

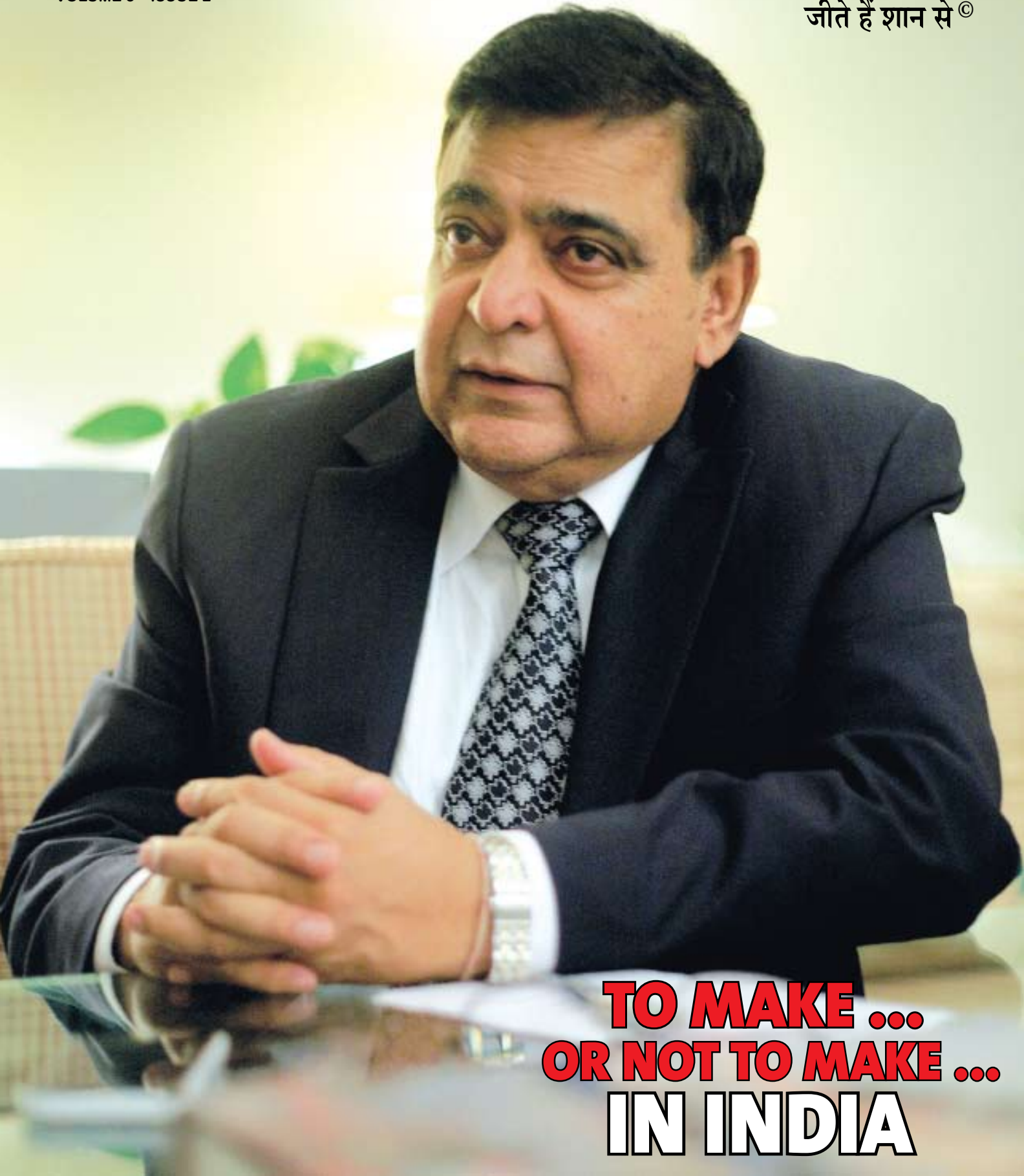
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**TO MAKE ...  
OR NOT TO MAKE ...  
IN INDIA**

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ONE RING  
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**CANADIAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT &  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

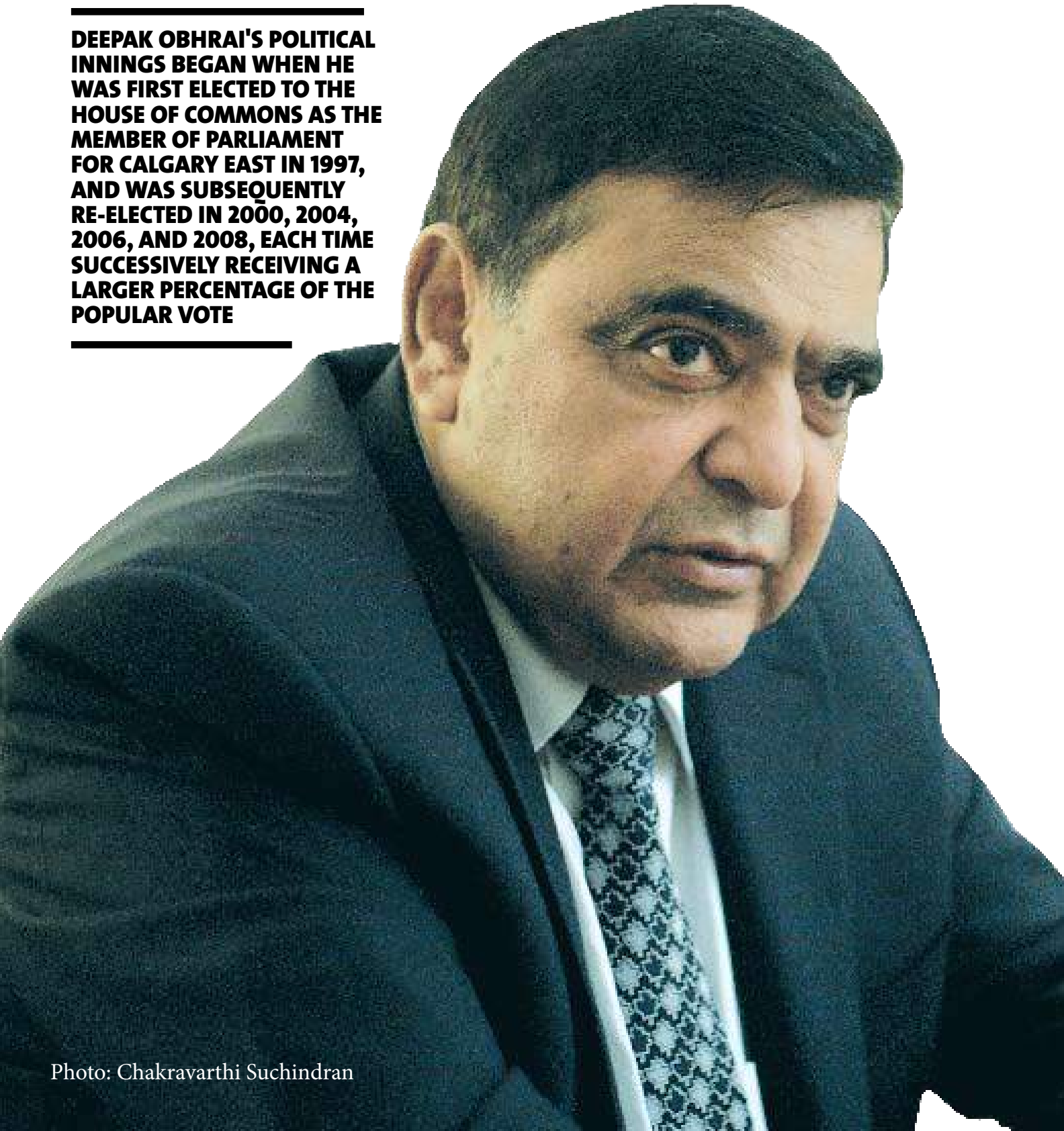
# **HON. DEEPAK OBHRAI, PC**



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**DEEPAK OBHRAI'S POLITICAL  
INNINGS BEGAN WHEN HE  
WAS FIRST ELECTED TO THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS AS THE  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
FOR CALGARY EAST IN 1997,  
AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY  
RE-ELECTED IN 2000, 2004,  
2006, AND 2008, EACH TIME  
SUCCESSIVELY RECEIVING A  
LARGER PERCENTAGE OF THE  
POPULAR VOTE**

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**M**r. Deepak Obhrai, a long-time Canadian Parliamentarian, was born on July 5th, 1950 in Oldeani, Tanzania, to Indian parents and went to school on three separate continents. His alma mater includes the Arusha Secondary School in Tanzania, and the Daly College at Indore in Madhya Pradesh, India. He then went on to the UK, to train and work as an Air Traffic Controller in the UK and in East Africa. He met his wife Neena in Jaipur, Rajasthan, after his college days, and ultimately tied the knot with her at the Pink City. He immigrated to Canada with his family in the year 1977. His gregarious nature and polyglot skills which meant he was equally at ease with English, Hindi, Punjabi, Swahili, and Gujarati soon got him closely involved with the doings of the Indian community, in which he has ended up playing a series of proactive roles as the President of the India-Canada Association, the Monterey Community Association and the Hindu Society of Calgary. He has also served as the Vice-President of the National Indo-Canadian Council.

Deepak Obhrai's political innings began when he was first elected to the House of Commons as the Member of Parliament for Calgary East in 1997, and was subsequently re-elected in 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2008, each time successively receiving a larger percentage of the popular vote. In the last general recent elections held in May 2011, he was re-elected with a whopping 67.4% majority. After the Conservative Party won the general elections in January 2006, Prime Minister Harper appointed Deepak Obhrai as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position he still continues to hold. He was later vested with the additional responsibilities of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation in March 2008, and that of the Parliamentary Secretary for International Human Rights.

Prior to entering the political arena, he has been an Air Traffic

Controller, been employed with the City of Calgary Electric Systems, and has also struck it out successfully on his own as an independent businessman. Married to Neena Obhrai with two daughters Priti and Kaajal; son Aman; and son-in-law Robin Martin, his family has since been further blessed with grandson Davin Jacob in 2006, and the arrival of granddaughter Evasha in the year 2008.

In September 2013, in recognition of his many years of public service as a Member of Parliament and in promoting the Government's foreign affairs agenda

conferred upon him in Washington D.C. recently. In his acceptance speech, Mr. Obhrai said : "All members of the Indian diaspora in Canada have played a role in strengthening ties between Canada and India and I accept this honour on their behalf."


Talking about his experiences during the long tenure he has held as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he said he has for long been interacting with the external affairs establishment of India, and quipped: "India's present external affairs minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, is the fifth

## **THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TOO HAS BEEN APPRECIATIVE OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY DEEPAK OBHRAI IN PROMOTING INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS, AND IN 2009, CONFERRED THE PRESTIGIOUS PRAVASI BHARATIYA SAMMAN AWARD, THE HIGHEST HONOUR GIVEN TO OVERSEAS INDIANS**

internationally as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Obhrai was appointed to Her Majesty's Privy Council for Canada. As the former chair of the Canada-India Parliamentary Friendship Group, Deepak had initiated many activities leading to further strengthening of Canada's relations with India. For the past thirteen years, Deepak has organized and hosted the National Diwali Celebration on Parliament Hill. Africa is his other great passion. Born and raised in Tanzania, he has travelled widely across Africa and continues to strive toward building bridges of understanding between Canada and Africa. He is a member of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association as well.

The Government of India too has been appreciative of the role played by Deepak Obhrai in promoting India-Canada relations, and in 2009, conferred the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award, the highest honour given to overseas Indians. He was also the recipient of the prestigious Pride of India 2014 Award, which was

consecutive foreign minister of India I am interfacing with since I took up this role ... ." Referring to his unbroken representation in the Canadian House of Commons, he ascribes it all to hard work, discounts lady luck, says that a thread of destiny invariably runs through our lives, and that it is ultimately up to us to use that thread to form the warp and weave of our aspirations, goals and objectives.

Recalling his early days in Canada when he got into provincial politics, he avers that the going was tough in those days, as there were several obstacles that come up for a brown-skinned Asian to succeed in a predominantly white society, but we ought not to think of them as insurmountable. Hard work, focus, and stubbornness are the character traits he attributes his showing to, and says all these were of immense help in his surmounting social and other barriers to forge ahead in his adopted country. 

**CHAKRAVARTHI SUCHINDRAN**

*The writer is a technocrat who dabbles in journalism print & broadcast, photography & creative visual arts.*