

International Seminar on Guru Granth Sahib as a Universal Scripture

*A Report by Dr. Mohinder Singh**

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“The Guru Granth is a unique Scripture in world history as an example of inter-faith amity and cooperation”, said the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh while speaking at the Inaugural Session of an International Seminar on “Guru Granth Sahib and its Context” at New Delhi, on October 30, 2005. On this occasion the Prime Minister released a translation of Guru Granth Sahib by Dr. Jarnail Singh of Canada, in four volumes published by M/s. Singh Bros., Amritsar. The Prime Minister was also presented two books “108 Blossoms for Guru Granth Garden,” being the translation of selected hymns from Guru Granth Sahib in English and Spanish arranged by Dr. Swami Veda Bharati.

The President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in his message said, “The cherished and noble values of the Guru Granth Sahib should inspire all of us to follow the message of love, compassion, unity, brotherhood of man and supremacy of God, the Almighty.”

While speaking at the seminar Shri Jaipal Reddy, Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Culture, referred to the essentially unifying message of the Guru Granth and emphasised that India needs to popularise the transcendental vision of the Sikh Gurus, Sufi saints and the Hindu Bhaktas at this crucial juncture in its history.

Earlier while welcoming the guests, Dr. Amrik Singh, Officiating President of the Sadan, said that if there is one Scripture which can be prescribed a highly inter-faith in character it is the Guru Granth Sahib.

While thanking the guests Dr. Mohinder Singh mentioned that the seminar indeed marked the culmination of five national seminars organised by various universities in five regions of India, namely, in Eastern India by Jadavpur University, West by Pune University, Northern India by Guru Nanak Dev University, Central by Banaras Hindu University, and South India by Madurai Kamaraj University. It may be recalled that the seminars had been organised in keeping with the decisions of the National Level Celebration Committee set up by the Government of India, under the chairmanship of Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India.

Spread over two days the seminar attracted nearly 50 scholars from different parts of India and other countries such as U.S.A., UK, Canada, Hungary, Afghanistan, Tehran, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The seminar was divided into **five sessions**. **The first session - *From Adi Granth to Guru Eternal*** - was chaired by Dr. Swami Veda Bharati, with Mrs. Anita Singh as Co-chair.

Following papers were presented by scholars:

Guru Granth Sahib Among World Scriptures by Dr. W. Owen Cole, *Unity of Minds as envisioned by the Sikh Gurus* by Dr. J. S. Neki, *Guru Granth Sahib as Guru Eternal* by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Egalitarian Order in Guru Granth Sahib*, Dr. Rajesh Gill and *World View of Guru Granth Sahib* by Swami Swaroopananda with Dr. Abraham Karickam, Dr. B. S. Rattan, Dr. Darshan Singh, Dr. Azizun Nahar Islam and Prof. Kazi Nurul Islam acting as Respondents.

The second session - *Philosophical and Theological Concepts in Guru Granth Sahib* - was chaired by Giani Gurdit Singh with Prof. Verne A. Dusenbery as Co-Chair. Following papers were presented by scholars:

Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Bhagavata Purana by Dr. Shrivatsa Goswami, *Sikh Monotheism*

by_Prof. I.H. Azad Faruqi, *Guru Nanak and Upanishidik Thought* by Dr. Jodh Singh. *Linguistics & Stylistics of Guru Granth Sahib* by_Prof. Prem Singh and *Poetics of Guru Granth Sahib* by Prof. Gurbhagat Singh with, Dr. M.K. Gill, Dr. Shashi Bala, Prof. Mahender Nath Rai, Prof. Ravinder Gregesh and Dr. Chandra Mohan acting as Respondents.

The third session - *Interfaith Dialogue and Contribution of the Bhagats and Sufis* - was chaired by Dr. Shaista Nuzhat with Prof. H.S. Shan as Co-chair. Following papers were presented by scholars:

Guru Granth Sahib and Bhagat Kabir by Prof. Namwar Singh, *Guru Granth Sahib and Bhagat Namdev* by Dr. I.N. Choudhuri, *Guru Granth Sahib and Bhagat Ravidas* by Dr. Kulwant Kaur and *Guru Granth Sahib and Baba Farid* by Dr. Ahmad Salim (Pakistan) with Shri Baldev Vanshi, Dr. Surjit Chahal, Dr. C.D. Sidhu and Dr. I. D. Gaur acting as Respondents.

The fourth session - Some Major Concerns in Guru Granth Sahib - was chaired by Dr. Mushir-ul-Hassan with Dr. B.S. Hansra (USA) as Co-Chair. Following papers were presented by scholars:

Major Social Concerns in Guru Granth Sahib by Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad, *Political Concerns in Guru Granth Sahib* by Prof. Pithipal Singh Kapur, *Guru Granth Sahib and Religious Pluralism* by Dr. Dharam Singh, and *Gender Equity in Guru Granth Sahib* by Dr. Sudeep Minhas with Dr. Himadri Banerji, Dr. Jaspal Singh, Bhai Sikandar Singh Bagrian and Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill acting as Respondents.

The Valedictory Address was given by Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyay, former Union Minister, currently Chairman, Centre for Studies in Civilization, and presided over by Justice A.M. Ahmadi, former Chief Justice of India.

Participants: The seminar was attended by many prominent scholars and other dignitaries from India and abroad such as Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka, Dr. Nirmala Deshpande, M.P., Dr. Kapila Vatsayan, Chairperson, Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, Rev. Karam Masih, Bishop of North India, Mr Paramjit Singh Sarna, President, DGPC, Mr Tarlochan Singh, Chairman, National Minorities Commission, Prof. Tahir Mahmood, Member, Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Justice Rajinder Sachar, Chairman, Prime Minister's High Powered Committee for the Welfare of the Muslims. Dr. M. Darrol Bryant from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Don Benson and Mrs. Avtar Hansra from Parliament of World's Religions, Chicago.

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