

# Dr Alka Raman

Victoria and Albert Research Institute  
Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 2RL  
[www.alkaraman.com](http://www.alkaraman.com)  
[a.raman@vam.ac.uk](mailto:a.raman@vam.ac.uk)  
[+44\(0\)7894667123](tel:+44(0)7894667123)

## Employment

**Postan Postdoctoral Fellow in Economic History**, Economic History Society, in affiliation with Institute of Historical Research and Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2021-2022

**Guest Lecturer**, Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art, London January-March 2022

## Doctoral Research

My doctoral research has assessed the impact of the imitation of pre-industrial Indian cotton textiles on the technological trajectory of mechanisation and industrialisation in the British cotton industry from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has shown that imitations of Indian printed and painted cottons – the benchmark cotton goods of the period – steered the growth of the British cotton industry along a specific trajectory of mechanical innovations, guided by the quest to match the cloth and print quality of Indian cottons. Using a material evidence and digital, scientific experiments-based approach, I demonstrate that the introduction of Indian cottons into Western Europe stimulated and intensified the evolutionary process of technological change via material exchange, knowledge transfer and through the benchmark product itself, which contained the knowledge necessary for its replication, setting the course of mechanisation along a specific trajectory, and triggering modern economic growth through the first industrial revolution.

## Education

**PhD in Economic History**, Department of Economic History, London School of Economics and Political Science. Thesis: *'Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialization'*, funded by LSE PhD Studentship, no revisions September 2021

**MSc Economic History (Research)**, with Distinction, London School of Economics and Political Science 2016 –2017

**M.Phil in Diplomatic Studies**, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. MPhil. International Diplomacy, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Defended MPhil dissertation titled *'Chinese diplomacy towards Pakistan,'* funded by Junior Research Fellowship, Universities Grants Commission, India 2001-2003

**MA Political Science**, Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi 1999-2001

**BA (Honours) Political Science**, Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi. Received Randhir Singh Award for Excellence in Political Science at the end of undergraduate studies 1996-1999

## Publications

### Papers

Raman, A., Indian cotton textiles and British industrialization: Evidence of comparative learning in the British cotton industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *The Economic History Review*, 00 (2002), pp. 1-28  
<http://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.13143>

A critical convergence: Indian cotton textiles and the evolution of spinning technology in the British cotton industry, in the eighteenth century, *Technology and Culture*, under review, submitted February 2022

## Books

*From Muse to Machines: How Indian Cottons led to British Industrialization*, book manuscript in progress for submission to Cambridge University Press in 2023

## Reviews

Review of 'Weaving Histories: The Transformation of the Handloom Industry in South India, 1800-1960,' by Karuna Dietrich Wielenga, for *Technology and Culture*, Vol 63, No. 1, January 2022, pp. 261-262

Review of 'The English East India Company's Silk Enterprise in Bengal, 1750-1850,' by Karolina Hutkova, for *Business History Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2021.2001055>

Review of 'The Wardle family and its circle: textile production in the Arts and Crafts era' by Brenda King, *The Economic History Review*, Volume 73, No. 1, February 2020, p. 330-331

Review of 'Indian cotton textiles in West Africa: African agency, consumer demand and the making of the global economy, 1750-1850' by Kazuo Kobayashi, *The Economic History Review*, Volume 73, No. 3, August 2020, p. 876-877

Review of 'Merchants: The Community that Shaped England's Trade and Empire, 1550-1650,' by Edmond Smith, for *The Business History Review*, forthcoming

Review of 'The Story of Work: A New History of Humankind,' by Jan Lucassen, for *The Economic History Review*, forthcoming

## Teaching

**Guest Lecturer**, designed course 'Indian Cotton Textiles in Britain: Imitation, Innovation and Industrialisation' at V&A's postgraduate programme in History of Design January-March 2021

**Guest Lecturer**, 'Indian Cottons and the British Calico Printing Industry' at Winterthur/University of Delaware Art Conservation Program workshop on Textile Conservation April & December 2021

**Guest Lecturer**, 'From Muse to Machines: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialization' at British Design History 1530-1930, Winterthur Museum Program in American Material Culture January 2021 & 2022

**Writing Advisor**, Department of Economic History, LSE 2019-2021

**Graduate Teaching Assistant**, Department of Economic History, LSE (EH225: Latin America and the International Economy) 2017-2019

## Academic Grants

**Postan Postdoctoral Fellowship**, Economic History Society [£24,000 per annum] 2021-2022

**PhD Studentship** [full tuition + bursary], Department of Economic History, LSE [£18,000 bursary + £6000 tuition fees per annum] 2017- 2021

**Dissertation Fellowship Award**, Winterthur Museum, Delaware, USA [bursary \$7000] 2019-2020

**Residential Training Workshop**, full funding for 3-day workshop, Economic History Society 2018

**Radwan Travel and Discovery Fund Grant** for archival research, LSE 2017, 2018, 2019

## Awards and Prizes

- New Researcher Award for Best Poster**, Economic History Society Annual Conference, Belfast 2019
- Judge's Award for Best Poster**, Research Festival, LSE 2019
- Students-led Teaching Excellence Award**, LSE 2018, 2019

## Public Engagement

Collaborations to bring digital, scientific analysis of historic textiles into the study of economic history with:

**Victoria & Albert Museum**, London: use of collections, developing public engagement events through sharing research output, interdisciplinary teaching 2017, 2021-2022

**Winterthur Museum**, Delaware: use of collections and scientific investigations in laboratory, interdisciplinary teaching 2019-2022

**Harris Museum**, Preston: use of collections, microscopic analysis  
2017

**Musée des Arts Décoratifs**, Paris: use of collections, microscopic analysis  
2018

## Conferences, Seminars and other Presentations

**World Economic History Congress**, Paris, 'A Critical Convergence: Indian Cotton Textiles and the Evolution of Cotton Spinning Technology in Britain' Forthcoming, July 2022

**Economic and Social History of the Early Modern World**, Seminar Series at IHR (invited speaker), 'The Evolution of Cotton Spinning Technology: Indian Cotton Textiles and Mechanisation in the British Cotton Industry' January 2022

**Winterthur Museum Academic Programmes**, British Design History, Delaware (invited speaker), 'Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation' January 2022

**Institute of Historical Research Fellows Seminar**, London, 'From Garthwaite to Morris: Indian Calicoes and the Evolution of British Textile Designs in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' December 2021

**Winterthur/University of Delaware Programme of Art Conservation (WUDPAC)**, Delaware (invited speaker), 'Indian Cotton Textiles in Britain: Imitation, Innovation and Industrialisation, 1720-1860' December 2021

**Economic and Social History Seminar Series, Utrecht University** (invited speaker), 'From Artist to Chemist: Indian Calico Printing Techniques and the Evolution of Calico Printing in Britain' October 2021

**'The Colour of Clothes in the Early Modern World,' Conference, Cambridge University**, 'Indian Cottons and the Evolution of Printing and Dyeing in the British Calico Industry, 1720-1860' May 2021

**Business History Collective**, Global Webinar Series, 'Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation' April 2021

**Economic History Society Annual Conference**, Warwick, New Researcher Session, 'From Emulation to Experimentation: Indian Cottons and the Evolution of Printing and Dyeing in the British Calico Industry, 1720-1860' April 2021

**Graduate Seminar, Department of Economic History, LSE**, 'Indian Cotton Textiles and Technological Evolution in the Early British Cotton Industry' February 2021

**Winterthur Museum Academic Programmes**, British Design History, Delaware (invited speaker), ‘Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation’ January 2021

**Winterthur/University of Delaware Programme of Art Conservation (WUDPAC)**, Delaware (invited speaker), Indian Cottons and the Evolution of Printing and Dyeing in the British Calico Industry, 1720-1860 April 2021

**Graduate Seminar, Nuffield College, University of Oxford**, ‘Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation’ 2020

**Asia Seminar Series, Department of Economic History, LSE**, ‘Indian Printed Cottons and the Evolution of Printing and Dyeing in the British Cotton Industry’ 2019

**Research Fellows Seminar, Winterthur Museum**, Delaware, ‘Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation’ 2019

**Economic History Society Annual Conference**, Belfast, Poster presentation, ‘From Muse to Machines: How Indian Cottons steered the Technological Trajectory of the British Cotton Industry’ 2019

**Economic History Society Residential Workshop**, Manchester, ‘Making the All-Cotton Cloth: Imitations and the Evolution of Cotton Spinning in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century’ 2018

**Graduate Seminar, Department of Economic History, LSE**, ‘Learning from the Muse: Indian Cotton Textiles and British Industrialisation’ 2018

## **Administration and Organization**

**Member**, Panel of Judges, Economic History Society Annual Conference Poster Competition, forthcoming 2022

**Member**, V&A’s Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) Selection Panel for Doctoral Candidates 2022

**Organiser**, South Asia Workshop, ‘South Asia through a Global Lens,’ Economic History, LSE 2021

**Student Ambassador**, Economic History Society 2019-2021

**Organiser**, Graduate Seminar Series, Department of Economic History, LSE 2019

## **Languages**

**Hindi**: Fluent in speaking, reading and writing, including archival sources

**English**: Fluent in speaking, reading and writing, including archival sources

**French**: Basic, reading and speaking