



Indian History Congress

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In Memoriam: Professor K.N. Panikkar

The Indian History Congress conveys its deepest sorrow upon the demise of K.N. Panikkar, an esteemed historian and public intellectual of India, whose profound impact on historical scholarship and advocacy for secularism has left a lasting legacy.

As a member of a remarkable generation of historians, Professor Panikkar significantly influenced the study of modern Indian history in the post-independence era. Through meticulous research, pedagogical endeavours, and public discourse, he exemplified the manner in which historical inquiry could elucidate the intricate dynamics of colonialism, culture, and ideology that have shaped Indian society. His scholarly work was distinguished by rigorous archival investigation complemented by a nuanced understanding of the intellectual and cultural facets of historical transformation.

Trained in Kerala and subsequently affiliated with Jawaharlal Nehru University, Professor Panikkar played a pivotal role in fostering a thriving academic community. His seminal writings on colonialism, social movements, and the cultural politics of nationalism introduced novel perspectives on the interplay between power, ideology, and popular consciousness. Notably, his influential studies on peasant resistance in Malabar and the cultural underpinnings of colonial dominance remain crucial for scholars of modern India.

Beyond his academic contributions, Professor Panikkar was esteemed as a public intellectual, known for his articulate and courageous stance on issues concerning historical interpretation and the role of historians. Amidst the increasing politicization of historical narratives, he steadfastly championed the autonomy of historical scholarship and the imperative of evidence-based historiography, thereby contributing significantly to the preservation of India's plural and secular historical narrative.

Professor Panikkar also made substantial contributions to Indian academia through various institutional roles, including his tenure as Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, where he endeavoured to enhance research and teaching in the humanities. His dedication to intellectual discourse, academic freedom, and the societal relevance of scholarship garnered him widespread admiration.

The demise of Professor Panikkar is a profound loss to the community of historians, who benefited from his intellectual rigor and moral integrity during a formative period in the discipline's development. His work and legacy continue to inspire historians committed to rigorous inquiry, intellectual openness, and the defence of secular historiography.

The Indian History Congress expresses its heartfelt condolences to his family, colleagues, students, and admirers. His scholarship and example are poised to continue inspiring future generations of historians.