

Mexico and India. A brief history of Cultural Exchange

Although not obvious at first sight, Mexico and India have enjoyed a significant amount of historical, social, and economic exchange, especially in the last 150 years or so. Yet, this relationship began in fact more than five hundred years ago, by a fortuitous mistake committed by Christopher Columbus who, searching for a new route towards the Indies (now South and Southeast Asia) encountered a whole new world not yet known to Europe by the end of the fifteenth century.

This continent, America or The Americas, became the base for intense colonial and imperial trajectories. For the Spanish Crown, the Americas provided an impressive amount of wealth and soon commerce quickly expanded in the Pacific Ocean, linking the Asian and American continents. Mexico was one key port. From that time onwards, many articles, both textile or spices and cultural items, travelled both ways.

This course seeks to provide an introduction into this complex and long exchange. It especially focuses on the cultural relations that took place after colonialism, so as to discuss issues of migration, orientalism from “the Global South”, and intellectual interaction. All of this entails very interesting ways of political and literary feedback. India has sometimes become a recurrent important motif—and for various reasons—in the oeuvre of some Mexican writers, such as Nobel Prize Octavio Paz or political thinker José Vasconcelos. Also, the impact of former Asian religious practices and systems has been

strongly felt in different Mexican metropolis, so that either Buddhism, Vaishnavism, or yoga have played an important role in the modification of the religious landscape in contemporary urban society in specific Mexican locales.