

Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, University of Mumbai
Award of Research Grants
under the South Asian Diaspora Fund, B.C., Canada

The Indo-Canadian Studies Centre - ICSC, University of Mumbai through its academic collaboration agreement with the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), British Columbia, Canada has received a Research Grant under the South Asian Diaspora Fund, set up by the British Columbia Province. Under the auspices of this fund the ICSC, Mumbai has awarded two research grants in 2013-14, to Dr. C.H. Asrani, Founder President, C.M. Health Foundation for his project on 'Social/Medical Counselling as an Outbound Orientation Service for Immigrants/Student Visitors to Canada' and to Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Founder Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in India (CASII) for his project 'Diasporic Identity and Re-Imaging the Nation in the Films of Deepa Mehta'.

Dr. C H Asrani's project is focused on how immigrants can be identified as a 'vulnerable population' as a result of poor physical, psychological, and social health outcomes and inadequate healthcare. There are several factors such as socioeconomic background, limited English proficiency, stigma and marginalization and lack of awareness in obtaining adequate healthcare that lead to the vulnerability of this population. The objective of his research is to identify gaps in prevalent healthcare policies, state policies, healthcare services, and immigrant behavior towards healthcare in Canada and recommend suggestion to improve awareness, availability and accessibility to quality healthcare among the diaspora population. Data collection through a structured questionnaire will be conducted on two groups of target population; diaspora population in Canada and prospective diaspora population with an aim to gather an understanding of feelings, beliefs, experiences, perception or attitudes of the target populations. The analysis of data collated endeavors` to propose recommendations for pre-immigration orientation programs to serve prospective diaspora populations. The C M Health Foundation is an NGO registered under Mumbai Public Charitable Act 1950 with the aim of offering unique, innovative, community care centric services benefitting both practicing medicos as well as consumers. Dr C H Asrani will be visiting British Columbia to meet with target groups of immigrants with the help of the UFV, local Indo-Canadian Associations and experts in the field. The data thus collected and then analysed would lead to the actual launch of the Social/Medical Counselling as an Outbound Orientation Service for Immigrants/Student Visitors to Canada by 2014. It is proposed that this service would be offered first at Mumbai and then also at a couple of centres in North India, from where there is a substantial flow of immigrants to Canada. These service centres would be self-financing in nature and could be set up in conjunction with existing services if available. Dr Asrani is a Senior Family Physician with a flair for community based innovative activities.

Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran's project considers how diasporic film makers have an insider outsider perspective. They are in the position of looking at issues that are of importance to the mother country armed with the objectivity of distance and this helps in breathing a freshness into issues of consequence, a facility which is unavailable to the in-station filmmaker, who has a conspicuous presence in the midst of events. His project focuses on Deepa Mehta the Indo-Canadian film maker and the manner in which she has presented her old and new worlds and the dance she has danced with old and new flames that have told her stories. Deepa Mehta's *oeuvre* is

not merely intensive but her canvas is also expansive. The nation is central to the cinematic texts of Deepa Mehta's Elements Trilogy - *Earth 1947*, *Fire* and *Water*. The new nation of Canada too is central to Mehta. If *Bollywood Hollywood* has 'Om' has its colonial mansion in a postcolonial postmodern world depicting it, her *Heaven on Earth*, locates a different segment of society. Her latest film *Midnight's Children* has palimpsestic value in the context of time and space. Additionally, her next film *Komagata Maru* is on the Komagata Maru incident which is to be completed in time for the centenary of this incident in 2014. Professor Sridhar will be studying Deepa Mehta's films in depth against the backdrop of the issues he has raised above through a combination of close analyses of the cinematic texts, available critical studies and theories, as well as detailed interviews with the film maker and some of her Indo-Canadian actors such as Lisa Ray for which he will be visiting Canada in 2014. In Canada he also plans to meet up with groups of Indo-Canadian women and discuss with them Mehta's representations of their lives. This will bring in not just a production but also a reception aspect to his research. It is in the context of Mehta's films set in Canada that this researcher would engage with issues of family health and psychological wellness in the wider context of gender. *Heaven on Earth* is a case in point. The end-product of this research will be a book on the films of Deepa Mehta and the critical issues identified by the researcher. While there are a couple of books which deal with Mehta's Elements Trilogy there is no serious in-depth book-length study on all her works as a comprehensive whole in the context of her diasporic Indo-Canadian space. This book will thus be an important pioneering contribution to studies on Indo-Canadian cinema. CASII is a registered educational trust and Professor Rajeswaran has international experience in teaching and researching Diasporic Literatures and Cinemas.