

Concept Note

Re-Imagine: India-UK Cultural Relations in the 21st Century

An evidence-based strategy for understanding and improving India-UK Cultural Relations today for mutual benefit in the future

1. Purpose of the project

- * To understand the India-UK cultural relationship in the 21st Century
- * To enable stakeholders and institutions in both countries interested in Cultural Relations to develop their strategy around this understanding

2. Background

Why are India-UK Cultural Relations important today?

The cultural relationship is bigger than a country's government or people. It cannot be entirely controlled by any one organisation or small group of people, although they might influence it significantly. The cultural relationship encompasses everything from the fashion, films and TV programmes one country produces and shares with another, to the amount of current affairs coverage one country's press and media gives another country, through to the number of tourist and exchange visits that happen between countries, and even the number of foreign food restaurants one country has because of another; basically, everything from which the people of one country can learn in order to understand the life and people of another country. It can include what we learn when formally studying in another country and, at the same time, what we pick up when browsing the websites of another country or chatting in online social networks and forums with people from that country.

In a world that is rapidly changing and dynamic, healthy cultural relationships between countries are of great importance: they help reduce prejudice and mistrust, allow for the sharing of ideas, knowledge, approaches and solutions in business and politics, and can underpin and facilitate significant increases in trade and tourism – all of which increases the quality and opportunity of people's lives.

As we enter the second decade of the 21st Century, the earlier bilateral, and even multilateral, relationships that seemed stable in the Nineties and at the beginning of the new millennium are assuming a new dynamic. The crisis in the Middle East is adding a new dimension to the changing world order. Within this changing matrix what is the nature of the existing India-UK relationship and what shape will this relationship take in the next ten years?

Historically, there is the legacy of two hundred years of shared history, a legacy that has been examined and recorded through a wide range of lenses offering varied viewpoints.

India and Britain have shared values and belief in democracy and share a parallel framework of parliamentary and legal institutions but the structure of this framework is under increasing scrutiny. The English language, recognised by the Indian Constitution, is the lingua franca, spoken widely by the Indian middle class -- often a special Indian variety of English endorsed by leading British linguists -- and recognised as a tool for self-advancement by the aspiring young. There have been long-standing economic ties

between India and the UK, and companies who pioneered FDI into the Indian economy in the early 20th Century are still market leaders although they face stiff competition from new entrants and Indian counterparts. There is a 1.4 million strong Indian diaspora in the UK who retained links with their country of origin but succeeding generations view these links differently.

The past offers a strong platform for this relationship but some of the planks are eroding. Between the 1960s and the 1980s the two countries moved radically apart – Britain for instance moved into the EU and India developed a special relationship with the Soviet Union. Some feel that Britain has not invested in the relationship since the economic liberalisation of India in the 1990s, while India's perception of a changing Britain also needs renewal.

India

In the last two decades India's growth and development has been rapid with an average annual GDP of 7-8% in the last few years. India's forex reserves now stand at around \$200 billion and could exceed \$500 billion by 2020. Its 400 million strong middle class has great buying power, and the 650 million Indians below the age of 29 are being considered the demographic dividend. At present India's Gross Domestic Product derived from its purchasing power parity (PPP) is the fourth largest in the world.

The Indian government's investment in the social sector – the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the National Rural Health Mission, the Right to Education Act, etc – and growing urbanisation will combine to potentially provide a large skilled force and highly-skilled labour migrants.

India will need to invest in this skilling and will require new higher education institutions and the English Language as a tool. A globally ambitious India will need to revive and reinvest in its cultural institutions, its museums, galleries and archives to bring them at par with international counterparts.

To realise its growing global ambitions India will have to forge new international relationships and re-examine existing ones, where success will depend on cultural and intellectual openness.

Britain

With its linguistic and communications advantage, its superior educational systems, its social and intellectual capital and world-leading cultural institutions, Britain among all European countries has the greatest capacity to forge dense ties with India.

Britain has already declared its intent to build "a special relationship with India". In July 2010 the British Prime Minister visited India with the biggest and highest level delegation of any British Prime Minister in recent memory and his trajectory was clear: "Alliances that succeed will be alliances that reflect and support this age of people power and networks. They will have to go beyond politician-to-politician contact to facilitate greater contact between business, civil society, universities and communities."

The British Prime Minister's idea of partnership in practice focussed on three areas: deepening economic links between entrepreneurs of the two countries and doubling trade by 2015; deepening links between young people, especially through universities; and deepening links between civil societies in the two countries across a whole spectrum of activity, from development work to the arts, sport and community organising.

At the same time, independent of Government policy, UK's leading educational and cultural institutions are beginning to reinvest in their relationship with India. The British

Museum, the V&A and the British Library led on the signing of a cultural agreement in July 2010 with a renewed commitment to work with their Indian counterparts. An exhibition of Tagore's paintings in the 150th anniversary celebrations of the poet, will be displayed at the V&A and the Ashmolean in the winter of 2011-12. Oxford University will be celebrating an India Day for the first time in recent years in June 2011. There are many such examples.

However, the long-term nurturing of this relationship will require action and incentives, unhindered by short-term nationalistic policies from both sides.

3. Scope

Initiating and capturing wide-ranging discussions: documenting the India-UK relationship today for strategic planning in the future.

The project will:

- provide knowledge, insights and market intelligence to stakeholders and institutions to inform their operational decision making
- advance the cultural relations agenda with new data-driven inputs and provide a forum for transparent dialogue between stakeholders and audiences about their work and objectives

Re-Imagine has three strands:

- a. **Debates and Dialogues:** engagement with key stakeholders
- b. **Cultural Mapping:** detailed analysis of the relationship
- c. **Commissioned research and writing:** a volume of future-forging pieces by leading thinkers in a variety of critical sectors

Debates and Dialogues

A series of debates and dialogues will be designed to engage key policy-makers and influencers, as well as aspirants, with the aim of thinking imaginatively about renewing and strengthening the India-UK relationship in the 21st century. The debates will be structured around the three key themes: Memory and Shared Past, Ambition and Modernity, and The Future and Re-invention.

In order to gain a 360 degree view on cultural relations, participants will be drawn from an array of sectors, including business and economics, education, English, the arts and culture, non-governmental organisations and civil society, politics and the media.

The debates will be recorded and disseminated in various forms, with the consent of participants, for wider public engagement.

A) Memory and Shared Past

India and the UK have deeply intertwined histories. The past remains an essential building block in beginning the process of re-imagining the future. Drawing on the complex, sometimes painful but rich legacy, the first of our series of dialogues and debates will pose questions about the role of memory in shaping the present and future relationship.

How will the radical changes modern India is currently experiencing be remembered? How will the UK's role in the transformations currently underway be remembered, or forgotten? What is the role of historical memory in shaping the way the UK perceives the changes in India today, and vice versa? Looking at the archive of past ties between the

countries, what lessons can we draw for today? These are just some of the areas that our discussions will seek to explore.

The first Debate on The Future Archive was held on 8 March in King's India Institute, London around an exhibition of living archives by the photographer Dayanita Singh. Her catalogue of arresting imagery provided a thought provoking backdrop for discussion our discussions.

B) Ambition and Modernity

With a new generation of leaders, thinkers and innovators tearing up the old rule books, what do ambition and progress mean in India and the UK today? In this debate, leading intellectuals from both countries will gather to discuss the different modernities that the UK and India are currently charting. The aim will be to foster further dialogue, and challenge the perception that India and the UK are growing increasingly irrelevant to one another as we plunge deeper into the 21st century.

In UK, the debate was recently held at the Hay-on-Wye festival on 3 June 2012. Renowned Bollywood personalities Anupam Kher and Nandita Das with writer William Dalrymple and BBC presenter Nik Gowing conversed on the different modernities that the UK and India are currently charting to challenge the perception that India and the UK are growing increasingly irrelevant to one another as we plunge deeper into the 21st century.

A parallel event in India will take place in Kolkata on 05 October 2012 at ICCR.

C) The Future and Re-Invention

In this series of dialogues, our eyes will not be half- focused on the past or the present, but firmly trained on the future. This event is about young citizen challengers, and how they will be the bearers of the shared legacy in the future. Developing the emerging themes of the previous two dialogues, we will map out progressive, imaginative ways of taking the India-UK relationship forward by enabling young people to engage with key stakeholders in the cultural relations process and put their own views forward.

A Youth Summit will be designed around the Culture Ministers' Summit in Edinburgh from 10 - 13 August 2012, immediately after the closing ceremony of the Olympics and before the Edinburgh Festivals.

A parallel event will take place in Hyderabad on 10 September 2012.

Re-Imagine Debates and Dialogues will wind down with an International Conference in Delhi on 30 November and 1 December 2012.

Cultural Mapping

Developing a methodology for cultural mapping outlined by the British Council and CS Transform, *Re-Imagine* will attempt to describe the state of India-UK cultural relationship today in quantitative and qualitative terms. This process consists of a number of key components:

- a. Collecting quantitative data on the scope, nature and direction of the relationship today. This includes analysing the results of an exclusive web survey and compiling information from other statistical sources.
- b. Two workshops designed to engage stakeholders in the process and allow them to contribute to the mapping process.
- c. Performing a large number of face-to-face interviews with decision about their role in and perception of the cultural relationship.

The Cultural Mapping process will be designed to respond to and include the results of the Debates and Dialogues series, as well as feed back into the engagement process. A

database of useful resources on the India-UK relationship will be established, and media that capture significant findings and highlights strategic opportunities will be published.

Commissioned research and writing

Re-Imagine will commission an edited volume of future-forging pieces by leading thinkers in a variety of sectors critical to the evolving relationship. As an important barer of the project's legacy, this work is intended to be a landmark contribution and marker of early 21st century visions of the India-UK cultural relationship can develop.

4. Partners

Re-Imagine will maximise its impact and broaden its scope through working with a coalition of partners. The partners are:

- a. The British Council <http://www.britishcouncil.org/india>
- b. Nehru Centre, <http://www.nehrucentre.org.uk/>
- c. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) <http://www.iccrindia.net/>
- d. Counterpoint, <http://counterpoint.uk.com/>
- e. King's India Institute
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/worldwide/global/indiainstitute/index.aspx>

5. Project Duration

Re-Imagine will run from September 2011 to November 2012.

6. Key Outputs

- 6 Round Tables in the Debates and Dialogues
- 5 Cultural Mapping Workshops and Cultural Mapping Project strategic outputs, including web survey, report and commissioned infographic
- 1 International Conference
- 1 volume of commissioned research and writing
- Database of resources for further research and market intelligence on the India-UK cultural relationship, especially in the areas of Education, Arts and English.
- On-going web presence, including engaging interviews and podcasts with key influencers and thinkers

7. Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the current and future Cultural Relationship between UK and India among stakeholders, key partners and customers
- Future scenarios -- understanding what this relationship will look like in the 21st century in order to recommend actions that will strengthen it
- Provide an intelligence tool that can assist in the production of evidence-based strategy for Indian partners, stakeholders and customers

8. Governance and Management

The project will work with an Advisory Group and a Management Team with participation from both countries, drawn from the partner organisations.