

GURU NANAK, HIS PHILOSOPHY AND MODERN SOCIETY (WORKSHOP)

WELCOME ADDRESS

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On behalf of the executive team of the *Institute for Understanding Sikhism*, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this half-day Workshop on 'Guru Nanak, His Philosophy and Modern Society'. We are very fortunate that we have with us today scholars from a cross-section of the Sikh community who will be presenting their papers related to the broad theme of the Workshop.

Sikhs all over the world recently celebrated Guru Nanak's 545th birth anniversary on November 6, 2014. These celebrations included the recitation of *bani* (words) of Guru Nanak, lectures, poems and religious discourses on his life and his philosophy, and by making contributions to local charities in keeping with his teachings. These celebrations help us to reconnect with the founder and foundations of Sikhism. Over the years, however, it appears that we have not fully imbibed his message into our daily lives.

Guru Nanak's philosophy and his teachings are as relevant today in our modern society, if not more, as they were in the social structure that existed in his time. That is why this Workshop that is designed around the theme of Guru Nanak's philosophy and its relevance to modern society is so timely and important.

We will listen to scholars speak about how Guru Nanak changed the social and religious face of India, of the wonders of his *Bani* (words) and how it relates to and is consistent with modern scientific evidence about the physical universe, about Guru Nanak's holistic vision of *Kudrat* or nature, and reflect on how the religious discourses in our Gurudwaras today have deviated from the true teachings of Guru Nanak and what corrective actions need to be taken to preserve the true message of the Guru.

The *Institute for Understanding Sikhism* has been in the forefront of producing and disseminating research on Sikhism and its philosophy, for the past 15 years. This has involved the annual publication of a scholarly journal titled *Understanding Sikhism: The Research Journal* as well as regular publication of books and monographs. In keeping with this tradition, a new publication titled *Nanak: The Guru - The Founder of Sikhi(sm)* will be released today. It is coauthored by three distinguished scholars. As Dr. Chawla notes in his message, the book "reflects insights into Guru Nanak's thoughts, style of living, commitment to humanity, and individual uplift."

I invite all of you to actively participate in today's deliberations so that we can each learn and pass on the message of our beloved Guru to the coming generations.

Thank You.

