

Report of 'The British Museum ITP Research Support Grant 2025'

The name of my book published with 'The British Museum ITP Research Support Grant 2025' is 'Stay- At- Home British Palette: Transformation through Colonial India'.



Writing this book has been both an intellectual and an emotional journey. Tracing the ways in which India's luminous climate and complex moral realities shaped the British artistic imagination compelled me to rethink long-held assumptions about colour, vision, and conscience within the history of art. As I revisited the works of J. M. W. Turner, William Blake, and George Stubbs, I came to see them not simply as British masters but as witnesses to an age of expanding horizons—an age in which climate and empire were as inseparable as pigment and light.

This project began with a fascination for colour as a form of moral language. Gradually, it became clear that the palette itself - the material embodiment of light - carried within it the history of empire. Writing this book has been a process of reconciling aesthetic admiration with ethical awareness, and of exploring how beauty can be both complicit in and critical of power. I hope this work invites readers to consider how artistic luminosity often conceals histories of exchange, extraction, and transformation, and how, through sustained critical attention, we might render that hidden light visible once more.



This study examines how the climatic, social, and moral realities of India transformed the visual and ethical sensibilities of three major British artists - Stubbs, Blake, and Turner - during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Drawing upon postcolonial art history, colour theory, and Romantic aesthetics, it argues that India functioned not merely as a colonial possession but as a moral and chromatic crucible that altered the very substance of the British palette. Through the material trade in pigments, the imaginative geography of the “Orient,” and the moral re-evaluation of light, these artists translated the external heat of India’s climate into the internal illumination of British conscience. Stubbs’s empirical naturalism, Blake’s visionary moralism, and Turner’s atmospheric sublimity together trace a trajectory from colonial observation to moral revelation, where pigment becomes conscience and colour becomes ethics.

My association with the British Museum, London, has been long and deeply inspiring, beginning in 2011. This publication is the culmination of years of research conducted across libraries, print and drawing rooms, and museums in both the United Kingdom and India, made possible through the generous support of the British Museum International Training Programme (ITP) Research Support Grant, 2022. I am equally grateful for the BM ITP Research Support Grant, 2025, which enabled me to bring this study to publication. Without these fellowships from the British Museum ITP, achieving this goal would not have been possible. My research has been profoundly shaped by the exposure and intellectual exchange fostered through the ITP Annual Programme.

During the International Curatorial Training Programme in 2011, I had the privilege of visiting nearly forty-five museums across the United Kingdom. The BM ITP marked my first sustained encounter with European art from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. It was during this period that a crucial question emerged: did British artists who never visited India nevertheless engage with Indian themes, and if so, how?

My visit to the Prints and Drawings Study Room of the British Museum in 2011, offered the first answers. There I encountered works on Indian themes by Turner,

Blake, Stubbs, and Henry Warren - artists whose imaginative engagement with India raised fundamental questions about perception, imagination, and artistic truth. Interactions with ITP colleagues from Egypt, Turkey, China, Africa, and other regions further broadened my comparative perspective.



Subsequent research at the British Library, the Courtauld Institute of Art through the Nehru UK Visiting Research Fellowship (2013), deepened and extended this inquiry. Although increased professional responsibilities and the COVID-19 pandemic delayed my project of publishing book. Ultimately the British Museum ITP Research Support Grant 2025 enabled its completion.

I remain sincerely grateful to Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the British Museum; Dr Neil MacGregor, Former Director of the BM; Claire Messenger, the Manager, ITP and the entire British Museum ITP team; my ITP colleagues worldwide; mentors, institutions, and my family. Their generosity, encouragement, and belief have been the sustaining forces behind this work.

The book is of total 134 pages with hard cover sized 19cm (length) x 12cm (width) and 2cm (height). The book has been published by a Kolkata of India based publication house, SETU.

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I wish to mention specially about the last chapter, 'The Global Imagination of Stay-at-Home British Artists' of the book. It gives insight through global perspective. It reveals how eighteenth and nineteenth centuries expanded British global awareness through trade, empire, travel literature, museums, and imported art. Within this world, "stay-at-home" British artists—who never travelled abroad—developed globally inflected visual languages. Though they never visited Africa, Egypt, Turkey, Sri Lanka, China, Nepal, or Japan, the climates and moral cultures of these regions reshaped the British palette also. Africa contributed intense luminosity; Egypt monumental clarity; Turkey jewel-like richness; Sri Lanka tropical colour; China atmospheric restraint; Japan tonal flatness; and Nepal spiritual hues. These influences reveal that artistic globalization arose through imagination, producing a British palette that was increasingly hybrid, symbolic, and ethically charged.

This global perspectives of my book invites world-wide readers (ITP colleagues and beyond) to see British art as part of a shared world history rather than a national tradition. It resonates internationally by revealing how distant cultures shaped artistic imagination without direct contact. By foregrounding cross-cultural exchange and ethical reflection, it speaks to global readers navigating interconnected histories today.

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