

AJIT JAIN
in Toronto

Satwinder Bains director, Center for Indo-Canadian Studies

After an extensive search and recruiting process, the University College of Fraser Valley has named Satwinder Bains Director of its Center for Indo-Canadian Studies.

Bains has been involved in the planning of the Center since its inception three years ago and is delighted to take on a formal role. "I am very happy to be given this responsibility," she told *India Abroad* November 10.

"I have been teaching South Asian studies for four years," Bains said. "I also have 20 years of working with the community, on awareness, immigration issues, planning and program development at the federal and provincial levels."

The University College, she said, has 10,000 students, one-quarter being of Indian descent. UCFV's research department has found that Fraser Valley has the highest proportion of Indo-Canadians of any metropolitan area in Canada.

Despite its short span of existence, over 2,500 students have already taken courses at the Indo-Canadian Studies center. Bains attributed this to its unique location. "South Asians have the largest concentration in Fraser Valley. We are the third most ethnically diverse community. When students graduate from here, they find work in our community. They want to be sure their knowledge is relevant to the community."

She went on to note that "there is a real realization within the student population that the South Asian community itself is looking for that expertise to help them in social work."

When asked if she would be able to analyze the reasons contributing to an increasing number of cases of domestic violence



■ Ujjal Dosanjh (right), Liberal Member of Parliament, inaugurates the opening of the Center. Satwinder Bains (third, left) looks on

amongst the South Asian community, Bains said, "It isn't unique to our commu-

nity alone. It is a societal issue." British Columbia Attorney General Wally

Oppal, himself an Indo-Canadian, has called violence within the community 'a cancer.' To that observation, Bains repeatedly said, "We need to put our heads together and identify what's lacking in society. I believe the issue is more deeply entrenched in terms of how we view marriage, relationships, destiny and faith."

Her advice as a teacher and activist was to create awareness.

"There should be a coming together of the community to discuss issues. I am keenly interested in cross-cultural community development and how communities support one another. We are moving away, in Canada, from a model where one culture dominates to where cultural communities have a real influence in contributing to a truly multicultural society."

The Center for Indo-Canadian Studies was made possible through the financial contribution of the community, in particular the Indo-Canadian community, which has strongly supported this project since its beginning three years ago, she said. Bains views that support as both a vote of confidence and be obligation to be lived up to.