

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM

ARTICLE

## Prof. P.S. Bhandari

Email: bhandari\_pawittar@yahoo.ca

Sikh scholars have been saying that Sikhism is a scientific religion but it was left for 'Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal to prove it. He founded the IUS in 1998 for the Scientific Interpretation of Sikh Scripture and 'Nanakian Philosophy.'

IUS celebrates the milestone anniversaries by holding International Seminar.

'Scholars reflect on the Guru's vision, on what the Sikhs have achieved and how they should confront the challenges that will most certainly come in their way in the future.'

**The Golden Era of IUS (2001-2004)** During this period IUS held 4 Historic International Seminars and put the Montreal Sikhs at the Sikh World Stage. The Harmony Dinners added to its grandeur. It may rightly be called The Golden Era.

**First Seminar and Dinner 2001:** I was invited by Dr. Chahal to the first welcome dinner in honour of the scholars at his home in 2001. I was also present during the discussions.

**Second Seminar and Dinner Sept. 2002:** Madam Updesh Bhandari extended the invitation to all the scholars and the organizers of the Second International Seminar in 2002.

**Multi Faith Harmony Dinner:** She also invited the local scholars of other faiths. Notable among them were Dr. (Mrs.) Rukmani Devi Chairperson Hindu Chair, Dr. Swamy Dean Dept. of Engineering but well versed in Vedas, Dr. Roop Narain Singh of Canada Day Parade fame and Dr. Shrinivas Tilak Dep. of Religious Studies Concordia University. Dr. Tilak was also the Moderator.

**Trend Setter Dinner:** It became the Trend Setter Dinner in Montreal. Future dinners in Montreal by different faiths were organized on this model.

**Welcome Speech:** Miss Vaishali Bhandari in her welcome speech said:

**"I remember a famous saying of the Holy Prophet Mohammed Peace be upon Him: The ink of a scholar is more sacred than the blood of a MARTYR.**

Thank you **Devinder Uncle** for providing us a chance to welcome **such scholars."**

The speech was highly appreciated. Scholars demanded copies of it. Dr. Chahal has published it in his prestigious IUS Magazine.

**Third Seminar and Harmony Dinner Sept. 2003:** It was the first Dinner of the Sikh Community in a Banquet Hall. It was sponsored by Jaswinder Singh Rana V.P. Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha and was coordinated by me. Around 130 persons were invited. Ex Mayor of Montreal Mr. Bourke and City Councillor Madam Deros graced the occasion. Leaders of South Asian Community were also present. Dr. Arvind Sharma was the Chairperson of this Dinner.. Again, Dr. Tilak was the Moderator.

**Welcome:** President Dr. Chahal and the Host Mr. Rana welcomed the guests. Dr. Bhai Hatbans Lal and Dr. Harinder Ahluwalia responded.

Mr. Zaidi President Pakistani Community and Mr. Rakesh Sharma President India Canada Organization spoke on behalf of their communities. Floor was also declared open for all to speak.

**Vote of Thanks:** Miss Vaishali gave the Vote of Thanks and thanked every body. She specially thanked Dr. Chahal for the Seminars.

**Announcement:** She also announced that 'the dinner of 2004 will be in a 5 Star Hotel or Palais-du-Congress.' Dr. Chahal and Mr. Rana had already given the approval.

**Enthusiasm:** The delegates announced in one voice that they will certainly come.

**Coverage:** Newspapers like Bharat Times gave the full coverage to this announcement

**Problem:** In January 2004 Dr. Ahluwalia approached me that they also want to organize a dinner at a large scale. IUS had already crossed the Rubicon- point of no return.

**Solution:** So we agreed to organize two Dinners- Saturday by IUS and Sunday by Canadian Sikh Council and show solidarity.

**Prof. Bhandari PRO of IUS (5<sup>th</sup> May, 2004):** When the Quebec Assembly passed the motion to recognize SGGS, Dr. Chahal sent an email to the Sikh diaspora : ‘Major credit to steer this project goes to Prof Pavitar Singh Bhadhari, PRO of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism, Laval, Quebec in close collaboration of the Gurdwaras of Montreal and the Sikh Community of Montreal.’

#### **Fourth Seminar and Harmony Dinner**

**Sept. 2004:** It was also the first dinner in Hotel by the Sikh community. It was also sponsored by Jaswinder Singh Rana and coordinated by me. Mr. Girdhari Kheterpal was the Chairman of this Dinner.

Bibi Kiran jot Kaur member SGPC, Mme Sheila Copps Ex. Dy. PM of Canada, Dr. Irwin Cotler Law Minister, Hon Dion Minister of Environment and Speaker of Quebec National Assembly graced the Occasion.

All these Historic Seminars, Harmony Dinners and participation of the local scholars and politicians made this period from 2001-2004 as the Golden Era of IUS,

**Dr. Harjeet Singh Bhabra V.P.:** He is a scholar of par excellence. He is soft spoken, social and young, He is professor at Concordia University. He has been appointed as the V.P. of IUS It shows that IUS has a very bright future.