

AHRC Indian Exhibition Project

Report of UK Visit Of Dr Anindita Saha to Kew, BL and CWEH, Sussex University

3rd November to 13th November, 2016

Dr Anindita Saha, (Independent Curator)

I arrived in London on 3rd November, 2016 and stayed at the International Hall, University of London until the 8th. On 4th November, I visited the British Library (BL) & met Dr Antonia Moon, Lead Curator, post-1858 India Office Records. I visited different sections of the Library under her guidance and also visited two temporary exhibitions running at the Library premises.

I met Ria Bartlett, Lead Producer, Onsite Learning Programme of the British Library and discussed the Learning Programmes that the Library usually organises for school children. She gave me some brochures of school programmes run by the BL and also showed me how they informally teach school children things that they would enjoy learning during these activities. These practical experiences will help me a lot to organise the school project at Kolkata and to make the learning process more interactive.

Under the guidance of Mark Browne, Conservation Manager I also visited the Conservation Studio of British Library. In the Conservation Studio, I saw how they have restored birch bark manuscripts and also discussed issues of conservation of archival materials.

Dr Moon has given me photocopies of lots of meteorological data from the India Office Record Section that I need for preparing a report on Meteorological History of India as requested by Mr. Ajay Narayan Jha, the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change of India for a follow up proposal on this project.

On 7th November, I met Christopher Mills at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He showed me the Herbarium and the Library of Kew and also some rare collections that included rare books, herbarium sheets and notebooks and paintings of JD Hooker. After lunch he showed me the Gardens, the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art & Marianne North Gallery. I discussed our school project with him during this guided tour. On my return to India, he has also sent me a number of web links on how to mount a herbarium specimen, details on Joseph Hooker, the Joseph Hooker Correspondence Project, Hooker's time in India etc.. Mr. Mills also introduced

me to Ruth Thomas, Learning Producer at Kew (Museum No. 1). I discussed with her the topics that we have selected for the school project at Kolkata. She assured me that she would help us develop two topics- one on, trades in medicinal plants in India and the other on, the history of transportation of plants. She also shared her practical experiences to make the learning process more interactive. She further suggested some topics, such as, the ecological aspects and environmental history of India, plant knowledge of local communities, history of specific plants of our localities, re-plantation of endangered plants of our locality etc for the school project.

On the 9th November, I arrived at Brighton and was hosted by Prof Damodaran of the Centre for World Environmental history. I met with Christina Miariti of Impact and Engagement Team of Sussex University. I presented an overview of the Exhibition at Kolkata and also an overview of the plans for the school project in Kolkata. According to her suggestion, on my return I met school teachers of the two schools that we have selected for our school project and discussed the topics that we have already selected for the school students and requested them to amend or change the topics that would be helpful for the students according to their school syllabus. I presented a paper entitled, *Botanical Heritage of India* on the same day at the University of Sussex.

I also met Sarah Naomi Lee of HAHP Impact and Engagement Team on 10th November at Sussex University and discussed the school project. In the afternoon, I visited the Indian collections at Brighton Museum and saw a rich collection of miniature paintings of the early 18th century.

On 11th November I returned to London and on 13th I left the UK after a useful and enjoyable visit.