



**Centre for India and South Asia Research  
Annual Report 2015-2016  
Institute of Asian Research  
The University of British Columbia**



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**





On May 4 2015 CISAR hosted a panel entitled “Modi’s Visits to Canada and China”. The event was attended by about 25 guests and took up the most important issues in India- Canada and then China- India relations. The speakers included Mr. Stewart Beck, President and CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation and Mr. Sukesh Kumar, Partner KPMG, and the panel was moderated by Brian Job, Associate Director, IAR UBC.



CISAR began the academic year of 2015-16 with its annual Open House. The event showcased CISAR’s accomplishments to the general public and featured cultural performances by Akhil Jobanputra (pictured) and Arno Kamolika. Over 50 people attended the event and enjoyed the festivities.



In the aftermath of Nepal’s earthquake in 2015, the Nepali people focused their efforts on rebuilding. On September 24, CISAR organized a symposium and fundraiser entitled “Reconstruction and Regeneration After the Earthquake”, which included Dr. Mark Turin, Dr. Sara Shneiderman, Dr. Ratna Shrestha, and Dr. Bishu Padney as speakers.



Dr. Sanzida Habib, CISAR Research Associate, led a workshop on microfinance and women’s agency in Bangladesh. The workshop featured a talk by Dr. Habiba Zaman and the screening of a documentary called “Greening Micro Finance”.



Dr. Elizabeth Rohlman is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary. Dr. Rohlman paid a visit to CISAR and gave a seminar on Sarasvati, one of the most ancient goddesses in Hinduism. The seminar examined elusive and paradoxical position of Sarasvati in the history of Hinduism.



Maharashtra is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populous Indian state and the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest in geographical area. With a widespread diaspora, maintaining cultural identity is a challenge. Dr. Vidyut Aklujkar, CISAR Research Associate, organized a vibrant community event called “Keeping Marathi Identity Alive”. The event featured music, poetry, and comedic skits that brought together members of the Marathi community.

## Messages from the Directors



Dr. Yves  
Tiberghien,  
Director of  
Institute of  
Asian Research

**Dr. Tiberghien:** As a Pacific Rim university, UBC is fully committed to teaching and promoting research in a wide range of issues dealing with Asia. Pursuing this commitment, UBC has a deep interest in India and South Asia, India having been singled out as one of the top three priorities in UBC's international strategy. The number of students from South Asia continues to rise, welcomed by UBC and reflecting British Columbia's long time links with South Asia. The number of faculty with professional interests in South Asia is also rising, with at least 100 faculty and researchers involved. The Centre for India and South Asia in the Institute of Asian Research is one of the most dynamic units in the Institute of Asian Research, with over 25 years of proud history and a long series of major milestones. It is leading the way with fruitful conferences and workshops, student-led roundtables, path-breaking research, and cultural events that actively engage UBC's students and staff, British Columbia's South Asian community. In this enterprise, CISAR serves as a hub in the deepening of human links and scholarly understanding between Canada and South Asia.



Dr.  
Mandakranta  
Bose, Director  
of Centre for  
India and  
South Asia

**Dr. Bose:** It has been a privilege for me to serve CISAR for many years and a great personal pleasure to watch it grow through occasionally difficult times. CISAR has succeeded in continuing and furthering the initiatives set in motion at UBC over 50 years ago, which has been possible due to the sustained fidelity to South Asia studies on the part of faculty and students and UBC's institutional leaders. Currently CISAR is expanding its horizons by forging links with individuals and academic and cultural bodies across Canada as well as major institutions of higher learning in South Asia. Today, CISAR has an assured place on the global map of South Asia and India studies.

## CISAR's Vision and Activities

CISAR's aim is to advance studies in India and South Asia at UBC and beyond, both as a hub and resource centre for research. The record of CISAR's activities during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years embodies the Centre's commitment to its vision by presenting learned seminars, lectures and symposia. A major example is a symposium on the Indian election, with participants from India, the USA and Canada in 2014. Some highlights of CISAR's program that addressed contemporary issues were lectures and seminars on gender, labour, migration, and healthcare in India, water-management in Bangladesh, Urdu literature, South Indian folklore, religious tourism in India, the impact of the British Empire on world history, and the challenges of practicing art in modern India. The Komagataru incident was one of the major topics discussed. The 2015-2016 session has hosted lectures and seminars covering diverse topics, such as political conditions in Afghanistan, post-earthquake reconstruction of Nepal, democracy in Bhutan, micro-credit in Bangladesh, modern Indian art, and the Goddess Saraswati. Through these scholarly meetings the Centre has continued to serve its goal to bring together members of the UBC involved in studies of the Indian sub-continent. The Centre is particularly enthusiastic about the recently launched Himalayan Programme at UBC and is actively supporting it. Also supported are meetings of discussion groups formed by graduate students studying South Asia. Going beyond UBC, CISAR has drawn to it with considerable success the larger community at academic and social events, such as CISAR's periodic Open House and the Nehru Jayanti, a particularly well-attended event being a workshop on Marathi identity in the diaspora. The academic year 2015-2016 is ending with a visit by Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, who is scheduled to give lectures, with a conference to be held around his visit.

CISAR's inclusiveness in promoting a wide range of disciplines is reflected in its executive committee, formed with faculty members from the Humanities, the Social Sciences, the Business School and the Science Faculty. Active engagements with the Asia Pacific Foundation and the Shastri Indo Canadian Institute remain strong. The Centre director has also met with the High Commissioner of India to Canada and the Consul-General of India in Vancouver, and has joined them in celebrating relevant events. Active relationships with major Indian institutions, such as IIM of Calcutta, is progressing well. Dr. Bose and Dr. Sathaye held a fruitful video-conference with faculty members of Canadian universities specializing in South Asia.

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