

Harvard University Announces Fund from Vijay Shekhar Sharma for Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute

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The fund would every year help two students from India receive a grant to pursue research at Harvard

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Mumbai,

Harvard University is delighted to announce a new gift from India's Vijay Shekhar Sharma, which will support the activities and research performed by the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute (LMSAI). With this gift, every year two bright and promising students from India would receive a scholarship to pursue their research at Harvard and work towards transforming the lives of millions in India and abroad.

By enabling scholars from South Asia to work in a cross-disciplinary fashion with faculty, researchers, and students across Harvard on critical questions and issues related to the region, Sharma's gift will significantly enhance the goals of the Institute to deepen the teaching and research on significant cultural and global issues related to South Asia.

"Recent months have confirmed that the most pressing societal challenges are global in nature," said University Provost Alan Garber. "We are deeply grateful to Vijay Shekhar Sharma. Through his generosity, he has affirmed our shared commitment to advancing cross-disciplinary research and learning in our interconnected world. His vision for a more collaborative future has never been timelier. We are proud to partner with him."

“Further expanding Harvard’s work and partnerships in India is a major priority for the University,” said Vice Provost for International Affairs Mark Elliott. “This fund, which will provide leading South Asian scholars in all fields with new opportunities to pursue their research at Harvard, will bring benefits to them and their home institutions as well as to the Harvard community. In this way, this new program will do much to strengthen and broaden the kinds of academic connections we depend upon to help deepen our engagement with South Asian partners and to advance our academic mission globally,” he continued.

Vijay Shekhar Sharma is the Founder CEO of India's largest payments company, Paytm. He has played a critical role in developing the mobile payments and digital age financial services ecosystem in India. A strong believer in the power of technology to uplift underserved, Sharma founded Paytm in August 2010. Paytm counts Alibaba, Ant Group, Softbank and Berkshire Hathaway as its shareholders. He has a bachelor's degree in electronics and communications from the Delhi College of Engineering.

"I believe that good education can change an individual's life in the most profound ways. My father, who was a teacher, believed that the world can be positively changed through education. His teachings are my inspiration to make this contribution to Harvard University. Harvard’s integrity, diversity, and commitment to excellence are exemplary. I hope this gift will help future leaders attain the global vision that would help in transforming the lives of millions for the better in India and beyond,” said Vijay Shekhar Sharma.

Sharma has seen firsthand the transformational powers of education. Inspired by the work of his father, he has helped students in their pursuit of a promising future through his support for several foundations that assist the educational pursuits of thousands of students. Additionally, Sharma has been named the UN Environment's “Patron for Clean Air,” where he helps to drive greater environmental action and awareness, and advocates for the goals of UN Environment's global “BreatheLife” campaign.

Tarun Khanna, Director of the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute and Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor at the Harvard Business School, highlighted the importance of creating a robust platform for knowledge-sharing, connecting those who may not otherwise have had the chance to interact. “We continue to increase the number of interdisciplinary programs and fellowships offered at the Mittal Institute, welcoming scholars of South Asia to share their research and partner with Harvard’s faculty and students. Thanks to Vijay’s generosity, we move closer to a critical mass of diverse perspectives and ideas at the Institute that deepen the world’s understanding of South Asia, from all disciplines and angles,” he said.

Each year, the Mittal Institute supports the research endeavors of numerous scholars from South Asia, providing them with opportunities to interact with Harvard’s faculty, students, and larger community for knowledge-sharing and the potential formation of new research partnerships. “This gift from Vijay will make it possible for young scholars of South Asia — who may have limited access to resources, but are highly talented — to have the opportunity to engage with the intellectual community at Harvard in ways that would make a lasting impact on their personal and professional development,” said Meena Hewett, Executive Director of the Mittal Institute.

With this generous gift, the Mittal Institute will continue to build its hub of scholars across all disciplines to further enrich the understanding of South Asia both in Cambridge and abroad.

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