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Weekly

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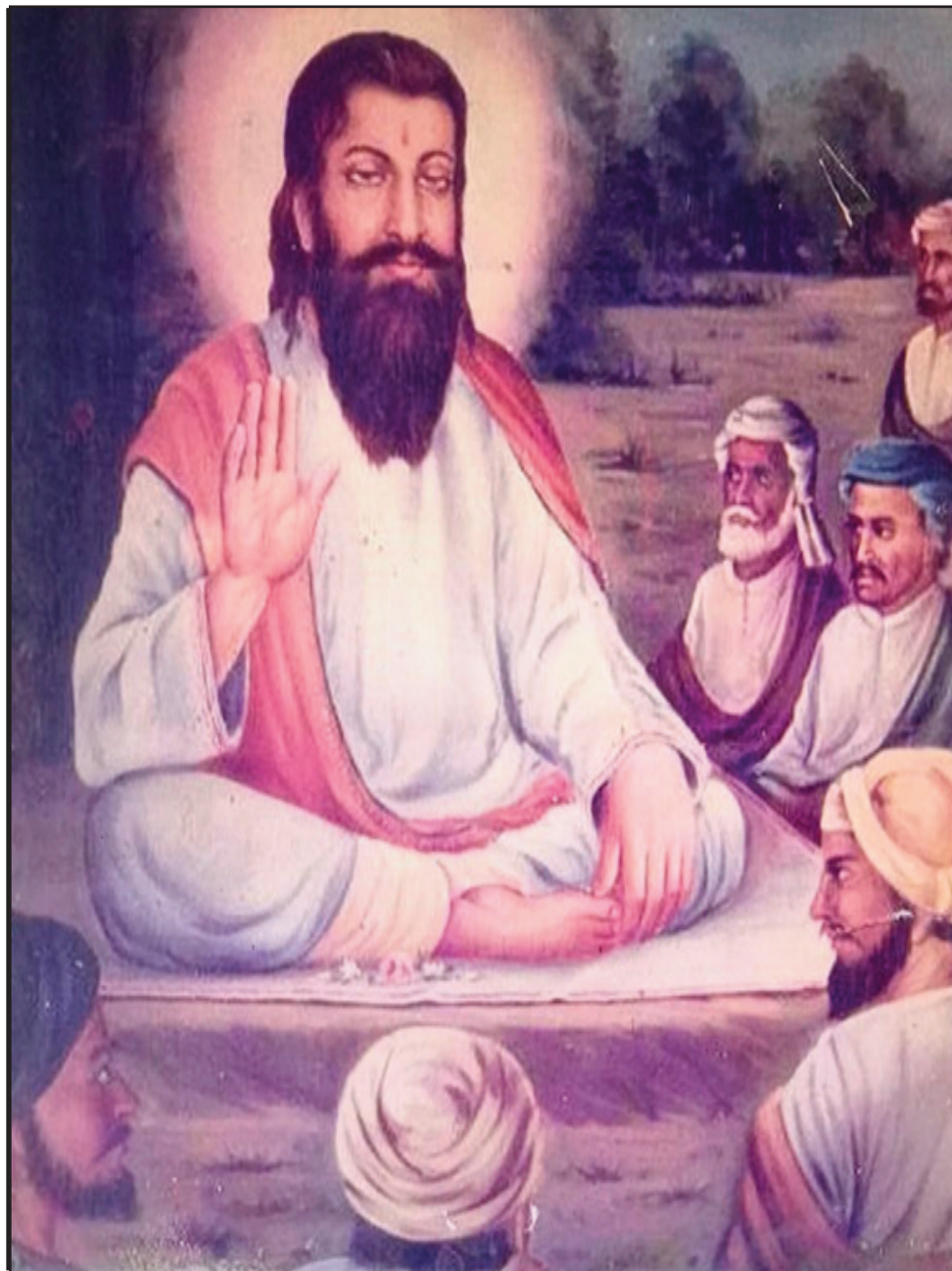
Guru Ravidass and His Vision of an Audacious and Egalitarian Social Order

Invited Editorial-cum-Article

Guru Ravidass was one of the most renowned lower caste Sant-poets of the bhakti movement, especially the *nirguna sampradaya* or *santparampara* (sect or tradition of devotees of a formless God), of the later medieval centuries in Northern India. He was a cobbler, sage, philosopher and social reformer, all rolled into one, who coined *bhakti* (devotion of non-anthropomorphic God) as a method of social protest against the centuries old oppressive system of social hierarchies and inhuman practice based on low-caste birth. As with all low-castes, he too fell victim to such all sorts of pernicious social restrictions and practices emanating from *Chatur-Varnavyavastha* (four-fold social order). It was owing to such socio-religious practices that Guru Ravidass was not allowed to practice conventional form of bhakti of Hindu Gods/Goddesses. His most refereed hymn, *Naam Tero Aarti Majan Murare, Hari Ke Naam bin Jhutte Sagalpasaare*, not only alludes to such social exclusionary practices and unravels their inner hollowness, but also articulates a voice of revolt against them. He dubbed all brahminical rituals and religious ceremonies as *Jhutte Sagal pasaare* (fake activities). Guru Ravidass refused to surrender before such oppressive social structures. To move upward on social hierarchy, he did not discard the religion he was born into, nor abandon his so-called 'polluted' hereditary occupation of making and mending shoes. He devised a new form of bhakti based on deep faith *innirakar* (formless) God and continued with of his hereditary leather-work. This unique middle path – free from religious rituals and sectarian formalities, and dignity of labour – was novel and daring given the rampant religious bigotry of his time.

Guru Ravidass laid emphasis on devotion to a formless God, self-respect, dignity of labour, fearlessness, and compassion for all. It reflected the democratic and egalitarian traits of his social philosophy and deep faith in the just order of God. His fearlessness is evident from the fact that he adopted the forbidden iconography of upper castes as a symbol of social protest. He challenged the tyranny of brahmins and defied their hegemony by wearing *dhoti* (cloth wrapped around the waist), *janeue* (sacred thread) and putting *tilak* (sacred red mark on forehead) – prohibited then for the untouchables. Despite adopting the prohibited dress code, Guru Ravidass continued with his hereditary occupation of leather working. He did not

discard/hide his caste at all. Rather, he became very vocal as well as proud of it and raised his voice against the oppression perpetrated in its name on lower castes. In presenting himself in such an



innovative manner, Guru Ravidass probably tried to demonstrate how lower castes could achieve upward social mobility without sacrificing or compromising their distinct Dalit identity on the one hand, and resorting to violent agitations on the other. In his widely appreciated scared scriptures, one can easily find ample references to his caste. He also underscored on the importance of being peaceful and cultivating compassion for all, including ones' opponents. This is what made him the principal prophet of Dalit consciousness in North India and distinguished him as the originator of a 'middle path' towards social transformation based as it was on democratic means and peaceful ways. His middle path approach liberated Dalits from what Schuetz called the dilemma of 'a man without a history'. Spiritually and socially

oriented revolutionary teachings of Guru Ravidass provided new vistas for upward Dalit social mobility. It facilitated the lowest of the low to rise up against the perennial injustices heaped upon them, and to

of carrying away the carcass and skinning the dead cattle. He earned his livelihood by the sweat of his brow and refused help from all quarters. That made him self-reliant and free from any bondage of

upper castes obligations. "He was probably the only saint in Kashi," as articulated by Chandra Bhan Prasad, "who neither sought nor accepted patronage from kings; that's the reason Ravidas continued with his business his entire life. He enjoyed financial freedom and did not live on alms" (*The Print*, April 12, 2018). To quote him further, Guru Ravidass "could travel more widely than any of his contemporaries – Kabir for instance – because he generated revenue from his business." That means Dalits need to have their own business too if they want to liberate themselves from the cobwebs of social exclusion and economic exploitation that they have been suffering for generation after generation. On the whole, this has become more meaningful given the large scale shrinking of the public sector domain.

In the popular calendar culture of Punjab, Guru Ravidass is often presented in the above-mentioned dress code which was (and for many still is) anathema, especially for the upper castes. His non-violent social defiance method of social transformation has effectively worked as a suitable pedagogic tool to convey the message of self-respect and the dignity of labour to the downtrodden who were not only debarred from entering into the spiritual sphere of the Hindu society, monopolized by the priestly class of Brahmins, but were also treated worse than animals for no other reason except for their so-called low caste birth and the allegedly polluted nature of their hereditary occupation. It is in this context that his emphasis on devotion to God and adoption of a unique iconography, together produced a new text of peaceful social protest for lower-castes. Many of his lower caste followers in Punjab take pride in publicly exhibiting their caste titles – *Ravidassia/putt chamaran de*
(Contd. on next page)



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Guru Ravidass and His Vision of an Audacious and Egalitarian Social Order

(Continue from page 1)

(sons of Chamars)/SC Boys! This unique phenomenon of articulation of caste-based social identity among the larger section of the SC population of Punjab can also be witnessed in mushrooming Dalit pop songs in Punjab.

Guru Ravidass became prominent because he unleashed a frontal attack on the long tradition of social oppression and untouchability in Hindu society. Though born and brought up in the Uttar Pradesh province of North India, Guru Ravidass came to command large followings among the lower castes of Punjab, which he was believed to have visited during his journeys to Rajasthan. Another factor that made him further popular in Punjab is the inclusion of his Bani (spiritual poetry 40 hymns and one Shloka) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib – the sacred scripture of the Sikh faith. His stature grew still further when the Ad Dharm movement made him its patron Sant and a political rallying point. The Ad Dharm movement which came into existence in 1920s used his pictures as its emblem, hymns as its sacred text and legends about him as illustration of lower caste pride and power. The fact that Guru Ravidass came from one of the lowest castes, acted as a catalyst in the emergence of Dalit consciousness in Punjab. His fellow low caste followers, who consider him their Guru, dedicated to him temples, memorial halls, educational institutions/chairs, cultural organizations, and hospitals. They founded several missions to accurately establish facts about his life and works, and to disseminate his message of compassion, equality, and brotherhood in India and abroad. In fact, his lustrous image played an instrumental role in mobilizing the outcastes, especially the Chamars (leather workers) who also joined the Ad Dharm movement in large numbers. Consequently, the Chamars of Punjab and Punjabi Chamar diasporas organized themselves into various Guru Ravidass Sabhas (societies) and established a large number of Ravidass shrines popularly known as Ravidass Deras within the state and abroad.

The sacred *bani* of Guru Ravidass eventually emerged as a vehicle of social protest during the early decades of 20th century colonial rule in India. His bani, written in the vernacular of common man, is full of radical fervour. It provides what Gail Omvedt hailed as "hope for a better world and a fight against exploiters, power-holders and oppression going on under the name of religion". It reflected his vision of the social and spiritual needs of the downtrodden and underlined the urgency of their emancipation. He therefore, is regarded as a messiah of the downtrodden who revere him as devoutly as Hindus revered their Gods and Goddesses, and Sikhs their Gurus. They worship his image, celebrate his

Jayantis (birth and death anniversaries), recite his hymns every morning and night, raise slogans like *Ravidass Shakti Amar Rahe* (the spiritual power of Ravidass live forever) and repose faith in his spiritual power.

The unique 'middle path' and bhakti-based model of Dalit social mobility was well received in Punjab for the following interrelated reasons: (a) Majority of Dalits in Punjab are followers of Guru Ravidass, (b) Ad Dharm leadership consistently worked towards the formation of alternative Ravidassia culture based on the life and teachings of Guru Ravidass himself belonged to one of the lowest castes (the Chamar caste) acted as a catalyst in the adoption of his unique path, (d) the widespread influence of Ad Dharm movement in Punjab prevented conversion of a large number of Dalits to other religions. It also worked as a bulwark against the cultural assimilation process for fear of losing indigenous Dalit culture, and (e) popularity of Ad Dharm (indigenous Dalit religion) among a large number of Dalits in the state and their faith in its capacity to salvage them from the abyss of social exclusion and oppression caused by the asymmetrical and oppressive structures that have emerged within the mainstream religions in the state. Since Guru Ravidass himself did not embrace any other religion nor try to escape social exclusion by assimilation into the mainstream social system of the upper castes, Dalits of Punjab found in him an exemplar of the 'middle path'. The presence of simple but sharp elements of social protest in his teachings along with the commonality of his caste provided the basis for the rise of radical consciousness among Dalits in the state. The mere mention of his name evokes a sense of confidence and self-respect among them. So much so that a large number of them prefer to identify themselves as 'Ravidassia' rather than to be known by their customary caste titles coloured with derogatory connotations.

Thus, it is for such reasons, as mentioned above, that Guru Ravidass was embraced by the leadership of Ad Dharm movement as an exemplar of the 'middle path' in whose life and teachings the Dalits of Punjab found the necessary ammunition for the ignition of radical Dalit consciousness in the state. The establishment of a large number of Ravidass Deras by the Dalits in Punjab and in other parts of India over the last few years is a case in point. Ravidass has become very popular among Punjabi Dalit diasporas as well, who 'have built Ravidass temples

in almost all the towns of the world wherever they happened to live even in small numbers' in order to assert their separate caste identity. The number of Ravidass Deras has been multiplying very fast, and has taken the form of a sort of alternate socio-cultural Ravidass Deras movement. It

has generated a sense of confidence among them and provided them with an opportunity to exhibit their hitherto eclipsed Dalit identity. These Deras, in fact, have been functioning as missions to sensitize Dalits and to facilitate their empowerment. In order to look different from the shrines of Hindu and Sikh religions, and to project a distinct religious identity, Ravidass Deras have formulated their own religious symbols, ceremonies, prayers, rituals and messages of social protest against the oppressive structures of caste domination in the agrarian society of Punjab. Led by varied Ravidass Deras, Guru Ravidass movement has offered new hope to those who have also been empowered by the constitutional provisions of state affirmative action. The goal-motivator of the Ravidass movement, based as it is on the teachings of Guru Ravidass, is rooted in the ideal of *Begumpura* (a city free from sorrows and sufferings of all sort).

The *Begumpura* city of Guru Ravidass promises a social order free from all sorts of hierarchies and buttressed by the principles of fraternity in the real sense of the term. *Begumpura* promises freedom from all sufferings and sorrows, worries of paying taxes, and ensures an abode of everlasting safety. Except the sovereignty of the eternal God, none would be authorised to exercise any power on the inhabitants of the city of *Begumpura*. Its inhabitants would be free to stroll throughout its length and breadth as they please without any fear of caste-based restrictions and punishments. Guru Ravidass concludes the description of his prescient joyful city by underlying that all those who live there would be his (an emancipated cobbler) friends. Thus, in a social order of *Begumpura* fame, there would be no space for boundaries whatsoever between lower and higher classes and all would be treated equally without any difference of small or big – Aisa Chahu Raaj Main Jaha Mile Sabhan ko Ann, Chot Bade Sabh Sam Base Ravidass Rahe Parsan. In fact, the very binary of low and high would cease to exist within the joyful city of *Begumpura* of Guru Ravidass. And the absence of caste hierarchies and social binaries would eventually warrant the dignity of labour and realization of its genuine remuneration.

The establishment of an egalitarian social order, based on dignity of labour, presupposes caste-class solidarity. Caste-class solidarity, in fact, depends upon what Dr B.R. Ambedkar pithily articulated as the 'annihilation of caste'. Caste has not only divided the lower and upper castes into seamless boundaries of mutual antagonism, the lower and upper castes are further deeply divided within their own social segments. All castes follow the principles of endogamy and exogamy. They marry within their respective social cocoons and limit themselves to their biradari (blood relationship) and

rishtedari (family ties) during formal family functions and community social gatherings. Inter-caste marriages are not only a taboo among the upper castes. Lower castes too are equally afflicted with this divisive caste malady. Ravidassias, Ramdassias, Valmikis, Ad Dharmis – are just some of the total 39 Scheduled Castes categories in Punjab – follow their respective biradari traditions and customary social bindings in deciding their matrimonial and other social practices and ceremonies. Territorial social divisions in the rural setting are posing a formidable challenge to caste-class solidarity. Villages are divided into two social settings: mainstream village (*pind*) and the segregated Scheduled Castes neighbourhoods. The latter are contemptuously called *chamarlees*, *thathees*, and *vehras* in Doaba, Malwa and Mazha regions of Punjab respectively.

Dalits in Punjab constitute almost one third of the total population of the state. Majority of them earn their livelihood through various kind of manual work, including daily wage work on the agricultural fields of the farmers. Farmers too constitute about one third of the total population of the state. Majority of the Dalits and farmers are rural-based and many of the former earn their livelihood while working as manual labour (popularly known as *kirtis* – landless agriculture workers) at the agriculture farms of the latter. *Kirtis* and *kisans* (farmers) together formed a potent social force despite the fact of their being belonging to different class/caste categories. There is a general impression that the recent Farmers' protests on the doorsteps of Delhi has put the *kirtis* and *kisans* on a single platform as they perceived that contentious farm laws in question would affect them in their respective domain in terms of the sustainability of their livelihoods. Landless agriculture workers are dependent on availability of manual work at the agriculture farms. They are equally worried about the allegedly long-term adverse impact of these three agriculture reform laws on their work conditions, which have motivated them to join the farmers' protest at Delhi borders. However, for a long-term sustainability of the current circumstantial coming together of the various *kirtis* and *kisans* organizations, the teaching of Guru Ravidass and his vision of *Begumpura* are of critical importance. For a durable association between *kirtis* and *kisans* to transcend their entrenched caste fault lines and to articulate fresh and long-lasting narratives of their newly formed unity, the spiritual vision of *Begumpura* – free from caste, class, religious hierarchies, spatial boundaries, taxes, unjust laws and fear of state officials – seems to be a most appropriate ideal in current circumstances!

Read more:

<http://www.ambedkartimes.com/Dr%20Ronki%20Ram.htm>

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS

on the 647th Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji

On the auspicious occasion of celebrating the 647th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj at Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Pittsburg (CA) on 23rd, 24th, and 25th February, 2024, the Supreme Council Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas, USA congratulates the followers of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj all over the globe. A glimpse in the pages of history during the middle ages reveals that social degeneration based on caste system, fanaticism, bigotry, hypocrisy and ritualism was alarmingly high and was eating into the very vitals of human civilization and dignity. At such a critical juncture of social decline, appear prophets with spiritual awakenings to create a just and equitable social order. It was this dark period of history when Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj was born at Seer Goverdhanpur in 1377 AD in Kashi, Varanasi.

BHAGTI MOVEMENT:- Guru Ravidass Ji, Satguru Kabir Ji and Guru Nanak Dev Ji were contemporaries and were pioneers of the Bhagti Movement in the 14th and 15th centuries which had started to bring the degenerating social order to the path of righteousness. As the history stands in evidence, there was a spiritual discourse among these spiritual sages of the time, in Varanasi. Guru Ravidass Ji's teachings were based on equality and universal brotherhood and were not meant for any particular section of society. Guru Ravidass Ji reminds us of the fact that human birth is a rare privilege obtained as a result of meritorious deeds of innumerable lives primarily for the purpose of realization of God. The very basic purpose of human life is defeated if one remains lost in the quagmire of material possessions and worldly delusions. God is always awake within us and can be seen with our inner vision only. We need not have to wander around in mountains and forests to find Him.

SYMBOL OF GODLINESS:- Satguru Kabir Ji and Satguru Nanak Dev Ji recognized the spiritual enlightening and greatness of Guru Ravidass Ji which had made him an undeniable symbol of godliness when social segregation was rampant



everywhere in Indian society. In spite of deliberate attempts on the part of Brahminical concept and ideology to keep his spiritual preachings hidden from the common masses, they could not hide it too long. The dazzling luster of this Spiritual JEWEL was finally visible in the holy pages of Guru Granth Saheb Ji Maharaj, compiled by the 5th Master Guru Arjun Dev Ji in 1604.

CASTE, CREED AND RELIGIOUS DISTINCTIONS:

As we learn from Guru Ji's teachings all men emerge from the same divine flame and the same creator pervades through them all. The four-fold classification of society into Varna system of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaish and Shudras is all man-made to maintain the fake and artificial superiority of priestly classes which has infected the entire society with a vicious disease, ruining the very core of the entire social organism. The

sacred hymns of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, as enshrined in Guru Granth sahib Ji, are simple and intelligible and full of devotional sentiments going straight to the heart and soul of the reader. The Brahmins and higher priestly class who initially opposed him with their thinking of superiority complex were dazzled and humbled to see Guru Ravidass Ji, tear open the skin on his chest to show them the gold-like sacred thread (or his inner light). This made them recognize his real and spiritual greatness and many of the Brahmin priests and rulers like Maharani Mirabai and Jhallan Bai of Chittor Rajasthan, became his devoted followers and bowed before him in reverence.

In the end we do feel that with the spread of education and the untiring efforts of our modern luminaries like Babasaheb, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia Ji and Babu Kanshi Ram Ji, the message of equality and humanitarianism is going across the man-made social barriers of human segregation. We hope that the hardened crust of caste based separatism will start breaking apart and the dream of Sat Guru Ravidass Ji will turn into reality.

Our best tribute to the sanctity of his life and ideals is to follow them as a way of our daily life.

Supreme Council also expresses its thanks to Mr. Prem K. Chumber, Chief Editor Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba (Weeklies) for, as always, publishing this respectful homage in remembrance of Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, in the esteemed columns of his Newspaper.

**"JO BOLE SO NIRBHAI
SHRI GURU RAVIDASS MAHARAJ KI JAI"
"NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA
TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA"**



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Goodie Takhar, PhD

Bootan Mandi - The Flag-bearer of Guru Ravidass and Babasaheb Ambedkar

Bootan Mandi and its peripheral localities in Jalandhar right from the Ambedkar Chowk to Satguru Kabir Chowk (Wadala Chowk) on Ambedkar Marg (Nakodar Road) have, and rightly, become the unnamed memorials and landmarks to register and carry forward the lofty ideals and thoughts of the great revolutionary Guru Ravidass and Babasaheb Ambedkar, one of the greatest sons of India in the contemporary times. Though I have written much about these matters in my blogs over the years yet I thought of broaching the subject once again in view of the forthcoming Guru Ravidass Gurburab on February 24 and Babasaheb Ambedkar's Jyanti on April 14. About this 2 kilometer patch of Ambedkar Marg will become a hub of celebrations and public events which have increasingly attained a definite place on the calendar of Jalandhar city. This patch of the Jalandhar-Nakodar Highway hosts - Ambedkar Chowk, Ambedkar Bhawan, Guru Ravidass-Chowk, Guru Ravidass Dham, Ambedkar Park, Ambedkar Community Centre, Budh Vihar, Guru Ravidass Mandir, Ambedkar College and Satguru Kabir-Chowk which make the site a mosaic of lofty ideals of 'equality and fraternity' propounded and preached by Guru Ravidass and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. One can easily make out the importance and dignity of the place, Bootan-Mandi and its periphery. I am happy to announce that my forthcoming book 'Bootan Mandi - The Nerve Centre of

Dalit Chetna, which is under print, is scheduled to be released in mid-April, 2024 which would provide more details as an 'oral history'.

Guru Ravidass Dham at Bootan Mandi has already been decked as a

through the normal wear and tear and partially by sheer neglect by the municipal authorities, the Park required urgent and immediate renovation. Some activists and residents of Bootan Mandi on the initiative and lead of AAP

at the park itself in the presence of Hon'ble MP, Sushil Rinku and Hon'ble MLA, Sheetal Angural. While appreciating the initiative and efforts of Paramjit Mahey in this regard, Minister Balkar Singh said that Ambedkar Park, in accordance with the high stature of Babasaheb Ambedkar, will be one of the best parks in Jalandhar.

Thanking the Hon'ble Minister, MP and MLA and also the top hierarchy of Punjab AAP including; Rajwinder Kaur, Surinder Singh Sodhi, Amritpal Singh spontaneously gathered audience, Paramjit Mahey said that we should not forget that whatever high positions and all round prosperity in the community we all were enjoying was due to our savior, Babasaheb Ambedkar alone. He also mentioned about Ambedkar Government College which was located in front of the Park across the road was the result of long struggle of the young activists of Bootan Mandi along with their supporters and also unstinted efforts of MP Sushil Rinku, a fully devoted young leader of the community.

With this off the cuff narration, I take the opportunity to greet you all on the Gurburab of Guru Ravidass and Naman to Babasaheb Ambedkar.



BOOTAN MANDI

The Nerve Centre of Dalit Chetna
The Bits and Pieces



Satguru Ravidass Dham Bootan Mandi

ਨੀਚੇ ਉਚ ਕਰੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ

Edited and Authored by:-

Ambassador Ramesh Chander



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bride and solacing spirit of Guru Ravidass's Vani has filled the air in the run up the Gurburab - Shobha Yatra on February 23 and Kirtan Darbar/Sangeet and Musical Darbar on February 24 are much awaited events by the followers of Guru Ravidass and the sprawling Mela by the public. Ambedkar Park at Bootan Mandi is yet another landmark which is the news. The park was thoughtfully planned and made by the then Mayor of Jalandhar in early 2010s, Surinder Mahey, a worthy son of the soil. Over the years, partially

activist Paramjit Mahey, Joint Secretary of the Intellectual Wing of AAP took up the matter with Minister Balkar Singh and convinced him to undertake the job of renovation and up-gradation of Ambedkar Park on priority basis. It is gratifying to note that they succeeded and on the advice and direction of the Hon'ble Minister Balkar Singh, Municipal authorities prepared a renovation project at the cost of Rs.1.15 crore and the formal go-ahead was given by the Minister on February 18 at a befitting but a solemn function



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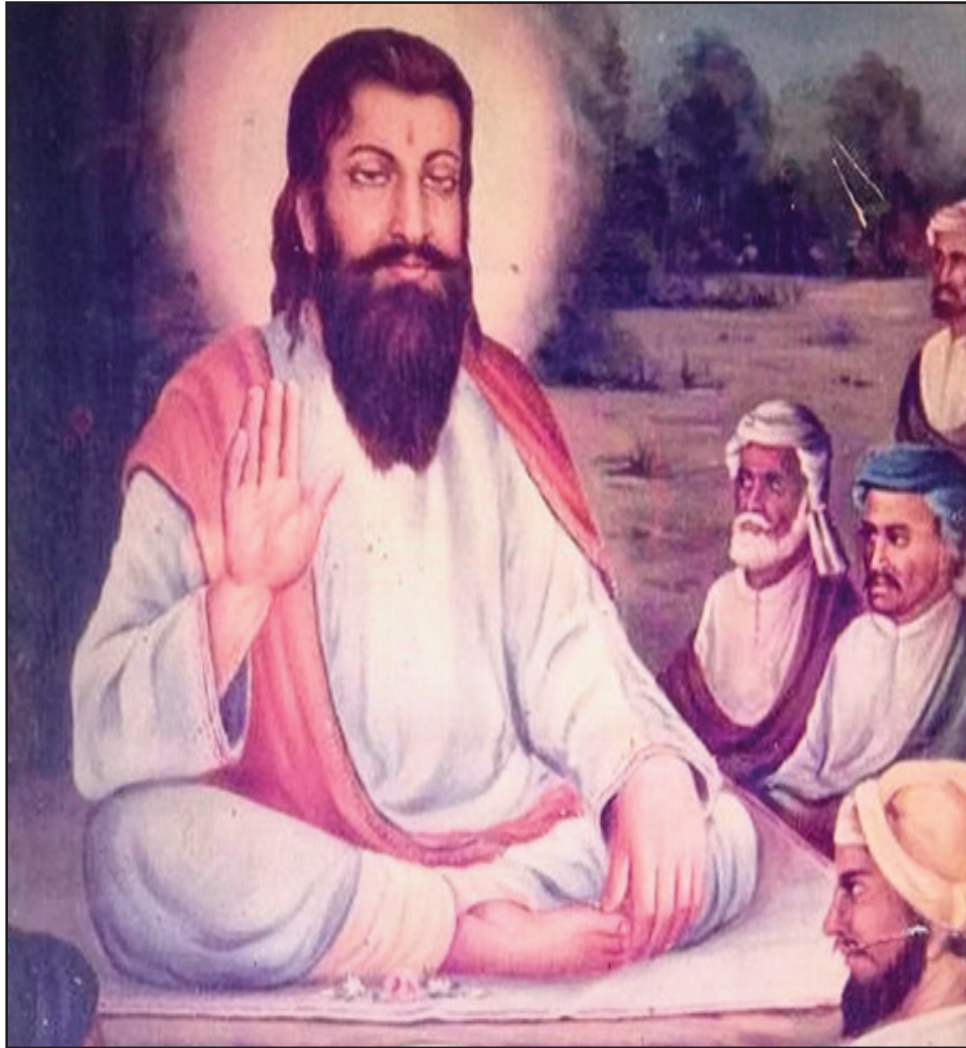
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CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 647th PARKASH UTSAV OF SATGURU RAVIDASS JI MAHARAJ

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, whose 646th birth anniversary is being celebrated throughout the world, is revered as Shiromani Sant of the medieval Bhakti movement of North India. He was born in the so called lowest of the low castes, in Seer Goverdhanpur near Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), whose touch was used to be considered polluting to the Savarnas. He opened a frontal attack on the system of Untouchability and spoke against the system of hegemonic Brahminical mediation for an access to spirituality. He also said that one needs not to hide his caste or leave his low profession to reach God. He became a model for his fellow beings to overcome the hierarchical barriers of Brahminical Social Order and to establish Begumpura a state without fear and sorrows. Sri Guru Ravidass elevated the status of the labour by emphasizing on the fact that manual labour is the best way to lead a pious life. He vehemently opposed living on alms and charity of others.

He defeated the famous Kashi Pundits in a formally organized Shas-trartha and proved that merit is not the



fiefdom of the so called upper castes alone. Everybody is capable of obtaining knowledge and to worship. He underlined the fact that the fourfold division of the Hindu society is a sham and a gimmick keep a large section of the society under the cruel control of a few Upper castes in the name of purity-pollution principle cunningly devised by Brahmins. It is against this very system of oppressive social differentiation that Guru Ravidass envisioned an egalitarian socio-political order where there would be no place for untouchability and social oppression. For the social transformation of the society, Sri Guru Ravidass Ji laid emphasis on labour, compassion, virtue, prohibition of alcohol and all bad deeds. He also reiterated the urgent need of remembering the formless God whom he addressed by varied names. Some scholars are of the view that Guru Ravidass did not form an organization nor he launched any consistent and systematic agitation against the system of untouchability. This is true. But to raise a loud voice at his times was no less than a clarion call to dismantle the unjust system of Brahminical social order. It is also true that the path told by him has become the beacon light for the Dalit movement.

Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Introduction of "Beyond Housing" Measure to Address Homelessness

Yesterday I introduced along with Assemblymember Joe Patterson



Assembly Bill 2417 to expand and improve California's response to our state's homelessness crisis. This legislation increases funding flexibility for treatment and service oriented programs by repealing the state's existing one-size-fits-all "Housing First" approach to homelessness.

Our current approach to homelessness is failing to get the results our communities are asking for. We need a renewed focus not just on housing, but on getting people the necessary treatment they need to get out of the cycle of homelessness. It's time for our state to support programs that are driving real change and getting people the help they need.

Since 2018 California has spent over \$20 billion taxpayer dollars to solve the homelessness crisis. During that same period the state's overall homelessness population has increased by 32 percent and today half of the nation's unsheltered homeless live in California.

AB 2417 shifts California's

focus "Beyond Housing" by recognizing that individuals experiencing homelessness have diverse needs and may require different pathways to stability. The bill would allow state agencies and departments to allocate funds to programs that prioritize mental health and drug treatment as a prerequisite for participation.

The proposed legislation comes in response to growing concerns over the shortcomings of the "Housing First" model, which has failed to adequately address the root causes of homelessness in many cases and has left many individuals without access to essential services. Moving "Beyond Housing" offers another tool in the toolbox for local governments as they seek to develop more holistic approaches to addressing homelessness.

Sheet Metal Worker Tour

I recently had the privilege of touring the Sheet Metal Workers' Local Apprenticeship Training Center in Mather. It was an enlightening experience, engaging with both staff and apprentices to gain a deeper understanding of the critical role the sheet metal industry plays in our community. Witnessing firsthand the skill and dedication of these workers reinforced my commitment to supporting policies that bolster workforce development and ensure the continued growth and prosperity of this vital sector.

Conversations during the visit highlighted the importance of investing in apprenticeship programs and promoting sustainable practices within the

industry. From crafting essential components for construction projects to contributing to the efficiency of heating and ventilation systems, sheet metal workers are indispensable to our



infrastructure. By working collaboratively with stakeholders and advocating for legislative measures that prioritize the needs of the sheet metal industry, I am confident we can pave the way for a brighter future for both workers and the communities they serve.

New Podcast Episode

On my podcast this week I was joined by Assemblymember Joe



Patterson where we discussed the 49ers Super Bowl loss, Newsom sending CHP to Oakland, growing bipartisan support for



Assemblyman Hoover

reforming Prop. 47, housing affordability, California's track record on homelessness, how to avoid a new parking infraction, rising energy costs, autonomous vehicles, new encampment legislation, a proposed plastic bag ban, single payer healthcare, and improving student literacy rates.

Ribbon Cutting in Rancho Cordova

Recently my staff participated in the grand opening and ribbon cut-



ting of The Flooring Station, located at 11367 Pyrites Way, and open every day of the week. They are an employee-owned flooring store offering a wide selection of carpet, hardwood, vinyl and tile floors. Their expert team is ready to help find the perfect floor for your home.

AWARENESS SEMINAR HELD AT AMBEDKAR BHAWAN

Caste Discrimination in Higher Educational Institutions Alarming Phenomenon - Advocate Pracha
We will not commit suicide; we will fight against injustice - Dr. Ritu Singh



Jalandhar (ATB) : At the Ambedkar Bhawan located on Dr. Ambedkar Marg, Jalandhar City, a discussion was held by Punjab Unit of 'Mission Save Constitution' on the topic of 'Caste Discrimination in Higher Educational Institutions' under the awareness programme, in which National Convener and Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, Mahmood Pracha, Dr. Ritu Singh, Assistant Professor, Delhi University and Convener Punjab Unit, Bhim Army Student Federation President Ashutosh Singh Boudh, Law Student, Delhi University participated.

Addressing the audience of intellectuals from across Punjab in the packed Ramabai Ambedkar Yadgar Hall of Ambedkar Bhawan, Ashutosh Singh said that By bowing to this historical place related to Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar ji, one realizes the truth that on 27 October 1951, the great thinker of the world, Dr. Ambedkar, while speaking on the subject of 'Future of Democracy in India', warned about the dangers to Indian democracy and expressed some doubts, they are clearly appearing today. Today, hero worship, direct interference of capitalists in educational and government institutions, excessive use of money and force in elections, corruption, oppression of Dalits, women, minorities and backward classes, lack of consciousness about the use of vote have turned Indian democracy into an authoritarian state.

Convener of the Punjab Unit, a loud voice against the caste discrimination and injustice being done to the backward, oppressed and poor students and teachers and a continuous

struggle for many years, combative, intellectual scholar Dr. Ritu Singh in her address, alerted the audience and discussed in detail about the arbitrariness and scams done by the principal of Daulat Ram College, Delhi University and other administrative officials regarding the appointments of professors. It should be remembered that due to raising the voice in favor of the victimized teachers, the assistant professor of Delhi University Dr. Ritu Singh was removed from the post of assistant professor. Under the leadership of Dr. Mahmood Pracha (Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India) and Ritu Singh fought a long struggle and won. But now it has become a symbol of struggle for the entire Dalits, backward and minorities.

Dr. Ritu became a 'role model' for the victims and oppressed. Rather than being victimized and frustrated by the unconstitutional diplomatic tactics of the humanitarians and fighting against them, rather than dying, Dr. Ritu inspired them to fight for their rights by drawing strength from the slogan of 'Sawa Lakh Se EkLadaun'. She said that if speaking for the rights of the oppressed people and fighting for their rights is a crime, then I will commit this crime again and again. Dr. Ritu Singh said in a loud voice that I will not die, I will not commit suicide, I have to fight against injustices. At the last stage of the seminar Dr. G. C. Kaul conducting the stage, when requested Mahmood Pracha, the leading advocate of this consciousness movement, to face the audience eagerly awaiting his speech, a calm settled over the cu-

rious silence in the hall. Pracha, an internationally renowned advocate, analyzed democracy and the Indian constitution with precision and subtlety, and said that Dr. Ambedkar, the creator of the constitution, was a very serious person. He made his mark in the whole world by creating the best constitution. He said that caste discrimination in higher educational institutions in India is an alarming phenomenon. The constitutional provisions made by Dr. Ambedkar for Dalits, Backward, Oppressed and minority communities have been hanged. The 10 percent of people who call themselves superior have hijacked the country by occupying all the resources and public institutions of the country. Advocate Pracha said that the young generation and students, being courageous, brave and combative like Dr. Ritu Singh, Dr. Ambedkar's ideology, which is enshrined in the constitution, needs to be saved. Our only demand is that the constitution should be implemented in the country in its true sense. Our movement is to save the Constitution. Only if the constitution survives will our life be safe. On this occasion, Advocate Pracha appealed to strongly support the three major movements going on in India, save the constitution, protest against the elections through EVM and farmers' struggle.

Madam Karamjit Kaur Retd. DPI (Colleges) in her address said that Dalit students are being discriminated against in higher educational institutions on a large scale today. The government or administrative officials are

keeping silent. Ambedkar Bhawan Trust Chairman Mr. Sohan Lal (Retired DPI, Colleges) thanked the audience from all over Punjab including intellectual thinkers and revolutionary comrades from Delhi and emphasized that the students and the younger generation should be aware of the tireless struggle of Babasaheb, maintaining their enthusiasm and consciousness, must move forward in the face of injustice with courage and boldness. He said that only education can bring social and economic change.

In this discussion, members of Ambedkar Bhawan Trust and Ambedkar Mission Society Shri Charan Das Sandhu, Harmesh Jasal, Dr. Charanjit Singh, Tilak Raj, Professor Balbir, Dr. Mahendra Sandhu, Harbhajan Nimta, Baldev Raj Bhardwaj, Dr. Rahul, Dr. Subhash, Dr. Thind, Dr. S. P. Singh, Dr. Surinder, Tarsem Lal Kaul UK, Hari Ram OSD, Prabh Dayal Rampur, Pradeep Raja (Chetna Channel), President of NRI Sabha Punjab Madam Parvinder Kaur Banga, Gautam, Madam Kavita, Anil Bagha, Meher Malik, Advocate Rajinder Boparai, Manjit Singh, Dr. Sandeep Mehmi, Prof. Arinder Singh, Pishori Lal Sandhu, Manohar Mahey, Ram Lal Das, Prof. Ashwini Jasal, Narendra Lakh, MR Sallan, LalitKanganiwal and a large number of colleagues were present. This information was given by Baldev Raj Bharadwaj, Finance Secretary of Ambedkar Bhawan Trust through a press statement.

Baldev Raj Bhardwaj
Finance Secretary,
Ambedkar Bhawan Trust (Reg),
Jalandhar

Supervisor Frost February Newsletter



Sue Frost
Sacramento County Supervisor

Prop 1: A Tale of More Empty Promises

As we navigate through the heart of election season, with ballots distributed and, I hope, making their way to the Election's Office, we stand on the cusp of the March 5 Primary Election. It's a pivotal time for our community, and I feel compelled to share my thoughts on Proposition 1, slated for the March 2024 ballot. This measure, which proposes a \$6.4 billion bond aimed at enhancing mental health treatment and housing, presents several concerns in our ongoing battle against homelessness in California.

While the initiative's provision for 6,800 treatment beds and 4,350 housing units, including dedicated support for veterans, is noteworthy, it doesn't fully meet the needs of the estimated 180,000 homeless individuals in our state. Of all the state's dysfunctions, none is more damaging to California's attempts to "make the pitch" to tax payers than the State's worst in the nation homelessness.

California's homelessness crisis is a glaring challenge, one that Proposition 1, despite its good intentions, might not fully address. It seems to focus on a specific part of the problem, potentially leaving many in need without adequate support.

A concerning aspect of Prop 1 is its mandate for counties to use 30% of their Mental Health Services Act funds for housing. This could significantly cut into the budget for crucial mental health services, especially for preventing homelessness and providing early mental health support. In Sacramento, where resources are already stretched thin, this could lead to a decrease in vital services. One has to wonder, why hasn't the original Mental Health Services Act of 2004, funded by a tax on millionaires, been able to curb our mental health and homelessness issues?

Adding to our challenges, Prop 1's implementation, particularly in financially strained counties like ours, could be difficult. Redirecting funds might mean cutting back on other essential services, compromising the quality and reach of mental health care.

While building new facilities and homes is important, Prop 1 misses a key piece: ongoing support services like job training, education, and continuous mental health care, all critical for successfully helping homeless individuals reintegrate into society.

Moreover, Prop 1 doesn't fully consider the varied needs of the entire homeless population, which includes diverse groups like families, youth, and the elderly, many of whom don't suffer from severe mental health conditions or substance abuse issues. We need a broader strategy that addresses the unique challenges faced by all homeless individuals.

While Proposition 1 demonstrates a commitment to addressing homelessness and mental health issues in California, it is not a comprehensive solution. The state needs a more holistic approach that includes a broader range of services and caters to the diverse needs of all homeless individuals. This should include not only

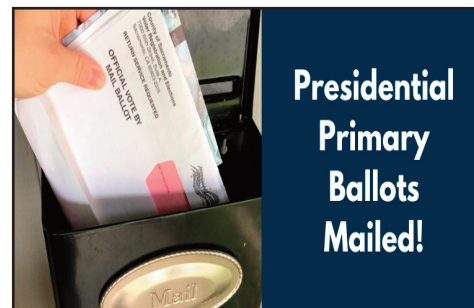
funding for treatment beds and housing but also investment in preventative services, workforce development, and long-term support mechanisms. Such an approach would ensure a more sustainable and effective solution to the complex issues of homelessness and mental health in California.

I do believe in reform, redemption, and rehabilitation. However, for a real change to occur, it's crucial for politicians and their activist partners to shift their focus from unchecked spending to taking decisive, early actions such as enforcing basic laws. This approach could have significantly slowed the homelessness crisis.

Thank you for Reading – and as always if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@saccounty.gov. Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murietta.

Ballots Mailed for Presidential Primary

We are less than a month



away from the March 5 Presidential Primary and ballots are officially in the mail. All registered voters in Sacramento County will receive a Vote-By-Mail ballot. Voters will notice a few things about their Vote-By-Mail ballot that makes the voting experience even more convenient.

All packets will include:
Your precinct-specific, party-specific ballot

A ballot drop box location map – 61 total drop boxes in the County
Your "I Voted" sticker

A pink, postage-paid return envelope

Remember, this is a party-specific Presidential Primary. Voters will see party-specific presidential candidates ONLY on their ballot. If you are still registered as a "no party preference" voter but want to vote for a Presidential candidate – you must either request a cross over ballot (American Independent, Democratic or Libertarian) or re-register under the new party (Green, Peace and Freedom, or Republican).

You can request a crossover ballot on our website.

You can re-register to vote under a new party on the Secretary of State's website.

Introducing My Voter Portal (MVP)

Visit Sacramento County Elections website and view all your voter specific information through My Voter Portal (MVP).

View your County Voter Information Guide

Find your nearest Vote Center or Ballot Drop Box

View your registration and voting history

Use the Voter Action Form to request accessible election materials, language preference, look up your district, and much more

As a reminder, here are ways to return your Vote by Mail Ballot:

Choose how, when and where you want to vote.

By Mail: All registered voters will receive a ballot in the mail. Place the voted ballot inside the envelope provided, sign the envelope and return – your postage is paid!

Vote Center: With the passage of the California Voter's Choice Act, traditional polling places have been replaced with Vote Centers that are open for up to 11 days, including Election Day.

This means voters can choose when, where and how they want to vote at ANY Vote Center in the County. Avoid the lines, vote early!

At the Vote Center, you can drop off your completed ballot OR vote in person. There is even weekend voting!

18 Vote Centers open for 11 days beginning Feb. 24, 2024

An additional 70 Vote Centers open for four days beginning March 2, 2024

61 Drop Boxes – Voted/signed ballots may be placed in any of the 61 secure Drop Box locations throughout Sacramento County beginning Feb. 5, 2024

Eligible residents can also register to vote, update their registration and cast their ballot at a Vote Center, even on the day of the election.

A complete list of locations can be found online and in the Sacramento County Voter Information Guide that was mailed out in January.

For more election and voter information, visit the Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections website.

To register to vote, visit the California Online Voter Registration website.

How to Report Property Damage

The Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services has been actively collecting information on the damages caused by the recent wind-storm. It is advised that affected resi-

dents and business owners contact their insurance providers to initiate claims for the dam-

ages incurred. Should a significant number of properties suffer substantial damage, the county might qualify for a Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Declaration, potentially allowing affected parties to apply for SBA loans.

To report damages, individuals and businesses can use the Citizen Damage Reporter. Submitting these reports enables the County to deploy building inspectors to evaluate the structural safety and compile necessary data to potentially request an SBA declaration. Please note, submitting a damage report does not constitute an application for financial assistance nor does it fulfill insurance reporting requirements.

Upcoming District 4 Community



Meetings

I have four upcoming district community meetings in the next few weeks, and I am thrilled to invite you to join me.

Orangevale
Monday, February 26th
Orangevale Community Center
6826 Hazel Ave, Orangevale, CA
6:00pm

Antelope
Wednesday, February 28th
North Highlands-Antelope Library
4235 Antelope Rd - Antelope, CA
6:00pm

Folsom
Tuesday, March 5th
Georgia Murray Library
411 Stafford St, Folsom, CA
6:00pm

North Highlands
Wednesday, March 7th
North Highlands Recreation & Parks District
6040 Watt Ave, North Highlands, CA
6:00pm

2024 District 4 Community Survey

My 2024 community survey is live! I'd love to hear from you, and I encourage you to take a few minutes to complete the survey.





SRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA CA

2150 Crestview Drive, Pittsburg CA 94565
Tel : (925) 439-2355

ਜਦੋਂ ਤੁਮ ਗਿਰਿਵਰ ਤਉ ਹਮ ਮੋਰਾ ॥ ਜਦੋਂ ਤੁਮ ਚੰਦ ਤਉ ਹਮ ਭਏ ਹੈਂ ਚਕੋਰਾ ॥1॥
ਮਾਧਵੇ ਤੁਮ ਨ ਤੋਰਹੁ ਤਉ ਹਮ ਨਹੀ ਤੋਰਹਿ ॥ ਤੁਮ ਸਿਉ ਤੋਰਿ ਕਵਨ ਸਿਉ ਜੋਰਹਿ ॥1॥ਰਹਾਉ॥

Bole' So Nirbhay! Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai
DHAN DHAN SRI GURU RAVIDASS JI



647th Gurpurb of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji

Sri Guru Ravidass ji was born in 1377, in Kanshi, in India. Guru Ravidass Ji was a great religious and social reformer. Guru Sahib dedicated his whole life for the welfare of the humanity. He preached social harmony and equality among all human beings. His BANI is enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg will be celebrating the 647th Parkash Utsav of **SATGURU RAVIDASS JI** on Sunday, February 25, 2024 at the Gurughar. Sangat will perform Langer and Path Sewa for this program.

ARAMBH SHRI AKHAND PATH

February 23, 2024 (Friday) 10:00 AM

BHOG SHRI AKHAND PATH

February 25, 2024 (Sunday) 10:00 AM

KIRTAN DIWAN - After Bhog until 2:30 PM

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony

February 24, 2024 (Saturday) at 11:00 AM.



- * Prominent Jatha of *Bhai Onkar Singh ji, Una Sahib Waley* will delight the sangat on Sunday from 12:30 noon to 1:30 PM. Gurughar jatha of Bhai Balwinder Singh ji will start the Kirtan Diwan.
- * Bhai Suveg Singh ji's jatha will do Shabad Kirtan on Saturday evening along with our Gurughar Jatha from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

We need volunteers to help with this event to prepare and serve Langar, keep Gurughar clean and organized, directing traffic/parking, kitchen and other Sewa.
For STALLS or any SEWA, please contact President Vinod Kumar President at (408) 718-2506, Asst. Secretary Dilbag Singh at (209) 834-4641 or Chairman Ramesh Suman at (925) 366-3618.

www.srigururavidasstemple.com

Sangat Sewadars

Chairman
Ramesh Suman

President
Vinod Kumar

General Secretary
Naresh Kumar

Treasurer
Sunita K. Singh