



REPORT

ACTIVITIES AND SKILLS ACQUIRED DURING THE CHARLES WALLACE FELLOWSHIP

Host Institution: The School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics,
Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Duration: April 1, 2025- June 30, 2025

Name of the Fellow: Dr. Sweta

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Introduction:

As a Charles Wallace Fellow in Social Anthropology, I was hosted at HAPP, Queen's University, Belfast from April 1 to June 30, 2025. This fellowship provided an extraordinary opportunity to engage with interdisciplinary scholars, participate in panel discussions, conduct ethnographic research, and contribute to conversations on water ecologies, conflict, mental health, and performative ethnography to name a few. My work during this period was grounded in my ongoing project on "Water Literacy, Everyday Practices, and Policy Integration," with specific attention to comparative insights from Northern Ireland and India.

Academic Engagements and Events Attended

1. Immersive Performance and Panel Discussion

- *April 2, 2025*, attended the screening and discussion of *HIVE Choir's* site-specific performance at Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles, with ecological importance and recent controversy. The audiovisual piece served as a unique lens to study environmental storytelling and sound-based activism.
- *April 15, 2025*, attended lecture by Prof. Mallika Shakya from Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg and South Asian University, Delhi, who presented a paper on "Labour Migration and the Reproduction of Social Class in Nepal." at Maynooth University.
- *May 2, 2025*, attended the performance *AN ILIAD* performed by Patty Gallagher and Ben Leeds Carson, Brian Friel Theatre, Queen's University Belfast. It deepened my approach to dramaturgy and actor collaboration for directing plays as I am also a theatre artist.
- *May 2, 2025*, attended a photo competition and launch event organized by Michael Pierse (English Department) on, held in the Main Site Tower Lobby, part of Seamus Heaney Centre's initiatives.

- 7 May 2025, attended the QUB Anthropology Postgraduate Conference 2025, titled *The Self Under Siege: Re-thinking Selfhood Across Disciplines*, held at Queen's University Belfast.
- 15 May 2025: Participated in the event "Creativity in Cultural Peace Work: Opportunities and Challenges" held at the Moot Court, School of Law.
- 20 May 2025: Attended Dr. Yusuf Oldac's talk on "Social Sciences and Humanities in Muslim Societies" chaired by Dr. Ibrar Bhatt.
- 28 May 2025 - May 30, 2025: Attended the Wiles Lectures 2025, delivered by Prof. Sven Beckert of Harvard University, on the theme *"Rethinking the History of Global Capitalism."*

2. Workshop and Talks

- Conducted a two-hour workshop in collaboration with Prof. Maruška Svasek on *"Exploring How We See the Field and the Others: Intersections of Theatre Techniques, Fieldwork and Script Writing"*, held at Performance Room 13, Queen's University. The workshop encouraged participants to rethink ethnographic presence and field ethics using embodied practices.
- 21 May 2025: Gave the India lecture titled *"Divine Currents, Earthly Dumps: Can the Ganga Survive as Both Goddess and River?"* at Queen's Graduate School, exploring contradictions in sacred ecology at the Ganga's riverfronts in Varanasi.
- June 18, 2025: Presented a lecture titled *"Sacred Currents, Precarious Futures: The Ganga's Paradox as a Mirror of Global Ecological Crisis"*, part of the Geography and Environmental Science Seminar Series at Room 1.003, 27 University Square.

3. SIEF 2025 Congress – Aberdeen, Scotland

- June 3–6, 2025: Attended the biennial congress of the **International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF)**.
 - **Discussant**, Workshop Inte06: "Unwriting into the Future" (Young Scholars WG)
 - **Paper Author**: *"Bridging Cultures among Konyak Nagas of Nagaland, India: Rethinking Ethnographic Dialogue and Emotional Cartographies in Fieldwork"*
 - **Contributor**: *"Challenging Gatekeepers in the Ivory Tower: Redefining Research/Publication in the Age of Bureaucratic Rejections"*

4. Field based Activities

- Visited St. Brigid's Well at Donaghadee as part of my continuing research on *sacred Irish wells* and their link to medical pluralism and spirituality and reviewed literature on Irish wells and healing traditions.

- Conducted research along the Lagan River trail in Belfast, carrying out informal interviews as part of the Water Literacy Project.

5. Research and Writing Outputs

- Draft completed on research paper titled “*Liquid Knowledge: Mapping Water Awareness in Belfast (tentative title)*”.
- Finalized an article titled “*Ethnographic Risk through the Lens of Gendered Violence in India*”, highlighting the researcher’s body as a paranoid field navigating tactical survival.
- Submitted a book proposal to Oxford University Press titled “*Sacred Streams and Spectacular Stairs: Reimagining Varanasi’s Ghat-Ganga Continuum*”, with a revised working title to broaden the scope.
- Drafted a paper analysing the portrayal of women in social movements, using the protests as a case to illustrate a shift from symbolic sacrifice to strategic leadership.
- A blog in Public Anthropologist on a series Lost Predictions (<https://publicanthropologist.cmi.no/2025/07/04/lost-predictions-iii/>)

Reflections and Acknowledgements:

Queen’s University offers a rich and well-resourced library, which played a crucial role in my academic growth during the fellowship. I spent many hours engaged in self-directed learning, exploring a wide range of books across disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economic history, and performance studies. Given the demanding nature of academic responsibilities in India, finding such uninterrupted time for reading and reflection is often a challenge. I extend my sincere gratitude to the library staff and staff at HAPP for their support and efficiency in providing seamless access to resources, which significantly enriched my research experience. I have developed valuable administrative skills and a strong sense of responsibility during this fellowship, which I plan to bring back to my home institution to help improve and streamline administrative processes. I intend to document this journey and share the good practices and collaborative culture of Queen’s University with my institutional head at MGCU, who has expressed keen interest in adapting them within our academic environment. I remain grateful for this opportunity and look forward to continuing scholarly collaborations with colleagues I met during this enriching fellowship period.

The Charles Wallace Fellowship has been instrumental in helping me acquire a diverse range of skills including ethnographic filmmaking, performance documentation, collaborative script development, and academic writing. It enabled me to travel across various parts of the UK, allowing rich engagements with professionals in mental health, gender rights, environmental justice, public health, creative writing, and performance studies. These interactions have opened up avenues for institutional growth, and I am currently in discussion with senior leadership at my home university in India about proposing a dedicated centre for interdisciplinary research and public engagement. Additionally, I am collaborating with Prof. Maruška Svašek on a proposal for the Wellcome Trust’s Discovery Fund.

The Charles Wallace Fellowship, and Charles Wallace India Trust, by placing a scholar as an anonymous presence within new lands and communities, fosters a form of empathetic scholarship that transcends geography and discipline. I am truly grateful that, even as many fellowships face cancellations, the Charles Wallace India Trust remains a steadfast support for young Indian scholars who are hopeful and eager to learn. Queen's University Belfast offers an inclusive and welcoming environment, and Prof. Maruška Svašek's empathy and kindness made homesickness almost non-existent, she has been not only a mentor and guide but also a genuine friend.

Photo Gallery:



A walk along Lagan River, Belfast



Attending a Lecture series organised by Prof. Maruska and Centre for Creative Ethnography



Glimpse from India Lecture Day at Queen's University, Belfast



Glimpse from India Lecture Day at Queen's University, Belfast



Sharing spaces over knowledge we think we hold at Queen's University, Belfast



A glimpse from the workshop co-conducted with Prof. Maruška Svašek.



In search of Well's and water Tradition in Irish culture, Edinburgh



In search of Well's and water Tradition in Irish culture, Belfast



Before the start of the Play "An Iliad" at the Brian Friel Theatre at Queen's University.



From the audio-visual performance by HIVE choir at Queen's University



This was the best time: I had time to read



A Promising Prelude: Acquaintance Evening at Queen's University

Special Thanks

Sincere gratitude to the Governments of India and the United Kingdom for nurturing cross-cultural academic exchange through the Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT), and to Shreela Ghosh for her steadfast support and thoughtful coordination throughout the fellowship.

Gratitude to Prof. Maruška Svašek for mentoring with clarity, care, and quiet strength

Special thanks to Queen's University, Belfast, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics.

Thank you, Dr. Tom Marshall, and the friends and family I found beyond borders - for your guidance, generosity, and companionship throughout this journey.