



Department of History
(School of Social Sciences)

Central University of Himachal Pradesh

Sapt Sindhu Vipasha Parisar, Dehra-177101 (HP)

organises

National Workshop on:

Significance of Guru Nanak Dev's Thought in Modern Times

Venue: ICSSR Bhawan, New Delhi

Date : 8th September, 2019

Time : 10.00 am to 05.00 pm

Background:

The year 2019 marks the 550th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Indian government has kick-started the preparations for the celebrations, which will stretch across the globe for over a year. With this concept in mind, Department of History, Central University of Himachal Pradesh proposes to organise one day National Seminar on the "Significance of Guru Nanak Dev's Thought in Modern Times".

Significance of Guru Nanak Dev's Thought in Modern Times:

At the birth time of Guru Nanak in 1469, Lodis were ruling over northern India. Behlul Lodi was on the throne, who was succeeded by Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi. It was the period of disintegration and disunity. There was a great confusion and chaos in Punjab and other regions. The ruling class was Muslim, with their long train of followers and consequently Muslim influence was easily visible. Hinduism had shrunk to the narrowness of becoming a very formal way of life. The caste system had become stiffer. Untouchability prevailed and the lower classes were kept away from the common wells and temples by the so-called upper classes. Ramanand and Kabir denounced this thought process in their verses. Namdev also protested against this second-rate treatment for the poor and the so-called untouchables by the upper strata of society. The social fabric of the society was decaying and the decaying-society under the influence of their ruling master shadowed down the priceless inheritance of their ancestors. There was a need for reformation in the society.

Guru Nanak does not believe in the distinction between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. He goes beyond these distinctions and fosters a religion of the spirit, which is universal in character. So, Guru Nanak stood for the wellbeing of all human beings and not of any person belonging to a particular caste or creed. Guru Nanak's

aim was to restore the reign of truth, justice and human rights and rekindle the light of love and goodwill among members of all communities through his message of equality of all mankind. Suppressed by ruling class, the Hindus, at the time of Guru Nanak, were not only depressed in spirit but had lost all sense of honour and self-respect. Guru Nanak therefore visualized that there could be no social revolution in India without a frontal attack on the caste system which was destroying human dignity. Therefore, he strongly and unequivocally denounced the caste system. The Guru actively worked for the formation of social group, based on common social and moral code of conduct.

While giving the description of both societies of Hindus and Muslims, Bhai Gurdas says, the Hindus have four castes and the Muslims were divided into four sects with jealousy, arrogance and vanity. The people had forgotten the teachings and sayings of their holy books, the Vedas and the Quran. The world was lost in avarice. In such a period of darkness, to bring equality Guru Nanak established Sangat and Pangat and gave right of equality to all people. By this exercise lower castes came closer to higher castes and he inspired feeling of brotherhood amongst the members of society.

Guru Nanak was in search of society in which equality, freedom and fraternity could be established in the real sense. He established the equality by breaking up the caste system and brought about fraternity by striking at the root of the sense of the high and the low. Guru Nanak succeeded in the task of a religious construction of society. It was not an easy task. Religious thought is something very different from a system of fictions; still realities to which it corresponds express themselves religiously only when religion transfigures them. The difficulty of the task consists in expressing the real with aid of appropriate symbols. So Guru Nanak wanted the religious construction of society through reformation. Guru never saw a man as higher or lower. According to him, man is a fundamental unit of society and he wanted the development of everybody in every possible way. Guru Nanak wished to create a society where Surat, Mati, Man and Buddh co-ordinate to make man a beautiful piece of work. He wanted to procure a balance among the emotions, desire and thoughts of man. He never conceived of a society, in which on the one side there were only the elite and on the other, the superstitious, the mentally backward and the downtrodden people. So Surat, Mati, Man and Buddh are such four faculties if works jointly in an individual, automatically it influence the structure of society. Guru Nanak reacted strongly against the hypocrisy of the priestly class who beguiled the innocent people by their formal ways of worship and by their outward appearance. Whatever may be the inherent cause, either to please the Muslim rulers or to gain economic benefits, they accepted the subjugation of Muslim invader. Guru Nanak stressed on the inner purity of thoughts. Only through purity of mind and purity of conduct, one can find the true reality. Guru Nanak instructed all the religious communities to be loyal towards their duties like: The real Brahmins is only he who practices austerity, contemplation, self control, righteous deeds and is contented and cultured; a real Khatri is he who performs heroic deeds, who is compassionate, charitable and beneficent. Similarly a true Muslim is he who makes mercy as his Mosque, faith as prayer, honest living as Quran, humility as circumcision and good conduct as fast. In this way Guru Nanak advised all the torch bearer of the society to realize the real man in them and be virtuous towards their profession which is their fundamental duty. Islam, says a Muslim writer, “succumbed to the spirit of class division and forgot all about the message of the Quran”. Guru Nanak taught that if God was to be found, he would be found in the inner chambers of human heart. He traced the progress of the human beings on the path of liberation in five distant phases by attaining five distinct ideals: dharma (Divine Justice), gian (knowledge), saram (feelings of humility and self-surrender), karam (good actions) and sach (Divine Truth).

The teachings of Guru Nanak are very relevant in the modern world, which is presently suffering from a deep moral and spiritual crisis, unbridled materialism, fundamentalism, extremism, separatism, terrorism, militancy and superficial religiosity. His social message based on spirituality, proved to be very helpful in eradicating social evils and establishing the new values. Guru Nanak believes in the equality of the whole humanity and discards any sort of division, distinction and discrimination. Guru Nanak teaches brotherhood, harmony, love and selfless services to the humankind.

Sub-Themes:

The theme of workshop has been divided into 5 sub-themes:

1. Introduction to Life and Times of Guru Nanak Dev
2. Guru Nanak Dev as Advocate of Humanity
3. Guru Nanak Dev and Bhakti Movement
4. Teachings of Guru Nanak and Their Impact on Modern Times
5. Guru Nanak Dev's Thought: Impact on Society

Topics:

The following topics will be broadly covered under above sub-themes during the workshop:

1. **IMPACT ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT**
 - (a) Reformation of Hindu society
 - (b) Fraternity with Muslims
 - (c) Salvation through repetition of God's Name
 - (d) Congregations
2. **IMPACT ON SOCIAL LIFE**
 - (a) Caste system
 - (b) The Langar
 - (c) Spirit of fellow-feeling
 - (d) Spirit of service
 - (e) The dignity of manual labour
 - (f) Women
3. **IMPACT ON ECONOMIC LIFE**
4. **IMPACT ON POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**
5. **IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER**
 - (a) Four fold process
(In Sri Rag Guru Nanak says: Nanak! life becomes most useful when we are in the company of great men who behave with humility and gentleness).
 - (b) Mastery over self (It is the mind alone which brings about victory or defeat).

Prof. Satish Ganjoo
Chair Professor, Tribal Chair, CUHP
Mob. 96825-87009, 72899-91959
Email : satishganjoo@hotmail.com
