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University of Alberta Creates New Chair in Classical Indian Polity and Society

After acquiring a \$1.5 million endowment fund from the Singhmar family of Sherwood Park, the University of Alberta began a worldwide search for an expert to develop a new position as Chair in Classical Indian Polity and Society. This position, which focuses on pre-modern India, is unique in North America. Professor Aloka Parasher-Sen fit the position like a glove. "The Faculty of Arts was committed to hiring the best scholar for the position," explains Dr. David Mills, acting chair of the Department of History & Classics. For her part, Dr. Parasher-Sen could not pass up such an opportunity. "They were seeking to focus on the society and polity of India between 500 BCE and 500 CE. That is my precise area of expertise. Nowhere else would I get the chance to develop a chair with such a focus," she explains.



Parasher-Sen, who arrived in Edmonton this summer, has already started to teach one seminar level course on state and society in India. She is planning to add general level courses this spring and summer and will be using the winter term to engage in her research in India and elsewhere. She has started discussions with her department and the Extensions Centre of the University of Alberta to develop field visits to compliment her courses in the future. She is excited about the opportunity to bring all those interested to India on these educational trips. The Department of History and Classics has three field study programs, but this would be the first to go to India.

When asked why it was important for Canadian students to learn about Indian history, Prof. Parasher-Sen acknowledged with sadness that many people today question the importance of studying the Arts in general. "Learning ones own cultural past is part of a natural education process." For that reason alone, Parasher-Sen believes it is vital for Canada to be educating its multi-ethnic citizenship on global histories. Moreover, she feels that in contemporary times internationalization in the classroom is good training for the growing international demands on jobs in all fields.



The University of Alberta aims to add positions in India studies to compliment the work of Dr. Parasher-Sen. Support for this initiative was felt on campus recently as

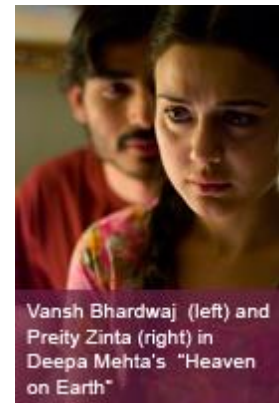
students, faculty and community members came together to celebrate the Shastri Institute's 40th anniversary and discuss the future of India studies at the University of Alberta. We would like to thank our representative, Dr. Regula Qureshi for organizing this day of thought provoking discussion and cultural performances. The events were held on Friday Oct. 17.

For more information on Dr. Parasher-Sen, please [click here](#) to be redirected to her webpage and contact info.

Report on Symposium: Strengthening India Studies in Canada

On Monday Oct. 20, as part of the Shastri Institute's 40th anniversary events, approximately 25 scholars and administrators interested in India studies gathered at the Schulich School of Business at York University for a Symposium entitled "Strengthening India Studies in Canada: Targets for the Next Decade". Two past presidents (Arun Mukherjee and Gary vanLoon) participated as well as current President A. S. Narang and the President-Elect, Sheila Embleton, who also hosted the event.

Apart from welcomes, an opening session, and a summary session, there were three sessions, addressing "Documenting our Successes", "Documenting our Challenges", and "Addressing the Challenges". The major challenges were agreed to be funding, visibility, and coordination; practical solutions were suggested for all of these, and will be examined in the near future both by the Executive and subsequently by the wider membership. A stimulating day was topped off by a late afternoon reception, followed by a pre-release screening of Deepa Mehta's newest film, "Heaven on Earth", attended by Ms. Mehta, her husband, her son, and her daughter, who all participated in a lively Q&A after the showing.



Vansh Bhardwaj (left) and Preity Zinta (right) in Deepa Mehta's "Heaven on Earth"

Joining Together to Celebrate

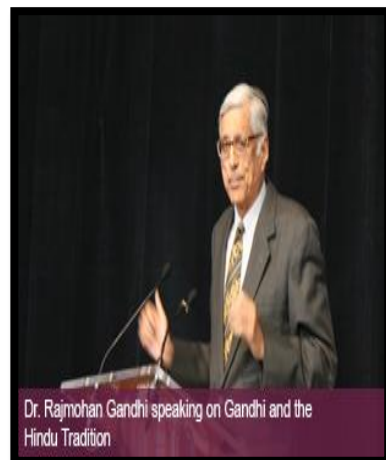
The Shastri Institute, Carleton University and the Canadian Museum of Civilization came together on Oct. 11 to commemorate the Institute's 40th anniversary and the inauguration of Carleton's new Hindu Fund. The celebration was held in the grand hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and was attended by over 300 honoured guests and members of the community. Professor Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of both Mahatma Gandhi and Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari, treated participants to a lecture on Gandhi and the Hindu Tradition. Following his lecture was a performance by acclaimed Bharatanatyam dancer Rama Vaidyanathan accompanied by live musicians. A reception ended the afternoon providing opportunities for participants, performers, and honored guests to meet and mingle.

Both Dr. Stephen Inglis, Director General of Research and Collections at the museum, and Dr. Harsha V. Dehejia, Professor of Religious Studies at Carleton University, were instrumental in



Rama Vaidyanathan dancing the Shringara Trayi

coordinating the day's festivities. On behalf of all the attendees, we would like to thank them for their hard work.



FICCI Higher Education Summit 2008

The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has invited Canada to be the partner country at its Global Conference on "Higher Education at the Crossroads: Imperatives for Policy and Practice" on Nov. 25 – 26, 2008 in New Delhi. As a partner country, Canada will have a strategic opportunity to showcase its education strengths and build its educational branding efforts in India. Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is sending a group of participants including many university vice-presidents from across the country. The Shastri Institute will be represented by its President, Dr. A.S. Narang and by the directors of both Indian and Canadian offices. It is our hope that this Education Summit will strengthen the India-Canada relationship and lead to the establishment of new innovative partnerships.

Dr. A. S. Narang Visits Canada

Dr. A. S. Narang, president of the Shastri Institute, visited Canada this October to meet with member universities, government officials, and the Canada office staff while taking time to participate in some of our 40th anniversary celebrations. Through his visit, Dr. Narang gained deeper insight into the direction of India studies in Canada. He participated in our symposium on India studies, which brought together representatives from universities throughout Canada. He also met separately with interested faculty and administration at the University of Toronto, York, McMaster, Ryerson, Queen's and the University of Calgary. He observed that currently, "there is a need for networking among member institutions and cooperation in lobbying with the government for collective funding and support."



Dr. Narang's meeting with our government funders (both the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) proved fruitful in determining

an understanding about the future, and his trip to our Calgary office was encouraging. "I found the Canadian office staff to be totally committed to the Institution, keen to learn more and contribute in the Institution's growth in a creative manner."

Dr. Narang returned to Delhi Oct. 24 where he works full-time as a professor of Social Sciences at the Indira Gandhi National Open University. He has served on the Shastri Institute's board since 2005 and will act as president until June 2009. During this term, he will be busy networking, sharing his expertise and envisioning a clear course for our future.

News from Members

Indian Institute of Management, Indore

[Twenty Fifth Convention & Conference of SIS on The Role of the Librarian in 21st Century](#)

Information Technology has dramatically impacted librarians and their relationship to the communities they serve. As we are at the threshold of the year 2008, we librarians must reassess and reconsider the changing library environment. Librarians, individually and collectively, cannot ignore the changing shape of information services that are emerging. Everyone knows that the primary objective of libraries is to organize and provide access of information. This objective will never change, but the format and methods that we have used will change dramatically; thus, providing new opportunities and challenges. On this backdrop the Conference will focus on rethinking the role of a library professional, both in relationship to his personal identity and the community he serves.