

Shastri News - July 2009

New Grants for Visiting Lecturers in Canada

The Shastri Institute is now accepting applications/nominations for three visiting lectureships to Canada. We invite our Canadian members to take advantage of these opportunities to bring world-renowned speakers to their lecture halls. All applications/nominations are due September 30, 2009.

- Lester Pearson Memorial Lecture
- Kanta Marwah Lecture Series
- Nominate this year's Indian visiting lecturer

Friends of Shastri inducted into the Order of Canada

The Shastri Institute is pleased to congratulate two of its long-time friends and alumni for their recent inductions into the Order of Canada. The Order of Canada is the highest honor given to Canadian civilians recognizing a lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation.

Dr. James Morrison from Saint Mary's University has been a representative for the Shastri Institute for many years and has researched in India under multiple Shastri grants. His research and teaching interests lie in Global, Southeast Asian and oral history. He has held visiting fellowships at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore), Hokkaido University of Education (Japan), and Jawaharlal Nehru University (India). He has been teaching at Saint Mary's for 30 years during which time he has served as Executive Director of the International Education Centre, as Dean of Arts, as coordinator of the Asian Studies Program and as coordinator of the Development Studies Program. Dr. Morrison was inducted into the Order of Canada on December 30, 2008.



Dr. Jeanne Wolfe, former Director of the School of Urban Planning at McGill University, was inducted into the Order of Canada on May 25, 2009, for her contributions to urban planning in Canada and abroad. For four years, Dr. Wolfe co-led a bi-national research project on urban governance and environmental management in India. The project was funded through a Shastri Applied Research Programme (SHARP) grant. Drawing on the work conducted in this project, she co-edited, with Professor Mahadevia, a [book on solid waste management in Indian cities](#). Her work in India is just one example of the many policy-related projects she has conducted across the globe.



Private provisions necessary for future of world's higher education

Like it or not, demand for higher education around the world is growing too rapidly for public institutions to sustain. This fact was made abundantly clear at the second World Conference on Higher Education which concluded July 8th in Paris. Two reports submitted to the conference reveal that private institutions now manage 30 per cent of the world's higher education enrollment. In India, private institutions manage between 60 to 70 per cent.

Over 1,000 participants, including 100 ministers/vice-ministers of education attended the conference held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the decade since UNESCO's last conference on higher education, enrollment in post-secondary institutions has risen by more than 50 per cent. Private institutions are stepping in to meet this overwhelming demand, leading to several new challenges and questions for conference participants to consider. While the conference communiqué acknowledged that private financing ought to be encouraged, it also emphasized the importance of protecting higher education as a "public good."

Many fear that private providers put commercial considerations before academic standards. A trend report prepared by Boston College's Centre for International Higher Education states that, in general, the private sector offers access to students who might not be qualified for public institutions. They also run on the business model, which can concentrate power in boards and chief executives while faculty hold little authority and students are seen as consumers. Private institutions may provide solutions to the problems of access and cost but their key issue is quality.

Sir John Daniel, president and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning asked at the conference whether it was possible today to increase access, improve quality and decrease cost at the same time. Throughout history it has seemed to be impossible but he argues that technology might be opening doors that have never been opened before. He cites open universities like the Indira Gandhi National Open University as successful examples of the use of technology to improve access, quality and cost.

Kapil Sibal, India's minister of human resource development spoke at the conference supporting the case for private involvement while calling upon UNESCO to play a role improving/maintaining the quality of education so that private players do not become 'teaching sweat-shops.' "The private sector has to come. But we will have to regulate it and there will be a law soon for it," said Sibal to the Lok Sabha Wednesday July 15, 2009. The quality of private educators is of key concern to him as he seeks to expand involvement in higher education in India.

India's big budget expansion in higher education focuses on science and technology

On Monday, July 6th, the Indian government announced that its budget plan for 2009-10 will include a 40 per cent increase for higher education, taking the higher education total to around \$3.1 billion US. Significant beneficiaries of the extra funds include the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology and the National Institutes of Technology. The budget includes provisions of Rs. 450 crore (\$93

million US) to develop new IITs and NITs. The budget also includes provisions of Rs. 827 crore (\$170 million US) to build a central university in each of the 16 states that lack one.

The government's strong emphasis on science and technology is applauded by many in the academic community, but others raise concerns about the state of existing traditional universities and the lack of attention paid to the humanities and social sciences. "The best universities in Europe and the US continue to have programmes in the core areas of the humanities and social sciences," says Shahid Amin a writer from Delhi University in [The Times of India July 10, 2009](#). "Their remit is to train well-rounded undergraduates, not single-minded, monochromatic specialists." Professor Shreesh Chaudhary, a teacher of English and linguistics at IIT Madras notes that a narrow focus on Science and Technology did not help the Eastern European countries emerge as global powers. Further he argues that "the Science and Technology Institutions can help create skills which, in turn, can create wealth. For using that wealth with wisdom, we need the humanities and social sciences." ([University World News, February 2009](#))

It is unlikely that India's model for higher education will develop along the same path as many of the countries in the West. India's urgent need for engineers, doctors and other specialized professional makes investments in specialized education a viable option. Yet, throughout history, India has had a strong academic tradition in the humanities and social sciences. It would be tragic if India's rich history, linguistic diversity and thriving society were neglected by the educated Indians of tomorrow.

University of Alberta and IIT Bombay form health and energy partnership

Professor Pradipta Banerji, former dean of International Relations at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, visited Edmonton during the first week of July to work out the details of a major partnership with the University of Alberta. The two schools will be collaborating on research into health and energy issues. Their three-year agreement involves joint conferences and workshops, joint research projects and a considerable amount of graduate student mobility.

Both institutions see the potential for their partnership to produce globally-relevant, world-class research. The U of A and IIT Bombay both rank within the top 50 universities in technology-related fields according to the [2008 Times Higher Education QS World University Rankings](#). In Lifesciences and biomedicine, the U of A is ranked 45th. IIT Bombay is also ranked and gaining ground in these fields, moving up 53 spots in the last year alone.

In an [article](#) released by the University of Alberta, President Indira Samarasekera reiterated that, "this really is an opportunity for two ranking institutions to complement our recognized accomplishments and also, perhaps more importantly, use our collective strengths to work together to help prepare our world for the coming centuries."

IIT Bombay has signed several memorandums of understanding with other universities around the world, including in Canada, but this is the first partnership that it will be investing in financially. Both institutions are demonstrating that they are serious about ensuring that the partnership is productive and they are hoping that it will grow to become a beacon for others.

MSSO Silver Jubilee

“Many Indo-Canadians amongst us were born and raised in India. Our education in India was a major stepping-stone to our comfortable lifestyle in Canada. Back in 1984, a group of Indo-Canadians felt the need to repay India for its contribution to our lives. This is how MSSO came to be” ~Dr. Jagannath Wani

On Sunday, June 28, 2009, the Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO) celebrated 25 years of development work ‘bridging miles and minds’ between Indo-Canadians and the less fortunate in India. In its 25-year history, MSSO has contributed more than four million dollars to projects in India through matching funds from both the federal and provincial governments of Canada. MSSO has worked with destitute women, the physically and mentally challenged, orphans, youth, tribal people, persons afflicted with leprosy, slum dwellers, nomadic communities, deserving but financially deprived students, innocent prison inmates, oppressed farmers, earthquake victims and many others.

What drew me to Dr. Wani’s projects over other good projects I could have chosen to work for at the time, was the sound development philosophy underlying MSSO work. I feel this philosophy is encapsulated in a poem written by an Australian Aboriginal woman:

If you have come to help me
You are wasting your time
But
If you have come
Because your liberation is bound up with mine;
Then let us work
Together.

MSSO does not presume to interpret what is good for people; they decide that; MSSO facilitates their carrying out this work.

~ Eilish Hiebert

After surveying several MSSO projects on behalf of Canadian government funders, Eilish Hiebert was compelled to become more involved with MSSO projects and later joined the MSSO board. Eilish Hiebert serves as Secretary of the board alongside Jivan Kayande, Vice-president, Chandrakant D Lad, Treasurer, and Jagannath Wani, founder and President.

MSSO’s silver jubilee event was held on the University of Calgary campus, where around 150 guests witnessed the passionate presentations of several social workers who came all the way from India to report on the success of their MSSO projects. Aparna Velankar, editor of Lokmat newspapers, presented a video documentary, Bridging Miles and Minds, on the work of MSSO and Anuradha Naimpally, with her daughter, danced an eclectic Bharatnatyam performance.

The event was followed by a dual celebration of Dr. Jagannath Wani's 75th birthday and 50th wedding anniversary with his wife, Kamalini. Dr. Wani is an emeritus professor of statistics and actuarial science at the University of Calgary who seems to touch the lives of everyone he meets. His friends and family describe him as a man abounding with energy, relentlessly fixed on making the world a better place. He recently released his memoir in Marathi, and plans on having the English version released by the end of the year. All funds raised through the sale of his book will be donated to MSSO.

To learn more about the Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization, please [click here](#).



Cancer care research programme gaining global perspective

“It is really important for our graduate students to be gaining global health competence in pressing cancer care issues,” explains Dr. Carmen Loiselle, the leader of a six-year old psychosocial oncology research training (PORT) programme in Canada. PORT trains promising graduate students to develop and test innovative, effective, accessible and patient-centred practices to significantly alleviate the burden of cancer on patients, family members, friends and caregivers. The programme recently received renewed funding for another six years through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Last year, Dr. Loiselle established a partnership with India through a Shastri Institute Partnership Development Seed Grant. She and the PORT Programme Manager, Michelle Sterling, traveled to Bangalore to develop working relationships with leading Indian institutions such as Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), and Bangalore University. This Fall, Dr. Loiselle plans to return to India to expand PORT's institutional collaborations.

“Canada has been approaching cancer-related communication and care in a more individualistic fashion whereas India – a culture that values collectivism – tends to involve multiple stakeholders in their cancer care interventions. Each approach carries inherent advantages and challenges. Through ongoing exchanges among clinicians and researchers involved in our respective programmes, we are learning so much from one another.” ~ Dr. Loiselle

Thanks to the relationships formed during Dr. Loiselle’s initial visit, researchers in Canada and India now communicate on a weekly basis. PORT and NIMHANS researchers recently co-authored an article in the Indian Journal of Palliative Care entitled [“Communication with relatives and collusion in palliative Care: A cross-cultural perspective.”](#) As PORT’s international program continues to grow, Dr. Loiselle hopes to further faculty and student exchanges and conduct more joint training of both researchers and clinicians. With another six years of renewed funding through CIHR, PORT is expanding to include three new university sites, more transdisciplinary fields, and more international outreach.

U of S signs MoU with rural university in India

On July 23, 2009, Dr. Brett Fairbairn, Provost and Vice-President at the University of Saskatchewan, signed a memorandum of understanding with Dr. Gyanendra Singh, Vice Chancellor of a unique university in rural India that focuses its research and teaching mandate entirely on rural development. The partnership will be an excellent opportunity for Canadian faculty and students to work in rural areas in collaboration with a well-established Indian Institution.



U of S President Peter McKinnon and Vice Chancellor Gyanendra Singh of Gramodaya University

The [Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya University](#) (MGCGV), which was founded in 1991 in Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh, undertakes academic, research, extension and training programmes ‘for the empowerment of people and for the betterment of rural life.’ The University offers multidisciplinary higher education courses through 14 departments and 5 faculties up to the doctoral level.

During the month of July, Dr. Singh has been meeting with university officials at the U of S campus including the university’s Shastri Institute representative, Dr. Braj Sinha, representatives from the International Research Office and the Office of Global Relations, several college deans, two Vice-Presidents and the President, Peter McKinnon. Dr. Singh also visited several agricultural institutes, plants and research facilities throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Vice-Chancellor’s visit and the memorandum signing are both results of a 2008 visit to MGCGV by Dr. R. L. Kushwaha, a University of Saskatchewan faculty member in the Agricultural and Bioresource Engineering Department. The Shastri Institute facilitated these visits as part of its mandate to

enhance linkages between Indian and Canadian universities through a Scholar Travel Subsidy programme.

U of T launches programme to help foreign-trained lawyers

The University of Toronto recently announced its plans to launch a bridging programme for internationally trained lawyers seeking accreditation to practice law in Ontario. This program, the first of its kind in Canada, joins other bridging programmes at the University of Toronto for professionals such as pharmacists, engineers and nurses. These programmes have proven instrumental in helping Canadian immigrants gain employment in their field of study.

“My training at the University of Toronto opened up a lot of doors,” says Sowmya Vishwanatha, a lawyer originally from India who recently passed the Bar in Canada. After passing her National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) exams, Sowmya joined a working group of NCA-certified international lawyers to help build the proposal for the new bridge programme at the University of Toronto. She was elated to hear that the Government of Ontario agreed to contribute a \$4 million dollar investment, putting the programme on its feet.

A [Statistics Canada report](#) from 2006 indicates that over half of recent immigrants holding university degrees are underemployed at some point during their first six years in Canada – almost double the proportion of underemployed Canadian-born citizens. Internationally trained lawyers face several hurdles if they want to become eligible to practice law in Canada. First, they must apply to the NCA to have their credentials assessed and to obtain direction on the steps they must take to obtain a Certificate of Qualification – essentially the equivalent of a Canadian law degree. These steps could include taking courses, attending Canadian law schools and/or write NCA challenge exams.

Once internationally trained lawyers obtain their Certificate of Qualification from the NCA they are then entitled to enter the licensing process in their province of residence. The licensing processes vary from province to province but all involve writing and passing exams and articling for several months. The articling job search can be challenging for Canadian educated students and is often even more challenging for internationally trained lawyers. Between 1997 and 2007, less than 40 per cent of the 3,206 internationally trained lawyers assessed by the NCA obtained equivalency certificates, and even fewer were called to the Bar.

The University of Toronto’s bridge programme will not fast-track the process of employment for foreign-trained lawyers in Canada, but it aims to significantly increase their odds of success. The programme will provide ongoing services, from the time students begin the NCA certification process to their successful employment as a lawyer in Canada. These services will include academic training to assist in preparing for the NCA challenge exam, language referrals, cultural fluency training, job search skills training, workplace experience, career counselling and services, and membership in a centre association.

The Internationally Trained Lawyers programme starts recruitment this fall for winter 2010 classes and expects to accept up to 90 applicants. Ten law firms in Toronto have already demonstrated their support for the programme by creating work placement positions for programme participants.

Space tourism – India’s next exciting venture?

Can the space tourism industry become commercially viable in India? A new bi-national team of researchers asks this important question as they conduct the first study on the subject of space tourism ever undertaken in or about India. The interdisciplinary study involves students and faculty members at the University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES) in India directed by Prof. Ram Jakhu of the Institute of Air and Space Law (IASL) at McGill University in Canada. This academic activity is being carried out pursuant to the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between the UPES and IASL regarding academic cooperation.



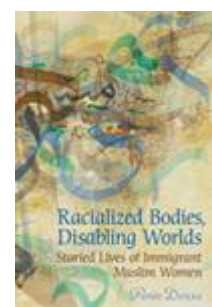
“Space tourism is the latest venture in which space faring nations are actively getting involved,” explains Prof. Jakhu. “India is an acknowledged space power; the international status which is critical for its economic and strategic position in a globalized world. Therefore, it is imperative for India to do what is expected of a space power.”

While India may be far from actually sending tourists into space, the team recognizes that they must sow some seeds now so that the industry can evolve in the future without hitting major roadblocks. They will be assessing the industry’s business viability along with several technical and regulatory aspects that are critical to the industry’s success. The four month project, which began in July, is expected to yield a report that could serve as an infrastructure, investment, laws and policies guide for the space tourism industry in the future.

New Publications

Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: Storied Lives of Immigrant Muslim Women
Parin Dossa, Professor of Anthropology at Simon Fraser University
University of Toronto Press © 2009

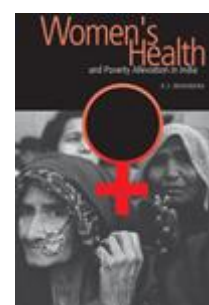
In *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds*, Parin Dossa explores the lives of Canadian Muslim women who share their stories of social marginalization and disenfranchisement in a disabling world. She shows how these women, who are subjected to social erasure in policy and research, define their identities and claim their humanity using the language of everyday life.



Women’s Health and Poverty Alleviation in India
K.S.Mohindra

New Delhi: Academic Foundation © 2009

Poverty and ill health are intertwined; therefore, social responses need to address the links between the two. There has been increasing attention paid



towards the role of microcredit as a poverty alleviation strategy (that especially targets women), yet little scrutiny of how microcredit may influence population health in general and women's health in particular. In this book, we ask: can microcredit be considered a "pro-health" poverty alleviation strategy for women?

K.S. Mohindra is currently a Global Health Post Doctoral Fellow (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) at the School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia and is affiliated with the International Health Unit, Centre de recherche du CHUM.

Journey through Breast Cancer

Jayashree Thatte Bhat, PhD.

New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books © 2009

The topic of breast cancer carries a social stigma among women, even the educated ones, in India. Women who develop this disease are quite reluctant to talk about it openly with anyone, including their own family members. Ignorance and lack of accurate medical information further complicates the problem. This book documents the concerns, responses and emotions of afflicted women in different age groups. It is a story of five women, coming from five different regions of India and five different walks of life.



Jayashree Thatte Bhat, PhD, a Medical Researcher, Writer, Social worker, Lecturer and an accomplished Musician, has been working at creating awareness of this disease through her lectures, workshops and writings for the last ten years in India. She has met, educated, lectured and talked with literally thousands of breast cancer victims and their families in India.