



a place of mind

## STEWARDSHIP REPORT



### PUNJABI LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND SIKH STUDIES

#### 2011-2013 Activity Report

Prepared by Dr. Anne Murphy  
Chair, Punjabi Language,  
Literature and Sikh Studies

Presented to the Canada India  
Education Society

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Photo courtesy of Jonathan Paradis.

### OVERVIEW

The Canada India Education Society (CIES) has played an integral role in helping the University of British Columbia to enhance teaching in Punjabi language and to build significant connections with South Asia and our local communities. Since 2011, your investments have enabled us to engage with the public, with students, and with faculty members in new and meaningful ways.

We are pleased to present this report, which highlights the activities made possible with your support.

### GO GLOBAL PROGRAM

A \$7,500 CIES award was granted to Jonathan Paradis during his fourth year as an Arts student with a background in Asian Studies (South Asia) and a major in International Relations. Paradis used the funds to attend Hindu College at the University of Dehli (July - December 2012). His coursework included the following: Disaster Management, India's Foreign Policy, Constitutional Democracy and Government in India and Urban Sociology. Paradis completed this term with an 84% average.

He was also very engaged with the student learning community and worked in partnership to establish TED Talks at the Hindu College. Paradis graduated in May 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and received a Class 1 distinction (over 80% average).

*Please see Appendix I for a thank you letter from Jonathan Paradis.*

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our goal has been to engage with a local and wider world in our thinking about and experience of South Asia in the Department of Asian Studies. The CIES gift allowed us to make connections between the Department and the community, and to enhance our pedagogical and intellectual engagement with the world outside the University.

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With the support of CIES, the following series of major events took place:

#### **I. Partnership with the Virasat Foundation**

November 2011 & October 2012

Indian classical music concerts at UBC.

#### **II. Punjab on Film: The Work of Ajay Bhardwaj**

November 6-7, 2012

Public screening of a trilogy by Ajay Bhardwaj: "Kite Mil Ve Mahi/Where the Twain Shall Meet" (2005), "Rabba Hun Kee Kariye/Thus Departed our Neighbors" (2007) and "Milange Babe Ratan de Mele te/Let's meet at Baba Ratan's fair" (2012). This was the first public screening anywhere of Bhardwaj's 2012 film. Bhardwaj also interacted with students in the Punjabi 300 class.

#### **III. THINK/CREATE: A Teach In/Creative Arts Event at UBC and Rhizome Café**

November 14-15, 2012

A 2-day event that brought together artists, journalists, professors and students to commemorate and reflect upon the violence against Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin (2012). Key-note speaker Arvind-pal Singh Mandair also addressed students in Asia 376, an introductory class on the Sikh tradition, and took part in a "book talk" with faculty and graduate students at Green College and in association with the University's Law and Society program.

#### **IV. The Global and the Local: The Gadar Movement and the Quest for Freedom, 1913-2013**

March 18-19, 2013

A symposium in honor of the centenary of the founding of the Gadar Party. Screening of the films of Ali Kazimi, and panel of scholarly papers by: filmmaker Ali Kazimi, historians Johanna Ogden and Hugh Johnston, Journalist Gurpreet Singh, and Independent Curator Naveen Girn.

These community events allowed us to significantly enhance discussion of South Asia, and particularly Punjab, on campus, and connect to the local history of South Asia in the region. Students attended all events, and interactions with students were built into each.

We also utilized CIES funds to bring speakers to the Punjabi 300 Oral history class, including authors Brajinder Dhillon and Ajmer Rode, and community curator Naveen Girn. Girn assisted students in conceptualizing their oral history-based video projects, and Rode and Dhillon reflected upon the writing process in Punjabi.

Finally, CIES support enabled the visit of Professor Anita Anantharam (University of Florida) to the Punjabi 300 class; Professor Anantharam also met with graduate students during her visit, and was particularly inspiring for students interested in thinking about gender and literature.

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We will use the remaining balance (approximately \$1,000) to support a major theatrical production in May 2014 in commemoration of the centenary of the Komagata Maru incident, a foundational event in the history of the Punjabi Canadian community, and in the history of Canada overall.

*For information on all events and programs associated with Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh Studies at UBC, including our upcoming May 2014 Komagata Maru production, please visit <http://blogs.ubc.ca/punjabisikhstudies>.*

### SUMMARY OF SPENDING ALLOCATION

Canada India Education Society contribution: \$25,000

Description	Amount
Community Engagement: to enrich community connections between UBC and the outside world in its engagement with South Asia. This amount includes the purchase of materials related to the Oral History program in Punjabi 300.	\$9,000
Teaching Assistant: for the Oral History program in the Punjabi 300 class.	\$8,500
Go Global program: to support student travel to South Asia.	\$7,500

For more information, please contact:

**Anne Murphy**

Assistant Professor & Chair, Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh Studies  
Department of Asian Studies  
[anne.murphy@ubc.ca](mailto:anne.murphy@ubc.ca)

**Victoria Auston**

Assistant Dean  
Development and Alumni Engagement  
Faculty of Arts  
[victoria.auston@ubc.ca](mailto:victoria.auston@ubc.ca)  
604.822.9594

### WITH OUR THANKS

Thank you for supporting Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh Studies at UBC. Your investments have enabled us to generate conversations and engage the public with South Asian research at the University. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with the Canada India Education Society, and the exciting initiation of the **Dhahan International Punjabi Literature Prize**.

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#### APPENDIX I: THANK YOU LETTER FROM JONATHAN PARADIS

Dear Mr. Dhahan:

As I take the opportunity to step back and reflect on the time I have spent in India, I cannot help but marvel at how much I have learned and grown over the course of my exchange in South Asia. The financial support you have generously extended to me for this experience was critical to this endeavour becoming achievable. For this reason, I want to sincerely thank you and provide you with a glimpse of where your donation has taken me.

While at Hindu College, I had the opportunity to take courses such as Urban Sociology, India's Foreign Policy, Constitutional Democracy and Government in India as well as Disaster Management. Being one of only thirteen exchange students in total to join the ranks of the University of Delhi - an institution that has 120,000 regular attendees- certainly made the experience as immersive as it gets.

The community I met at Delhi University and the freedom I was given by my professors to research any topic of personal interest allowed me to dig far deeper than the lectures went. I worked day and night to research and wrap my mind around the success of extremist Hindu nationalist movements in India and the functions that informal settlements perform in India's urban systems.

The \$7,500 you donated to UBC Go Global in support of this exchange allowed me to go much further than what's on paper; it allowed me to meet the India that simply cannot be found in textbooks. It provided me with the funds necessary to head to Darjeeling where I met with a hill man who had attended over 200 killings during the bouts of political violence that pitted the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the forces that supported the state of West Bengal. Needless to say his accounts were moving and beyond what an academic experience could have delivered.



Photo courtesy of Jonathan Paradis.

Furthermore, your financial support made it possible for me to witness cremation rituals in Varanasi and develop a better appreciation of Hinduism's relationship to death and life. What on paper could have seemed off putting from a Western perspective revealed splendour once on site. Attending such ceremonies live allowed my prejudice to fade a way and make place for greater understanding and a deeper respect of customs that are not my own.

If in many exchange locations around the world travel is seen as leisurely -as a nice add on- I would argue that it is entirely necessary in South Asian countries. India features an extreme cultural diversity that can only be grasped by actual experience and encounters. Amongst others, your stipend made it possible for me to go to Manali, Sikkim, Udaipur, Fort Kochi and Allepey. Had I merely stayed in Delhi for the lack of funds I would have faced without your support, I do not think I would have been able to grasp the social fabric of India.

It would also have been impossible for me to spend an additional four months in Mumbai to work in Dharavi, one of India's largest slums. By doing so, I was able to work on a project that strives to provide a more accurate and balanced picture of what slum life is like - one that does not eclipse the opportunity structure that it beholds but also avoids romanticizing poverty. I met with a slum dweller turned New York Times photographer, spent countless nights on the corrugated rooftops of slum huts and observed day in and day out a place that is so deeply misunderstood. In addition to working on the above project, I also volunteered at a community centre teaching English to underprivileged children who are looking to make a stride forward. The experience was truly humbling.

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As I move forward with my career, you may wonder what I will keep with me from this India journey. An obvious answer would be proficiency in the Hindi language. Ten months in South Asia, literally forcing my local friends to use only Hindi with me, means that I am conversational in this language. As a future international reporter, this will allow me to get to the grassroots and provide information that better reflects the reality on the ground in India.

I have also developed a remarkable ability for adaptation. Here, I refer to integrating to another culture, becoming aware of the untold and knowing how to earn the trust of people with a tremendously different background. I also refer to feeling as comfortable walking in the narrow alleyways of India's slums as walking in Mumbai's Taj Hotel alongside high-ranking officials. Of course, I also mean adapting to bureaucratic challenges – yes, it does take fourteen supporting documents to obtain housing at Delhi University (including an HIV test and an oath to the High Court promising one will not engage in ragging). As a future international journalist, this experience in India was a dress rehearsal – an opportunity to ease into my future reality.

Mr. Dhahan, please accept my deepest expression of gratitude.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Paradis