

INTRODUCTION

Department of Guru Nanak Studies and Objectives of International Conference

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Respected Prof Dr Ajaib Singh Brar, Vice Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Dr Jaswant Singh Neki, Ex- Director, P.G.I. Chandigarh and Secretary of Bhai Vir Singh Sadan, New Delhi, Prof Jaspal Singh, Vice Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala; Prof Dr Devinder Singh Chahal, President, *Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS)*, Canada; Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal, IUS; Distinguished Guests and dear Students, I, myself, and on behalf of the Department of Guru Nanak Studies welcome you all in the Inaugural Session of this three-day *International Conference: Uniqueness of Guru Nanak's Philosophy*.

The Department of Guru Nanak Studies was established in accordance with Article IV of the University Act with the main objective to study and research on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak and their cultural and religious impact in the context of Indian and Western civilizations. Keeping this objective in mind, the department had initiated different research projects besides teaching in four courses i.e. MA (Religious Studies), MA (Philosophy), M Phil (Religious Studies) and M Phil (Philosophy). Two referred research journals: *Journal of Sikh Studies* (since 1974) and (2003) are the regular Journals of this department. Guru Nanak Studies Centre and DRS -1 (SAP) are the UGC sponsored programs of the department. The department has to its credit about hundred books, five hundred research papers and thirty two issues of *Journal of Sikh Studies*. More than fifty students have completed PhDs and about twenty students got registered for the doctorate degree. Besides twenty-five Annual Seminars on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak Dev since 1986, the department has also organized eight International Conferences on the contemporary issues. This three-day International Conference on the theme '*Uniqueness of Guru Nanak's Philosophy*' has been organized by the *Department of Guru Nanak Studies* in collaboration with the *Institute for Understanding Sikhism*, Canada. As we all know, the rising trend towards science and technology and industrial development has brought a paradigm shift in the standards of living with new value patterns, affecting our



ways of thinking, modes of living and social etiquettes and has alienated us from our socio-cultural and spiritual heritage. The inquisitive spirit of modern youth seeks rational and scientific explanation for everything and therefore puts a query about the rationale behind religious concepts, beliefs and values of different religious traditions. Nevertheless, there are many questions which we need to ponder over such as:

Why religion in the present days is proving fatal for mankind?

Why does the negativity of man finds expression through the medium of religion?

Are we not inflating our ego by mere possession of religion as status symbol?

We need to analyze and reinterpret our religious traditions to meet the challenges of present times and to instill the significance of religion in our life and to inculcate value-oriented life for the posterity.

In this three-day conference, scholars from the interdisciplinary fields specialized in scientific, philosophical, religious, literary, historical, sociological and allied disciplines have come from India and abroad to present their papers on the distinctive aspects of Guru Nanak's philosophy; and his unique and pragmatic approach towards the phenomenal world, condemnation of external formalism, dogmatism, fundamentalism and his way of communication through interfaith dialogue. We

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have compiled the papers without making any changes keeping in view the originality of the author and differences in approach due to different backgrounds may be sorted out during discussion and before publication of these proceedings.

The faculty members of the department feel honored to welcome the distinguished dignitaries on the dais, and all those esteemed scholars associated with the *Institute for Understanding Sikhism*, Canada who have come from Canada, U.K., U.S.A., and Malaysia to participate in the conference. We also welcome the eminent scholars from different Universities and Institutions of India who have come from Mumbai, Varanasi, Pune, Madurai, New Delhi, Mohali, Malout, Patiala, Beas and from different colleges of Punjab to participate in the conference. We also welcome the Deans of various faculties, Heads and faculty members of various departments, administrative officers, staff, students of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. We feel confident that the deliberations and discussions here will provide innovative direction to the researchers for understanding the teachings of Guru Nanak and their relevance in the modern context. Once again we welcome you all and seek your blessings for the success of this conference.

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