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A New Direction for the Canada-India Relationship

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In 2008, the Canadian International Council (CIC) announced its first fellowship recipients, a group of eight scholars selected from across Canada to research and produce new foreign policy insights for national debate and discussion. One of the foreign policy themes that the CIC is focusing on is the rise of emerging global powers, such as India, and their relationship with Canada. My project, 'A New Direction for the Canada-India Relationship', examines how the Canadian government can practically re-develop a historically neglected relationship with India at a time when interest in India is not only increasing domestically but globally as well. The research focuses on three specific niche areas that have traditionally been underutilized by Ottawa and New Delhi yet have the promise to enhance bilateral ties: public diplomacy initiatives, higher education ties, and science and technology linkage.

"Ryan Touhey, a terrific young historian, is the Canadian scholar who has engaged most excitingly with India of late, bridging the often turbulent but rich history of Canada-India relations since 1947 with today's more stable and positive, if still immature prospects for a closer bilateral relationship."

~Dr. David Malone, President, International Development Research Council

Executive Summary

Since 2001 sitting Canadian governments have stated that Ottawa needs to raise the profile of the Canada-India relationship on a variety of fronts. There have, however, been precious few federal initiatives developed to achieve these aims. The current government lists India as a foreign policy priority, particularly at the economic level. And while there have been a number of high profile cabinet visits to India since 2006, the rhetoric has not been matched by significant new funding or policy initiatives. One critical departure from that trend occurred in August 2008 when Ottawa reversed a decades old policy that prohibited nuclear cooperation with India in the aftermath of New Delhi's decision to test nuclear devices in 1974 and 1998. Granted, Ottawa's hand was forced by external factors, particularly the US-India Civil Nuclear Deal. Still, this decision is historically significant.

Ottawa's new policy has the potential to usher in a new phase for the Canada-India bilateral relationship that moves beyond the distrust created from proliferation concerns as well as Cold War era divergences. Ottawa looks to redevelop this bilateral relationship at a time when India is experiencing an unprecedented rise on the global stage economically and geopolitically. There is no shortage of foreign suitors seeking to strengthen their ties with India. The question now is how can the Canadian government, with the support of the provinces and interested NGOs, redevelop and build on a relationship that was neglected for the better part of 30 years? There are some who unrealistically call for a strategic relationship with India that is based on closer military and security ties while others vaguely suggest that shared values alone will create an enhanced relationship.

It is time to reconsider Canada's bilateral relationship with India and Ottawa should develop practical niche linkages with New Delhi. It is essential that the Canadian federal government concentrate on niche areas that can set a firm base from which it can interact with a rising India while promoting its economic, political and cultural interests. This paper outlines three such areas that should be emphasized to develop an underdeveloped and under-articulated relationship.

- *Canada must strengthen its meagre public diplomacy/advocacy efforts in India. The federal government could consider the creation of an India specific public diplomacy program:*

    - A Canada-India Council that will work to enhance the flow of knowledge and people between Canada and India needs to be created. Such an organization would facilitate advocacy and Track Two efforts with other interested organizations

- *Post-secondary linkages with Indian students, universities and colleges must be strengthened. To achieve this goal, the federal government should consider the following:*

- Closer coordination with the provinces and higher-education sector actors engaged in India alongside the creation of a federally-funded program to develop and enhance bilateral education dialogue and linkages
- Increased levels of federal funding for international scholarships that are available for Indian students.
- Conducting a national mapping study to identify the main academic institutions operating in India and catalogue their successes and failures to date.

- *Canada and India should bolster their nascent science and technology (S&T) linkages through the following means:*

  - Increased funding for the current Canada and India S&T program
  - Long-term funding stability
  - Develop an S&T India Program led by the National Research Council to strengthen capacity building in India, particularly amongst higher education facilities

It is an opportune time to redevelop the Canada-India bilateral relationship but it is essential that Ottawa provides the national leadership that has traditionally been lacking with practical policies based on a longterm vision that will help relations reach their full potential

Download full article directly from the CIC website.

Shastri Institute Founder receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Michael Brecher, who holds the R.B. Angus Chair of Political Science at McGill University, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Political Science Association (Conflict Processes) at its annual conference on September 4, 2009. Brecher's lifetime of achievements includes almost six decades as a professor at McGill University where he has developed a world-renowned body of work on International Crises.

Professor Michael Brecher

"Michael Brecher is a towering figure in international relations research," says Professor John A. Vasquez who presented Brecher's award. "He is read throughout the world, and he is one of the most influential scholars in the post-World War II era."

Prof. Brecher has served as Director, and founder, of the International Crisis Behaviour Project, based at McGill University, since its launch in 1975. This innovative, collaborative project has drawn together researchers from across the globe to analyze and understand international crises and conflicts, spawning more than a dozen books and many journal articles.

Of course, we will always remember Prof. Brecher for founding the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. While engaged in research in India in 1965, with his wife, Eva, he met with senior ministers of the Government of India and Canada's then-High Commissioner to India, Roland Michener, later

Governor-General of Canada. They approved the idea of an institute dedicated to enhancing mutual understanding and scholarly exchange. “I was still in India on my sabbatical, in June 1965, when Prime Minister Shastri made his announcement during his Convocation Address at McGill University supporting the creation of such an institute,” Brecher remembers. While the Prime Minister did not live to see the Institute’s birth, he was a key proponent of Brecher’s ideas, which is why Brecher suggested founding the Institute in his name.

One of Prof. Brecher’s first research loves was the national movement for India’s independence and India’s foreign and domestic policies during its formative period. He authored a political biography of Nehru (Oxford 1959) which won the Watumull Prize of the American Historical Association for “the book published in the preceding two years that made the greatest contribution to America’s understanding of India.” In 2009 we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the book’s publication.

Michael Brecher’s passion and ingenuity have substantially strengthened the academic and political relationship between India and Canada. For that we are truly grateful. Nearly 3,000 faculty, students, artists, librarians, and journalists have received funding from the Shastri Institute thanks to his initiative.

Shastri partners with AIESEC to create new internship fund

The Shastri Institute is excited to announce a new partnership that will create opportunities for more Canadian Students to conduct internships in India. Early in September 2009, the Institute signed an agreement with the Canadian branch of AIESEC to provide bursaries for exchange participants traveling to India. AIESEC is the world’s largest student-run organization and has over 50 years experience managing international internships. Each year, AIESEC’sGlobal Internship Program provides 5,500 students and recent graduates with the challenging opportunity to live and work in a foreign country in the areas of management, information technology, and development.

From August 2009 to April 2010, the Shastri Institute will be conducting a pilot project awarding ‘Shastri bursaries’ of $1,000 to worthy applicants within AIESEC’s Global Internship Program. The aim of the project is to entice more exchange participants to consider India as an internship destination. As an emerging economy, a leader in information technology, and a ground breaker in sustainable development, India would be an ideal destination for students seeking global experience, but currently internship opportunities in India surpass demand from Canadian students.

The Shastri-AIESEC Bursary Fund operates on a competitive application basis. Interested students should contact their closest AIESEC university chapter in order to apply.

The Greatest Story Never Told

Professor Robert Goldman

How could a poem written thousands of years ago complicate commercial shipping activities along India's eastern coastline today? To truly understand India, to engage in political, social, educational or commercial relationships with India, the world needs to understand what inspires Indian thought. Two critical texts that continue to influence all aspects of life in India are the great epics, the Ramayana and theMahabharata. Dr. Robert Goldman, Professor ofSanskrit and India Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, has invested over 30 years of his life to a translation project that will open the floodgates of potential for study into India's oldest epic, the Ramayana. For him it is still "the greatest story never told" in the West.

After releasing the sixth of seven volumes in his translation of the Ramayanathis summer, Dr. Goldman visited the University of Alberta to lecture on the importance of this ancient text. The original text of the Ramayana is believed to have been written around the 4th century BCE by a Hindu sage namedValmiki. It includes some 24,000 verses of poetry within seven books, which tell the story of Rama (an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu), whose wife Sita is abducted by a demon king.

At best, most western thinkers classify the Ramayana as a great historical literary work within the ranks of Homer's Iliad or the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, but by doing so they neglect one critical fact. Unlike its literary counterparts, the Ramayana is very much alive and active in society today. The Ramayana is currently fundamental to the platform of one of India's major political parties, the BJP. The cultural and social norms it conveys still hold religious, economic and political significance.

Anyone interested in understanding India should have a basic understanding of what its epics teach. Yet, finding quality English translations of these texts has not always been easy. "Previous translations of the Ramayana are quite archaic in their language," says Goldman. "Our goal was to create a translation that would be readable and accessible." Goldman's current six translated volumes of the Ramayana have taken a team of translators decades to complete. They are the first to translate the 'critical edition' of the Ramayana, which was approved by Indian scholars as the version closest to the Valmikioriginal.

Goldman's translations of the Ramayana are complete with thousands of pages of notes providing in-depth insight into the socio-cultural context of the text. The fifth volume in the series, the Sundarakanda, was cited as one of "The 100 Best Books of 1997" by the Los Angeles Times Book Review. Goldman expects that the last volume in the series will be published in a few years. Those interested in obtaining a copy of any volume should contact Princeton University Press, or Motilal Banarsidass in India.

Shastri Alumnus receives SSHRC grant for research on Biomedicine and Ancient Healing

Dr. Robin Oakley, Shastri alumnus and professor at Dalhousie University, has received a $92,277 grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada to conduct a three-year research project examining ancient Tamil medicine. The Siddha system in South India is a form of humoral medicine that is thought to have preceded both the Ayruvedic and Greek systems. In the past decade, the Indian Government has put more funding toward promoting the Siddha system, causing a new proliferation in both awareness and practice. In Tamil Nadu, both science and medicine have been closely linked to approaches toward social and political economic development.

Young *Siddhavadiya* consulting with elders about medical preparations in Tamil Nadu

Dr. Oakley hopes to shed international light on the significant contribution that Ancient Tamils have made to science and medicine – a contribution she feels is still undervalued in North America.

"One of the reasons why biomedicine so often fails is that it strips the social dimension of disease away and only examines the affected organ," explains Dr. Oakley. "A human being's health is also greatly affected by the economic and resulting social context in which their lives are lived, and to ignore this dimension often amounts to a band aid over chronic problems rooted in social conditions."

Of primary interest to Dr. Oakley's research is the significant movement within the Siddha system as a form of "people's science" that vigorously challenges both the biomedical mind/body dichotomy, and profit-oriented allopathy, with a scientifically sound and effective approach toward health and medicine grounded in common sense. "Science" is viewed by Tamil Siddhapractitioners as a process of verification placing the human factor first. Siddhaadvocates a strong link between ancient values of Tamil culture, medical practice, and ones' duty to serve people for free.

"Canada can learn much about the fact that Tamil Canadians come from a civilized society with an ancient complex scientific heritage, a large part of which focused on preserving social services to create a society fit for human beings to live in," says Dr. Oakley.

The logic of the Siddha approach also has relevance to aboriginal peoples in North America whose immune systems were destroyed by the processes of colonialism and capital penetration of their traditional economies. "When human populations are stressed to their limit, the immune system is affected and a ripe context for illness is created. In the Siddha system it is often noted that food is medicine and medicine is food, and starting from this basis is a logical basis upon which to build a strong foundation of medical science."

Throughout her research, Dr. Oakley will be partnering with scholars from Pondicherry Central University, the Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, The French Institute of Pondicherry, Sri Venkataswarna University and the University of Hyderabad.

Dr. Oakley received a Faculty Research Fellowship from the Shastri Institute in 2007-2008. During her fellowship she trained in the Tamil language and began pilot research for her current project. She attributes much of her success in attaining SSHRC funding to the work she was able to accomplish during her Shastri fellowship and appreciates the Institutional support she received from Pondicherry Central University and The French Institute of Pondicherry. She would also like to thank her colleagues Dr. Sasicoumar Brumont, Suresh Chandrasekaran , R. Mishra, G. Ravi Kumar Reddy and R. Yalamala for the their ongoing academic contributions to both of these projects.

Join the Celebration

Whether you're seeking fun and festivities or reverent reflection, October is a magical month within all Indian traditions. It is the month when we celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. It is also the month in which bothMahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri were born. In fact, these two father figures of India share a birthday on October 2nd.

Celebrations of these special occasions are becoming more and more common in Canada. The Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University is in the midst of its annual Gandhi Peace Festival, and will be hosting Rajmohan Gandhi as a guest lecturer on October 2nd. On October 7th, Simon Fraser University will be holding its annual Diwali Gala at the Bollywood Banquet Hall in Surrey.

Let us know about other events being held throughout Canada in Honor of Gandhi, Shastri or Diwali. Which city in Canada hosts the best Diwali festivities? Are there any events planned in Canada specifically to honor Prime Minister Shastri? If you know of events taking place, please post some quick information so that everyone wishing to get more involved can find an event close to home.

India Abroad Power List includes notable Shastri Alumni

Congratulations to all those honored on India Abroad's 'Power List 2009', a publication celebrating Indo-Canadians who have achieved excellence in their various walks of life.

Shastri Institute alumni and volunteers on the list include:

Dr. Balbir Sahni – Former President of the Shastri Institute and Alumnus

Dr. Ratna Ghosh – Former President of the Shastri Institute and Alumnus

Dr. Ramesh Thakur – Alumnus

Ms. Lata Pada – Evaluator for the India Studies Arts Fellowship Programme

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

In India:
Partnership Development Seed Grant – September 30th
Canadian Studies Fellowships – October 1st

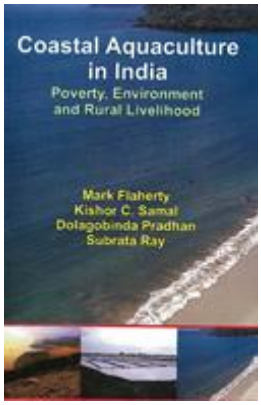
In Canada:
Partnership Development Seed Grant – September 30th
Visiting lecturer nominations – September 30th
Lester Pearson Memorial Lecture – September 30th
Kanta Marwah Lecture Series – September 30th
Student Excellence Awards – October 30th

Call for Student Programming Information

Towards the end of the fall term, the Shastri Institute will be producing a publication for Canadian students on Nation-wide opportunities to study in India. If you are aware of field studies in India, term aboard programmes or other new initiatives running through your institution during 2010 please let us know.

New Publication

Coastal Aquaculture in India, Poverty Environment & Rural Livelihood
By: Subrata Ray, Mark Flatherty, Kishor C Samal, Dologobinda Pradhan
New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company © 2009



(From the cover)

The book examines the diverse impacts of coastal aquaculture in Orissa where Shrimp farming is a leading economic activity. It observes that there has been shift in occupation from rice cultivation and capture fishing to shrimp aquaculture. Shrimp farming has played an important role in employment generation and a rise in per capita income; and has thus led to decrease in dependency on agriculture and artisan fisheries for food and income. On the other hand, it has led to environmental degradation. It has not also brought any significant improvement in community-scale human development parameters. The participation and role of women in shrimp farming is insignificant. The institutional arrangements that have been set up by the government to regulate the shrimp farming are not stringently followed. Almost all the activities of shrimp farming are in private sector. The government's role is only promotional. The study believes that if suitable measures (such as infrastructure development, laboratories for various tests, research on shrimp diseases, effective enforcement of institutional regulations etc) are taken to overcome the problems faced by the local farmers, shrimp farming may turn out to be a perennial source of livelihood.

This publication is the result of a Shastri Applied Research Project (SHARP). More details on the project can be found here.