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## TRIBUTE TO BHARAT RATAN BABASAHEBDR. BHIMRAO RAMJI AMBEDKAR Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Social Justice

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar devoted his whole life towards building an egalitarian social order in India having no place for graded inequality and oppressive social hierarchies of low and high, pure and polluted, and Savarnas and Avarnas. He emphasized on the value of fraternity which in conjunction with equality and liberty leads to wholesome order of egalitarianism. It is for the realization this trinity of equality, liberty and fraternity that he termed his struggle as spiritual. He was of the view that political freedom without social and economic parity is shallow that cannot help create an egalitarian social set-up. In a socially segmented society, a large number of so-called Shudras and Ati-Shudras have historically been denied basic human and civil rights that are essential for social, political, economic and spiritual growth of each and every member of the society. His sole objective was to restore the lost dignity and self-respect to the millions of downtrodden in the society and to prepare them to stand for equal rights on their own strength. He firmly believed that liberty, equality and fraternity should become the real strengths of India, which would lay the foundations of Indian democracy rooted in its social domain. For him political democracy should be based on social democracy. Social democracy in turn is dependent on equal opportunity available to all in the society free from hierarchies and hereditary claims and special privileges.

He was a practical visionary who produced voluminous of well-documented literature to put across his viewpoint on egalitarian social order. He was not an armchair scholar. He actually devoted his entire life while abdicating various opportunities to lead a rich and comfortable life. He worked with the people at the grassroots to up left them from the morass of social exclusion and terrified social and economic life. In order to awaken his people and to put across his viewpoint, Babasaheb launched many papers like Mook Nayak, Janata, Bahishkrit Bharat and Prabudh Bharat. He believed that without acquiring political power the goal of egalitarian order is next to impossible. Therefore, he founded two political parties (Labor Party of India and Scheduled Castes Federation of India) and prepared a blueprint for the third (Republican Party of India). To give a practical shape to his social vision, Babasaheb tried all possible ways to bring social reforms within Hinduism in order to make it an all-inclusive religion where the Shudras and Ati-Shudras should not suffer on account of their so-called low-birth.

He launched satyagrahas (non-violent struggles) for the entry of lower castes (then known as depressed classes) into public places of utility and religious sites; organized common kitchen eating and advocated inter-caste marriages. When such measures failed to bring the desired results, he put forward the idea of abandoning Hindu religion. After giving it a deep thought (more than twenty years), he embraced Buddhism as a way to an egalitarian social order in India.

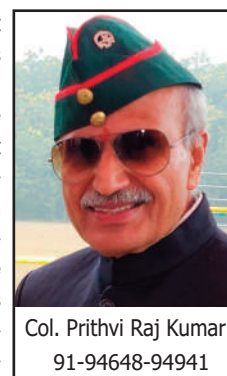
His people for whom he struggled throughout his life eagerly wait for the true realization of his goal. Their enthusiasm can be seen from the way they throng the Mahaparinirvan Bhoomi of their beloved Babasaheb who had died on 6th December 1956. Large crowds of people from all over the country gathered at the "Chaitya Bhoomi" (Dr. Ambedkar's memorial) at Dadar in order to pay reverence to the Messiah of downtrodden. They offered their love-laced feelings by touching the "Chaitya Bhoomi" reverently. This shows his great legacy that his people carrying forward to make his dream come true. A true tribute to Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar would be to follow his footsteps towards the creation of egalitarian social order free from the bounds of pure and impure, and high-low social statuses.

## Israelis Proud of Dr. Ambedkar's Support in Struggle for Rebuilding their National Home

**B**harat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, known world over as the "Father of Indian Constitution", a great social reformer and leader and emancipator of the downtrodden sections of the Indian society, was a versatile personality. He was a flag bearer of India's nationhood, social and political democracy, universal good, happiness, peace and harmony. An avowed follower of Buddhism that teaches *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love) and *samata* (equality) which man wants for a good and happy life on earth, he was of the view that these three principles should also make an appeal to the world. He said neither God nor Soul could save the society 1. To him, religion

taking the thankless but noble task of leading Jews out of their captivity in Egypt. He was among the few in the Indian National Movement who was aware of and consequently sympathized with the Jewish National Movement in Israel (then Palestine under British rule). The Jews in Israel feel proud of his support in their struggle for rebuilding their national home in Israel.

In an article published in Praja Bandhu,



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means the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order 2. It is the Buddhism that fits in his definition of religion. He firmly believed that unless there was justice, there would be no peace in his world, and that Buddhist religion only would be the savior of the world 3. He pursued his mission of not only liberating the marginalized classes from the thralldom but also establishing egalitarian social order with ultimate aim of world peace and prosperity.

It is well known that Dr. Ambedkar's driving force was his unimpeachable commitment and zeal for the uplift of the unfortunate children of lesser God and establish true democracy in the country. He was devotee of Gautam Buddha, Kabir and Mahatama Phule who were the source of his inspiration<sup>4</sup>. Besides, the philosophy of Guru Nanak and other saints such as Ravidas, Nandnar and Chokhamela et al also inspired him. He was an icon, liberator and messiah for the millions of deprived and depressed people in the country and an inspiration for such people the world over. Perhaps not many know that in the story of the EXODUS and the leadership of Moses in the Holy Bible had been to him a source of perennial inspiration and hope. he said that if anything sustained him in his efforts to emancipate the Depressed Classes, it was the story of Biblical leader Moses in the Old Testament under-



dated 30th December 1991 (Courtesy; News from Israel), it has been brought out that in a special interview with Glora Becher, Consul of Israel in Bombay, the editor of a monthly Jewish publication in Bombay (The Jewish Advocate, November 1941), the "Father of Indian Constitution" and one of India's most respected leaders Dr. Ambedkar expressed openly his admiration for the pioneering efforts of the Jews in Palestine in respect of the Social order that was being created there. To understand the specialties Dr. Ambedkar had with the Jewish people one should read his article "Moses and His Significance" published in the Bombay Sentinel probably the same year, 1941. In this masterpiece of a short essay about the Biblical Leader Moses, Dr. Ambedkar exposes to the roots of his special attitude towards the Jewish people<sup>5</sup>.

The essay says: "The story of the Jews told in the Old Testament is a moving tale. It has few parallels. It is told in a simple but thrilling language. The pathos inherent in the subjugation and ultimate emancipation of the Jews cannot, but affect the emotions of those who are as depressed as the Jews were in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh. But the heart of everyone who is working for emancipation of a depressed people is bound to go to Moses, the man who brought about the emancipation of the Jews. Moses led the Jews out of Egypt, out of bondage; he laid  
(Contd. on next page)



# Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji and the Birth of Dalit Movement in Punjab

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

**P**unjab has the distinction of being the only state in India where caste based social exclusion was diluted because of the long spell of Muslim rule on the one hand and the most appealing egalitarian philosophy of Sikh faith and its grassroots impact on transformation of the life of downtrodden, on the other. However, caste and its resultant social negativities never ceased to torment the major section of the society. Caste discriminations in Punjab were/are more material in nature than social as in other parts of India. Prejudice takes precedence over pollution in Punjab. However, absence of pollution does not mean that Brahminism Social Order (BSO) is alien to it. On the contrary, it thrives under new structures of social subordination entrenched in material deprivation of Dalits in the state. Material deprivation of the downtrodden in the state was reinforced by the customary laws of Razat-Namaas and the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900. Along with many other nonagricultural castes, Scheduled Castes people were historically deprived the right to own land. This restriction made them absolutely landless. It was because of this legal restriction that when Babu Mangu Ram Mu-

gowalia Ji after his return to Punjab from the United States of America (USA) asked his father to buy some land to evade social oppressions at the hands of landlords that he came to know that social subordination of the Scheduled Castes people was also rooted in the law of the land. This has led him to organize his fellow beings to form a movement for the emancipation and empowerment of downtrodden what eventually termed as Ad Dharm Movement. This movement was the first of its kind that became suddenly popular because of its grassroots appeals. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji devoted his entire life for the cause of total transformation of his country and the socio-economic and political uplift of his people who were relegated to the periphery since centuries. He exhorted his people to come over a common platform to challenge the forces that subjugated the Dalits. He waged a long battle and finally able to unite many communities among the Scheduled Castes to work for their upward social mobility. Scheduled Castes of Punjab, particularly of the Doaba region, consider him the pioneer of Dalit movement in the state that played a leading role in strengthening the mission of Dr B. R. Ambedkar not only in Punjab but in the whole of the country.



## Israelis Proud of Dr. Ambedkar's Support in Struggle for Rebuilding their National Home

(Continue from page 1)

the foundation for their religion by bringing the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. He gave them laws for social, civil and religious purpose and instructions for building the tabernacle."

The Ten Commandments are the words of Lord God, who brought the people of Israel (Jews) out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. The words were spoken to Moses at Mount Sinai for conveying further to the people. The Commandments in short are: "(1) You shall have no other gods before me; (2) You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth beneath; You shall not bow down to them or serve them...; (3) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain; (4) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is Sabbath to the Lord your God; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day and hallowed it;(5) Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you;(6) You shall not kill;(7) You shall not commit adultery;(8) You shall not steal;(9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor;(10) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's6."

A brief mention of Buddha's Gospel here will be appropriate to appreciate better the Commandments and human problems, and solution thereto. The foundation of his Gospel is the fact that the world was full of misery and unhappiness. To remove this misery and unhappiness was to him the aim and object

of the Gospel if it was to serve any useful purpose. A part of the misery and unhappiness of man was the result of his own misconduct. To remove this cause of misery he preached the practice of *Panch Sila* that comprised the observance of five principles, namely, (1) To abstain from destroying or causing destruction of any living thing; (2) To abstain from stealing i.e. acquiring or keeping by fraud or violence, the property of another; (3) To Abstain from telling untruth; (4) To abstain from lust; (5) To abstain from intoxicating drinks. The second part his gospel is that a part of the misery and unhappiness in the world was the result of man's inequity towards man. For the removal of this inequity he prescribed the Noble Eight-Fold Path. The elements of the Noble Eight-Fold Path are: (1) Right views i.e. freedom from superstition; (2) Right aims, high and worthy of the intelligent and earnest men; (3) Right speech i.e. kindly, open, truthful; (4) Right Conduct i.e. peaceful, honest and pure; (5) Right livelihood i.e. causing hurt or injury to no living being; (6) Right perseverance in all the other seven; (7) Right mindfulness i.e. with a watchful and active mind; and (8) Right contemplation i.e. earnest thought on the deep mysteries of life.

The aim of the Noble Eight-Fold Path is to establish on earth the Kingdom of righteousness and thereby to banish sorrow and unhappiness from the face of the world7. The concept of Truth, Truthful life, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and prosperity echoes in the philosophy of Sri Guru Granth Saheb also. One may like to refer to its first Bani under the title "*Japu*" and the hymn "*Beghumpura sehar ko nao dookhu andohu nahin tih thao...*"8 one may notice the striking similarity in the philosophy contained in the Ten Commandments, Gospel of Buddha and Sri Guru Granth Saheb. This also finds place in the twenty two vows that Dr. Ambedkar took and administered to

his people at the time of his embracing the Buddhism on 14th October 1956.

Continuing with the essay, Dr. Ambedkar says: "When the children of Israel left Egypt and were pursued and attacked by the army of Pharaohs they were sore and said unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have thou taken us away to die? It has been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in wilderness." The marching Israel came to Elim and camped there. There was not sufficient water for them all.

They all shouted, "give us water wherefore is this that thou hast brought us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" They were ready to stone him because there was no water. Moses went up to Mount Sinai and delayed to come down. Immediately the Jews went to Aaron (Moses's brother) and said unto him, "Make for us Gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we woe not what has become of him." Even his leadership was challenged. The Old Testament records that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married and they said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" Yet Moses bore their calumny, their abuse, tolerated their impatience and served them with the fullness of his heart.

"As the Old Testament truly says, "There arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face". Moses was not merely a great leader of the Jews. He is a leader whose birth, any downtrodden community may pray for. Whatever interest others may have felt in the story of the exodus and the leadership of Moses they have been to me a source of perennial inspiration and hope. I believe that just as there was a land of promise for

the Jews, so the Depressed Classes must be destined to have their land of promise. I trust that just as the Jews reached their land of promise, so will be the Depressed Classes in the end reach their land of promise "I see in the present day condition of the Depressed Classes of India a parallel to the Jews in their captivity in Egypt. In Moses I see a leader whose infinite love for his people has given undaunted courage to face hardships and bear calumny. I confess that if anything sustains me in my efforts to emancipate the Depressed Classes, it is the story of Moses undertaking the thankless but noble task of leading Jews out of their captivity." It is only natural, says the editor that the Jewish people have always looked at Dr. Ambedkar and his life's work with absolute admiration. His struggle for the weakest section of society has found an echo in the hearts of those who for many hundreds of years since their expulsion from their "Promised land"-Israel - were suffering from discrimination and persecution just because of being different from the majority around. He affirms: "We in Israel are till today proud of Dr. Ambedkar's support in our struggle for rebuilding our national home in Israel." It is a tragedy that most of the people in India regard Dr. Ambedkar as a leader only of the downtrodden section of the Indian society. It is the sacred duty of the true Ambedkarites and the beneficiaries of his struggle and sacrifice to understand his real philosophy and mission, and spread it in the world for universal good, happiness and peace.

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# Bharat Rattan Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Hearty Tributes on His 67th Mahaparinirvan Divas

**6** TH December, 2023 which is just around the corner, marks the 67th Maha parinirvan Divas of Bharat Ratna, Babasaheb, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, an icon of social liberation and a strong voice of the voiceless. Let us pay our heart-felt tributes to the nobility of this great soul on this historic day.

It is a matter of pride, honor and duty for all of us to revitalize the immortal legacy of this intellectual giant, not only as the architect of the constitution of India, but also for his invaluable contributions in safeguarding the fundamental human rights and in the making of Modern India.

After vigorous and penetrating research into Babasaheb's writings and speeches by eminent scholars, rather than the distorted versions, the whole world now knows him as a towering stalwart of the 20th century for the cause of social justice.

On this historic occasion of his 67th Parinirvan Divas, some of the glimpses of his unceasing struggles and sacrifices, which speak for themselves, are shared as under:

**SOCIAL DISABILITIES:-** Born in a Mahar family of Maharashtra state on April 14th, 1891, Babasaheb, grew up in the midst of harsh and severe social disabilities faced by the untouchables of that time. His practical knowledge and face-to-face experiences with the inequalities and in-built inadequacies in the social hierarchy of India inspired him to raise his inner voice against this unjust social order.

**EDUCATIONIST:-** Babasaheb, as he was popularly and affectionately known, firmly believed that good education was the inner eye of a human being through which she/he could visualize the whole world in its true perspective and shielding them against the most formidable challenges of life. His birth in a family of so called "untouchables" but still reaching the peaks of education exploded the false myth that education is the birth-right of only the few selected segments of society.

**CONSTITUTIONALIST:-** As the principal architect of India's constitution, a seasoned statesman and a nation builder, he welded the entire nation of modern India into a unified entity through his charismatic skills and exceptional knowledge of constitutional law in drafting the constitution of free India, while tackling justly and

successfully, the diverse intricacies of Indian social order. He can, thus, be undoubtedly recognized as one of the most luminous stars in the galaxy of human intelligentsia. His painstaking work as the first Law Minister of free India in the enactment of Hindu code bill for safeguarding the rights of



women, is, inspite of stiff opposition, a priceless gift to the welfare of Indian society.

**DISTINGUISHED ECONOMIST:-** The versatility of his genius and exceptional knowledge in the field of Economics was a vital contribution in the establishment of Reserve Bank Of India, as reflected in the records of his interview before "The Hunt's commission" in 1934. Many other important commissions like Planning Commission, Finance Commission, Election Commission of India and University Grants Commission were also established with his innovative intellect and imagination.

**MEMBER-VICEROY'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:-** As a labor member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy of India from 1942 to 1946, he was responsible for enactment of many important labor laws such as reduction in the working hours from 14 to 8 hours and establishment of the system of Employment Exchanges in India as a centralized channel of providing job opportunities to the needy. Dr. Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate in Economics was highly inspired by the distinguished writings of Babasaheb, recognizing him as the father of his Economics, thus adorning his intellectual excellence like a rare glitter of an emerald.

## RESURGENCE OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA:

- Babasaheb remained deeply inspired all his life by teachings of Lord Buddha. Late Mr. D. C. Ahir, in his treatise on Buddhism "Buddhism Declined In India, How and Why" has defined and elaborated as to how Buddhism, once a prosperous religion, declined in the

land of its birth as a result of concerted and calculated crusade against it by the reactionary Brahmins and Muslim invasions of India. It was Babasaheb, Dr B. R. Ambedkar who ignited a new spark in its revival and resurgence in India with his conversion to Buddhism alongwith five hundred thousands of his followers on October, 14th, 1956, just a few weeks before his

Parinirvana on December 6th, 1956. His untimely demise, nodoubt, slowed its growth and expansion, but it is in the process of its revitalized resuscitation.

**AWARD OF BHARAT RATNA:-** During the tenure of Prime Minister V.P. Singh, Bharat Ratna was conferred on Babasaheb posthumously in 1990, in recognition of his exceptional services to the nation. This noble gesture on the part of Mr. V. P. Singh reflects his deep and significant commitment towards the cause of social justice. Manyavar Kanshi Ram and Babasaheb:- Manyavar Kanshi Ram, founder of Bahujan Samaj Party, inspired by Babasaheb's ideology and mission, played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses in advancing the vision of Babasaheb. In fact, it was he who revived the genuine spirit of, otherwise declining phase of the mission, to the glory of its new heights.

## STATUES UNVEILED TO HONOR BABASAHEB:-

In recognition of his outstanding contributions in multiple fields and for being the key figure in the drafting of India's constitution, he is being venerated with the unveiling of his statues both in India and abroad. Recently Honorable President Dorupadi Murmu, in the presence of the Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, D. Y. Chandrachud, unveiled a 7-foot tall statue of Babasaheb at the

Supreme Court of India, on the occasion of the "Constitution Day". It was an unprecedented recognition for his outstanding services to the nation.

## PERSONAL MEETINGS:-

As mentioned by me on many previous occasions it was the most thrilling experience of my life when I was blessed to meet Babasaheb in person at his residence at 26, Alipore Road, Delhi and some public functions, in 1956 with the help of late Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, his private Secretary.

**FUNERAL PROCESSION:-** On 6th December, 1956, the day of his Mahaparinirvana, I had the rare opportunity to hand-lift his body along with five other persons from his bedroom to the main lobby for public view. Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and his Cabinet Ministers also visited his residence to pay their last respects to this rare and precious jewel.

A vast sea of mourners attended the funeral procession through the streets of Delhi before flying the mortal remains of Babasaheb to Bombay for cremation and final rites, by a special plane arranged with the help of Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the then Cabinet Minister. As an eye witness to the entire event I will carry these memories as a holy relic for the rest of my life.

We also congratulate Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief, "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" weeklies for starting a very innovative program "Ambedkar Times TV" is depicting live pictures and speeches of various episodes.

**CONCLUSION:-** "LET US KEEP THE FLAME OF BABASAHEB'S LEGACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE BURNING AND KEEP THE CARAVAN OF HIS IDEALS MARCHING AHEAD TOWARDS ITS CHERISHED GOALS."

"Again with the hearty greetings to the greatness of Babasaheb, the champion of Human rights"

Jai Bhim, Jai Bharat

O. P. Balley  
December 6, 2023



O. P. Balley  
General Secretary  
Supreme Council  
Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas, USA

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# December 6 – Parinirvan Diwas of Babasaheb Ambedkar

I generally write on the important days in the life of Babasaheb Ambedkar, my icon and one of the greatest sons of India. Babasaheb passed away on December 6, 1956 in Delhi leaving a rich legacy behind. This year I have decided to share an extract of my recently released book: **Some Random Thoughts on Babasaheb Ambedkar and His Legacy** to pay my tributes of the leader. The book is available online with Amazon and Flipkart.

## Naman to Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar

Today, December 6, is the Mahaparinirvan Diwas (death anniversary) of the great icon of humanity, Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar (April 14, 1891 – December 6, 1956). I wrote on the day several times in my blogs in the successive years to pay my humble tributes to the great leader. Due to busy schedule, I intended to remain silent this year. But today I read something about Babasaheb in the media and I thought of picking up the threads and make some observations as Naman to Babasaheb on his Mahaparinirvan Diwas. PM Narendra Modi, paying Tribute to Babasaheb rightly said, "Remembering the great Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas; his thoughts and ideals continue to give strength to millions. We are committed to fulfilling the dreams he had for our nation." It is a befitting tribute



to Babasaheb. Yet another interesting aspect, which hitherto remained under the carpet, came to light. "B.R. Ambedkar was a lifelong Public Diplomat" – an article appeared on the editorial page of the HindustanTimes on December 6. It has been written by two prominent public personalities; Guru Prakash Paswan and Sudarshan Ramabadrnan, co-authors of the book 'Makers of Modern Dalit History'. It must be a well researched book though I am yet to lay my hands on the book. The following quote from the article justifies the title of the article, "Public diplomacy has many definitions

but broadly speaking, it means a country communicating its values, culture or policies to a foreign audience. B.R. Ambedkar, an Ambassador of Human Rights epitomized this in many ways. He was a strong global communicator of what plagued India and what India ought to do to overcome its challenges to be a model for the world. He also championed soft power much before

the term came into the foreign policy lexicon – never resorting to violence in pursuit of social change nor backing anything that called for violence." The authors termed Babasaheb as "Ambedkar was an inveterate diplomat." Some days ago, I also saw a video interview MP Shashi Tharoor on The Wire conducted by Karan Thapar on his recent book 'Ambedkar: A Life' in which both Karan Thapar and Shashi Tharoor wondered that how come PM Narendra Modi, who clearly and loudly, considered Ambedkar his icon in the face of perceived perception that BJP and RSS and the Hindutva leadership



in general would be able to stomach 'candid and assertive' views of Babasaheb Ambedkar on Hinduism and Hindu traditions like Varanvibashtha (Caste system). RSS Sanghsanchalak Mohan Bhagwat also in the recent past rightly and publically owned the legacy of Ambedkar with regard to bring about 'Samrasta' in the society. I would not go into the details of this

and leave the matter here as, I think, it is up to PM Narendra Modi and Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat and the hardcore Hindu leadership as to how would they synchronize, assimilate and harmonize their views and position with that of B.R. Ambedkar's. Followers of Ambedkar and the marginalized segments of the society should be rather happy that the so-called 'opponents' of Babasaheb Ambedkar are voluntarily willing to appropriate him and his legacy for the larger interest of the country and the society at large. It should be appreciated and welcomed, to my mind.

As I said that I did not intend to write a long piece today. I would like to mention about April 14, birthday of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as 'International Day of Equality' under the aegis of UN; a proposal resting the GOI (MEA) since June, 2015 and earnestly urge PM Narendra Modi and solicit support of Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat to kindly revisit the proposal afresh in pur-

suance of India's Soft Diplomacy of which B.R. Ambedkar was the early proponent as asserted by Guru Prakash Paswan and Sudharshan Ramabadrnan. Ambedkar in himself is a potent force which cannot be suppressed for long.

Naman to Babasaheb Ambedkar on his Maha-Parinirvan Diwas  
**Ramesh Chander**  
 Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)

# The Indian Constitution and Dalit Emancipation

Jai Birdi

Executive Director

Chetna Association of Canada

The Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar took 2 years, 11 months, and 12 days to draft the Indian Constitution. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, on the final adoption of the Constitution said, "I have realised as nobody else could have, with what zeal and devotion the members of the Drafting Committee, and especially its Chairman, Dr. Ambedkar in spite of his indifferent health, have worked." Undoubtedly, Dr. Ambedkar is the "Father of the Indian Constitution." The Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949. It came into force on January 26, 1950. At the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India, in 2015, declared November 26 as the "Constitution Day". Prior to that the day used to be known as the "Law Day."

The Consulate General of India, Vancouver, in association with Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha, and Chetna Association of Canada, Vancouver celebrated the Day at Consulate's premises on November 27th. In addition to H.E. Manish, the Consul General, the other prominent speakers were Dr. Shinder Purewal, Professor of Political Science, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, Lawyer Lovleen Gill and Jai Birdi, Executive Director, Chetna Association. As the Day coincided with Guru Nanak's birthday, Giani Harmin-

der Singh of Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver spoke about Guru Nanak's philosophy.

While drafting the Constitution, due care was taken of nation's diversity, i.e. religion, language, and the educationally and economically disadvantaged population known as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who were lately declared to be called "The Dalits" – The Downtrodden. After about a three-quarter of a century of the implementation of the Constitution it becomes necessary to retrospect on the economic emancipation of this special section of Indian society.

Even before the Constitution came into force, Dr. Ambedkar's monumental writing, "Buddha or Karl Marx" and the Resolution of Karachi Congress, 1931 served as a great guide for economic emancipation of the masses. In other words, "In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom for the starving millions."

The Preamble of the Constitution gives a guarantee to secure Justice: social, economic, and political, and Equality of status and of opportunity. The Directive Principles of State Policy guide the government as follows:



*"The State shall direct its policy in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and within limit of its economic capacity and development, to make effective provision for securing the right to work, education and to public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement or other cases of undeserved want. The State shall also endeavour to secure to workers a living wage, humane conditions of work, a decent standard of life, and full involvement of workers in management of industries."*

During these 73 years of the implementation of the Constitution, the underprivileged sections of Indian society have come a long way to combat economic hardship by provisions of reservation in employment, in educational institutions and in elected bodies, i.e., the Panchayats, State Assemblies and the Parliament. However, this is just a tip of an iceberg. A small percentage of people have been benefited by the welfare measures of the government. Still, we have to wipe out the tears of the man standing last in the queue. In the far-flung tribal areas people go empty stomach.

A Case in Reference to Dalit Economic Emancipation-

The Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DICCI) is one of the examples. The founder of DICCI, Dr. Milind Kamble states that whatever success the Chamber has gained, is because of the government and the constitutional framework.

It would not have been possible without government's pro-Dalit policies. He, however, is hopeful to achieve Dr. Ambedkar's vision of economic empowerment through self-help and entrepreneurship. Founded in 2005, the Chamber continues to face problems and challenges. These are some highlights of DICCI:-

It provides a platform and network for Dalit entrepreneurs to dream and act as a core group for shifting mindsets and creating opportunities.

Has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chambers of Commerce outside of India. In March this year, DICCI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, United States.

Has started signing Memoranda of Understanding with the Central Bank of India, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Has created a Venture Capital Fund.

**Finally, to quote Dr. Ambedkar** – "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are good, it will prove to be good."



# The Menace of Casteism among Sikhs

**S**oon after the end of Guru Period, during the Misal period, the Sikh community experienced the emergence of the ill effects of caste system among Sikhs. Though the Sikhism rejected the age-old Hindu caste system, yet the Sikhs started to uphold their old caste ties and practice the caste rituals. In fact, they forget the teachings of their revered Gurus and eternal message of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. They fought bravely, laid supreme sacrifices to seek the temporal authority, and established small Sikh kingdoms and eventually they established a huge Sikh empire under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Despite their unparalleled and exemplary achievements in political sphere, they began to suffer the socio-ethical degeneration because they had deviated from the fundamental Sikh ethos. They moved away from the Sikhi (Sikh way of life). The immediate loss to the spirit of Sikhism can be traced in the terms of casteism among Sikhs. In the twentieth

century, Sikh community entered in era of electoral politics. The compulsions of electoral politics and democracy created the new socio-political, cultural and economic scenario in the Punjab. After independence, the Sikh leadership was shifted to Malwa based Jat Sikhs from urban based Khatri and non-Jat Sikhs of Majha region of Punjab. The political parties got this opportunity to exploit the caste factor in Punjab to seek the political power by hook and crook. Presently, Shiromani Akali Dal (B) backed by SGPC is keen to serve the interests of rural based agricultural people especially Jat Sikhs. Congress (I) has the considerable vote bank among Dalits and BJP is interested in catering the needs of urban based Hindu trading class. The politicization of caste and political polarization based on casteism in Punjab has created the new political equations. The battle lines are clearly demarcated among the various caste groups. Political culture and political socialization of people is determined by the caste affiliations. In the present scenario, scheduled castes and urban based non-Jat Sikhs feel alienated and neglected. They believed that in Punjab economically prosperous and politically influential Jat Sikh community dominates all the major political parties and power centres. Dalit Sikhs also felt betrayed and disheartened by the activities of those political parties, which came in to existence in the name of Dalit emancipation. They feel disturbed, ignored, and drop their faith in Sikh institutions. They raised serious objections on widening economic gap and social injustice in Punjab.

There exists a close linkage between religion, caste and politics in the

Punjab. The majority of Dalit Sikhs still face the social discriminations, economic disparities, and injustice in the religious and political spheres. Sikh social, political, religious, cultural and even educational institutions are not free from the caste considerations. Presently, at the time of policy formulation, execution of decisions, recruitment and social interactions casteism has deeply penetrated in the attitudes and behaviour of Sikhs. In the Punjab, in Sikh Gurudwaras, scheduled castes are discriminated by the local

**There exists a close linkage between religion, caste and politics in the Punjab. The majority of Dalit Sikhs still face the social discriminations, economic disparities, and injustice in the religious and political spheres. Sikh social, political, religious, cultural and even educational institutions are not free from the caste considerations. Presently, at the time of policy formulation, execution of decisions, recruitment and social interactions casteism has deeply penetrated in the attitudes and behaviour of Sikhs. In the Punjab, in Sikh Gurudwaras, scheduled castes are discriminated by the local Gurudwaras management committees dominated by dominant caste groups.**



Gurudwaras management committees dominated by dominant caste groups. Their faith in the Sikh religious institutions and Sikh leadership has been badly shaken. They find that Sikh Gurudwaras and rural politics are being dominated by the petty caste considerations. Their lower social status and inferior economic position have created the several hindrances in their social, economic and political mobilization. Interestingly, in the Punjab, social discriminations with Dalit Sikhs are not same in the different geographic regions in the Punjab. In the Majha and Malwa region, they are still marginalized and face the various kinds of discriminations due to the lack of political awareness and lower economic position. Their main source of livelihood comes from agricultural activities. In agricultural sector, their dependence on dominant castes remains intact and perpetuates their inferior status. Whereas in the Doaba region in Punjab, the large number of Dalit Sikhs have migrated to the various countries. Over the years, in this region their socio-economic status has been reasonably elevated. Political consciousness and political participation among the Dalits have increased in the recent times. Dalits began to demand the equal share in the policymaking and power politics. They are not ready to remain submissive and being dominated by Jat Sikh people in the villages.

Today in Punjab, there exists a close relationship between Deras and

Dalit assertion in Punjab politics. In the Punjab, schedule castes have a considerable size. Despite their large number in Punjab, their socio-economic interests were largely ignored and they were politically marginalized. They failed to register their voice of protest at the decision-making level despite the fact that there is considerable number of seats in Punjab Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha in Punjab are reserved for them. They are still being pushed to periphery and remained away from the power centres. Under

these circumstances, they took the shelter of various Deras. Identity crisis, socio-economic immobility and urge to confront the exploitation by the dominant caste groups inspire and encourage them to look forward to Deras for political direction and support. In the recent years, Punjab witnessed the mushroom growth of various socio-religious Deras. The emergence of Deravad in Punjab has brought the far-reaching changes in social, religious and political spheres. The most interesting aspect of these Deras is that the majority of their followers belong to the schedule castes. The chiefs of these Deras give them socio-political and religious platform to raise their voice against them dominant caste groups. In the recent past, a close linkage has been developed between Deravad and several caste conflicts. In Punjab at present, Deravad is an offshoot of Dalit assertion and displeasure among Dalits with the prevailing socio-political conditions.

Ironically, at present people are giving the deliberate and unwarranted preference to their caste distinctions in their social-political thought process. Media and corporate sector have mentally hijacked them. They are playing with the sentiments of people. Their caste traits are portrayed in the way to make them arrogant, non-compromising and hostile towards others. Punjabi songs, films, theatre, literature etc. mischievously has exaggerated the social hatred among various caste

groups. Media represents some caste groups as the sole custodian of Sikhism and representative of Punjabi cultural values and makes attempt to humiliate, degrade and damage the social image and role of Dalit Sikhs in the society. Some people are portrayed as born wise, brave, bold and fearless whereas others are presented as inherently weak, docile and coward. This kind of the frame of mind and the role of media have created the sense of suspicion, distrust and fear among the downtrodden and urban based non-Jat Sikhs.

It seems that it is difficult for people to get rid of the casteism if they continue to hold the high opinion regarding their own caste and have tendency to hate the members of other castes. The ultimate solution of menace of casteism lies in the Sikh way of life. As the person has to take bath daily to remain clean and healthy and to eat daily to get the required energy in the same way, the observance of the teachings of Sikh Gurus in everyday life is needed to get the rid from the superiority and inferiority complex based

on caste of a person. People belonging to various caste groups must realize a basic truth that the seeds of their rise and downfall lie in their actions, attitudes and behavior towards their fellow beings especially the downtrodden. If a person, whether he belongs to Brahman, Khatri, Vaishya, Shudra caste group or Jat clan, has any kind of racial arrogance and sense of superiority, he is bound to fall later or sooner. Sikhi (Sikh way of life) demands from a person to remain humble, compassionate, respectful and caring towards others. It is hostile to spirit of Sikh religious beliefs if any Sikh starts to discriminate with others, and acts in arrogance and considers himself as superior to others on basis of caste. There is immense need for a true Sikh to broaden his mind and to rise above the casteism. If people continue to live with their pride of their caste and humiliate the vulnerable sections of society then they should be mentally prepared that they will have to face the revulsion, wrath and opposition of oppressed sections of society. Those who are in dominant positions and those who are struggling for centre of power must refrain from caste based arrogance and social antagonism, they must strive for social harmony, cooperation and mutual respect otherwise the outcome of the prevailing caste struggle within Sikh community would be disastrous for them as well as for the Sikh fraternity. Sikhs must realize that if they still believe in casteism then they have no moral right to be called a Sikh of Guru Nanak because a true Sikh cannot have social prejudices and discriminatory attitudes toward depressed people.



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# Gurdas Ram Alam's 'Achhoot Da Ilaaj'—A Translation

Gurdas Ram Alam, a prominent Dalit Punjabi poet, was known for his forthright and straightforward demeanor, as he once encapsulated with the expression, "*Sachkehen di meriaadathai, Mainvalpake gal kahendanahin*" (I don't beat around the bush, I speak the truth). Born in 1912 to ShriUmra Ram and Mata Jeoni Devi in Jalandhar district, Punjab, Alam emerged as one of the pioneering Punjabi Dalit poets. His poems, characterized by simplicity, resonate with profound significance, addressing the struggles of the downtrodden that remain pertinent even today.

Alam's early years were marked by laborious toil, earning meager wages until serendipity led him to Quetta (now in Pakistan). It was there, at a local KaviDarbar, that his recitation talents captivated organizers. One thing led to another, and he was eventually taken in by the Chief KhalsaDiwan at a monthly salary of 15 rupees, along with provisions for food and accommodation, and as Alam distinctly remembers, even his cigarettes. His association with the organization, however, couldn't survive for very long. The organizational requirement mandated Alam to compose a weekly poem, focusing on themes such as Sikhism or education. During this period, there was a concerted effort to persuade Dalits and Adivasis to undergo the Amrit ceremony, and adopt the Sikh faith. The Dalit community, historically marginalized and oppressed, often became easy targets for salvation narratives. Alam personally witnessed one such event in the village of Nangal, where Adivasis were being made to undergo the Amrit ceremony. This encounter served as a pivotal moment of deep personal reflection for him.

But the definitive moment that led to the separation was when he sent out his weekly poem for publication and it was rejected citing its anti-Sikh sentiment. This poem was 'Achhoot da Ilaaj.' Despite the fact that Alam was on the organization's payroll, he did not waver in calling out religious groups and political interests with intentions of dividing Dalits and Adivasis for their opportunistic gains. This is the reason why he was such a believer and supporter of the Ad Dharm movement. The movement led by BabuMangu Ram Mugowaliawas fiercer than other reformist and revivalist efforts of the time. The movement aimed to establish a distinct collective Dalit identity—a socio-politico-religious community, with a Dalit agenda notably divergent and appropriately articulated by Professor Ronki Ram as 'beyond conversion and sanskritisation.'

The poem 'Achoot da Ilaaj' poem represents the crystallization of a sentiment that had been brewing within Alam for an extended duration before finding expression. This sentiment had been subtly articulated in fragments across various articles in the Jantak Lehar (see *Sohan Sehjal's MeraJeevan Pandh:Gurdas Ram Alam*). Within the corpus of his writings, the poet delineates instances of this theme, drawing from his experiences at a Valmiki school where he was acquiring proficiency in Gurumukhi. Notably, he narrates the evolution of his instructor's identity, progressing from Sheehu to Master Sheehu Ram, subsequently transforming into Master Shiv Ram, and ultimately adopting the appellation Swami Shivanand. The latter persona actively advocated the adoption of the sacred thread (janeu), while concurrently proscribing the consumption of alcohol and non-vegetarian fare. Alam's wry recollection of this transformative journey serves as a poignant reflection of his sentiments of perplexity and incredulity in response to these unfolding developments.

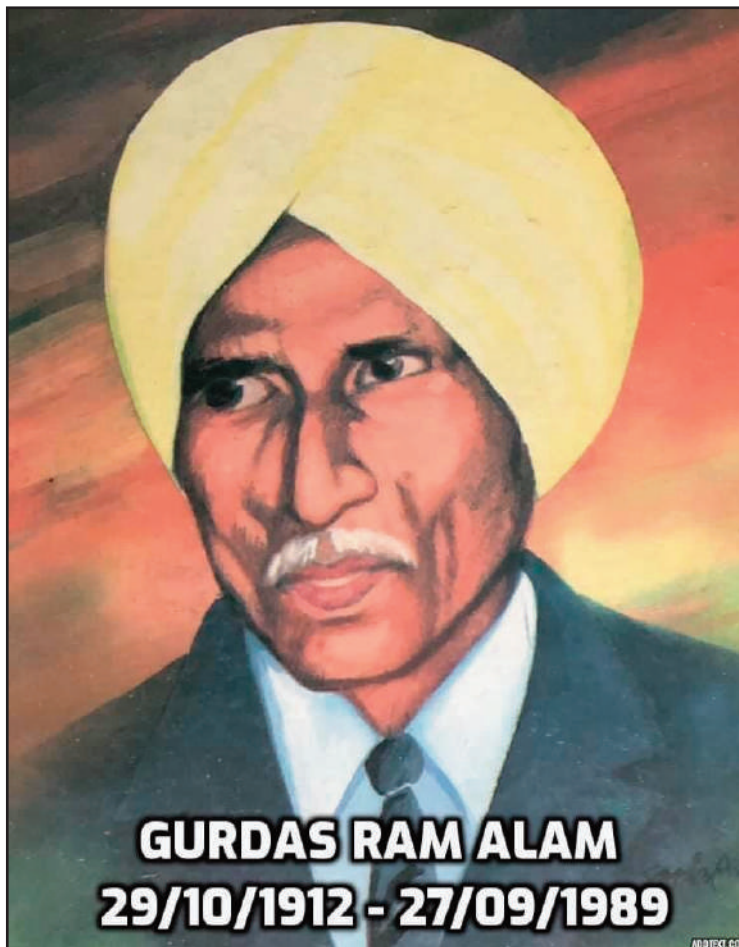
It is imperative to emphasize that the essence of this poem does not lie in the condemnation of diverse faiths; rather, its principal objective is to underscore the perpetual oscillation experienced by a Dalit individual amidst the turbulence of successive transitions and conversions. The poem seeks to elucidate the inefficacy and futility inherent in such endeavors, offering a critical commentary on the challenges and complexities entailed in navigating the socioreligious landscape. Alam contends that

authentic strength emerges from recognizing the political potency inherent in unity, and advocates for organized collective action along these lines.

## Achhoot da ilaaj (An Untouchable's Cure)

### Achhoot (Untouchable)

Doctor, I implore you, show resilience in this endeavor,  
For I've wrestled with my plight these many years,  
and never found reprieve.  
The haunting specter of untouchability, it clings relentlessly,  
Though I've bathed in the Ganges' sacred stream,  
so many times you wouldn't believe.  
I've sought counsel from Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, of every creed,  
Heeding their advice, I followed each prescription,



with unwavering belief.  
Yet, I lost my hovel and hearth,  
and untouchability clung to me indeed,  
Even as I adhered to religious rites,  
and underwent Baptism's cleansing relief.

### Pandit (Hindu Priest)

A Brahmin then arose and expressed,  
"As a Hindu, refrain from shearing your sacred tuft,  
Untouchability, an age-old companion,  
Shall dissipate; despair not, persevere.  
Abstain from flesh and spirits; wear garments unsullied,  
Adhere to your heritage; eschew the offerings of a Muslim.  
We are all Hindus; you too, kin,  
In due course, you shall be embraced."  
After bestowing upon you the five sacred elements,  
Milk, curd, butter, dung, and urine, gifts from the hallowed cow,  
You shall be integrated as one of our own."

### Maulvi (Cleric)

Maulvi, checking my pulse, straightforward he spoke,  
"To erase untouchability, a remedy bespoke.  
Thirty days sans food, prayer five times each day,  
no restrictions, save for the consumption of pork"  
In Prophet Mohammad's name, assurance he bestowed,  
All would be well, the burden lightened, untouchability cured, he vowed.  
All Muslims, he pledged, would break bread with me,  
"Wells and hotels accessible, barriers set free.  
Respect from all, just utter 'Salam Alaikum,' and

Alexander himself shall refresh your hookah."

### Bhai (Sikh preacher)

The Sikh proclaimed, "I know and comprehend all,  
No malady can elude my discerning eye.  
Barbers, Watermen, Carpenters, Ironsmiths, and Tailors,  
Have all sought remedy within my healing ways.  
Are you not acquainted with Sangat Singh and Jeevan Singh?  
All your brethren found solace through me.  
A mere sip of Amrit,  
Shall dispel the malevolent specter of untouchability.  
Embrace the five distinctive symbols of Sikhism, the Kakkar,  
They shall stand as sentinels, shielding you from dishonor.  
The populace shall respectfully address you as 'Sardarji,'  
The very moment they see you adorned with the sacred beard and hair."

### Padri (Christian Priest)

The Padri, inquisitive, requested scrutiny of my eyes,  
Contending, "To eradicate the untouchability curse, be wise.  
Embrace what has journeyed from England's distant shore,  
Opt for Christianity, if heavenly realms you implore.  
Adhere to the Ten Commandments of Jesus Christ,  
A simple doctrine, devoid of additional tryst.  
No prohibitions dictate, consume at your behest,  
All Hindostaanis—Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims—  
treat you as a slave.  
Simply don a black hat, and witness the chorus of 'Salaam Sahib.'"

### Congressman

"Embrace Congress," spoke then, a follower of Gandhi to me,  
"Break free from divisive faiths, they deceive cunningly.  
Clerics and scholars, entangled in their debates,  
Are making the nation a slave to their fates.  
Claiming God resides in twenty different spaces,  
They weave illusions, entwining you in deceptive embraces.  
Trapped themselves like partridges, they ensnare with wordy art,  
Should the Communists dissent, we'll command from Delhi's gate,  
Fees' forgiven, incentives galore, reserved seats await,  
Breaking the chains of disparity,  
A pledge to eradicate untouchability with collective clarity."

### Shāyār (Kavi/Poet):

"Listen, O my untouchable comrade, to these clandestine lines,  
Three virtues—Strength, Unity, Education, life defines.  
Worry not if these companions accompany your stride,  
Religious dictums enforced, untouchability stems from internal divide.  
You, a human, akin to others in essence,  
Issues arise from the selfish few, not divine presence.  
Men like you, deceived for ages, worship veiled,  
By varied houses of faith, their authenticity assailed."  
Poet Alam asserts, ages have passed, men misled by diverse beliefs,  
in the name of varied worship, a timeless web of deceptions.



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# The Life and Times of Dr B.R. Ambedkar through the eyes of Indian Cinema

**D**r. Bhim Rao Ambedkar was an Indian polymath and the prime architect of the Indian constitution. Born on April 14, 1891, Baba Saheb was an economist, lecturer, and lawyer who battled against the societal injustice and atrocities committed against the untouchables. He went on to become one of the most revered leaders of the underprivileged populace. The emancipatory deeds of Dr. Ambedkar had touched the lives of millions. He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990.

The Untold Truth" (2000), was undertaken by National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in nine Indian languages. Directed by eminent filmmaker Jabbar Patel, it is a portrait of both the man and the legend through the prism of the important events that shaped Ambedkar's life from 1913 to his conversion to Buddhism in 1956. Veteran actor Mammooty played the titular role of Babasaheb.

The opening scene of the movie depicts the reactions to the attack on Dalits at Bhima Koregaon, which serve as a reminder that caste

Mera Yaar and Bhimaichya Vasaracha RamjichyaLekeracha. The film won National Film Awards for Best English Feature Film, Best Actor for Mammooty, and Best Art Direction for Nitin Chandrakant Desai. It was released only in Hindi/English after two years of its making. Madras High Court interfered to get release of its Tamil version. The callous attitude of the film makers had disappointed the film enthusiasts of regional cinemas.

"Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" (Kannada-2005), directed by Sharan Kumar Kabbur won three Karnataka State

has played a special role in the film. "Debu" (Marathi-2010), directed by Nilesh Jalmkar, is based on the life of social reformer and Saint Gadge Baba, who was immensely influenced by Babasaheb. Mohan Joshi en-



The life and teachings of Baba Saheb have been subject matter of around a dozen mainstream Indian movies, especially Marathi (7) and Kannada (3) languages. The film makers had tried to portray Babasaheb's legacy in true spirit, while the lead actors have successfully brought him to life on the big screen. On his Nirwana Divas, let us have a glance of the most talked-about films based on the life and works of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

The earliest known movie made on the life and works of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is 18-minute short film "Mahapurush Dr. Ambedkar" (1968) produced by Government of Maharashtra. Directed by Namdeo Varkar, this film fictionalised the key events of Dr. Ambedkar's life. The film had rare live footage of Dr. Ambedkar embracing Buddhism and his visit to Nepal along with close-up shots of his funeral procession at Dadar Chowpatty (Mumbai).

Reportedly, the first feature film on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a Marathi biopic "Bhim Garjana" (1989), directed by Sudhakar Waghmare. It show-cased his difficult childhood and the growing-up years shaping his ideologies. In 1991, another film on his earlier days Balak Ambedkar was made in Kannada language. Dr. Ambedkar (1992), a Telugu film, directed by Parpalli Bharat, had impressive star cast Akash Khurana as Babasaheb, Neena Gupta as Ramabai and Rohini Hattandi. Narayan Dulake enacted the role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Marathi film Yugpurush Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar (1993) directed by Shashikant Nalawade.

The most significant and costly cinematic venture on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar "Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar:



oppression takes on a varied range of shades. The film starts from his student days at Columbia University, USA. He refused to join Lala Lajpat Rai's Home-rule league as he was a scholarship holder from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. He did part-time jobs like washing plates and cleaning to meet his study expenses. Even being highly educated, he became subject of ridicule and neglect in rarified and intellectual circles. His subsequent transformation as crusader of the deprived classes made him popular across the nations.

The film had excellent songs like Buddhham Sharanam Gachchami, Kabir Kahe Yeh Jag Andha, Mann Lago

Awards. The film projected Babasaheb's cherished socio-economic reforms for the Indian society. "Periyar" (Tamil-2007) was based on the life of social reformer and rationalist Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, who was greatly influenced by Dr. Ambedkar. Mohan Raman played the role of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

"Joshi Ki Kamble" (2008-Marathi), directed by Shekhar Sartandel, deals with reservation and caste system. The protagonist of the film young Ambedkarite Sanjay Kamble (Amey Wagh), grew up in a Buddhist Scheduled Caste Kamble family, but his biological parents are Hindu Brahmin (Joshi family). Ramdas Athavale

acted the role of Dr. Ambedkar.

Prakash Jadhav made "Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar" (2011), which dealt with the trials and tribulations faced by the young couple. Ramabai Ambedkar stood like a rock behind her husband's mission of uplifting the downtrodden populace, deprived of the basic human necessities for generations. He made another biopic "Bal Bhimrao" (2018), in which Manish Kamble played the role of child Bhimrao Ambedkar. The film delved deep into his budding years, showcasing his thought process, which ultimately evolved him as the Masiha of the under-privileged sections.

Dedicated to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Hindi movie "Shudra: The Rising" (2012), depicts the life of a Shudra and also features the popular Bhima song 'Jai Jai Bhim'. "A Journey of Samyak Buddha" (2013), Hindi film directed by Praveen Damle, is based on Dr Ambedkar's book 'The Buddha and His Dhamma'.

"Bole India Jai Bhim" (2016) is a Marathi film directed by Subodh Nagdeve, based on the life work of Dr. Ambedkar's follower and social reformer L. N. Hardas. The famous greeting 'Jai Bhim' was started by Hardas. "Ramabai" (2016), a Kannada language film directed by M. Ranganath was released on Dr. Ambedkar's 125th birthday. In this movie Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was played by Siddaram Karnik.

"Saranam Gachchami" (Telugu-2017), directed by Prem Raj, based on the Constitution of India and the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The movie features a unique song 'Ambedkar Saranam Gachcham' (I take

(Contd.. on next page)



# The Life and Times of Dr B.R. Ambedkar through the eyes of Indian Cinema

(Continue from page 7)

refuge in Ambedkar).

"Ramai" (Marathi-2019), was directed by Bal Bagrale. Vina Jamkar was in the lead role of Ramabai while Sagar Talashi karen acted Babasaheb's character. "Jayanti" (2021), is a Marathi social-drama, directed by Shailesh Baliram Narwade. The hero Santosh is inspired by the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

"Jai Bhim" (Tamil-2021), is a legal drama directed by T. J. Gnanavel. The film highlights the police atrocities and state violence against a marginalised community. Based on a true incident in 1993, it revolves around the lives of Sengeni and Rajakannu, a couple from the Irular tribe.

The first Hollywood film based on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's life and ideologies "Origin" (2023), is written and directed by Ava Du Vernay. It is based on the book 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents' by Isabel Wilkerson. Professor Gaurav J Pathania, a renowned Ambedkarite has played the role of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. The movie explores the concept of caste in the United States and draws connections between the caste system in India and social hierarchies and racial discrimination in America.

"The Battle of Bhima Koregaon" is an upcoming Hindi film produced and directed by Ramesh Thete, is based on the Battle of Koregaon,

which took place on January 1, 1818.

Many TV serials have also been made on the life and teachings of Dada Saheb. The first TV serial "Dr. Ambedkar" (1992-93), was produced by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Doordarshan. Sudhir Kulkarni played the role of Babasaheb. In the TV Series "Pradhan Mantri" (2013-14), popular actor Surendra Pal enacted the character of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Rajya Sabha TV serial "Samvidhaan: The Making of the Constitution of India" (2014), had Sachin Khedekar as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Sony TV (Marathi) presented Prashant Choudappa as Babasaheb Ambedkar in its show "Garja Maharashtra" (2018-19). Next year Sagar Deshmukh appeared as young Ambedkar in the popular TV programme "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar- Mahamanvachi Gaurav-gatha" (2019-20). The entire life-sketch of Babasaheb from childhood to Mahaparinirvana has been portrayed through this serial.

The most popular serial "Ek Mahanayak Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" is on air since 2019. The serial, directed by Imtiaz Punjabi, is an inspiring story of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, portraying his journey from the age of five to becoming the author of the Indian Constitution. "Ambedkar- The Legend" is Hindi webseries directed by Sanjeev Jaiswal, which can be seen on the OTT platform Baba Play App. Many

untouched and neglected aspects of Babasaheb are shown in this series.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had interesting movies and he had interactions with a few prominent artists like V. Shantaram, Master Krishna rao Phulambrikar, P. K. Atre, Dilip Kumar, Shobhna Samarth and Lata Mangeshkar. One of the earliest movies that Dr. Ambedkar had watched is "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1927).

Thereafter he is reportedly watched "Achhut Kanya" (1936), Dharmatma (1935), Kunku (1937) and Oliver Twist (1948) etc. Acharya Atre made a film "Mahatma Phule" (1954) on the life of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. The launching of the shooting was done at the hands of Baba Saheb at Famous Studios on 31 January 1954. Baba Saheb also attended its premiere and was completely overwhelmed by the movie. The great Sangeet Kalanidhi Master Krishna rao Phulambrikar was deeply influenced by the movement under taken by Babasaheb and performed opening songs on many occasions. He composed music for Buddha Vandana, which was played during the mass conversion ceremony held at Nagpur in 1956.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is yet to be extensively explored in Bollywood. Indian filmmakers had never purposive engagement on social complexities to bring substantive change. Dr. Ambedkar's personality and political philoso-

phy were simply alien in such a conservative space. He was ignored by Indian Cinema for years but the trend is changing now. In recent films, Ambedkar is much more than just a framed-photo inside Government offices.

A few recent films like "Article 15" (Hindi), "Jai Bhim" (Tamil) and "Jayanti" (Marathi), portraying the grotesque social inequalities, feudal exploitation and caste atrocities are considered as the beginning of a new 'Dalit cinema' genre in the mainstream cinema.

Ambedkar is now visible on screen not only as a hanging portrait but also as a motivating influence for the characters. The arrival of filmmakers, technicians and artists from the Dalit-samaj, has given a new meaning to on-screen image of Babasaheb. Pa Ranjith often employs Ambedkar's name, photograph, statue, slogans and other Dalit symbols in the background of the narratives to provide substantive social meaning to the story. Narwade's "Jayanti" expanded this horizon and introduced Ambedkar's writings as a crucial force that motivate the protagonist to become a courageous heroic personality.

We do hope that the nascent 'Dalit Cinema' has the potential to churn out a new cinematic culture and can bring a more meaningful and socially responsible cinema to the audience.



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