

"I remember thinking in late June, on a warm summer night, looking at the majestic parliament and I said to myself, 'How did I get here?' Then suddenly, I felt the enormous responsibility that came with this victory. It was because of my family, my friends, and my supporters who had stood by me in my earlier defeats but continued to answer my call for support both through volunteerism, and financial support".



Deepak (Left) Lights lamp with Prime Minister Stephen Harper (center) at the Annual Diwali Celebration on Parliament Hill.

Africa is representative in their very own looks to Deepak as Asian community, which collectively, Canada's South and community and passion. Born and raised in Tanzania, he has travelled widely across Africa and continues to work hard to build bridges of understanding between Canada and countries of Africa.

Elaborating the changing phase of relationship between India and Canada, Deepak says: "Under the previous Liberal Governments, (Canada's) relations with India were frozen, for two reasons: One, of course, was the nuclear file; and the second was the high influence of those who pursued a separatist agenda for India, with the leadership of the Liberal Party, and especially then Prime Minister Chrétien. I initiated two very significant milestones. First was the celebration of Diwali on Parliament Hill, the first being in 1999. Canada became the first country in the Western World to have celebrations on Parliament. The second was the formation of the Canada India Parliamentary Friendship Group. Friendship groups are formed to promote and build a strong relationship between Parliamentarians. The lack of a group was due to the Liberals' biased approach towards India. However, with the blessing of the speakers of the House of Commons, and the Senate, I founded this group, which today is very active in parliamentary exchanges between Canada and India".

As Deepak describes, it was a humbling experience when the government of India in 2009 recognised these efforts by awarding him the prestigious "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman", the highest award given to overseas Indians, which was conferred on him by India's President, Mrs. Pratibha D. Patil. Here are some of the awards and recognitions Deepak has been honoured with, in recognition of his services to Canada:

- September 2006 **Special Achievement Award presented by the Indo Canada Ottawa Business Chamber (ICOBCC)** in recognition of Deepak Obhrai's contributions to the Indo-Canadian community and the commitment towards strengthening political, cultural and economic relations between Canada and South Asia.
- October 2006 **The National Indo-Canadian Council of Montreal** presented Deepak Obhrai with an award for meritorious services to the Indo-Canadian Community and to Canada.
- November 2006 - **Desi News-Grants Community Achievers Award**, given by *Desi News of Toronto*, a popular South-Asian e-magazine with a large readership across Canada, presented by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty.



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As of today, Deepak has won five consecutive federal elections, successively receiving a larger percentage of the popular vote.

As a rookie Member of Parliament, Deepak had a lot to learn from his senior colleagues, who were very helpful to him. He says: "I slowly learnt the workings of Parliament. My party, which was considered as being unfriendly to multicultural communities, handed me the task of reaching



out to the ethnic communities". In 2006, his party won the General Election and Deepak was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2007, Deepak was given the additional responsibility as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation. All these posts allowed him to represent Canada on the world stage.

Deepak rendered valuable services to Canada and its people while holding different political positions. He is also grateful to Canada for the opportunities she bestowed upon him and to achieve excellence in what he did. However, as a true son of the soil, he still has a deep passion for India and the Indians living in Canada. His fervour for the motherland always keeps him devoutly active in endeavours to improve Indo-Canadian relations besides helping the Indo-Canadian