

Canada and South Asia: the Relationship

From the moment that Canada established diplomatic relations following the independence of countries in the region, Canada has worked to develop close relations with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Almost a million Canadians have family origins in these countries, and Canada is greatly enriched by their contribution.

4 The Canadian government has played an active role in human development in South Asia since the 1950s. Through assistance programs that focus on poverty reduction and promoting economic and social development, Canada has made a difference in the region.

South Asia's strong demand for improved infrastructure, along with the growing purchasing power of its consumers, makes it an ideal destination for Canadian products and services, particularly in the transportation and emerging information and communications sectors. Indeed, there are already many Canadian companies active in the region. With some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, and a dynamic and flourishing high-tech sector, there is no doubt that South Asia will become an increasingly important market for Canada in the 21st century.



Note the clothing of these two young people in India. He is wearing a Western style shirt rather than a white kurta, and she is wearing a salwar kameez – a dress with pants – that is slightly more modern than a sari but in keeping with customary modesty.

CIDA Photo: David Trattles

Common membership of Canada and South Asian countries in international institutions such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth reflect shared values and a desire to contribute to global peace and understanding. Canadian peacekeepers continue to serve side by side with South Asian peacekeeping units around the world.

South Asian culture is also having a greater influence worldwide. Music, dance, literature and films from the region are gaining popularity in many countries, including Canada. Contemporary Canadian performers – Alanis Morissette, Bryan Adams and Céline Dion – are also popular in South Asia. These artists continue to include South Asian destinations in their world tours.

With well-established ties to the region and the current high level of interest and activity in two-way trade, Canada will continue to actively pursue opportunities in South Asia in the 21st century, promoting prosperity at home and abroad.