

REFLECTIONS ON GURU GOBIND SINGH'S VISION WHERE WE STAND AFTER 350 YEARS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

PREAMBLE

IUS SEMINAR 2016

Held at Library of Gurdwara Sahib Greater Montreal
December 10, 2016

The Sikh community the world over celebrated the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh in 2016. The year-long celebrations, which commenced in January 2016 was concluded in first week of January 2017 at Patna Sahib in Bihar, and was comprised of a number of events, including religious, academic and humanitarian, among others. The Central Government of India, as well as the Governments of Bihar and Punjab, have contributed immensely to this cause. The Union Finance Ministry allocated a package of Rs 100 crore (US\$16 million) for the celebrations. The Bihar government spent Rs 100 crore (US\$16 million) on beautifying Patna Sahib, the Capital of Bihar, and on the arrangements and the celebrations. [1]

Bhatia [2] has reported that the three-day International conclave urged Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, to develop Patna Sahib as "Mecca of Sikhism", held at the city's S K Memorial Hall. The National Commission for Minorities' former Chair Tarlochan Singh said; "People were earlier skeptical about the contribution of Hemkund Sahib, situated at 15,000 feet above the sea-level, to the economy of Uttarakhand. "Now, at least four lakh Sikhs visit it every year even though it opens only for three months. Imagine how Bihar's economy can be turned around if all its gurdwaras are developed properly,"

Ex-Punjab CM S S Barnala's son G S Barnala described Bihar as the "Mecca of Sikhism" and said Nitish Kumar had already created history of sorts by organising this conclave. Union minister of state for agriculture S S Ahluwalia, who hails from Begusarai, referred to Bihar as the second most important state after Punjab in the history of Sikhism. 'Dastan-e-Patliputra' also talks about this fact.

UP Minister, B S Ramoowalia appreciated Nitish Kumar for dedicating a university to Guru Gobind Singh's mother, Mata Gujri, in Kishanganj - a first-of-its-kind in the world. Bihar Chief Minister, Satish Kumar, was also honored by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar for his efforts to organize successfully such a great event of celebration of the 350th Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh.

Now there is question: If birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh a Mecca then what is the birthplace of Guru Nanak called?

This is the result of celebration of 350th Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh by Bihar Government. Similarly, the Government of India celebrated this auspicious event during January 2017 by spending hundreds of crores of rupees. Here

millions of Sikhs from all over the world gathered and the high dignitaries from Government of India, Bihar and Punjab delivered their speeches in praise of Guru Gobind Singh and his contributions.

The *Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS)*, based in Montreal, Canada, also organized a half-day seminar on Saturday, December 10th, 2016 at Gurdwara Sahib Greater Montreal, to celebrate this milestone anniversary by reflecting about the vision of Guru Gobind Singh. In his inaugural remarks, Prof. Harjeet Singh Bhabra outlined many achievements and hurdles faced by the Sikh community over the past four centuries and laid out some of the major challenges the community is likely to face in the decades ahead, thereby setting the tone for the deliberations of the afternoon. This was followed by a brief report by S Gurinder Jit Singh on the many contributions and initiatives undertaken by the IUS since its inception in 1998. However, Prof P S Bhandhari has also expressed his own views about the contributions made by IUS over the years. Thought provoking lectures followed by stimulating question and answer sessions were presented by Bhai Jiwan Singh (Gurdwara Sahib Greater Montreal), Prof Manjit Singh, Director Chaplaincy, (Retd.) of McGill University, Dr Devinder Pal Singh (Center for Understanding Sikhism, Mississauga, ON), Dr Gurdev Singh Sangha (Kitchener,

ON), S. Manmohan Singh (Montreal, Quebec), and Prof Devinder Singh Chahal (President, IUS). Finally, poems about Guru Gobind Singh were recited by Mr Jutla and S Manjit Singh Chatrik. Nevertheless, Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal and Dr Sukhdev Singh Dhillon from USA and Dr S S Sidhu from Malaysia presented their papers through Internet.

All the papers received to date so far are presented in this issue. The authors have expressed their views based on their experience about the life and contributions of Guru Gobind Singh. However, it appears from the research paper by Prof

Chahal that there is a great need of in-depth research by theologians, historians, scientists and other experts to discover the truth about the life and establishment of “Nation for Justice” by Guru Gobind Singh.

It is an observation of the IUS that the Sikhs have celebrated many centenaries related to the Sikh Gurus and Sikhi so far. It is the time for the Sikh intelligentsia to evaluate where do we, the Sikhs, stand and how to tackle the challenges being faced in the modern world of logic and science.

REFERENCES

1. 350th Prakash Parv *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/350th_Prakash_Parv
2. BHATIA, B. K. (2016) International conclave urges Nitish to develop 'Mecca of Sikhism' *Times of India*. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Patna/International-conclave-urges-Nitish-to-develop-Mecca-of-Sikhism/articleshow/54470334.cms>

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