

Seminar on Guru Granth Sahib at Hyderabad

Sr. Nanak Singh Nishter reports: Eminent scholars of the Deccan assembled last January to celebrate Guru Granth Sahib as ocean of knowledge for the followers of all faiths. The deliberations, during the two-day seminar were held in the auditorium of Salar Jung Museum on 8th and 9th January 2005.

Jointly organised by Research Foundation for Devotional Voluntary Associations (COVA). I acted as convenor. The 1st session was presided over by Dr. K. Kehava Rao, former minister and president, Pradesh Congress Committee. He said that Guru Granth Sahib was not simply a religious text but an ocean of scientific enlightenment. He stressed that people from other religions should read it at least once in their lifetime. Justice Sardar Ali Khan, former Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court, Former chairman, National commission for Minorities and former Dean, Faculty of Law, Osmania University, inaugurated the seminar and released my book "Selections from Guru Granth Sahib". He said the holy book did not differentiate between religions and emphasised love and compassion. It provides solutions to most of the problems the world is facing. He said there is urgent need to imbibe its message. Dr. A.K.V.S. Reddy, director of the museum, Prof. T. Mohan Singh, director of foundation and Sant Isher Singh presented the papers. A large gathering of scholars and people of all castes and creeds participated. A group of students and staff of Punjab University, Patiala, lead by Sardar Sevak Singh has also participated. The 2nd session was presided over by Mr. Swaranjit Sen, IPS, Director General of Police. Apart from him, Prof. Dharampal Peehal, Father Dr. Anthoni Raj Thumma and Prof. Kishori Lal Vyas presented the papers.

On 9th Jan, the 3rd session was presided over by Prof. Afzal Mohammad, former Vice Chancellor, Ambedkar Open University. Apart from him, Dr. Raminder Kaur, Prof. Dhreshwari, Dr. Sadiq Naqvi and Naqvi and Mr. Ahmad Ali presented the papers. The 4th session was presided over Sardar Harpreet Singh, IAS. Apart from him, Mr. Ghouse Pasha, Sajjan Singh, Dr. Durgesh Nandani, Dr. Jai Kishan, Mr. Bharat Bhushan, Dr. Gurbachan Singh Thapar and Nanak Singh Nishter presented the papers. It followed by a lively session of socio-religious questions by the audience, I acted as Quiz Master.

On behalf of Salar Jung Museum, Mr. Ahmad Ali and Mr. P. Venugopal presented the mementos to the speakers. The media has done a very good coverage of the event. In this seminar one Buddhist, two Christians, five Sikh, five Muslim and eight Hindu scholars presented their papers. On public demand a book "Guru Granth Sahib as Inter Faith Guide" consisting upon the lectures and papers presented in the seminar in English and Hindi is under compilation for larger benefit of the society. It was unique seminar in the sense that it was organised by the non-Sikh organisations and most of the speakers were the non-Sikhs, who commanded a study of Guru Granth Sahib for the universal brotherhood.

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US initiative to explain turbans

AMERICANS are being asked by their Justice Department to get acquainted with the turban and others head coverings, like patkas and hijabs. Post 9/11, there have

been a number of attacks against people of colour, especially those who were distinctive ethnic clothing. The Sikhs have also faced attacks, especially those who wear turbans.

An "Initiative to Combat Post-9/11 Discriminatory Backlash," by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice seeks to actively work to "combat violations of civil rights laws against Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South-Asian Americans, and those perceived to be members of these groups." The department has also brought out a similar poster on common Muslim American head coverings, which shows Muslim women wearing scarves and hijabs.

The Justice Department admits that since 9/11, members of these groups and those perceived to be members of these groups have been the victims of increased number of bias-related assaults, threats, vandalism and arson. Reducing the incidence of such attacks, and ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to Justice, is a Civil Right Division priority.

The Division has also placed a priority on cases involving discrimination against Arab, Sikh, Muslim, and South-Asian Americans in employment, housing, education, access to public accommodations and facilities and other areas within the Civil Rights Division's jurisdiction."

The poster on the Sikhs describes Sikhism as "a religion that originated in South Asia during the 15th Century and is distinct from both Islam and Hinduism. For religious reasons, practicing Sikhs do not cut their hair. Sikh men wrap their long hair with a turban or pagri, a practice that typically takes 10-15 minutes. Sikh boys tie their hair in a smaller under-turban or patka, with their hair knotted on top of their head. Some Sikh women also wear a turban; however, many opt for a cloth or chunni to cover their head.

Primarily meant for law enforcement agents, the posters have "points to keep in mind when searching someone wearing a Sikh head covering, which are: (i) show respect, (ii) explain why they need to conduct the search, (iii) offer private room for search, if available. It also says that searches should be done by members of the same sex. – TNS

[Courtesy: *Tribune News Service*]

For God's Love

Ninety-four-year-old Fauja Singh kept pace with athletes from across the world, including the Pakistani girl, at the Lahore International Marathon. Fauja Singh and 72-year-old Ashish Roy are among the 15 participants from this side of the border. The marathon saw athletes from Pakistan and 16 countries rubbing shoulders.

For Pakistan officials, the event will project the country's "soft face" to the world, but Delhi sees it as a step forward in promoting people-to-people contact between the neighbours.

The marathon - the first of its kind in Pakistan - carries a handsome prize of \$ 100,000. "For me, the cash award is not important. It is, in fact, the lasting relationship, which we will develop with our Pakistani friends," said Roy.

Fauja Singh, the oldest marathon runner in the world with the unique distinction of having taken part in six full marathons in London, said he enjoys running and plans to continue “this labour of love till the fag end of his life.”

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Distinction for Dr. Banerjee

Our editorial board panelist and noted historian Dr. Himdari Banerjee has been elected the President, Modern History section of the Indian History Congress which is the premier body of historians in India. He is expected to preside over the relevant session at the 66th session in Santiniketan later this year. Our compliments to the learned scholar.

- S.S.