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Student Excellence Award Winners

This year the Shastri Institute recognizes ten outstanding students who are pursuing studies related to India. They have each won \$2000 to help further their studies and prepare for a career in their field. Thank you to all the excellent students who applied. Here are the winners of 2008-09:

Mira Gambhir, Toronto, ON

As an educator and researcher of marginalized learners, Mira Gambhir witnessed new teachers struggling to create inclusive classrooms for students from diverse backgrounds. A lack of practical knowledge and skills coupled with problematic attitudes towards equity lead to the exclusion of children who were in the greatest need of safe and supportive learning environments. After her most recent role as an educational consultant for Aga Khan Foundation in India, she realized that adults and children of marginalized groups in regions of India are facing similar integration challenges as to those in the Ontario urban context.



Mira is now pursuing a doctoral degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in hopes of better understanding how teacher education programs prepare teachers for the diversity they will encounter in their classrooms and communities. The generous support of the Shastri Institute Student Excellence Award will allow her to travel to India to begin her thesis work – a comparative international study of Indian and Canadian teacher education programs. This award will also support her Hindi studies, presentation at the National Seminar on Equity in Delhi and help her access resources. She sincerely appreciates the Institute's commitment to supporting new scholars in their pursuit of careers related to India and most importantly in achieving their dreams.

Kory Goldberg, Dunham, QC

Kory Goldberg is currently teaching courses on education, religion, and the environment in the Humanities department at Champlain Regional College in St-Lambert, QC. With the help of Shastri's Student Excellence award, he is also writing his PhD dissertation in religious studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM). Buddhists Without Borders: Pilgrimage, Foreign-Aid, and Education in Bodhgayā investigates how Buddhist pilgrims visiting Bodhgayā change the impoverished town's educational terrain by opening private, alternative schools promoting Buddhist values. They also investigate how these changes are received and responded to by the local agrarian Bihari, predominantly Hindu community.



Kory's thesis also examines how engagement with these schools broadens the pilgrim experience from a religious journey to a social one, thus affecting the traditional structure, devotional motivations, and activities of Buddhist pilgrimage.

With his wife Michelle, Kory recently completed writing a pilgrimage guidebook entitled *Along the Path: A Meditator's Companion to the Buddha's Land* (forthcoming 2009, Pariyatti Press). The two of them live in the woods outside Montreal with their toddler Jai, balancing the rigour and demands of academia with rural simplicity.

Poornima Padmanabhan, Burnaby, BC

Poornima Padmanabhan is a graduate student, pursuing an MA in Educational Technology and Learning Design at Simon Fraser University. Over the next few months, she will be working on her Master's thesis, which is an exploration of the social and educational effects of the One Laptop Per Child program in India. She will apply her award towards this research, which will involve visiting a non-profit school in India and studying how children and teachers use the XO laptop (popularly called the 100-dollar laptop). Dr. Alyssa Wise from the Faculty of Education at SFU is Poornima's advisor, and her expertise in educational technology will be valuable in helping refine her thinking. Poornima's long-term research goals are to continue to develop skills in

International and comparative education, particularly focusing on educational technologies in



developing countries such as India. She is a keen traveller and amateur photographer, and would like nothing better than to spend her life visiting new places and having new cultural experiences.

Ashley McClelland, London, ON

Ashley McClelland's relationship with India began in 2000, with a backpack and a second-hand travel guide. The next six months, spent traveling from South India to the Himalaya was a profound wake-up call, challenging her own pre-conceived notions of culture, society, and ideology, and ultimately spurring her interest in pursuing studies in anthropology. Ashley earned her



undergraduate degree at the University of Alberta, where she had the opportunity to deepen her understanding of India's cultural, political and historical context, with a primary focus on Hindu religious thought. She is currently studying her MA in Anthropology and International Development through the University of Guelph.

Last year she had the incredible opportunity to spend five months in Kerala conducting fieldwork. This time was spent living with a family and carrying out research in Kadakkavoor panchayat, an area that experiences a high incidence of labor migration to the countries of the Gulf. Her research explores labor migration as a highly transformative movement, affecting households and the community in diverse and uneven ways, economically, socially and ideologically. "I am honored to be a recipient of this year's Student Excellence Award and plan to use the funds to disseminate my research findings through publication, and, potentially, a workshop series in Thiruvananthapuram this spring."

Other student excellence award winners:

Adam Malloy, Keswick, ON

Ajnesh Prasad, Surrey, BC

Karen Rideout, Vancouver, BC

Kieran Findlater, Regina, SK

Kirk Franklin Perris, Toronto, ON

Tejwant Kaur Chana, Edmonton, AB

Hopeful Students Await University Response

Indian students await the reaction from Canadian and American universities as World Education Services (WES) upgrades its assessment of Indian degrees. Recently WES, one of the largest foreign-credential evaluators for North American universities, determined that India's highest rated three-year degrees are now on par with North American degrees. This is a positive sign for many Indian students who are currently required to hold a masters degree before applying to graduate schools in most North American universities.

York University in Toronto conducted its own research and approved recognition of Indian degrees last spring. They found that, because India's top non-humanities degrees include no general education components, they focus more on the actual subject matter. "It was clear that Indian students in three-year programs were learning as much, if not more, than North American students in four-year programs in terms of degree-specific content," explains Dr. Adrian Shubert, Associate Vice-President International, York University. "Since York has begun recognizing three-year degrees from the UK, it made academic sense to include India as well." Dr. Shubert hopes that other Canadian universities will soon follow York's lead in developing or expanding on similar policies. Many students in India today share that same hope.

For reactions in India to the WES report, please see:

[US Agency recognizes India's Bachelor's degree](#)

Daily News & Analysis, Mumbai



Student Summer Science Program 2009

We are pleased to announce a new initiative under the Ontario/Maharashtra-Goa Student Exchange Program. The 2009 Summer Science Program at St. Xavier's College in Mumbai welcomes applications from Ontario students in the fields of Biology, Health and Environmental Science. This 9 credit program will consist of courses in Forensics, Biodiversity and Infectious Diseases. The starting date of the program is May 18, 2009 and it will last five weeks. The deadline for applications is **February 20, 2009**.



For more information please refer to the [OMG website](#) or see responses to these [frequently asked questions](#).

Indian Government awards Deepak Obhrai the highest honor given to overseas Indians

On January 9, 2009, the Government of India awarded the prestigious "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman" award, the highest honor given to overseas Indians, to Canadian M.P. and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deepak Obhrai. The award was presented to Obhrai by the President of India, Pratibha Devisingh Patil, in the southern Indian city of Chennai.



Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil (right) presenting Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award to Mr. Deepak Obhrai

Mr. Obhrai, whose family immigrated to Tanzania from



Prime Minister Stephen Harper congratulates Deepak Obhrai on his award

India and who was later educated in India, was a guest of Honor at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention and delivered the keynote address at the regional workshop on Canada. Since 2003, the Government of India has been hosting the PBD convention for people of Indian origin residing outside India, to provide a platform for them to engage with India. Today, this convention has become the most prestigious event for the Indian Diaspora worldwide.

Emerging India: Strategic Innovation in a Flat World

When the Strategic Management Society's members set out to invoke new thinking on emerging markets, they knew they wanted to bring together top strategy scholars, and top names in business leadership. On December 12-14, 2008, they achieved this goal during their first India Conference entitled "Emerging India: Strategic Innovation in a Flat World" hosted by the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad. Over 450 delegates from 120 different institutions around the



Dr. Charles Dhanaraj speaking from the University of Western Ontario

globe attended the conference along with 15 CEOs from leading Indian companies such as ICICI and Tata. Multinational companies including Nokia, GE and Shell also had senior executives in attendance.

The conference created a platform to integrate researchers, academic leaders, and business executives in India with their global counterparts to co-learn and co-create a greater enterprise. Fifty deans, half from India and half from abroad also met at the conference to deliberate on the topics of internationalization, institution building, scholarship, curriculum, and knowledge networks.

Professor Charles Dhanaraj of the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario was a Co-Chair of the conference.

Sowing new Seeds at Ryerson University

The study of South Asia is set to be strengthened at Ryerson University as professors unite to form Ryerson's first South Asian Studies Group. A special campus visit by Shastri Institute president, Dr. A.S. Narang, sparked the group's creation. Through word of mouth the group has grown from four to close to 20 faculty members representing numerous departments. Together, they plan to start a South Asian seminar series before the end of the winter term. They would also like to pool together to apply for research funding. "In the long term we would love to see the formation of a South Asian Studies minor for undergraduate students," says Professor Wade E. Pickren, Associate Chair, Department of Psychology, who is considering different ways to get students more involved. The group's next meeting, sponsored by the Office of International Affairs, will take place some time in February. All interested faculty members are welcome to attend. Please contact [Prof. Wade Pickren](#) for more information.

UWO Professor to lecture at ISEC, Bangalore

Professor Ajit K. Pyati, of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario will be lecturing on Community-Based Information Centres: A New Vision for India's Public Libraries? at the Institute for Social and Economic Change on February 6, at 3:30 p.m. This lecture follows a series he has been giving in India on libraries and information technology. For more information on Prof. Pyati's research and teaching, please [click here](#).

Shashishekhar M. Gavai Welcomed as New High Commissioner for India to Canada

His Excellency Shashishekhar M. Gavai, High Commissioner for India to Canada, presented his Letters of Credence to Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada on January 21, at an impressive ceremony at Rideau Hall. In her speech welcoming the new High Commissioner, the Governor General mentioned that both India and Canada are democratic countries and share common values. She condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai and mourned the loss of innocent lives in these incidents. She hoped that during the High Commissioner's tenure in Canada, he would work towards further consolidating and diversifying

India-Canada bilateral relations in various spheres including agriculture, science, technology and energy. His Excellency Shashishekhar M. Gavai assured that he and his team would do their best to take the bilateral relations to a higher level.

New Publication

Prof Nandi Bhatia of the English Department at the University of Western Ontario has recently published:

Partitioned Lives. Narratives of Home, Displacement and Relocation, (co-edited with Anjali Gera-Roy). Pearson-Longman, 2007.

For more information on the author, please [click here](#).

Speak out!

*Would you like to have input into the grants we offer and the deadlines we set?
Would you like to provide feedback on our website, newsletter or application procedures?*

We want to continue to improve the way we operate in order to meet your needs. Please take five minutes to complete our [online survey](#) and help us accomplish this goal. Your input will influence our planning for 2009-2010.