



Dr. Renny Thomas

Charles Wallace Fellow in Social Anthropology (2017-2018)

Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Charles Wallace Fellowship in Social Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast is one of the most prestigious fellowships given to an Indian sociologist/social anthropologist under the age of 40 annually based on their scholarship and international publications. This three-month fellowship is unique in its approach as it allows the recipient to work on an independent research work. It gives the freedom and the intellectual atmosphere to think and write.

Queen's University Belfast is absolutely the best place for an academic to do solitary thinking and writing, and for enjoying the weekends at some of the best pubs in the area. What is so unique about Queen's University is its vibrant academic community. I had the opportunity to discuss and

engage with some of the best minds in the field that I work on, at the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, and at the School of Natural Built and Environment. I was fortunate to be part of various significant academic and cultural events that took place at QUB during my stay. I must mention the amazing Queens Film Theatre (QFT) where one could watch some of the classic films. Queens University Library (The McClay Library) has important collection in history of science that was of great use to my work. Also, the famous United Theological College (UTC) Library is not far from the University.

As a Charles Wallace Fellow, I was expected to give two talks at the University, 1) a public lecture, 'India Public Lecture' and, 2) Anthropology Colloquium. Both these lectures had been extremely engaging and useful in raising important questions, that is very helpful for my book manuscript. I started working on a new paper while I was at QUB because of my interaction with colleagues at QUB. I was introduced to very important works in the field of science and religion, and anthropology of religion by colleagues. QUB has some of the finest scholars in anthropology of religion, and history of science and religion; interacting with them on my work helped me in strengthening my arguments and provided new ideas to think about. Interacting with students of Social Anthropology was fulfilling as well.

As a Charles Wallace Fellow, I had the fortune to be invited by few other universities in the UK to give talks and to meet and interact with scholars of eminence in my field. I was invited to give lectures at the University of Cambridge (Department of History and Philosophy of Science), University of Aberdeen (Department of Social Anthropology) and The London School of Economics (LSE, The London Public Understanding of Science Lecture). All these lectures had been very engaging and useful. At Cambridge, I encountered an important and rare archival material. Thanks to the Professor from the Department of History and Philosophy of Science who invited me to speak.

I was happy that I could use my stay productively by engaging with a larger academic community, both at QUB and outside.

The spacious office space and the library facilities provided by QUB allowed me to think and write peacefully. I must acknowledge the friendship and intellectual support I received from colleagues and friends at QUB. How can I forget those wonderful second hand book shops in Belfast from

where I got some rare titles in social anthropology, also those astonishing cafes in Belfast where I used to have coffee and spend hours reading a book !

My stay at QUB was intellectually fulfilling and culturally enriching. I miss the silence that QUB provided me to work. I miss those beautiful evening walks, and of course the Irish beer and coffee.

I thank the Charles Wallace Trust for giving me an opportunity to spend three productive months of thinking, reading and writing.

Dr. Renny Thomas

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