



Lorne Mackenzie, UCFV Business Administration program chair, with Professor B.S. Ghuman and Professor Dhian Kaur Ghuman, both of Panjab University, and Parm Bains, campaign chair for UCFV's Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research endowment.

## UCFV hosts lectures on Punjab economy

UCFV took another step in its quest to foster dialog about topics related to Canada–India business and economic development recently by hosting two professors from Panjab University in Chandigarh, India, for guest lectures.

### Punjab Economy at the Crossroads

Professor **B.S. Ghuman**, chair of the Public Administration department at Panjab University, focused on the state of the Punjab economy.

The phenomenal growth of Punjab's agriculture helped India to overcome its food shortages and also brought widespread prosperity in the state, noted Ghuman. Until 1997, the economy of Punjab experienced a rate of growth of 5% per annum for about 25 years. No other state of the Indian Union matched Punjab's sustained growth rate. However, as Professor Ghuman explained, the glorious past of the Punjab economy is under threat. During the Ninth

Five-Year Plan (1997–98 to 2001–02), the Punjab economy experienced a deceleration in its rate of growth. That deceleration, particularly during the post-globalization phase, is a source of serious concern among researchers and policy makers. Other parts of the Indian economy are reaping the benefits of globalization, but Punjab, because of its reliance on agriculture, has been slow in taking advantage of the new opportunities.

For Dr. Ghuman, Punjab is now trapped in a crisis, which is reflected by: stagnation in the productivities of principal crops, namely, wheat and rice; declining returns from agriculture; a declining rate of growth; and the degradation of environmental resources. A number of factors are also hindering the industrialization of the land-locked state, including a lack of mineral resources, a location disadvantage in relation to major national markets, and its proximity to a sensitive international border.

**Please see next page.**

## Dr. B.S. Ghuman, continued

However, Dr. Ghuman explained that there are many reasons to remain optimistic. He believes that Punjab has the potential to reverse the deceleration process on the basis of the following strengths: a well-developed infrastructure, adequate deposits of commercial banks, a skilled manpower, abundant agriculture-based raw material, an adequate market reflected by the dominance of a middle class, the keen interest of NRIs in the Punjab economy, improvement in Indo-Pak trade relations, and well-developed intellectual capital.



Dr. B.S. Ghuman

His own analysis led him to conclude that the future of the Punjab economy lies in the promotion of non-agricultural activities, particularly industrial activities. The predominance of small-scale industrial units also needs to be replaced by an integrated model of industrialization, he said.

## Contract Farming in Punjab: Problems and Prospects

Professor **Dhian Kaur Ghuman**, chair of the Geography department at Panjab University (Chandigarh), spoke on contract farming in the Punjab.

She outlined how the Government of Punjab, in order to promote agricultural diversification, introduced a contract farming program in 2003, focusing on the winter cropping season of a pilot project area of 30,000 acres. Prof. Ghuman presented the findings of her recent research on the implementation of this program and how it is perceived by participating farmers.

The introduction of contract farming in Punjab is meant to address some of the problems which have emerged in the local agriculture due to an overemphasis on wheat-paddy cultivation as part of the Green Revolution Strategy. Monoculture of these two crops has adversely affected the economy as well as ecology of the state. Occupying 42 percent and 30 percent of the total cropped



Dr. Dhian Kaur Ghuman

area of the state, these constitute 22.32 percent and 10.77 percent of India's wheat and rice production. An overproduction of these two crops has led to problems of handling, transport, and storage of food grains. Cultivation of high-yielding varieties of paddy, particularly under assured tubewell irrigation, has resulted in an alarming depletion of the underground water table in the sweet water zone. The burning of paddy straw has caused air pollution. Other problems such as the decline in soil fertility, an increased incidence of insect pests, weeds, and their increased resistance towards use of chemical inputs, declining yields, and declining profit margins for farmers, are also all associated with paddy-wheat monoculture. That type of agriculture is thus considered unsustainable.

Under such a situation, the diversification of cropping patterns has become inevitable. Contract farming can provide an impetus for diversification. It refers to the type of farming based on agreements between agri-processing companies and growers for the production of a stipulated quantity of a particular commodity of a specified quality.

Dr. Ghuman explained that the government program is gaining popularity among all categories of farmers, largely due to the higher profit margins and assured marketing. Her research has also identified a number of issues which will require further attention in coming years.

## UCFV awards honorary degree to Dr. Kuldip Gill: Valley daughter returns to share fruits of a life well lived

When Dr. Kuldip Gill looks at the view of Mt. Baker and the Fraser River from her new hilltop home in Mission, she knows that she has come full circle. Back, after 40 years away, to a home that she never really left since arriving in the community as a young girl in 1941.

It's what she did in the intervening years that has led UCFV to bestow her with an honorary doctor of letters degree in recognition of her academic career as a social anthropologist, her extensive community work, and, of late, her budding literary career.

Dr. Gill didn't start post-secondary studies until she was past the age of 30, after caring for her extended family during earlier years.

"My first schooling was watching the teacher write letters on a slate, as I copied them in the sand in India, and I've been fascinated with learning ever since," she recalls.

She started at Langara College in Vancouver as a part-time student, and entered UBC at the third-year level.

"I decided anthropology was what I really wanted to do, and was encouraged to focus on South Asia: India and Sri Lanka."

After finishing her master's degree, she was preparing to do fieldwork in India for her PhD when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated.

"There was great political turmoil and my university said it wasn't safe for me to go. I was heartbroken."

She regrouped, and turned her attention to the health care beliefs and practices of the women of the Indian diaspora in Fiji, studying their communities and helping to set up a hospital auxiliary while she was there.

After earning her PhD she became an anthropologist for hire as well as an active volunteer, teaching sessionally, conducting workshops, sitting on boards, consulting, and generally sharing her expertise.

"I have always believed that we all have a civic duty — the government can't do it all, and if we have the privilege of receiving an education we must use it to benefit society."

Dr. Gill has never stopped learning and growing, and started only recently, in 1997, to write poetry.

"I have always loved poetry, but had never written it. In a time of personal angst and looking back on my life, I started a memoir, but found it hard to find a way to write without talking about people in my midst and the chance of hurting people. Poetry was a form that allowed me to disclose little bits through metaphor without relying too



**Social anthropologist and published poet Dr. Kuldip Gill, a member of a pioneer Sikh family in the Mission area, received an honorary doctorate from UCFV at its recent Convocation ceremonies. Dr. Gill's books of poetry are available at the UCFV and Fraser Valley Regional libraries.**

much on explicit narrative. I struggle with how to say certain things, and poetry lets me express them. It's very forgiving."

She sent her manuscript to Harbour Publishing and was surprised when they picked it up for a book, which became *Dharma Rasa*.

"Harbour likes writing that's about smaller communities, and I had never really left Mission behind. I write about ordinary people, the immigrant story of my family who were in the wood industries, so it was right up their alley."

*Dharma Rasa* was published in 1999 and won the B.C. 2000 Book Award for poetry.

Dr. Gill wanted to learn more about writing and eventually took a Master of Fine Arts degree at UBC.

Now, having recently returned to Mission, Dr. Gill has reached a place in life where she feels "at ease," and surrounded by serendipity. She's looking forward to more involvement with her former home community, with UCFV and its Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research, and with poetry and creative writing, while continuing her volunteer work in many contexts.

"We as Canadians are immensely richer for having Kuldip in our midst, and in the Fraser Valley we are doubly blessed to have our daughter return," said UCFV professor **Madeleine Hardin**. "She is exactly the kind of role model, lifelong learner, and passionate community member who should be honoured."

## Punjabi University Vice Chancellor visits UCFV

UCFV took further steps to strengthen its ties with Indian post-secondary institutions recently when it hosted the Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University (Patiala, Punjab), **Mr. Swarn Singh Boparai**. The Vice Chancellor was accompanied by **Prof. Baltej Singh Mann**, and **Dr. Jodh Singh**, Professor of Sikhism and Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*.

UCFV is exploring different possibilities for collaboration with Punjabi University, in particular between UCFV's future Chair of Canada-India Business Development and the new Punjabi University Research Chair on the same topic, which was announced by the Chief Minister of Punjab, **Captain Amarinder Singh**, during his recent visit to British Columbia.

During his meeting with UCFV senior administrators and faculty, Vice-Chancellor Boparai explained that Punjabi University had launched "a new educational movement for equitable distribution of knowledge and for the upliftment of rural poor."

"When the whole world is at the threshold of new beginnings, large sections of rural people are lagging behind," he noted. "Keeping this in mind, Punjabi University has rededicated itself for the employment of rural people through equitable and affordable technical education."



**Dr. Wayne Welsh, Vice President Academic at UCFV, with Mr. Swarn Singh Boparai, Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University. UCFV is exploring possibilities for collaboration with Punjabi University.**

**Dr. Wayne Welsh**, VP Academic at UCFV, welcomed the new opportunity for collaboration and pointed out that the two universities have much in common. The two institutions are engaged in discussions about creating a collaboration agreement between the two institutions.

### Your support is needed now more than ever!

In April 2005, the BC provincial government announced that UCFV is eligible for a \$1.25 million grant to establish a Regional Innovation Chair on Canada-India Business and Economic Development. The Chair would be of huge economic and cultural benefit to our community as well as communities across Canada and in India. However...

**To receive the \$1.25 million grant, the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research must raise matching funds by February 2006.**

For more information, please contact:  
Parm Bains, Campaign Chair,  
Phone: 604-854-4547, email: [parm.bains@ucfv.ca](mailto:parm.bains@ucfv.ca)

### Contacts for the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research Endowment

<b>Parm Bains,</b> Campaign Chair Phone: 604-854-4547 Email: <a href="mailto:parm.bains@ucfv.ca">parm.bains@ucfv.ca</a>	<b>David James,</b> Campaign Director, Phone: 604-854-4566 Email: <a href="mailto:david.james@ucfv.ca">david.james@ucfv.ca</a>
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