



**TALK BY ANITA ANAND  
Author and TV presenter**

*About the book*

***Sophia: Princess, Suffragette, Revolutionary***  
**8 December 2016 at 12 pm**

At the British Council | C515, 5th Floor, Elante Office Block  
178, Industrial and Business Park, Phase 1, Chandigarh

For details contact: T:0172-5203016 E:namrata.sandhu@britishcouncil.org

About Anita Anand

Broadcaster, journalist and biographer Anita Anand was born in 1972 and educated at King's College, London. Her broadcasting career began in the newsroom of satellite channel Zee and she won the Nisha Hassan Award in the category 'Upcoming Television Broadcaster' in 2005. She has since presented several news and current affairs programmes for BBC radio and television, notably on Radio 5 Live and currently Radio 4's *Any Answers*. On BBC2 she has co-hosted 'The Daily Politics' show and presented 'Newnight'.

Her first book, *Sophia: Princess, Suffragette, Revolutionary*, a biography of a campaigner for women's suffrage and Indian independence, was published in 2015.

She opened the 2014 Kolkata Book Fair and has also appeared at the Jaipur Literature Festival, most recently in January 2015. She is married to the science writer Simon Singh and lives in London. Her website is

About the book *Sophia: Princess, Suffragette, Revolutionary*

In 1876 Sophia Duleep Singh was born into Indian royalty. Her father, Maharajah Duleep Singh, was heir to the Kingdom of the Sikhs, one of the greatest empires of the Indian subcontinent, a realm that stretched from the lush Kashmir Valley to the craggy foothills of the Khyber Pass and included the mighty cities of Lahore and Peshawar. It was a territory irresistible to the British, who plundered everything, including the famed Koh-i-Noor diamond.

Exiled to England, the dispossessed Maharajah transformed his estate at Evesden in Suffolk into a Moghul palace, its grounds stocked with leopards, monkeys and exotic birds. Sophia, god-daughter of Queen Victoria, was raised a genteel aristocratic Englishwoman: presented at court, afforded grace and favor lodgings at Hampton Court Palace and photographed wearing the latest fashions for the society pages. But when, in secret defiance of the British government, she travelled to India, she returned a revolutionary.

Sophia transcended her heritage to devote herself to battling injustice and inequality, a far cry from the life to which she was born. Her causes were the struggle for Indian independence, the fate of the lascars, the welfare of Indian soldiers in the First World War – and, above all, the fight for female suffrage. She was bold and fearless, attacking politicians, putting herself in the front line and swapping her silk for a nurse's uniform to tend wounded soldiers evacuated from the battlefields. Meticulously researched and passionately written, this enthralling story of the rise of women and the fall of empire introduces an extraordinary individual and her part in the defining moments of recent British and Indian history.

The achievement of the book is to tell the story of a life exceptional in its circumstances, within the larger context of the historical relationship between Britain and India. In a poignant epilogue, Anand details how she eventually tracked down the only living people who had known Sophia: her goddaughter Drona and the surviving ex-niece child. They were able to give testimony on what really mattered to Sophia, the advancement of women by democratic means: she told Drona 'You are never, ever not to vote'. (This is a command that, in her acknowledgements, Anand herself repeats to her own nieces and goddaughters). No matter

that Sophia 'never managed to be sent to prison, and therefore was denied her chance to go on hunger strike and her place in the pantheon' of the suffragette movement – until now. A literary that encapsulates the rise of women and the fall of empires is one still full of relevance today. Anita Anand herself, as political journalist and biographer, observes these ongoing struggles.



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**WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016**

**6.30 pm:** Dramatised reading of **STILL AND STILL MOVING** (English)

Followed by a conversation with the playwright and the director

**THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2016**

**10.00 am to 1.00 pm:** Workshop on playwriting by Neel Chaudhuri

**6.30 pm:** Dramatised reading of **MAHUA** (Hindi)

Followed by a conversation with the playwright and the director

**British Council**

C515, 5th Floor, Elante Office Bloc, 178A, Industrial and Business Park, Phase 1, Chandigarh 160 002