

QUADRICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS OF THE COMPILATION OF THE AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB

SECOND INTERNATIONAL IUS SEMINAR 2002 *Sabd Guru, Conscience, and Consciousness* Saturday, September 21, 2002

PREAMBLE

It was about 400 years ago (1604 CE) when Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, who succeeded to the House of Nanak (*Mahla*), received the *Bani* (words) of the first four Gurus and of some *Bhagats*, Sufis, and *Sants* (saints), from his father, Guru Ramdas, the Fourth Guru. He added his own *Bani* and the *Swayiae* (praises / laudations / eulogies) of the first five Gurus, composed by *Bhatts* (bards). After arranging the collected *Bani* (verses) into different sections and sub-sections under different *Raags* (musical modes) he handed it over to Bhai Gurdas for copying into a *Pothi* (book). While compiling the *Bani* to give it a form of *Pothi*, Guru Arjan declared this *Pothi* as *Parmesar* (the Guru, the Enlightener) as indicated in his following verse:

pQI¹ prmsr² k ॥ Qm³]

siD⁴ sllg⁵ gwih⁶ gx⁷ gibl⁸ plrn bhm⁹ igAwni¹⁰]

AGGS, M 5, p 1226 [1].

"The *Pothi*¹ (*Granth*)¹ is equated³ to the *Guru/Enlightener*².

(Because from this *Pothi*) the noble people⁴ in a congregation⁵ sing / discuss⁶ the attributes⁷ and the wisdom¹⁰ of the Almighty^{8,9}."

The *Pothi* was declared as **Parmesar/Guru** by Guru Arjan because of the fact that it contains the *Sabd* (Word/*Bani*/verse), which was declared **Guru** by Guru Nanak: sbdugrl¹sr²iq³ Din c⁴ ॥] AGGS, M 1, P 943.

"*Sabd is Guru, consciousness and intention toward it make one its disciple (Sikh).*"

Therefore, this *Pothi* became the *Parmesar* / the *Guru* / the *Enlightener* for the Sikhs right from the time of its compilation. Henceforth, Guru Arjan himself started preaching from this *Pothi* from that very day of its compilation. All the other five Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, also taught from this *Pothi*. *Bani* of Guru Teg Bahadur, the 9th Guru, was incorporated by the 10th Guru, Gobind Singh, in this

Pothi around 1705 CE.

In 1708 CE at the time of his demise, Guru Gobind Singh declared that there will be no more Gurus in person to the House of Nanak; nevertheless, the *Sabd* that was incorporated in this *Pothi*, which was declared *Parmesar* / *Guru* by Guru Arjan in 1604, will remain the **Eternal Guru** of the Sikhs forever. Consequently every Sikh should seek guidance from this *Eternal Guru* and preach the wisdom from it to the humanity. It also eliminated priesthood of any type in Sikhism.

After a great success of the First IUS International Seminar, **Gurdwara: Past, Present, and Future**, held on September 15, 2001, in continuation of *Quadricentennial Celebration of Compilation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib*, the **Institute for Understanding Sikhism** (IUS) in collaboration with le département des sciences religieuses de l'université du québec à montréal held the Second IUS International Seminar on, **SABD GURU, CONSCIENCE, AND CONSCIOUSNESS**, on September 21, 2002 in the auditorium at la Centre des Loisirs du parc à montréal.

When the title of the seminar was announced a few scholars raised their eyebrows that it would be very difficult to hold a seminar on such a difficult subject. There is no doubt that to discuss about *Sabd*, *Guru*, *conscience*, and *consciousness* is very difficult task. Then I told myself if the **INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM** would not discuss this subject then who else would? After persuasion some scholars came forward to discuss different aspects of this subject. The wonderful result is before you to look at. I am glad to report that the invited scholars have done wonderful job to present their views on this topic keeping in view the *Gurbani* incorporated in the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* and other works published somewhere else on these and similar topics. The

Institute also believes that a lot more can be written on this important subject. We are open to all the scholars who would like to write more on this subject.

The First Session was chaired by Prof Mathieu Boisvert of University of Quebec at Montreal. Before seminar was declared open, Parminder Singh Ragi, Gurdwara Sahib Quebec recited a Sabd, *Vidya vichari tan parupkari*. Prof Harjit Singh Bhabra, Vice President of IUS and Chairperson of the Seminar welcomed the delegates and the participants. He explained the objectives of the **Seminar** and of the **Institute for Understanding Sikhism** and its achievements. The Seminar was declared open by Mr Baljit Singh Chadha, a well-known businessman of Canada, a devout Sikh and who has supported various teaching programs on Sikhism and other subjects in various universities and also supported various religious organizations other than that of Sikhism. He is also protagonist of multiculturalism in Canada.

The Second Session was chaired by Dr Bhai Harbans Lal, Emeritus Professor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, President, Institute For Understanding Sikhism presented *Sabd Guru to Granth Guru – a Study*. He emphasized that it is necessary to understand Sabd, Guru, and Granth independently and then in combination of ‘Sabd Guru’ and ‘Granth Guru’. He mentioned that more and more attention is being paid to the idolization of the ‘Granth Guru’ rather than on the understanding the ‘Sabd Guru’. He had also presented another paper, *Understanding Sabd and Guru, and their Implications*, closely connected with his above paper. It was presented at the **Second International Conference – 2002** at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar on October 17-19, 2002; and to the Sikh intellectuals and professionals (including the university professors and staff of the Sikh Review, on November 24, 2002 at Kolkata. Since it is necessary to understand *Sabd* and *Guru* before discussing on the *Sabd Guru* and *Granth Guru*, therefore, this article is placed as the first one in the proceedings of the current seminar.

Prof Hardev Singh Virk, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar talked about *Concept of Sabd Guru: An Inter-comparison of Science and Spirituality* by referring his work on the importance of Sabd Guru discussed in *Sidh Ghosts* and other verses. He could not submit his complete paper for publication on time because of some other important work to be attended at home. It will be published, when received. Dr Pashaura Singh, Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan, USA, discussed about the *Transforming Power of Divine Word (Sabd) -A Focus on Mystical Dimension of Sikhism*. Dr Manmohan Singh, Former Professor of Psychiatry,

University of Illinois, USA, discussed *Consciousness of Reality and Truth in Eastern and Western Thought in Light of Guru Granth*. He also could not submit his complete paper on time. On its receipt it will be published in the forthcoming issue of the Journal.

The Third Session was chaired by Prof Balbir Singh Sahni, Professor in Concordia University, Montreal. Dr Bhai Harbans Lal, Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, India presented his paper on, *Surat: Higher Consciousness of Divine Engagement*, as is understood in the Gurbani. Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal, Eastern Tennessee Sikh Association, Johnson City, Tenn. USA presented ‘*Consciousness and Guru Granth*’ in medical terms by quoting Gurbani. Dr Sukhraj Singh Dhillon, Molecular Biologist, Cary, North Carolina, USA explained, *Religious War and New Consciousness in Nanakian Philosophy*, scientifically and according to Gurbani. And finally Dr Jarnail Singh, Sikh Social and Educational Society, Kanata, Ontario, Canada talked about, *Conscience of Custodians of Sikhi (Sikhism)*, that they failed badly in performing their duties in dissemination of Sikhism to the Sikhs and rest of the humanity.

The Fourth Session was chaired by Dr Parminder Singh Chahal, Scientist, Biotechnology Research Institute, Montreal. During this session **Late S Amar Singh Chhatwal** was honored for his outstanding journalist contributions on Sikhism by publishing *The Sikh Courier*. The homage was read by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal. {See Homage in *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 4 (2): 46, 2002}. The Plaque of Honor was presented by S Baljit Singh Chadha to Mrs Mohinpreet Magon of Montreal, daughter of Late S Amar Singh Chhatwal.

The Fifth Session was chaired by S Prithvipal Singh Saluja. S Manjit Singh Chatrik presented a poem on *Sabd Guru*. Dr Harbans Lal proposed a resolution. The resolution was about the concern of the speakers and INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM on the increase of misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepresentation of Sikhism in the Sikh literature by the Sikh as well as by the non-Sikh scholars. Prof Devinder Singh Chahal presented a recent example of such a misconstruing of < into 1Å by the Dharam Parchar Committee of the SGPC, Amritsar on the title page of the new magazine, *Gurmat Gian*, in Hindi. The resolution was discussed in length and a committee of five members was suggested to proceed further on this serious issue. A detailed article on this topic written later by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal has also been included in the proceeding of the seminar.

The Final Session, Panel Discussion, was chaired by Dr Manmohan Singh. Mrs Kulbir Kaur Ahuja, President of Gurdwara Sahib Quebec, Montreal, S Kiran Pal Singh, President of Gurdwara Sahib Guru Nanak Darbar, Lasalle, and S Jagmail Singh Virk, Vice-President, Gurdwara Sahib Greater Montreal, DDO presented their views on the efforts of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism for holding such important seminars and they also explained the activities of their respective Gurdwaras.

Recommendations:

A good discussion was held on the various rituals being practiced by the Sikhs. This session ended with the following recommendations:

- There is a need of making the Sikhs aware of the importance of *vichar* on Sabd Guru rather than on idolism of Granth Guru although all due respects are to be paid to the Granth Guru.
- All the rituals being performed in Sikhism are to be looked into carefully by testing them on Gurbani, science, and logic – the touchstones of truth. All such rituals, which fail these tests, should be stopped.

Hospitality

- Guest speakers were hosted for the weekend by Mr and Mrs Inderpal Singh Ahuja and Prof and Mrs Devinder Singh Chahal and family at their residences.
- Reception to the Speakers and the organizers was hosted on September 20 by Prof and Mrs Devinder Singh Chahal and family at their residence.
- Lunch for all the attendees for the conference was provided by the Gurdwara Sahib Guru Nanak Darbar, Lasalle and Park Extension, Montreal.
- Another reception to the Speakers and other guests from Montreal was hosted on September 21 by Mr Pavitar Singh Bhandhari's family at their residence. A speech (page 10 of this issue) was delivered by Miss Vaishali Bhandhari, daughter of the Bhandharis.
- Mr Baljit Singh Chadha's family honoured the speakers and the organizing committee with dinner at Bombay Palace Restaurant in Montreal.
- Mementos were presented to all the guest speakers by Mrs Kulbir Kaur Ahuja, President, Gurdwara Sahib Quebec, Montreal on behalf of the INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM in the Gurdwara Sahib Quebec on Sunday, September 22.