

Two-day International Conference
on
Guru Nanak Dev Ji- Life, Philosophy and Legacy
Organized by Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi

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New Delhi: Commemorating the 550th Prakash Purab of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi organised a two-day International Conference on the theme, *Guru Nanak Dev Ji: Life, Philosophy and Legacy* on 27-28 September 2019. The Conference began with the recital of melodious *Shabad* by students of the Divinity Society.

Chairman, College Governing Body S. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Padma Shri welcoming the dignitaries elaborated on the cultural legacy of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, philosophy of ‘Ek Onkar’ and relevance of the Guru’s teachings with especial impetus on gender equality. The Principal of the College and Convenor of the Conference, *Prof. (Dr.) Harpreet Kaur* accorded a warm welcome to the guests and shared teachings and travels of ‘*Jagat Gur Baba*’, Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

The ***Chief Guest*** for the occasion was Former Vice President of India, ***Shri Hamid Ansari Ji*** who aptly outlined the Guru’s image as a powerful motivator who could appeal to the people of varied shades and opinions. He recited Urdu couplets in praise of the Guru Nanak Dev and stressed how the present generation should learn from his teachings.

Prof. Gurinder Singh Mann, Global Institute for Sikh Studies, New York delivered the Keynote Address. He threw light on celebrations, research literature, academic deliberations and institutions created at the time of 500th birth celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev in 1969, which he had closely followed and showed his concern on the decline of those institutions. He implored that in this auspicious year, 2019, our emphasis should be on taking the legacy of Guru forward through serious academic accomplishments.

Dr. Afroz Ahmed, Advisor, Ministry of Revenue and Forest, Mumbai showed his concern on the environmental degradation at present and focused upon the environmental concerns addressed in Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s Bani to solve these pressing environmental issues. *Dr. Mohinder Singh*, Director, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan addressed different aspects of Sikhism and Humanity at large, through reflection on the dialogues between Guru Nanak Dev and Mardana and talked on the exhibition at display during the conference. *Prof. Rawail Singh*, Former Head, Department of Punjabi, DU proposing vote of thanks highlighted the need to emphasise comparative perspective on Sikhism. *Dr. Jaswinder Singh*, Principal, Guru Teg Bahadur Khalsa College, DU, *S. Paramjit Singh Rana* and *Captain L.S. Bahl* also graced the inaugural session. Rare hand written manuscripts and books by *Dr. Harbans Singh Chawla*, Eminent Historian were showcased during the conference.

The **second session** on the theme, *Ek Onkar, Concept, Philosophy and Traditional Thought* was chaired by Dr. Surjit Singh Bhatti, Former Principal of College at Ghanour. Dr. Harbhajan Singh, Former Director, Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun discussed the continuities and differences between Vedic Hinduism and Sikhism. Dr. Manmohan, Additional Director, IB, Chandigarh elaborated on the concept of 'Ek Onkar'. Dr. Jaswinder Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala pointed out the issues in translation of the key concepts of Sikhism into English. The **third session** entailed *Presentations by faculty members from different colleges and universities* that was chaired by S. Makhan Singh, Former DGM, Punjab and Sind Bank. Papers presented were on various sub-themes of the conference like, Gosht in Punjabi Literature, importance of *Kirat Karo, Naam Japo, Vand Chakho*, practice of *Sikhi* and gender equality. The papers were presented in Hindi, English and Punjabi.

Session 4 was chaired by Dr. Sukhdial Singh, eminent historian. The theme of the session was *Image of Guru Nanak: In Context of Janam Sakhi Tradition*. Dr. Balbir Madhopuri, Director, Punjabi Bhawan, Delhi discussed the literary legacy of Guru Nanak Ji as well as his struggle for the social reform in degenerating society of those times. Dr. Kulvinder Singh, Director, Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun shared the importance of *Sakhis*. Dr. Gurnam Kaur Bedi, Former Principal, Government College, Amritsar and Dr. Balvinder Kaur Bhatti, Department of Historical Studies, Punjabi University Patiala reflected upon changing image of Guru Nanak. In **Session 5**, presentations were made by the faculty members from different institutions that was chaired by Dr. Manjit Singh, Former Head, Department of Punjabi that entailed discussion around the topics like, Significance of Guru Nanak's Teachings in Contemporary India, need to follow principles of Guru Nanak on social justice, equality, self-service etc., role of music as a medium to disseminate Bani, implications of opening the Kartarpur Corridor in the contemporary times and others. The chair concluded by reflecting on ideology of Guru Nanak and historical perspectives on the same.

The **last session for the day** chaired by Prof. Bhagwan Josh, CHS, JNU was on the theme, *Guru Nanak Dev Ji and His Legacy: Its Relevance to Society, Politics, History, Culture and Spiritual Tradition*. Dr. Parveen Kumar, Department of Punjabi, Punjab University underlined the relevance of Guru Nanak's Bani in Present Times. The central theme of Shri Desh Raj Kali, Eminent Scholar and Journalist was Guru Nanak's emphasis on reaching moral heights that would pave the way through which the humans can reach God. Dr. Vanita, Convener, Punjabi Board Sahitya Academy emphasized relevance in the post-modern age for the Guru was a votary of the depressed and in this way, was ahead of the Western scholars of the post-modern times. The chair emphasized Guru Nanak's role in bridging all differences in the society.

Day 2 comprised of presentations on engaging themes as well. **Session 6** with the theme of *Guru Nanak Bani: A Study of Musicology: Ragas, Singing Styles and Folklores* had papers by different scholars. Dr. Jasbir Kaur, Department of Punjabi, Punjab University, Patiala spoke on the musical legacy through a lecture-cum-demonstration, wherein she rendered *Shabad* of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Dr. Darya, Department of Punjabi, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar analyzed the folklore aspects of Guru Nanak Ji's philosophy. The session closed

with concluding remarks by the Chair, Prof. Jagdish Singh, Director, Naad Pargaas, Amritsar who highlighted how music was a means to convey Guru Nanak's philosophy to the commoners. **Session 7** entailed paper presentations by under graduate and post graduate students and research scholars from various institutions. Papers were on various topics like, religious epistemology, impact of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings on organizational behavior, women issues and others. The chair for the session was Dr. Parveen Kumar, Department of Punjabi, Punjab University. Best Paper Award was given in two categories, Graduate\ Post Graduate and Research Scholars.

Session 8 on *Tradition of Dialogue: Thought and Study* was chaired by Dr. Harbans Kaur Sagoo, Director, International Centre for Sikh Studies, Delhi who said that dialogue was used as a methodology by Baba Nanak firmly based on spirituality. Dr. Avatar Singh, Ramgarhia College, Phagwara discussed how Guru Nanak's philosophy brought desired changes in the society. Dr. Sukhwinder Singh, Department of Punjabi, Punjab University, Chandigarh underlined role of Guru Nanak in social reconstruction and Dr. Gurmeet Singh Sidhu, Incharge, Guru Gobind Singh Chair, Punjabi University, Patiala shared the significance in the contemporary times.

The **Valedictory Session** was on the theme of *Nature, Environment and Guru Nanak Bani*. Prof. Himadri Banerjee, Jadavpur University delivering the valedictory speech discussed about the traditions, culture and social issues in the Sikh Community in the Eastern and North Eastern States. His research and connect with the Sikhs is really worth appreciating. S. Gurvinder Singh Dhamija, Director, Haryana Punjabi Sahitya Academy was the Guest of Honour. He called Guru Nanak as the 'biggest planner of the planet' and presented his original research on 'Lohgarh' tracing the connect of Sikhs Gurus especially from the Sixth Guru onwards with Fort Lohgarh commonly associated with Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. The session was chaired by Dr. Swarajbir, Editor, Punjabi Tribune who reflected on the Guru's impact on the common people especially with reference to language and social reforms. Dr. Ajay Kumar Gupta, Director, ICSSR and Dr. Rawail Singh, Former Head, Department of Punjabi, DU highlighted the significance of the theme in the present times and congratulated the Management, Principal, Staff and Students for successfully organizing the conference especially appreciating the endeavor of the college to disseminate teachings to the students. The session ended with vote of thanks by the College Principal, Prof. Harpreet Kaur wherein she underlined the crux of the discussions of various sessions.

In all, the two-day conference provided an enriched platform for fruitful interaction between eminent scholars, researchers, faculty and students. The deliberations and reflections on the teachings and philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev Ji were thought-provoking imploring one and all to imbibe it in words and deeds. ***It was a humble contribution of Mata Sundri College in the series of events being organized world over in the auspicious year 2019 to mark the 550th Birth Celebrations of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.*** The event was covered extensively by the print and electronic media.

