

# UCB to Document Stories of Indian American Entrepreneurs

By RICHARD SPRINGER  
India-West Staff Reporter

A two-semester course at the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley has been launched to document the accomplishments and struggles of Indian American entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley.

The program is being funded by the Bhandari Foundation, a charitable trust launched in 1994 by Los Gatos, Calif., entrepreneur Narpat Bhandari and his wife, Chandra.

The course, "The Indian Diaspora in the Silicon Valley," has already begun meeting to catalogue oral histories of Indian American entrepreneurs and make a documentary film about them.

"This is something I wanted to do for my grandchildren and great grandchildren long after I'm gone," Bhandari told *India-West*. "To commemorate (the histories) of Indian American entrepre-

neurs, there couldn't be a better place than UCB."

The instructor selected to teach the class, Darren Zook, a veteran teacher of South Asia-related courses at Berkeley, recently won the university's "Outstanding Teacher Award," the only honor awarded by the students at Berkeley.

Zook told *India-West* Sept. 20 that he was besieged by applications from undergraduate students to enroll in the course, which was originally limited to 10 students. He expanded the class to 11, when one student turned in an application saying that getting admitted would be a life-changing experience.

Zook said there will be three central elements to the course: "gaining a deep understanding of the Indian Diaspora as it relates to Silicon Valley," discovering a methodology on how to do good research and producing the documentary film.

Students will select three Indian



Narpat and Chandra Bhandari pose with instructor Darren Zook, who is currently teaching a two-semester course, "The Indian Diaspora in the Silicon Valley," at the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. The new program is being funded by the Bhandari Foundation.

American entrepreneurs "as the centerpiece" of the film. Non-Indians and Indian Americans outside Silicon Valley will be interviewed for their perspectives.

There are two Indian American students in the class who had already planned visits to India during school breaks, so there may be

a chance to conduct interviews in India, Zook said, adding that the oral histories will be archived for scholars and a public showing of the documentary may be held sometime in May.

Bhandari, a private venture capitalist and founding member of The Indus Entrepreneurs,

said he feels it is important for mainstream society in the U.S. to understand that Indian Americans "came to this country not only as takers, but as active contributors who reshaped our industry and made America a new tolerant and diverse country which can enjoy, benefit and profit from its new global relations."

Raka Ray, Sarah Kailath Chair of India Studies at the Center for South Asian Studies at UCB, in an e-mail to *India-West*, pointed out that the accomplishments of Indian entrepreneurs "in business terms have been staggering and well documented."

She added that the Bhandari-funded program "will attempt to examine the largely neglected sociological side of this revolutionary history and thereby cast the economic success of Silicon Valley's Indian entrepreneurs in a much more nuanced and compelling light than do the simplistic stereotypes about Indian tech-

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nologists dominant in the media today."

Bhandari, who founded Aspen Semiconductor in the late 1980s, endured a bitter litigation against Cypress Semiconductor and general partner Larry Sonsini of the Palo Alto, Calif.-based law firm of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati. Bhandari won a settlement against Cypress and the conflict of interest case against Sonsini was settled confidentially.

"I want to help Indian American entrepreneurs. I don't want anyone to suffer what I suffered for eight years," Bhandari said. He said he recently did some "soul-searching" on what he could do to build upon TIE's outstanding successes.

Born in Sojat, Rajasthan, he said he is proud of his trajectory from India to the U.S. "I want to keep my feet on the ground. I don't want to ever forget that I came here with \$5 in my pocket."

Depending on the success of the U.C. Berkeley program, "I may renew it," he said.

The Bhandari Foundation has supported projects in education and medicine, most notably a school near Jodhpur and the Dr. Willard Fee Lectureship Chair in Medical Research on Cancer at Stanford University.

Chandra Bhandari is an educator with a long-standing interest in the study of peace and nonviolence, as well as the art, history, politics and culture of India.