

PRESS RELEASE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
FORMULATING METHODOLOGY
FOR INTERPRETING GURBANI
Dedicated to
Max Arthur Macauliffe Centennial

Sept 21, 2013,

Civic Center, Ville des Dollards-des-Ormeaux (near Montreal), Quebec, Canada



Max Arthur Macauliffe

10 Sept 1841 – 15 Mar 1913),
 Senior Sikh-British administrator,
 Indian Civil Service,
 Prolific Scholar and Author,
 Renowned for his translation of the Sikh
 scripture and history into English.

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With the efforts of Prof. Davinder Singh Chahal, PhD, the Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS) came into existence in 1999 and it held its 1st conference in 2001. The aim of IUS is to spread the message of Gurbani in its real perspective as intended by Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism. There are many translations of Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) available today. However, none can be called perfect as it is a difficult job to convey the message of Gurbani in its real perspective, especially when translated into foreign languages and even in Punjabi. On Sept 21, 2013 IUS held its 12th conference at Civic Center, Ville des Dollards-des-Ormeaux (near Montreal), Quebec, Canada to highlight the methods that must be kept in mind when interpreting AGGS. Scholars from Canada, USA and UK presented their papers in the conference. This conference was dedicated to Max Arthur Macauliffe on his Centennial Anniversary, which was on March 15, 2013.

The conference started and ended by reciting of *Kirtan*; in the morning by Avneet Kaur Bhabra & Manmeet Singh Bhabra (*Vidyia vichari tan parupkaari...*) and in the evening by Mansirat Kaur & Nimrat Kaur (*Kot koti mere arja...*). After welcoming remarks by Dr. Parminder Singh Chahal, PhD and introduction of IUS by Gurinderjit Singh, B. Eng., M. Eng., Prof. Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD the founder of IUS, presented *Keynote Address* devoted to Macauliffe on his Centennial Anniversary who did 1st translation of Gurbani into English with the help of many Sikhs including Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha. Macauliffe noted that Sikhs who helped him with his job often translated the same verses of Gurbani very differently with entirely different meanings. The 1st translation of Gurbani in Punjabi was done by Giani Badan Singh with the aid of a group of scholars by 1883 under the Patronage of Raja Ripuduman Singh of Faridkot and later by Prof Sahib Singh in Punjabi and by Dr Gopal Singh in English followed by that of Bhai Manmohan Singh who did translation into Punjabi and English as well. All these translations and that followed later have been heavily influenced by the earlier work of Faridkot Vala Tika. It is generally agreed that all available translations have serious deficiencies.

The next Session started with Dr. Avtar Singh Dhaliwal, MD, from North Carolina, USA who presented his paper titled “Explicative Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani” that highlighted many points for improving translations. This was followed by a paper present by Dr. Kulbir S Thind, MD, from San Mateo, California, USA titled “Some Pitfalls of Translation of Aad Guru Granth Sahib into English”. Dr. Thind highlighted requirements for a good translation and of those issues that cause difficulties in translation of Gurbani into English along with many examples. After this Prof. Davinder Singh Chahal, Ph.D, from Laval, Quebec, Canada presented his paper “Application of Science and Logic in Interpreting Gurbani”. Prof. Chahal also explained in detail that application of etymological study can trace out real meanings of Gurbani words and if care is not taken it can result in entirely different interpretation. Dr. Harbans Lal, Ph.D, from Taxes, USA presented his paper and highlighted the point that translations must be consistent with Gurmat. A paper was then presented by Dr. Devinder Singh Sekhon, Ph.D, from Brampton, Ontario, Canada titled “Formulating Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani”. Dr. Sekhon, along with many other points he explained how some incorrect splitting of *Larivar* (continuous text) into words have caused some errors in the correct interpretation of Gurbani.

The final session of the conference dealt with two unrelated but important issues. Lovpreet Kaur a Ph.D student from Wolverhampton University, UK presented her paper on “Exploration of Gender Equality in Sikhism”. The last paper “Amrit Bani as a Trajectory of a Distinct Identity” was read by S. Charan Singh from Community College, Ashwa, Ontario, Canada. Prof. P.S. Bhandari, Montreal, Canada then presented a slide show of photos illustrating the role of IUS since its formation.

Resolutions

At the International Conference, *Formulating Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani*, held at Greater Montreal, Quebec, Canada on Saturday, September 21, 2013 the following two resolutions were passed:

In the above conference held by Institute of Understanding Sikhism, Montreal, Canada on September 21, 2013 and from its proceedings it was resolved that 'Formulation of Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani' by world class scholars is urgently needed. The resolution was moved by Dr. Kulbir Singh Thind, San Mateo, USA and seconded by Dr. Teja Singh, Brampton, Ontario, Canada and approved unanimously by the attendees with voice vote.

It was unanimously passed to bestow the honorific title of **GYANI** upon Max Arthur Macauliffe for his contributions to Sikhi (Sikhism) and introducing Sikhism to the English speaking people of the West. He will now be known as **Gyani Max Arthur Macauliffe**. The resolution was moved by Dr. Harpal Singh Buttar of Ottawa, Canada and seconded by Dr Teja Singh of Brampton, Ontario, Canada and was passed unanimously.

The following day scholars held a two-hour long round-table meeting to exchange ideas on how to proceed further with the mission. The exchange was very useful and a tentative plan for another conference to be held in Toronto area, Canada, a year later was decided.



Speakers (in the front row) with other guests and volunteers at the conference.