

ASIA SOCIETY INDIA CENTRE

PRESENTS

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS: SOUTH ASIA IN THE "THIRD SPACE"

SUPPORTED BY THE CHATTERJEE GROUP



1. Half-portrait oil painting of Ram Mohan Roy, painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1833
2. Parag Tandel, 'Journey of Bombayduck,' 2023, clear cast resin, rice paper, cuttlefish ink. Courtesy Parag Tandel and TARQ
3. Raja Yudhishtira Surveys Hell in Search of His Son, unknown artist, 19th century
4. Aban Raza, Shaheen Bagh, Delhi (detail), Oil on canvas. Courtesy: Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS: SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY IN THE 'THIRD SPACE'

Asia Society India's summer learning series, June-August 2024

FOREWORD

With both Asia Society's commitment to understanding Asia in all its complexity, and South Asia's increasing visibility as the largest and most dynamic region in the world, at Asia Society India we are focused more than ever on creating a holistic and nuanced understanding of South Asia. These issues might range beyond the most immediate and current affairs, going deeper and farther.

We inaugurated our first summer learning series in 2023, looking at important and relevant contemporary issue that affects nations and communities across the world: migration, displacement and refugees. [Lands, Borders and People](#) brought together human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, and academic experts to engage with critical questions related to the legal, social, economic and cultural specificities of refugee crises in South Asia. As a virtual series, it opened up the stage to more experts and audiences than we ordinarily have the pleasure of hosting in India: people from both within and outside South Asia. Through this series, we aimed to broaden the cultural awareness of those attending, and to offer unique insights into the themes that animate the lives, concerns and realities of those living in, and thinking about, South Asia.

The overwhelming and positive response to [Lands, Borders and People](#) led us to broaden our field of inquiry for the second edition, this time looking at a more abstract conception of South Asia: probing, and reimagining the importance of cultural history in South Asia. In today's increasingly polarised climate, with countries in South Asia growing divided along lines of religion, politics, and cultural diversity, it is important to look at what we have in common.

To this end, we launched Cultural Encounters: South Asian History in the 'Third Space', with the generous support of The Chatterjee Group – focusing on both Asia Society and the Chatterjee Group's mandates toward advancing public knowledge on the issues shaping India and South Asia. We believe this series was positioned at the right time and place, dealing with themes that are only going to become more and more crucial. Culture, after all, forms the backbone of many nations, and their identities. From our shared colonial past, to how it has impacted all aspects of our lives – religion, food, and even the conception of nationhood – South Asia's future has been built on the cultural encounters of its past. Spending time on this history allows us to engage with its future, whether through policy, politics, or culture, and this series was a step towards a more holistic understanding of the present.

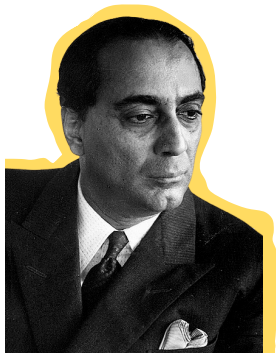
Inakshi Sobti

CEO, Asia Society India Centre

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Encounters: South Asian History in the 'Third Space'

In today's world, identities are based on binaries, where one is either this or that: **Indian** or foreign; **South Asian** or Western; **religious** or not. Our notions of ourselves are based on narrowly defined, immutable definitions of one community or culture. Yet, this has never been the case in South Asia. Histories of the region reveal a much more layered, composite story of how one culture interacts with another, creating a new one. Unlike the idea of '**cultural differences**' or '**diversity**' which nod to other cultures while maintaining the supremacy of one, cultural exchange is far more intricate, creating what Homi Bhabha called a '**third space**' – and it is from this third space that most of South Asia has drawn its progress across art, economy, architecture, and civilisation.



In his book **The Location of Culture** (1994), Homi Bhabha explains why Western modernity must be relocated in the postcolonial era. He proves that the dominant ideology of western cultural dominance can be dissolved to exhibit a 'third space' – an **in-between state** through which the **colonised** and the **coloniser** come together, **subverting traditional hierarchies** of the colonial state. The very creation of this space **undermines** the traditional identities created and imposed by the colonial state. Through colonialism, and indeed globalisation, the third space today exists as a space for **cultural contact** and interaction.

Homi Bhabha. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Over four modules in June, July, and August 2024, we explored the historical instances of culture coming together in South Asia, and what can come of those encounters. Through these panels, we hoped to reveal the **joy and wonder** that is to be gained from cultural encounters, as well as the **fundamental contribution** these encounters have to our understanding of **South Asia** today. The series brought together academics, professionals, and advocates from journalism, writing, and academia to share their thoughts and perspectives in an open discussion. Each session focused on a specific sub-topic: the interactions between **the colonial and the local**, **food** histories, **religious** histories, and **freedom** and **citizenship**.

SESSIONS

Chapter 1: What is Colonial, What is Local?

This introductory session covered **historical interactions** between colonial and local populations, as well as **resistance** to colonial rule, in South Asia. Colonial interactions with 'local' populations were **two-way**, whether in the form of **language, politics, employment**, or **marriage**, making the colonial 'local,' and the local 'colonial,' in **more complex** ways than simply a **one-to-one** exchange. As we started to explore cultural history in South Asia, we began by asking the difficult question: what is 'colonial,' what is 'local'? Can those two clearly be defined? What are various forms of resistance, interaction, and knowledge exchange, and today, how can we look back on a more complex history than the one we have been given to understand?

Key Takeaways

Ipshita Nath, author of 'Memsahibs: British Women in Colonial India,' (2022) highlighted how colonial and local terms are understood in **isolation**, and in **competition**; and how these interactions were enacted by '**memsahibs**' during the colonial period, particularly through their own writing. Through a study of the journals left behind of these memsahibs, it became apparent that these women would create British dishes adapted to the continent, using what spices, meats, and cooking methods were available, creating at once a cuisine that was **neither British nor Indian alone**.



Lady Alice Reading, Viceregal Consort to Lord Isaacs, Viceroy of India 1921-26. Known for her charitable efforts, she was awarded the Kaiser-e-Hind medal in 1924 - the highest honour awarded by the British Empire in India for public services rendered. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Dina M Siddiqi, clinical associate professor, New York University, and author, 'Women in Question: Gender and Labor in Bangladeshi Factories' (1996), then proceeded to ask **why** the difference between 'colonial' and 'local' matters, and to whom. Why are we discussing these terms at this present moment? These words have been **naturalised** and **reproduced** over and over, to the point where the **binaries** that were once created by the colonial regime are today reprinted in anthropology and literature. Dina explored how ideas of **indigeneity** and **purity** are **weaponised** in a modern context to reestablish a past that wasn't necessarily always present. Through her research, she contends that today's ideas of the '**Mother India**' never truly existed in the colonial past, at least not in the way they

are seen today. Yet, this imagery is propelled into the narrative of the past to give rise to certain ideologies that are considered the mainstream.

Finally, she discussed narratives of 'Muslimness' in Bangladesh and South Asia more broadly, expanding on how 'Muslimness' was placed as antithetical to ideas of Hindu identity, then going on to impact ideas of nationhood in the formation of Bangladesh.

“ European Orientalism and Indian nationalism colluded in endorsing a principle in which Muslim decline was synonymous with Hindu Renaissance.

– Dina M Siddiqi

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Gauri Vishwanathan, Class of 1933 Professor in the Humanities and former Director of the South Asia Institute at Columbia University, brought up the need to **recontextualise** these terms, particularly in the present moment. She provided the panel with a background in the three primary terms necessary while engaging with the colonial and the local – **appropriation**, **mediation**, and **translation** – and the need to **reengage** with these ideas within the modern context in order to understand the narratives that have been built based on these ideas. She also mentioned the contemporary political context, and why it matters, alongside the ideas of religious and cultural nationalism that inform our understanding of the colonial and local today.

The **Cambridge School of historiography** was first used to understand the **British Empire**. This school of thought approached history from the **imperialist** perspective, and was for a long time the **preeminent** way of engaging with colonial history. One of the historians part of this movement was **Dr Anil Seal**, author of 'The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century' (1971). It was the rise of the **subaltern** school that replaced this school of historiography, including academics such as **Ranajit Guha**, and **Partha Chatterjee**.



Dr Gauri Vishwanathan, image courtesy of NYU website.

Finally, our last panelist, Zehra Jumabhoy, lecturer in the history of art at the University of Bristol, and a curatorial research fellow at Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, University of Swansea, brought up **visual culture** as a way of understanding the colonial and local. To understand the current shape **macho nationalism** has taken – the sole male patriarch at the centre, powerful and responsible for saving the nation from outsiders – one must go back to the colonial period. This was where the ideal was the **muscular, white Christian identity** was created, seeing resonances in the **hyperpatriotic** and **destructive** nationalism of **today**.



'The Great Mughal Jahangir's Darbar,' India, c. 1620. Currently located at David Collection Museum, Denmark. Image courtesy of Open Art Images. This miniature depicts power in a way that is familiar in contemporary political imagery: with the most powerful person depicted in a larger size, at the centre of the frame.

Areas for Future Investigation

What other **legacies** of colonialism exist in the present day, and how is our understanding of our own local culture shaped by it? The cultural encounters that shaped and gave rise to the 'third space' also shape the **naturalised narratives** and dominant history of today. Looking at these modern narratives, it would be interesting to uncover how they have **evolved**. Furthermore, what does what present day nationalism in countries such as Bangladesh and India look like, and how is that impacted by its colonial legacy?

Chapter 2: Food Histories of South Asia

A study of the countries of South Asia reveals a **closely linked** set of histories concerning food as people have moved, lands have shifted, and new ingredients have been discovered and put to use. What then, do the histories and origins of food reveal about the **confluence** and interaction of communities in south Asia? Week two looked at how **migration, exploration** and change impacts what we eat today – and, most importantly, can a region so diverse, and multicultural ever be **defined** by a particular type of food?

Key Takeaways

Dina Begum, British Bangladeshi author of 'Made in Bangladesh' (2024) and food writer, argued that the role the **diaspora** plays is equally important – looking at food that has been passed down from generation to generation, it is the act of recreating by the diaspora that creates a **link** to the home country and **saves** the culture in a way, with mothers passing down recipes that have never been written down and exist only in the minds and traditions of elders. Additionally, diaspora cooks take what ingredients are available and use techniques, and methods of spicing reminiscent of home to create dishes that are in themselves a **culture encounter** – for instance, using chilies that are perhaps not the traditional Kashmiri or Byadagi, but making do with what is available. Food is a way of connecting to a shared past when one's present circumstances may have taken you far from home.

“**Bangladeshis** are the **pioneers** of our love of **curries** in the UK - a journey that spans over a **hundred** years with the arrival of **lascars**, or sailors in the **1900s** to British shores from the part of India which is now Bangladesh.....Food is a **conduit** through which we can understand and **explore** a culture.”

- an excerpt from Dina Begum's *Made in Bangladesh: Recipes and Stories from a Home Kitchen* (2023)

Saba Imtiaz, the author of 'Karachi, You're Killing Me!' (2014) and a freelance journalist, researcher and author highlighted the parallels in street food in both Pakistan and India, and showed how each might have **evolved differently**, but continued to **borrow** from the other. For example, the bun kebab in Karachi was created based on social media trends but is deeply similar to Mumbai vada pav, illustrating **regional** influences coming into contact with the world through the **Internet**, leading to the creation of a brand-new food culture. She stressed the role of **globalisation** in creating the "fastfoodisation" of food – world over, access to the Internet has changed how people interact with food, with constant **borrowing**, **reshaping**, and **transformation** depending on the availability of ingredients, and techniques.



The vada pav in
Mumbai



The bun kebab in
Karachi

Images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Finally, Sonal Ved, author of 'Tiffin,' cookery show host and journalist, highlighted how the very food we consider to be **staples** of our diet are a consequence and amalgamation of a multitude of cultural encounters, each bringing together ingredients from **across the world** to create something different through the way it is **cooked, shaped, or spiced**. Indian food, thus, is a product of countless arcs of **migration** and **colonialism**; in each case the cooks prepare what they remember with what is available, as with the example of [Sindhi Macaroni patata](#) – a dish combining Sindhi flavours and ways of cooking with the traditionally Italian pasta. Sonal also expanded on how the growth of Indian food globally has led to **changing perceptions** of chaat and other foods that were considered **street food** – from being frowned upon to being presented in fine dining spaces. Today, the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai proudly boasts a chicken kathi roll priced at Rs 1250 – a dish that can be found on the streets on Mumbai for less than one-tenth that price. This can also be seen in the boom in Indian fine dining restaurants across the globe – from London's Dishoom, to Himachal Pradesh's Naar, homestyle Indian cuisine, once considered inferior and lackluster, now shine on the world stage.

“As the subcontinent witnessed the arrival of traders and invaders, the cauldron of **Indian** cuisine was further stirred. From the **Turks**, who brought **dates** and **nuts** and used them to garnish and sweeten desserts, to the **Arab** traders, who brought **coffee** and **asafoetida** via the silk route, to the **Portuguese**, who brought fine **bread**—these people **changed** the culinary landscape of India.”

– an excerpt from **Tiffin** (2018) by Sonal Ved

Areas for Future Investigation

What are the **overlaps** within South Asia when it comes the idea of 'local' food, and how does each of these interact with **different communities**? How do ideas of local food change over time, and how are they influenced by **migration and trade**? It would also be interesting to probe further on **global** influence in present-day food, and how **social media** has changed how we look at food. From the creation of the bun kebab, to even the idea of Chinese bhel, cultural encounters, both old and new transform a region's culture and food.

Chapter 3: Religious Histories of South Asia

South Asia is teeming with religions, each with its own **practices, customs, and traditions**. Each religion has also left its imprint on the **architecture, art, edifices**, and material reality of everyday life in ways that involve **overlaps** between religion, culture, and identity: making it difficult, even impossible, to separate one religion from another neatly. This week, we investigated what religion and pluralism in South Asia signifies. How can we understand religious confluences, and how does one religion change or impact another?

Key Takeaways

Haroon Khalid, a writer, journalist and educator, as well as the author of 'A White Trail' (2013) and 'From Waris to Heer' (2024), spoke at length about minority religions. His primary argument was that minority religions, such as Bhakti, which was created as an **anti-religion**, with a **lack of traditions**, and associated rituals, have tended to become more **mainstream** with the passage of time. They then become essentially what they were going against, and end up spawning further smaller branches that then go against mainstream teachings, creating a **cycle**. He highlighted this through the cycle of **Bhakti** and **Sufi** saints, who despite being against traditional forms of worship and reverence, soon were venerated in similar ways to the Hindu and Muslim saints they were trying to differ from.

In vain I pampered the body's cage,
nurturing evil in my heart.
Like a spoon without a handle,
I can't dip into the ambrosia I seek.
As I think desperate thoughts,
like a frog caught in the snake's mouth,
protect and save me,
O king of Orriyur!

(Appar: Indira Viswanathan Peterson)

Excerpt from *Eating God* (2014) by Arundhati Subramanian

Dr Eliza Kent, professor, Religious Studies, at Skidmore College and author of 'Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India' (2004), went into depth about **religious boundaries**. She talked about how religious boundaries historically were more **fluid**, with rulers of one religion patronising the building of religious structures of another. Over time, that began to change, with the British restructuring the political process in the British Raj.

“ One of the big introductions of British colonial rule was representational politics.

— Dr Eliza Kent

”

This started to **divide communities** along stricter lines. She also highlighted the reasons behind the form that **conversion** to Christianity took in India, explaining that it was often **necessity** that drove conversion, and in many cases conversion was a 'half-conversion' that is not seen very often today.

Priyadarshini Sen, an independent journalist who writes about religion, politics, culture, peace and social justice, focused more on the conception of **pluralism** in the past, and how our understanding of **religious tolerance** has changed over time. Pluralism, broadly defined as “**the respect for otherness**,” means that “belief systems coexist harmoniously in the same society.” Similarly, she stated that identities were more **porous**, and not posed in opposition to one another.



Sufi saints meet with Hindu ascetics prior to Sanyas. This painting from 1604 shows Hindus and Muslims coexisting and borrowing from each other's religious traditions. Image courtesy of Open Art Images.

“ [a] community did not see the acts of adopting customs of other religions as a threat to their identity.

— Priyadarshini Sen

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Areas for Future Investigation

Building on this, it would be interesting to look at the **provenance** and history of impactful religious figures such as **Bulleh Shah**, particularly how they reacted to the formation of more **restrictive** religious boundaries under the British. We could further engage with the ideas of **fluidity** and boundary blurring in religion, especially during the time of patronage, and how religious rigidity was only constructed later on. As religious boundaries grow more and more rigid, it is necessary to look at how fluid they used to be, in order to investigate whether a return to this fluidity is possible. Furthermore, it would be interesting to look at how **Bhakti and Sufism** are looked at today, and to explore the transformation they have undergone across the centuries.

Chapter 4: Freedom and Citizenship Histories

The final session of our series explored the **political thought** that has driven **independence, democracy, citizenship, protest, nation-building**, and **rights** in South Asia. A study of South Asian nations, national imagination, and political movements shows that interaction between **cultures and people** shape thought and life. What are some surprising interchanges and exchanges crucial to how nation-states in South Asia were formed? Were these interchanges always from the **West to the East**, or was there space for **intermingling** and movement in the opposite direction as well? What thoughts about **freedom, expression** and **citizenship** travelled to create the social movements that have existed in South Asia for years? Which ideologies do nations follow, and how do **socio-economic** factors affect the voices that form a nation?

Key Takeaways

Eleanor Newbiggin, historian of imperialism and decolonisation in twentieth century South Asia, and a lecturer at SOAS University of London, brought to light the flow of **enlightenment**, and how it was not simply from west to east, but rather more **continuous** and a **dialogue**, with thinkers such as **KT Shah** and others from India making an impact on the west as well. Indian thinkers would pick up on state produced economic data to counter British ideas of “progress,” leading to the reworking of economic growth – “**moving away from an idea of a state under foreign rule to an idea of nation.**”

Another reason why I am moving this amendment for dropping the words “**men and women equally**” is that it smacks too much in my opinion, of **patronising** by men over women. There is no reason for man to believe that he is even an equal to woman, **let alone superior**. According to that view which I have always entertained that man is a somewhat lower animal as compared to woman, I feel that this exhibition of patronage by man over woman, as if we were conferring any special right, ought to be **expunged** from the Constitution.

-KT Shah on an amendment to the proposed **Clause 1, Article 31** of the **Indian constitution** that initially stated ‘that the citizens, **men and women equally**, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood’.

Navine Murshid, Associate Professor of Political Science at Colgate University, and the author of several books on Bangladesh, identity, and politics, drew on her research to highlight the difference between the **perception** and **reality** of the period during the **Partition**. While the Bengal Renaissance has always been considered a period in which art and political thought flourished, recent Census data shows that this movement was dominated by **upper-caste Hindu elites**, to the **exclusion** of the **majority Muslim** population. Celebrated thinker and poet Rabindranath Tagore himself was influenced by people like **Lalon Shah**, a folk artist, but while Tagore was celebrated by these elites, Shah and others remained in the shadows. This divide between the Bengali and the Muslim was hidden away during Partition, and it only gained prominence upon the creation of Bangladesh.



Portrait of Lalon Shah, by Jyotirindranath Tagore (1884). He played a big role in shaping the ideology and thinking of the Tagore brothers. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

“ Bengali Muslim identity found political resolution in the new nation state. And thus, in India, interestingly enough, Bengali could continue to be an ethno-religious Hindu identity.

– Dr Navine Murshid

”

Sharif Hozoori, visiting scholar, Einaudi Center South Asia Program at Cornell University, and the 2024 Global Public Voices Freedom of Expression Fellow, spoke at length on the **uniqueness** of Afghanistan’s **national conscience**, and how terming it as **one single nationalism** would be misleading. He sees Afghan nation-building as a system which placed a specific group’s **cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identity** at the centre, in contrast to other forms of nationhood.

“ Afghan nation building was an ethnic nationalism, putting the Pashtun as an ethnic group in the center, and trying to nationalize the Pashtun culture, Pashtun values, and impose it on others.”

– Dr Sharif Hozoori

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Sharif also believes that **civic nationalism** – a nationalism built on shared belief in the institutions of the state, offering freedom, tolerance, equality, and individual rights, to all nationals - would be a better path forward, as it **reduces discrimination** and stigma amongst citizens, and positions them all as equals.

Tushar Shetty, producer and host, 'Beyond the Indus,' The Diplomat Magazine's South Asia podcast, showed how the **Third Battle of Panipat** stands as a relevant method of showing **multiple strands** of thought (Afghani and Maratha ideologies, for instance). He also used that, and other panelists' examples, to explain how identity based on **class, ethnicity** and **caste** have been critical in defining **nationalism** in South Asia over time.



Detail of Ahmad Shah Abdali on horseback from a larger Mughal-era painting of the Third Battle of Panipat, c 1761-1770. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Areas for Future Investigation

Who were the **influential thinkers** of the 19th century, and how did ideas that emerged in British India contribute to the global bank of knowledge and philosophy on **nationhood**? How did **Partition** come to **define** India and Pakistan as nations, and somehow completely divest two countries of a shared and continued sense of nationalism? It would also be good to look at the **local ideas** of nationhood and citizenship for each South Asian country – no two countries have the same experience, and generalising can be difficult. Whether it be Bangladesh or Sri Lanka, each country's fight for **independence and self-determination** varies, and to club all South Asian countries together, and claim that they share the same pathway to nationhood would be misleading.

OUR AUDIENCE

The audience comprised individuals from **all over the world**, including almost all the continents. India, UK, US, Netherlands, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Germany, Portugal, Malaysia and Australia were just some of the countries represented. Week 1 had 110 attendees; Week 2 had 173 attendees; Week 3 had 120; and Week 4 had 40 attendees. Most attendees belonged to **academic institutions**, across the world, with a large percentage coming from top Indian institutions, such as Tata Institute of Social Sciences, St Xavier's College, Ashoka University and Delhi University. Universities in the United States (New York University, Brown University, Middlebury College) were also well represented. Europe and other Asian countries were also represented by students and professors of the National University of Singapore, BRAC University, University of Heidelberg, University of Malaya, and Imperial College London. This diverse audience was possible largely due to the **virtual** nature of these sessions. Furthermore, the individuals who tuned in came from varied backgrounds. The audience comprised **artists, college students, professors, lecturers, school teachers, managing trustees, artists, and C-suite executives**.

OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure that the maximum number of interested individuals were reached, and would be inclined to attend the sessions, we enlisted the help of several outreach partners. We worked with several organisations, mostly non-profits, who work with **history** in some shape or form and who are interested in featuring **South Asian voices**. With their help, we were able to extend our reach, by getting in touch with their member bases and audiences. The outreach partners were:

BICAR, a non-profit, pedagogical and research para-academy, assisted us by including our work in their newsletter and Instagram stories.

Citizens Archive of India, which uses oral history and material memory to save India's country's cultural legacy, collaborated on two Instagram posts, included our work in their newsletter and spread the word through WhatsApp messages.

Kalinga Lit Fest, an annual literature festival taking place in Odisha, collaborated on one Instagram post, while also spreading the word over email.

Citizens Archive of Pakistan, an organisation dedicated to cultural and historical preservation in Pakistan, included our work on their social media channels, and collaborated on two separate Instagram posts.

Sahapedia, an open online resource on the arts, cultures and heritage of India, included our work on three Instagram posts, while also sharing information on the panels on their Instagram stories.

Our chapter-based outreach partners collaborated on one post each on Instagram, while also

spreading the word through their newsletters and member bases:

Food Histories: [The Daily Pao](#)

Religious Histories: [Voices of Bhakti](#)

Freedom and Citizenship Histories: [1947 Partition Archive](#)

We recognise the special efforts of [Malvika Bhatia](#) and Citizens Archive of India, who shared [archival footage](#) and [images](#) that were folded into the outreach strategy and creatives we included as part of our social media strategy. [Here are](#) just a few images she sourced for us to use for our Instagram posts:



LESSONS FROM THE SERIES: THE PAST IS PRESENT

Over the course of the four panel discussions in this series, Asia Society India, with the generous support of [The Chatterjee Group](#), looked at [cultural history](#) and its continued relevance in the present: the past does not remain stagnant, and instead [morphs](#) with each successive discovery. Just as the present is constantly in [flux](#), so too are the identities and ideologies of the past; the way we relate to these ideas transforms depending on our [current context](#) and perspective.

What is buried, and what is celebrated, even today, remains a consequence of [historic narratives](#). [Identities](#) once regarded as part of the cultural fabric of South Asia were done away with under [colonial rule](#), because they did not align with the [Western canon](#). What was once considered authentic, upon a closer look, seems to be just as mired in an [amalgamated identity](#).

Food, for instance, has always travelled through [migration and trade](#) across South Asia, a phenomenon now accelerated by [globalisation](#), which has led to the evolution of cuisine in ways that were previously unthinkable. Cultural exchanges now span continents, leading to the meeting of the old and the new in interesting ways. Similarly, the defining of religious identity in the past is being [renegotiated](#) today, to suit current [political ideology](#). From what was once a sense of fluid boundaries, with fraternity and intermingling between different religions, India today [prioritises one ideology](#) (that of Hindu nationalism) above all others, and reinterprets the past to fit into this narrative.

Rather than allowing history to live in the past with no connections to the present, [learning](#), [remembering](#), and [building](#) upon the events of our history helps us understand with greater clarity the long arcs of events taking place today. We would like to extend our thanks once again to The Chatterjee Group for their generous support of this series, and for assisting us in our quest to understand exactly how the [third space](#) continues to play a role in our lives, even today, helping us move towards a closer understanding of the present.



FURTHER READING

[Nationalism in Bangladesh](#)

[Nationalism in Pakistan](#)

Dina M Siddiqi

[Counting on the State? Unequal Valuation and Regimes of Compensation in South Asia](#)

[Weaponizing Paperwork- Rohingya Belonging and Statelessness](#)

[The 'gift' of freedom: dissent, decolonisation and afterlives of empire](#)

<https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/news/colonial-legacies-capitalist-presents-national-interests-vs-labour-interests-1737628>

Ipshita Nath

[Telegraph India A woman's perspective: British Raj through the eyes of memsahibs who straddled two lands](#)

[Ipshita Nath Feminism in India Netflix's Sir: The Indian Audience's Fascination With The Rich-Man-Loves-Poor-Girl Trope](#)

Gauri Viswanathan

[Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief](#)

Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (Columbia, 1989; Oxford, 1998; [25th anniversary edition](#))

[Conversion and the Idea of the Secret](#)

Zehra Jumabhoy

"Tilting at Thresholds: Partition in South Asian Art & Exhibitions" in The 1947 Partition of British India: Forced Migrations and Its Reverberations, Jennifer Leaning and Shubanghi Bhadada (Eds), Sage Publications, India, pp. 279-313. The project is Harvard University's publication on South Asian Partitions. [Read Chapter 10](#)

"Decolonising Art History", Art History, Vol 43, Issue 1, Feb 2020, p.23-25 [Read](#)

Dina Begum

[Bangladeshi Food: How To Cook Like A Local](#)

[I'm a food writer - this is the most underappreciated culinary city.](#)

[Bangladeshi Shrimp and Green Bean Stir-Fry Recipe](#)

[Feeding Britain: The cost of living crisis threatens Bangladeshi cuisine in the UK](#)

[Why the UK's 'Indian' Curry Houses Are Starting To Celebrate Their Bangladeshi Roots](#)

[Why women are the future of Bangladeshi food](#)

Sonal Ved

[A new cookbook suggests Indian cuisines have always been accommodating of veganism](#)

[9 Indian spices that will transform the way you cook](#)

[How an Indian Street Snack Became American Haute Cuisine](#)

[Buy India Local : Classic Street Food Recipes Book](#)

[The Indian Vegan by Sonal Ved: Easy Recipes](#)

Saba Imtiaz

[July 5, 2021 / Spicy Things, Crunchy Things - Vittles](#)

[April 29, 2022 / Eid Cakes are the Ultimate Dinner Present in Pakistan - Goya](#)

[Jan 9, 2020 / An Elegy for Karachi's Empress Market - Roads & Kingdoms](#)

[Dec 27, 2019 / In Karachi, a Biryani for Hundreds to Celebrate the Full Moon - SAVEUR](#)

[March 2019 / A Collective of Syrian Refugee Women Have Found an Outlet for Their Home Cooking - SAVEUR](#)

Eliza Kent

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