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Completion Report of Two Day International Conference on
Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imagination



**Organized by: Department of Language, Literature & Cultural Studies,
Swami Vivekananda University**

Mode: Blended

Conference Date: 22.01.2025 to 23.01.2025

Conference Time: 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM

**Venue: Hall 02, Meghnad Saha Block, Swami Vivekananda University,
Barrackpore.**

Mission

The mission of the International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imagination* is to create a vibrant, interdisciplinary forum that brings together scholars, artists, cultural practitioners, and policymakers to explore and celebrate the intricate intersections between Scotland, India, and the global cultural landscape. Over two days, the conference will foster critical dialogue and innovative research that challenges traditional narratives, highlights mutual influences, and reimagines the ways in which diverse cultural legacies interact. We aim to examine the evolving nature of transcultural identity through engaging presentations, interactive workshops, and collaborative sessions that bridge academic and creative approaches. By interrogating historical linkages alongside contemporary exchanges, our goal is to illuminate the transformative power of transcultural engagement—cultivating a space where debates, performances, and scholarly inquiries inspire new frameworks for understanding culture in an increasingly interconnected world.

Vision

We envision a future where cultural boundaries are continuously redefined through the power of imaginative dialogue and collaborative exploration. Our goal is to build a resilient global community dedicated to transcultural scholarship and creative innovation, one that not only celebrates the richness of distinct cultural identities but also harnesses their collective potential to inspire fresh narratives and transformative practices. Looking ahead, we aspire to create lasting networks that extend well beyond the conference, contributing to academic research, cultural policy, and creative industries. Ultimately, the conference serves as a catalyst for ongoing intercultural exchange—a dynamic platform that encourages critical thinking, nurtures creative expression, and paves the way toward a more inclusive, interconnected, and culturally vibrant future.

Concept Note:

This concept note should precede with a Scottish musician's (Mischa Macpherson) pleasant rumination of a trans-cultural experience in India. In her blog, she writes: "There are two sayings in India I've come to learn; the first is that 'the world is one family', and the second, that 'guest is god' . After three visits to the country, I've yet to experience any place or situation where I have not instantly felt this with great warmth and affection." India should be

now celebrating its 300-year relationship with Scotland in 2025, if we do go by Douglas Watt's calculations on the Company of Scottish Trading's expansionist drive into the "Indies and the World". Again Puneet Gupta OBE wishes to move it further back and considers it to be a relationship of four centuries with the speculative formation of Scottish East India Company in 1618. Around 1695 Scottish trading ventures across the Baltic and in Europe were slowly dwindling, giving way to new imaginative alternatives. Scottish entrepreneurs were gradually moving forward to Asia and Africa: India, China and Africa.

Since the days of the empire, Scotland contributed immensely to the monastic activities, education and administration. The Scottish presence in colonial India as administrators, missionaries and educationists impacted largely on the Indian cultural formation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thomas Martin Devine and Angela McCarthy have recently edited a book *The Scottish Experience in Asia, 1700 to the Present: Settlers and Sojourners* (2017) highlighting the Scottish contributions in South Asia, Southeast Asia, China, thereby marking an interface of studies of migration and of the empire.

Scotland should therefore be looked upon as the new epicentre of trans-cultural relationships between Scotland and the world. But India should be the new strategic site for configuring this trajectory of trans-cultural relationship.

This international conference intends to focus on, though not strictly limited to, the following areas:

- Empire and Scottish identity
- Nationalism, Nativism and Identity: India and Scotland
- Re-reading Scottish Literature: Scott, Burns, R L Stevenson
- Missiology and Enlightenment
- Trade and Adventure
- Scottish Orientalism
- Indian/Asian Travellers to Scotland

Speaker Details:

Prof. Bashabi Fraser



Prof. Bashabi Fraser, CBE, is an award-winning Indian-born Scottish poet, children's writer, editor, translator, and academic. She is a Professor Emerita of English and Creative Writing at Edinburgh Napier University, Director of Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies (ScoTs) and an Honorary Fellow at the Centre for South Asian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. She is also the Chief Editor of *Gitanjali and Beyond*, an international peer-reviewed journal. With a literary career spanning continents, she has authored and edited 23 books, along with numerous academic and creative articles. Her notable works include *Raga & Reels* (2012), *Scots Beneath the Banyan Tree* (2012), *From the Ganga to the Tay* (2009), and *Bengal Partition Stories* (2006, 2008). A widely anthologized poet, Prof. Fraser has collaborated with the British Council and the BBC and actively engages in literary festivals. Her contributions to literature earned her the AIO Award for Literary Services in Scotland (2009).

Prof. Neil Fraser



Prof. Neil Fraser is a Professor at The University of Edinburgh and a distinguished expert in Social Policy. His research focuses on social policy, health economics, development in India, and working poverty. With extensive contributions to these fields, he has influenced policy discussions and academic discourse on economic and social welfare. His work addresses critical issues such as poverty, healthcare access, and economic development, particularly in the Indian context. As a leading scholar, Prof. Fraser continues to engage in research, policy analysis, and academic collaborations to advance understanding in these areas.

Prof. Alan Scott Riach

Prof. Alan Scott Riach is a Scottish poet and academic, currently serving as Professor of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow. Born in Airdrie, Lanarkshire, on 1 August



1957, he studied at Churchill College, Cambridge (BA, 1979) and the University of Glasgow (PhD, 1985). He taught at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, from 1986 to 2001 before returning to Scotland. A former President of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies (2006–2010), Prof. Riach is a regular contributor to *The National* and an authority on the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid, having edited MacDiarmid's collected works for Carcanet Press. He has written and edited several volumes on twentieth-century Scottish literature and co-authored two books on art and culture in modern Scotland with Alexander Moffat. A prolific poet, he has published six collections and recently worked on English-language versions of 18th-century Gaelic poetry.

Prof. Amrit Sen



Prof. Amrit Sen is a distinguished scholar and Professor of English at Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. He specializes in the study of Rabindranath Tagore and has made significant contributions to eighteenth-century literature, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. In collaboration with Prof. Bashabi Fraser, he co-edited the book *Scottish Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Continuum of Ideas*, which explores the intellectual exchanges between Scotland and Bengal during the colonial period. Prof. Sen earned his Ph.D. from Jadavpur University in 2005 and has been a faculty member at Visva-Bharati University since 1998. Throughout his tenure, he has chaired numerous conferences and published extensively in scholarly journals, contributing valuable insights into literature and cultural studies. His research interests encompass British Isles literature, with a focus on the eighteenth-century novel, as well as cultural and postcolonial studies.

Dr. Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee



Dr. Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee is a distinguished scholar specializing in Cosmopolitanism, Home, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Indian Nationalism, Women and Gender Studies, the History of Ideas, and South Asian Studies. She is currently a faculty member at the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) department of IIIT Delhi and also serves as an adjunct professor in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Her research has been widely published in esteemed academic outlets, including *Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures*, *South Asian Review*, *Journal of Human Values*, *Sahitya Akademi*, and *Gandhi Marg*.

She has actively contributed to global academic discourse, presenting her work at prestigious forums such as The European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (EACLALS), The South Asian Literary Association (SALA), The Association for Asian Studies (AAS, USA), and The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS). Dr. Mukherjee's interdisciplinary scholarship continues to shape critical discussions on postcolonial studies, nationalism, gender, and the broader South Asian intellectual landscape.

Dr. Kaberi Chatterjee



Dr. Kaberi Chatterjee is a distinguished academician and researcher specializing in the historical and intellectual exchanges between India and Scotland, with a particular focus on the contributions of Scottish missionaries to the education of nineteenth-century Bengal.

As a faculty member at Scottish Church College, she has played a significant role in advancing scholarship on colonial education, cultural interactions, and historical narratives. Dr. Chatterjee has chaired numerous

academic conferences and has published extensively in reputed scholarly journals, contributing valuable insights to her field.

Her research continues to bridge the historical and educational connections between India and Scotland, enriching academic discourse on transnational exchanges and colonial legacies.

Participants Details:

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Department	Institution	E-mail Id
1.	Parimal Mondal	Research Scholar	Language, Literature & Cultural Studies	Swami Vivekananda University	
2.	Sneha	Student	Language, Literature & Cultural Studies	Swami Vivekananda University	
3.	Amrita Ghosh	Student	Language, Literature & Cultural Studies	Swami Vivekananda University	
4.	Swarnali Chattopadhyay	Student	Language, Literature & Cultural Studies	Swami Vivekananda University	
5.	Ahana Chatterjee	Student	Language, Literature & Cultural Studies	Swami Vivekananda University	

Conference Committee:

The committee was formed three months prior to this conference. In the committee, Prof. Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay, Chief Executive Director (Academics), Swami Vivekananda University was requested to Chair the conference and Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty, Head, Department of English and Dr. Subham Bhattacharjee, Asst. Prof. of the Department of English were the Convenor and Co-convenor. Other members of this committee are as follows:

- Dr. Madhumita Roy
- Dr. Tirna Sadhu
- Ms. Shreyoshi Dhar
- Mr. Soumyarup Bhattacharjee
- Ms. Natasha Chatterjee
- Mr. Agnideep Datta
- Mr. Debarshi Arathdar
- Mr. Anirban Banerjee
- Mr. Sudipta Dutta

Conference Report: International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations*

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore, hosted a prestigious two-day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations* on January 22-23, 2025. This conference brought together eminent scholars, researchers, and students to explore the historical and cultural exchanges between Scotland and India.

Day 1: January 22, 2025

The first day of the conference began with a warm breakfast session where guests and participants had the opportunity to engage in informal discussions and networking. Following this, the official inauguration ceremony commenced at 11:00 AM with the traditional lighting of the sacred lamp by the chief guests and organizers.

Inaugural Session

The conference was graced by eminent scholars such as Prof. Bashabi Fraser (Professor Emerita, Edinburgh Napier University), Prof. Neil Fraser (University of Edinburgh), Prof. Alan Riach (University of Glasgow), and Dr. Payel C. Mukherjee (IIIT Delhi). They were felicitated by Prof. Subrata Kr. Dey, Vice Chancellor of Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore.

In his inaugural speech, Prof. Dey highlighted the historical collaborations between Scotland and India, emphasizing potential avenues for future academic partnerships. He discussed how universities from both nations could collaborate in research and cultural studies. This was followed by an inaugural address by Prof. Shorosimohan Dan, Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Burdwan and Chief Patron of Swami Vivekananda University. He elaborated on the shared intellectual and cultural history between the two nations.

Prof. Ranjan Chakraborty, Former Vice Chancellor of Vidyasagar University and Director of Research and Academic Development at Swami Vivekananda University, provided an insightful speech on research opportunities in Indo-Scottish collaborations. Other distinguished speakers included:

- Prof. Mita Banerjee, Former Vice Chancellor, WBUTTEPA and Chief Academic Advisor, Swami Vivekananda University
- Prof. Swapan Dutta, Former Vice Chancellor, Visva-Bharati and Director, School of Agriculture, Swami Vivekananda University
- Prof. Malayendu Saha, Former Vice Chancellor, University of Kalyani and Director, School of Management, Swami Vivekananda University
- Prof. Anuradha Mukherjee, Former Vice Chancellor, Diamond Harbour Women's University and Director, School of Basic Sciences, Swami Vivekananda University
- Shri Subhasish Mazumder, Hon'ble General Manager, Swami Vivekananda University
- The Hon'ble Registrar of Swami Vivekananda University

Following the inaugural addresses, Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty, Head of the Department of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies (formerly English), delivered a welcome speech. She also recited a poem by Prof. Alan Riach, setting an intellectual and artistic tone for the conference.

Keynote and Special Sessions

The first keynote address was delivered by Prof. Bashabi Fraser, chaired by Prof. Alan Riach. Prof. Fraser's lecture focused on the intertwined narratives of Scotland and Colonial India, exploring themes of literary and cultural exchange. Her insights provided a deep understanding of how these narratives have shaped historical and contemporary identities.

After a lunch break, the conference resumed with a special plenary lecture by Prof. Neil Fraser from the University of Edinburgh. His session, also chaired by Prof. Alan Riach, provided an in-depth analysis of cross-cultural interactions, particularly in literature and politics. The final special address of the day was delivered by Prof. Subir Kumar Roy from Bankura University, who elaborated on the historical and philosophical aspects of Indo-Scottish relationships.

Day 2: January 23, 2025

The second day commenced with breakfast, followed by a keynote address by Prof. Alan Riach, chaired by Prof. Bashabi Fraser. Prof. Riach's lecture expanded upon the themes discussed on the first day, delving into artistic and poetic exchanges between the two nations.

Plenary and Working Sessions

A special plenary address was delivered via an online platform by Prof. Amrit Sen from Visva-Bharati, chaired by Prof. Subir Dhar from Sister Nivedita University. Prof. Sen's lecture examined how historical events and literature have documented the transcultural negotiations between Scotland and India.

Following the plenary, the conference transitioned into the working sessions. The first working session, chaired by Dr. Madhumita Roy, featured presentations from scholars engaging with topics related to transcultural imaginations.

- **Dr. Payel C. Mukherjee (IIIT Delhi)** presented a paper on the commonalities between Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes.
- **Prof. Kaberi Chatterjee (Scottish Church College)** explored the evolution of Scottish influences on education and literature of nineteenth century Bengal.

The second working session, chaired by Mr. Debarshi Arathdar, provided a platform for postgraduate students to present their research papers. The student presenters examined various aspects of transcultural negotiations, including themes in literature, historical studies, and comparative cultural analysis.

Valedictory Session

The conference concluded with a valedictory lecture by Prof. Subir Dhar, summarizing the key discussions of the two-day event. He emphasized the importance of sustained academic dialogue and future research collaborations between Scotland and India.

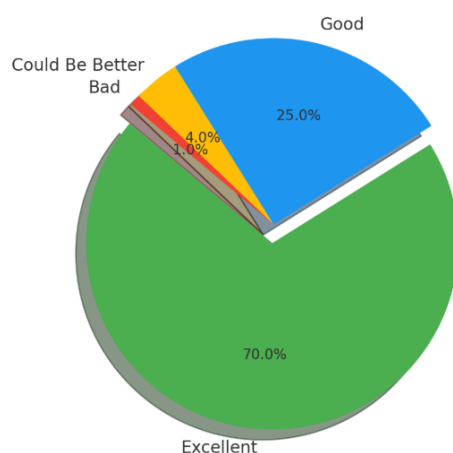
Finally, Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging the contributions of all participants, organizers, and speakers. She expressed gratitude to Swami Vivekananda University for successfully hosting the event and encouraged ongoing discussions and academic partnerships. The two-day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations* was a resounding success, fostering academic discussions and strengthening the intellectual bond between the two nations. The event provided a vital platform for scholars and students to explore and present their research, ensuring that Indo-Scottish cultural and academic engagements continue to flourish in the years to come.

Paper Submission and Publication:

Total number of paper submitted for publication: 60 (from students, research scholars and faculty members)

Total number of paper published: 00 (Publication houses are being contacted)

Feedback:



Index:

... Excellent

... Good

... Could be better

... Bad

Programme Outcome

The two-day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations* successfully achieved its objectives, fostering academic exchange and strengthening Indo-Scottish intellectual and cultural ties. The key outcomes of the conference include:

1. **Enhanced Academic Collaborations:** The conference provided a platform for discussions on future research collaborations between Scottish and Indian universities, facilitating exchange programs and joint research initiatives.
2. **Interdisciplinary Engagement:** Scholars from literature, history, political science, and cultural studies engaged in thought-provoking discussions on transcultural negotiations.
3. **Emerging Research Prospects:** The working sessions highlighted the latest research in Indo-Scottish relations, opening avenues for further study in literature, education, and digital humanities.
4. **Student Participation and Learning:** Postgraduate students gained invaluable experience by presenting their research and receiving constructive feedback from eminent scholars.
5. **Cultural Exchange and Intellectual Growth:** The conference emphasized shared narratives between India and Scotland, deepening the understanding of their historical, literary, and political interactions.

The conference successfully strengthened Indo-Scottish academic relations and laid the foundation for future collaborative research in transcultural studies.

Budget Report for the International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations*

Outflow of Money

1. Travel Allowance

- Flight Tickets for Speakers: ₹207,100
- Car Rent: ₹18000

Total Travel Allowance: ₹225,100

2. Accommodation

- 2 Guests at Hotel for 2 Nights: ₹28,000

3. Conference Fooding

- **Day 1:** ₹800 per plate × 16 guests = ₹12,800
- **Day 2:** ₹800 per plate × 17 guests = ₹13,600

Total Fooding Cost: ₹26,400

4. Conference Kit & Felicitation Kit

- Cost: ₹2,660

Total Outflow

- Travel Allowance: ₹225,100
- Accommodation: ₹28,000
- Conference Fooding: ₹26,400
- Conference Kit & Felicitation Kit: ₹2,660

Grand Total: ₹282,160

Certificate for the Participants:



Conclusion: Reflections on the Two-Day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations*

The two-day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations*, held at Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore on January 22-23, 2025, was an intellectually stimulating event that brought together leading scholars, researchers, and students to explore the multifaceted interactions between Scotland and India. Over the course of two days, the conference successfully facilitated dialogues that deepened our understanding of the historical, literary, and cultural exchanges between these two nations. It provided a platform for interdisciplinary discussions, academic collaborations, and new research perspectives that will shape future studies in transcultural negotiations.

Bridging Historical Narratives and Contemporary Discourse

One of the key achievements of this conference was its ability to bridge historical narratives with contemporary discourse. The keynote addresses and plenary sessions provided valuable insights into the shared past of Scotland and India, particularly in the context of colonialism, literature, and education. Prof. Bashabi Fraser's keynote lecture underscored the intertwined

narratives of Scotland and colonial India, shedding light on the intellectual and cultural imprints that each nation has left on the other. Her analysis of historical texts and literary traditions revealed the depth of Indo-Scottish interactions and their influence on global cultural movements.

Similarly, Prof. Neil Fraser's plenary lecture explored the intersections of political and cultural history, emphasizing the significant roles that Scottish intellectuals played in shaping India's colonial and post-colonial landscapes. Prof. Alan Riach's keynote address on the second day further extended this discourse by examining artistic and poetic exchanges between the two nations. These lectures reinforced the importance of re-examining historical narratives through a transcultural lens, acknowledging both the complexities and the enduring connections between Scotland and India.

Interdisciplinary Dialogues and Academic Collaborations

The conference also facilitated interdisciplinary discussions that transcended the traditional boundaries of literary and historical studies. Participants from various academic fields, including literature, history, political science, cultural studies, and digital humanities, engaged in thought-provoking discussions on transcultural negotiations. The presentations and working sessions demonstrated how Indo-Scottish interactions have shaped diverse domains such as education, governance, language, and artistic expressions.

The working sessions, in particular, highlighted emerging research in Indo-Scottish relations. Dr. Payel C. Mukherjee's presentation on the digital representation of Scottish and Indian literary traditions opened new avenues for digital humanities research, while Prof. Kaberi Chatterjee's discussion on Scottish influences in Indian education provided a fresh perspective on pedagogical frameworks. These sessions not only showcased cutting-edge research but also encouraged collaborative projects that could lead to significant academic contributions in the future.

One of the most promising outcomes of the conference was the establishment of potential academic collaborations between institutions in Scotland and India. Discussions on joint research initiatives, student exchange programs, and cross-institutional projects were encouraged, paving the way for a more interconnected academic network. By fostering such

collaborations, the conference successfully created opportunities for sustained scholarly engagement beyond the event itself.

Encouraging Emerging Scholars and Student Participation

A notable feature of the conference was its emphasis on encouraging emerging scholars and student participation. The inclusion of postgraduate students in the working sessions provided them with a unique opportunity to present their research before an audience of eminent scholars and receive constructive feedback. This not only enriched their academic experience but also helped them refine their research methodologies and analytical frameworks.

The second working session, which was dedicated to student presentations, showcased a diverse range of topics, reflecting the broad spectrum of Indo-Scottish transcultural studies. The active engagement of students in these discussions demonstrated their keen interest in the subject and their commitment to contributing to this evolving field. The insights and critical feedback provided by experienced academics, including Prof. Subir Dhar and Dr. Madhumita Roy, were invaluable in shaping the future research trajectories of these young scholars.

Cultural Exchange and Intellectual Enrichment

Beyond its academic rigor, the conference was also a celebration of cultural exchange and intellectual enrichment. The recitation of a poem by Prof. Alan Riach, presented by Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty during the inaugural session, set a reflective and artistic tone for the event. The discussions throughout the conference were interwoven with references to literature, poetry, and art, emphasizing the profound cultural connections between Scotland and India.

The informal interactions during breakfast and lunch breaks also played a significant role in fostering intellectual camaraderie among participants. These moments allowed for the exchange of ideas in a more relaxed setting, leading to spontaneous discussions that often extended the themes explored in the formal sessions. Many participants expressed their appreciation for these opportunities to engage with scholars whose work has inspired their own research.

Key Takeaways and Future Directions

The conference concluded with a valedictory lecture by Prof. Subir Dhar, who eloquently summarized the key discussions and insights gained over the two days. He emphasized the importance of sustained academic dialogue and the need to continue exploring Indo-Scottish relations through multiple disciplinary perspectives. His address reinforced the conference's overarching theme of transcultural negotiations and the potential for future research in this domain.

Several key takeaways emerged from the conference that will guide future scholarly endeavors:

1. **Re-examining Indo-Scottish Relations:** The conference highlighted the need for re-examining Indo-Scottish relations beyond colonial binaries, acknowledging the nuanced exchanges that have shaped both nations.
2. **Expanding Research Frontiers:** The discussions underscored the importance of incorporating digital humanities, comparative literature, and cultural studies into Indo-Scottish research.
3. **Strengthening Institutional Collaborations:** The potential for academic collaborations between Indian and Scottish universities was a major takeaway, with many participants expressing interest in joint research projects.
4. **Encouraging Young Scholars:** The active participation of students and early-career researchers emphasized the need for continued mentorship and academic support in this field.
5. **Broadening Public Engagement:** There was a consensus on the importance of making research on Indo-Scottish relations more accessible to a wider audience, including policymakers, educators, and cultural organizations.

Final Thoughts: A Landmark Academic Event

As the conference came to an end, it was evident that it had made a significant impact on all attendees. The success of the event was not only reflected in the depth of discussions and the quality of research presented but also in the enthusiasm with which participants engaged with the themes of transcultural negotiations. The event served as a reminder of the enduring ties between Scotland and India and the relevance of these connections in contemporary academic discourse.

Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore, emerged as a key facilitator of this intellectual exchange, demonstrating its commitment to promoting international academic collaborations. The efforts of the organizing committee, led by Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty, were instrumental in ensuring the seamless execution of the event. The university's dedication to fostering interdisciplinary research was evident in the diverse range of speakers and topics covered.

In conclusion, the two-day International Conference on *Scotland, India and the World: Negotiating the Transcultural Imaginations* was a landmark academic event that successfully deepened our understanding of Indo-Scottish relations. It provided a robust platform for scholarly exchange, encouraged new research directions, and strengthened the foundations for future collaborations. The conference reaffirmed the importance of transcultural studies in a globalized world and left participants with a renewed commitment to exploring the dynamic interactions between Scotland, India, and the broader world. As discussions from this conference continue to inspire future research, it is hoped that this event will serve as a catalyst for even greater academic partnerships and intellectual advancements in the years to come.