



# **CENTRE FOR INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA RESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

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# THE CENTRE

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The Centre for India and South Asia Research (CISAR) is a research facility at The University of British Columbia (UBC) aimed at advancing studies about India and South Asia at UBC and beyond. It operates under the Institute for Asian Research (IAR) and acts as both a hub and a resource centre for research. CISAR brings together faculty, research associates, and graduate and undergraduate students with an interest in the cultures, histories and contemporary realities of the subcontinent.

CISAR's multi-faceted mandate includes:

- development of inter-disciplinary research on South Asia
- dissemination of research findings through seminars, lectures, conferences and publications
- promotion of interaction between the university and members of South Asian communities in Vancouver and British Columbia
- linking UBC specialists on India and South Asia and those situated elsewhere in Canada and abroad

# OUTGOING DIRECTOR'S NOTE

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Serving CISAR as its director over the past 5 years has brought me immense satisfaction and pleasure. I feel privileged that I was invited to take the responsibility again after having served as its director for 5 years before my retirement from teaching. I am particularly proud of my long association with CISAR during the continuing expansion of 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. As a sign of CISAR's growth and reputation I may point out its ability to attract faculty from neighbouring universities as Research Associates. Equally satisfying is the growing number of enquiries regarding research opportunities at UBC through CISAR.



The Centre has been able to build a strong body of postdoctoral fellows during the past few years while graduate and undergraduate students remain a vital part of its activities. The array of scholars from different disciplines from all over the world who visited and gave lectures in the past year includes professors from Oxford, Sorbonne, Delhi, Calcutta, the US, and other Canadian Universities. Support from the President, the Dean and UBC's institutional leaders continues to be invaluable. Externally, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute's active involvement this year has similarly enriched our endeavour. Under the vision and active engagement of the Centre's new directors, Dr. Anne Murphy and Dr. Sara Shneiderman, CISAR can look forward to further consolidate its position within and outside UBC as a major gathering place for all students and scholars from all over the world who study South Asia.

- Dr. Mandakranta Bose

# CO-DIRECTORS' WELCOME

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It is an honour for us to share the position of Director of the Centre, taking up the mantle carried in past years by scholars and administrators such as Professors John Wood, Ashok Kotwal, and Mandakranta Bose. Our respective home departments are Asian Studies and Anthropology / the new School of Public Policy & Global Affairs (where the Institute of Asian Research is now housed), and we share a wide range of interests in language, literature, cultural heritage, political transformation, and development across the entire South Asian region, as well as its diasporas. Over the coming years, we look forward to working with the UBC community of students and faculty who engage with South Asia in all its diversity, across disciplines and faculties. We also hope to connect with the broader public through a range of community-engaged initiatives.



As we look back at the prior year's activities, we are struck by the multifaceted nature of UBC's engagement with South Asia. It is grounded in research, as the numerous scholarly presentations and discussions described in this Report attest. It is simultaneously grounded in larger community networks, as highlighted by the "South Asia Showcase" celebration of Sri Lankan cultures; the talk by Dr. Anand Teltumbde on "Understanding Caste and Class in Contemporary India" (supported through a partnership with the Hari Sharma Foundation and the Chetna Association of Canada); the talk by Professor Diwakar Acharya hosted in collaboration with the UBC Himalaya Program; and the art exhibition "Mending Cracks" by CISAR Research Associate Raghavendra Rao, with an opening event held in association with the launch of the Canada 150 project "Canada at 150+: Trauma, Memory and the Story of Canada," founded by the South Asian Canadian Histories Association. The Centre will continue to support this exciting project in the coming year. Scholarship and community engagement in this way are intimately tied, and we look forward to further developing connections with diverse organizations and UBC units during our co-directorship of CISAR.



2017-18, too, will be an exciting year. CISAR will host the South Asia Conference for the Pacific Northwest (SACPAN) from March 1-3, 2018, with additional support from the Department of Asian Studies. The Conference will bring together scholars and students from the US and Canada to explore South Asia across disciplines. On November 2 the Centre will co-host Dr. Vivek Kumar of Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) with the Department of Asian Studies and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhism and Contemporary Society to launch the new B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture, which has been made possible by a partnership with the Chetna Association of Canada, the Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation, and the SFU Institute of Humanities. Prior to that, on October 5, political scientist Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed will join us to commemorate the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, in recognition of its 70th anniversary. Both lectures will take place within the Centre's year-long Colloquium Series on regularly scheduled Thursdays at 4pm, which brings together scholars and students from across the University and beyond. We look forward to working as our colleagues have done in the past: to promote scholarly engagement with South Asia among diverse audiences, to further research about South Asia at UBC, and to develop partnerships with community organizations and academic institutions in Canada, South Asia, and beyond.

- **Dr. Anne Murphy, Associate Professor, Department of Asian Studies**

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- **Dr. Sara Shneiderman, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology and the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs/Institute of Asian Research**

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# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016-17

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This section features a sampling of key events from April 2016-July 2017. For an exhaustive list of all events please see Appendix.

## Colloquium: Challenges of Urbanization featuring Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta April 29, 2016

Rapid urbanization will bring myriad challenges for growing economies like India and China, spanning employment, housing, resource management, environmental degradation as well as societal tensions. This day-long conference brought together five speakers from Canada, the USA and India to discuss urbanization in India today and its lessons for the future.


The conference featured a keynote talk by former President of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi and current Vice-Chancellor Ashoka University, Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta.



# “Literary Interaction in South Asia: Indo-Persian Narratives” by Dr. Pegah Shahbaz

Sep 8, 2016

Dr. Pegah Shahbaz, a Postdoctoral Fellow attached to the Perso-Indica project and the ‘Mondes Indien et Iranien’ Research Unit at University Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, presented research on Persian narratives of Indian origin, translated from Sanskrit or South Asian vernaculars from the 14th century onward. Her talk featured a case study of the Suka-saptati and Pañcatantra as two examples of Sanskrit narrative traditions that were transmitted into Persian language and literary forms.



**Literary Interaction in South Asia:**  
**Indo-Persian Narratives**  
by Dr. Pegah Shahbaz  
*Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3*  
Visiting Fellow, Centre for India and South Asia Research  
**Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2016**  
**4:30 pm to 6:00 pm, Room 120 C.K. Choi Bldg**

This presentation will bring up the study of Persian narratives of Indian origin, translated directly from Sanskrit or other South Asian vernaculars from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards; the stories which, retold and modified according to the recipient culture, helped to form a forthcoming exchange of knowledge between Muslims and Hindus, during the realm of Sultanates in Delhi (1206-1526) and later Mughal period (1526-1858). We will pursue the case study of *Suka-saptati* and *Pañcatantra* as two examples of Sanskrit narrative tradition and will follow their transmission and insertion into Persian literature along with the multiple specificities and changes they accepted within centuries, from the receiving culture.

# Religion and Ethics Lecture Series: “The Ethical Basis of Personal and Social Conduct in Indian Thought” by Prof. Diwakar Acharya Sept 21, 2016



University of Oxford Academic Fellow and Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, Prof. Diwakar Acharya, reflected in this lecture on the tradition of ethical and philosophical discourse in India, and what such discourse offers to the modern study of ethics.

# Experimentation and Ethnocentrism in Post-Colonial Indian Drama by Dr. Vijaya Jammi Oct 19, 2016

This presentation dealt with the spectre of the nation in the post-colonial Indian drama. The presentation underlined traditional and experimental features in this genre. Dr. Vijaya Jammi is a CISAR Research Associate whose research focus is on post-colonial Indian drama and Canadian drama.



# Discussion: “Minorities and Terror Attack in Bangladesh”

## Oct 27, 2016

This roundtable discussion featured UBC Alumnus, Blogger and Member of the International Crimes Strategy Forum Shariful Islam, PhD Candidate at UBC Nazrul Islam, Executive Editor of the Daily Ittefaq, a leading newspaper in Bangladesh, and President of Projonmo Ekattor Shaheen Rezanur, and Associate Professor, Department of Asian Studies and the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at UBC Sunera Thobani for a discussion about root causes of different kinds of violence in Bangladesh.

# Understanding Caste and Class in Contemporary India by Dr. Anand Teltumbde

## Nov 14, 2016

In this lecture, Dr. Anand Teltumbde presented the historical development of the struggles of Dalits and the Left in India and discussed strategies that might contribute to their causes. The event was co-sponsored by the Department of Asian Studies and the Hari Sharma Foundation.

# South Asia Showcase: Sri Lanka, that which glitters

## Dec 3, 2016

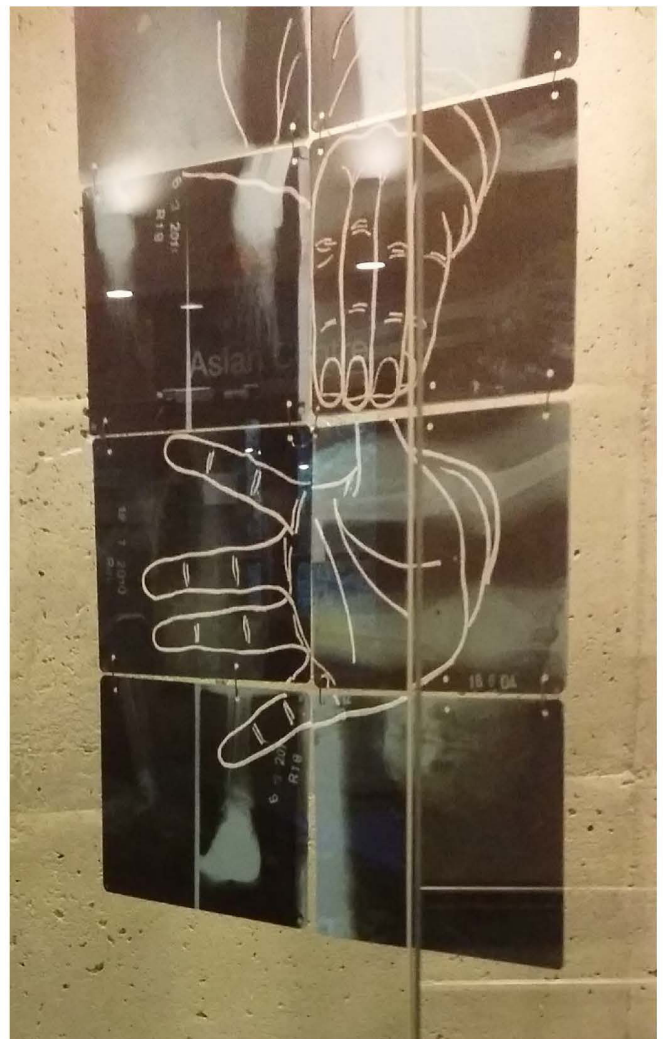
Sri Lanka's diversity and cultures were presented in full glory in this day-long event, with a wide range of performances and presentations by members of the UBC community.



# Exhibition: 'Mending Cracks' by Raghavendra Rao

Jan 11-Mar 3, 2017

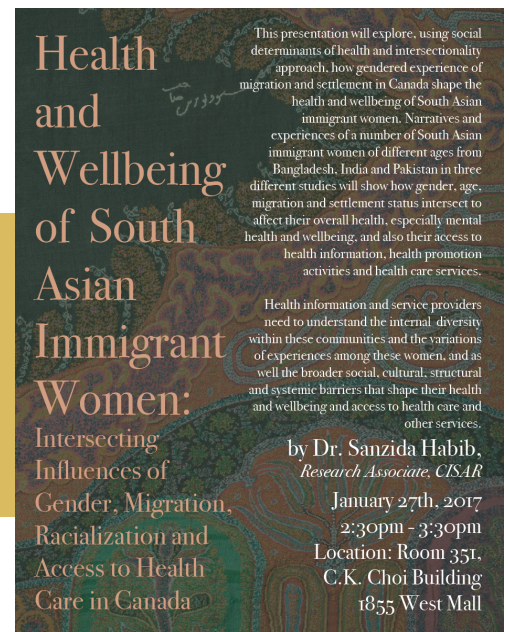
This exhibition of mixed media works by conceptual visual artist and CISAR Research Associate at Raghavendra Rao K.V. explored the representation of loss and healing. The closing reception of the exhibition coincided with the Launch Event of the South Asian Canadian Histories Association's Canada (SACHA) 150+ project, "Trauma, Memory, and the Story of Canada." Rao is a founding member and Artistic Director of SACHA.



# Health and Wellbeing of South Asian Immigrant Women by Dr. Sanzida Habib

Jan 27, 2017

In this presentation, CISAR Research Associate Dr. Sanzida Habib presented stories from South Asian immigrant women to explore what health care professionals need to consider while providing accessible health resources within the South Asian diaspora.



# Contested Governance, Competing Nationalisms, and Disenchanted Publics: Kashmir beyond Intractability? by Dr. Reeta Tremblay

March 10, 2017

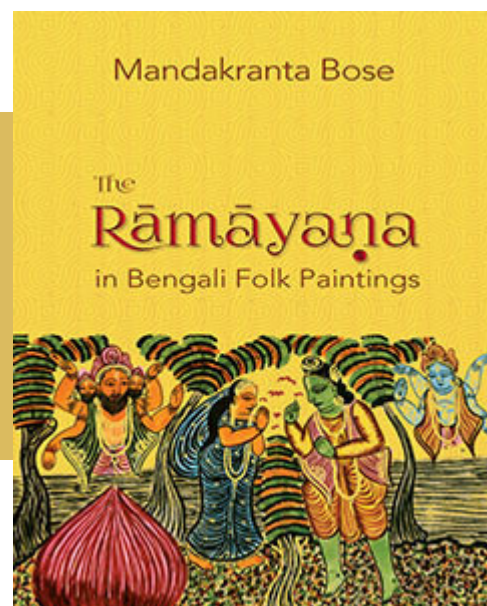
Spiralling unrest has continued in the Kashmir Valley since the July 2016 killing of Burhan Wani by the security forces. This lecture by Professor of Comparative Politics and the Global South, University of Victoria, Dr. Reeta Tremblay, who is now a CISAR Research Associate, focused on the interaction of Kashmiri Muslims with the State. The lecture addressed the strategies the Valley's Muslims adopt depending upon how the State reacts to Kashmiri agitation.



# An Art for Everyone: The Ramayana Scrolls of Bengal by Dr. Mandakranta Bose

April 6, 2017

This talk by UBC Professor Emerita and outgoing CISAR Director, Dr. Mandakranta Bose, shed light on her new book and work on the tradition of painted Ramayana scrolls of Bengal in eastern India. The talk was followed by a reception honoring Dr. Bose for her long service to CISAR.



# Info Session: Research and Training in India: Funding Opportunities for Faculty and Students by Dr. Prachi Kaul

June 22, 2017

Dr Prachi Kaul, Director of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, led an information session on research opportunities in India for students and faculty at UBC. Dr. Kaul presented detailed information about various programs run by the Shastri Institute in collaboration with Indian and Canadian universities. The event was also an opportunity for Shastri alumni to reconnect with CISAR.





# APPENDIX

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This section features all events that took place from April 2016 to June 2017.

<i>Colloquium: Challenges of Urbanisation</i> by Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Amartya Lahiri, John Harriss, Naresh Devineni and Milind Kandlikar	April 29, 2016	<i>Impact of Global Financial Crisis on India: An Analysis of Large Exporters in Indian Manufacturing</i> by Mitali Chatterjee	Sept. 23, 2016
<i>How Realistic Are The Chances Of India Maintaining An Annual Growth Rate Of 8%?</i> by Vijay Mahajan	June 7, 2016	<i>CISAR Open House 2016</i>	Sept. 23, 2016
<i>Persian Writings on Ayurvedic Medicine: The Construction of a Genre</i> by Fabrizio Speziale	Sept. 7, 2016	<i>The Poetics of Fragility</i> by Nicolás Grandi and Lata Mani	Oct. 5, 2016
<i>Literary Interaction in South Asia</i> by Pegah Shahbaz	Sept. 8, 2016	<i>Writing the Present: The Arts, Humanities, &amp; Polyphony of our Wor(l)ds</i> by Anne Murphy; Nicolás Grandi and Lata Mani	Oct. 6, 2016
<i>Colonial Readers and Authors of Indo-Persian Texts</i> by Pegah Shahbaz and Fabrizio Speziale	Sept. 9, 2016	<i>Experimentation and Ethnocentrism in Post-Colonial Indian Drama</i> by Vijaya Jammi	Oct. 19, 2016
<i>Religion and Ethics Annual Series: The Ethical Basis of Personal and Social Conduct in Indian Thought</i> by Diwakar Acharya	Sept. 21, 2016	<i>Minorities and Terror Attack in Bangladesh</i> by Shariful Islam, Nazrul Islam, Shaheen Rezanur, Sunera Thobani	Oct. 27, 2016
<i>Reluctant Rebellions: An Intimate Gathering</i> by Shauna Singh Baldwin	Sept. 21, 2016	<i>Islam and Empire in India: The Padshah's Sacred Authority and Religious Pluralism in Mughal Times</i> by Corinne Lefèvre	Nov. 3, 2016
<i>Nationalism, Dogmatism, and What More: The Crisis of Vision in Nepali Society</i> by Diwakar Acharya	Sept. 22, 2016	<i>Understanding Caste and Class in Contemporary India</i> by Anand Teltumbde	Nov. 14, 2016

<i>South Asia Showcase: Sri Lanka, That Which Glitters</i> by UBC Community	Dec. 3, 2016	<i>Another Tagore: A Campaigner of Emancipation of the Peasantry in Bengal</i> by Atiur Rahman	Apr. 22, 2017
<i>'Mending Cracks': Exhibition</i> by Raghavendra Rao	Jan. 11 – Mar. 3, 2017	<i>2017 Harjit Kaur Sidhu Memorial Program Punjabi Theatre: Exploration and Celebration (Workshop)</i>	May 2-4, 2017
<i>Health and Wellbeing of South Asian Immigrant Women</i> by Sanzida Habib	Jan. 27, 2017		
<i>At Home in the Green Mountains: Bhutanese Resettlement in Vermont</i> by Pablo Bose	Feb. 6, 2017	<i>Luna's Voice: Staging a Traditional Punjabi narrative in the Lower Mainland</i>	May 13, 2017
<i>Trauma and Art Production</i> by Raghavendra Rao	Feb. 9, 2017	<i>Kahani da Rangmanch: A Theatre of Stories</i> by Samuel John and Rangmanch Punjabi Theatre	May 13, 2017
<i>Cultural Exchange in Eighteenth-Century India: Poetry and Paintings from Kishangarh</i> by Heidi Rika Maria Pauwels	Feb. 17, 2017	1. Dulatti (The Hidden Power) 2. Ghasea Hoea Aadmi (Worn Out Man)	
<i>International Mother Language Day</i> by Sanzida Habib and UBC community	Feb. 28, 2017	<i>Research and Training in India: An Info Session on Funding Opportunities for UBC Students and Faculty</i> by Dr. Prachi Kaul	June 22, 2017
<i>Contested Governance, Competing Nationalisms, and Disenchanted Publics: Kashmir Beyond Intractability?</i> by Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay	Mar. 10, 2017		
<i>An Art for Everyone: The Rāmāyaṇa Scrolls of Bengal</i> by Mandakranta Bose	Apr. 6, 2017		
<i>India's Innovation Journey: Scripted Digitally</i> by Sam Pitroda	Apr. 12, 2017		