



Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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VOL - 7

ISSUE - 29

February 10, 2016

www.ambedkartimes.com

www.ambedkartimes.org

REMEMBERING SH. C. L. CHUMBER

The sudden demise of Sh. C. L. Chumber on February 6, 2016 is not only shocking and appalling to his family alone but to all those who associated with him and knew his close concern with the welfare of the community. Born on March 2, 1958 in his ancestral home at Hussain Abad that falls in Tehsil Nakodar of Jalandhar district, Mr. Chumber got his matriculation from Govt. High School Shankar and B.A. from K. R.M. DAV College Nakodar. In 1976, he was selected as a Tehsil Welfare Officer. After a few years, he resigned from the service on October 12, 1979 to become a whole-time servant of the community. He was closely associated with Babu Kanshi Ram Ji during his activism sojourns in Punjab and contributed a lot for furthering the cause of the Dalit movement in the state. He also played a major role in building Dalit print media in Punjab. On November 19, 1985, he launched Dalit magazine entitled "Qaumi Udarian" to initiate regular debate and conversation on the burning issues of Dalit identity and empowerment. He was resident editor of "Bahujan Bulletin" which was released by Babu Kanshi Ram Ji. He struggled hard to remind his people within the Samaj and outside about the great contribution made by Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia and his famous Ad Dharm movement. He brought out a detailed souvenir on the life of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia and the achieve-

ments of the historic Ad Dharm movement in Punjab. On June 11, 2000, Mr. Chumber re-published the Ad Dharm Report of 1931 with the list of its 500 members about whom there was no information was available.

Despite his being a whole-time servant of the Samaj, Mr. C. L. Chumber provided the best education to his children. His two sons, Kumarjiv Chumber & Jansangram Chumber and two daughters Ravjot & Amandeep are well educated. He often used to talk that it is only through

excellent educational qualifications our Samaj can confront the centuries old repression and social exclusion slammed on the lives of Dalits. His social and political activism was never resented by the members of his family.

They supported him throughout his life struggle. His wife Mrs. Santosh Kumari Chumber stood with him at all the occasion and con-

tributed her best in his struggle. It is with the support of his dedicated and committed wife towards his mission that he remained free from the daily chores of house hold activities. His continuous struggle left an indelible

print on the lives of his three brothers (Prem Kumar Chumber, Tarsem Lal Chumber and Ravi Parkash Chumber) who did not hesitate to follow into his footsteps. Mr. Prem

Kumar Chumber's contribution towards the community is known world over. He has continuously been publishing two weekly

newspapers (Ambedkar Times (English) and Desh Doaba in Punjabi) headquartered at Sacramento (California) in the USA. Mr. Prem Chumber confesses that all this has been possible only with the encouragement and guidance of his great brother Mr. C.L. Chumber who was more a father figure to him rather than a brother.

Mr. C.L. Chumber was like a father to his three sisters and three

brothers who lost their father (Late Shri Punjab Rai Chumber MA) in his prime age. The loving son of mother Mrs. Bishan Kaur Chumber, C. L. Chumber was fond of books in general and Dalit literature in particular. He was a voracious reader

and always remained ready for engaged conversations. He never minced words while articulating his view-point.

His deep attachment with the history of Dalit culture and Dalit heritage brought him closer to the realization to preserve the glorious history of Ad Dharm movement in Punjab. He was a man of clear and simple heart, unwavering commitment and fearless convictions for the betterment of the community. On his sudden passing away causing a tragic loss to the family and the community as a whole, I offer my heart-felt condolences and pray for peace and tranquility of the departed soul. Posted on www.ambedkartimes.com on February 8, 2016



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SH. C. L. CHUMBER

In the Memory of Shri C. L. Chumber

It is to inform with deep grief that my most respected elder Brother Mr. C.L. Chumber passed away on February 6, 2016. He is survived by his mother Mrs. Bishan Kaur Chumber, wife Mrs. Santosh Kumari Chumber, two daughters (Ravjot & Amandeep), two sons (Kumarjiv Chumber & Jansangram Chumber), two grandchildren and one daughter-in-law, two son-in-laws and three brothers (Prem Kumar Chumber, Tarsem Lal Chumber and Ravi Parkash Chumber) with their families. Mr. C. L. Chumber was not only my most respected brother but gave love to all of us as our father. I have not only lost my elder brother but lost my most respected father too. I can't control myselfOh my great great great brother. You were very brave and intelligent son of most respected mother Mrs. Bishan Kaur Chumber & most respected father Late Shri Punjab Rai Chumber MA. Ex Tehsil Welfare Officer, right hand man of Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji, Mr. C.L. Chumber was totally dedicated to all the Adi Rehbars, Adi Dharam, Ad Dharm Movement and its founder, the great

freedom fighter, Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia Ji. As a fearless journalist, writer and spokesman he was the publisher and founder editor and of KAUMI UDARIAN monthly magazine, brought out the historic souvenir on the life and contributions of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia and became the resident editor of BAHUJAN SAMAJ BULLETIN.

He was also the one who advised me to choose the title DESH DOABA for our weekly newspaper published from Sacramento. Sincerely committed to the cause of Dalit community, C.L. Chumber never compromised with his principles, lived a fearless life facing all the challenges and remained a vital source of inspiration and courage to all of us and his large friend circle. A great brother, father, husband and friend, a true believer in humanity and a dedicated servant of the community.

we salute you!

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor: Weekly Newspapers:
Ambedkar Times (English)
Desh Doaba (Punjabi)

Eminent Writer & Dalit Crusader Sh. C.L. Chumber's Bhog ceremony will be held on 14th February 2016

Sh. C.L. Chumber noted social activist breathed his last on 6th February 2016. Hailing from Village Hussain Abad (Jalandhar), Sh. Chumber was widely well known for his contribution to the upliftment of the Dalit community. Sh. Chumber started his career as a District Welfare Officer, but soon quit the job to serve the larger interests of the marginalized sections of the society. He was the founding father and editor-in-chief of Kaumi Udarian – a fortnightly magazine highlighting the social issues of the time. He was also editor/publisher/owner of historic souvenir of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia.

Sh. C. L. Chumber contested the Punjab Legislative Assembly Jalandhar north seat in 1992 election for BSP. A close aide of Late Sahib Sh. Kanshi Ram Ji, he was the spokesperson for 'Kanshi Ram Bachao Sangharsh Committee'. He also served as the President of 'Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Academy' and worked as Resident Editor on 'Bahujan Samaj Bulletin' - the mouthpiece of BSP in 1997. He was

widely covered by print and electronic media for his progressive and insightful thoughts on a host of concurrent issues, including universal access to education, social stigmas, rampant corruption, and oppressive caste system. Sh. C. L. Chumber had a personal library with a collection of very valuable & rare books over 10,000 titles. Sh. C. L. Chumber leaves behind his mother Mrs. Bishan Kaur Chumber, wife Mrs. Santosh Chumber, daughters Mrs. Ravjot and Mrs. Amandeep, and sons Mr. Kumar Jiv Chumber and Mr. Jan Sangram Chumber.

His younger beloved brothers Prem Kumar Chumber Editor-In-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba weekly newspapers in the USA and Mr. Tarsem Lal Chumber in Jalandhar City with their families.

The Bhog ceremony will be held on 14th February 2016 at 1 pm at Shri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara Sahib, Urban Estate Phase-2, Jalandhar City (Punjab).

- Kumarjiv Chumber

CONDOLENCES

Dear Editor Prem Chumber,

* I learnt with a heavy heart the demise of your dear brother and mine a close friend, Shri C.L. Chumber. It is an irreparable loss not only to you and the family but also to the community at large. C. L. Chumber was a staunch Ad-Dharmi and a true follower of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Babu Kanshi Ram. He was dedicated to the social and community causes wholeheartedly.

Kindly accept our heartfelt condolences on this sad occasion. We pray for the departed soul and the bereaved family.

(Ramesh Chander)

Ambassador-IFS Retired

* It is stunning and shocking to know that your elder brother Mr. C.L. Chumber has passed away, creating an emotional vacuum not only in his own family but in the entire community of his admirers and well-wishers. He was a man of unwavering commitment and fearless convictions in the service of the community as a whole.

Humanly this loss is unforgettable and irreparable but God's ways are mysterious and He is the best judge of his actions.

I offer my heart-felt condolences on this tragic loss and pray for peace and tranquility of the departed soul and for solace and comfort to the bereaved family.

O. P. Bailey (California, USA)

* It is really a shock. We talked only yesterday. It is a loss not only yours but that of whole the community. We need people like C.L Chumber who could speak their mind without fear. His memory will remain forever through his writings. My brother had an opportunity to work with him and he had all praise for him. We often talked about him. It is an irreparable loss to the family and community. At this time of sorrow, my sincerest condolences to the family and friends.

With deepest sympathy,

Arun Kumar (UK)

* I am sad to learn the loss of your elder brother. Death is inevitable, unpredictable and no doubt comes to all of us. But this untimely loss of a dear brother, who acted like a father is really a difficult time for the whole Chumber family and many near and dears as well.

In this difficult time, I express my condolences and do sympathize with the bereaved family. May God empower you and whole Chumber family to bear this loss and rest the departed soul in peace.

Sincerely,

Rakesh Chander (California)

* Very sad to hear about your loss. My sincere condolences with you and your family. May Lord Buddha bless his soul in peace!

Raj Kumar Oshoraj (Toronto, Canada)

* I am really sorry to hear about your brother's sudden demise. May Waheguru give you, your family and relatives all the emotional strength to deal with this loss and may his soul rest in peace.

With heart felt grief,

Dr. Harmesh Kumar (California, USA)

* We are very sorry to know about early demise of our beloved leader and writer Mr. C. L. Chumber. We pray to Guru Ravidass Ji for the peace of the departed soul from us. Brother we are with you all the time. God bless you and your family. We feel so sorry.

Amardeep Chahal (King City, California, USA).

* I am sorry to read the passing away of your brother Mr. C. L. Chumber. I know the pain of losing brother or sister as you know I too lost my two brothers and one sister here in California. My deepest condolences from the bottom of my heart to you and your family. May God give peace to his soul and give a space in the heaven and provide the strength to the family to bear the loss.

Ram M. Saroay (California, USA).

* I am really shocked to hear about Mr. C. L. Chumber's early demise. He was like a big brother to me. Four days ago received a SMS from Mr. Chumber that read "We can talk now". I could not call him. But I regret it now. Had I known he was seriously sick, I would have never delayed to call him. Now I won't be able forgive myself ever. I learn lot from him. Anyone I know about Ghadari Baba Babu Mangu Ram Ji, from his writing. From 2010

on we talked over the phone for hours. But there were lot of questions I wants to ask him during my next visit to India. But that won't happen again. Mr. C. L. Chumber is physically not with us today but his writing will keep him alive forever. He was the most daring writer and thinker who never compromised. Mr. C. L. Chumber will be missed dearly by his family and friends.

Tejpal Gangar

(Vancouver, Canada).

* Very very sad. In fact I had a plan to see him and I got his address and phone number

and was thinking to write him to fix up the meeting. He was great Ambedkarite and always fights for the cause of Dalits. He was so young, his departure has really created vacuum and left everybody in shock. Prem Chumber is good friend of mine and we meet quite often. He always talked about him, his family and his support to all people around him. I just called Prem Ji to get somebody's phone, but he gave me this shocking news. Unbelievable! It is a great loss to the Chumber family as well as to the whole community. My condolence and heart felt feeling to the family and others associated with him. God bless his soul and rest in peace.

G. S. Bagha.

* I remember the occasion in which Mr. C. L. Chumber released the book of "The Legend Saheed Immanuel Sekeran" On 24th October 2012 at Dikshabhumi, Nagpur (Maharashtra) India. I and Sant Hira Singh had a chance to stay with him for 3 days at Nagpur. He was very much interested to come to Tamilnadu to meet the people of Kanshiramists. But Nature not permitted. May his soul rest in peace!

Jeevan Malla, Tamilnadu (Kanyakumari)

C. L. Chumber was not only an individual but an institution. He was very warm in nature. Whenever he passed by my village often visited us. A fearless and dedicated writer and journalist to the cause of the Dalit community is no more among us. I with a painful heart while remembering the days spent with Mr. C.L. Chumber share the grief with Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber and his family! Amin!!

Kulveer Singh Kanwal (Nakodar).

* So sad ... the source of the roots of Sh. C.L.Chumber Sahib is no more. My sincere condolences for the Chumber family and all the readers and friends of Desh Doaba and Ambedkar Times forums.

Dr. Jaswant Rai Sahri.

* I am very socked and sad to know that Mr. C. L. Chumber passed away. We have lost a prominent Ambedkarite, writer, spokesman, thinker, more over a man of principles. Since 40 years, I knew him very well, when we worked together in Ambedkar Mission Society Punjab actively at Ambedkar Bhawan Jalandhar. After that he joined into B.S.P. and became right-hand man of Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji. He started & was founding Chief Editor of "Kaumi Udarian" and resident editor of Bahujan Samaj Bulletin weekly newspaper. He also published historic Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Souvenir. He contested the Punjab Legislative Assembly Jalandhar North seat as a candidate of B.S.P. He always took right stand by the side of Mr. Kanshi Ram Ji even before and after his death. He was very intelligent & a great book lover that's why he left behind a huge collection of books in thousands. He was himself a society and dedicated to the downtrodden classes. His wife Mrs. Santosh Chumber is a teacher His children and brothers and sisters are well established. His younger brother Mr. P. K. Chumber publishing weekly newspapers Ambedkar Times in English and Desh Doaba in Punjabi from California USA, Mr. C. L. Chumber was very proud of him. I express my condolence and sympathy to the whole Chumber family. We have lost a great visionary brilliant man. I pay my homage to the extraordinary man Mr. C. L. Chumber. He will be remembered by his work for downtrodden forever.

Harmesh Jassal, Sidarth Nagar, Jalandhar



SH. C. L. CHUMBER



Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

A Crusader for Social Justice



Arun Kumar
(General Secretary Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations, UK)

Dr. Bheem Ramji Ambedkar, popularly also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was one among the tallest leaders in the world who fought for the dignity of all humans irrespective of all artificial barriers – caste, race, gender, religion, ethnicity etc. He is no less in stature than Dr King, Nelson Mandela, or anyone else who

fought for the human dignity. Lately he is becoming a world phenomenon and the oppressed people across the Globe get inspiration from him. Whole of his life he struggled for the basic human rights of millions of people living in the Indian sub-continent. Schools opened in the name of Ambedkar in Hungary by the Roma community are an evidence of his growing popularity. Contribution of Dr. Ambedkar to eradicate caste based discrimination (CBD) and his work to improve the conditions of nearly 300 million oppressed people in India alone are being recognised in academic and political circles not only in India but also all over the world. On the demand of Dalit network Netherlands, on 30th June, 2011, Dutch Parliament adopted a motion by two third majorities requesting the Minister of Foreign Affairs to continue an active approach to combat CBD and improving the position of over 300 million Dalits in South Asian countries. It was also requested to raise issue on the European Union, UN organisations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Parliament was further asked to accept Ambedkar Principles framed by International Dalit Solidarity Network, Netherlands as an integral part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy of Dutch and the European companies including in the supply chain who are active in the countries where CBD is practised.

Dr. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, political leader, philosopher, thinker, anthropologist, historian, orator, prolific writer, economist, scholar, editor, a revolutionary and one of the founding fathers of independent India. He was born as untouchable community which is considered inherently so much low and inferior that their mere shadow polluted others. Overcoming numerous social and financial obstacles, Ambedkar became one of the first so-called outcastes to obtain a college education in India and earning law degrees and multiple doctorates for his study and research in law, economics and political science from Columbia University and the London School of Economics. Despite all his learning, he was still considered low. He fought

ideological wars with his opponents (including Gandhi) to get minimum human rights for his people. Overcoming all prejudices, he became the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution and which was adopted on January 26, 1950. Ambedkar's work on the constitution provided the legal framework for the abolition of many oppressive features of Indian society and transformed the lives of over three hundred million people by abolishing age old scourge of humanity- Untouchability in modern India.

Ambedkar gave preference to social reforms over political reforms. After his education in London, he started a social movement to improve the conditions and social status of Untouchables. He started newspapers and authored many books to highlight the plight of untouchables. As they were not allowed to enter into temples and fetch water from common water tanks, he started campaign to enter into these places and drink water. Their admission in schools was prohibited. In 1927, he led the Mahad March at the Chowdar Tank at Colaba, near Bombay, to give the untouchables the right to draw water from the public tank where he burnt copies of the 'Manusmriti' Hindu scripture advocating caste based discrimination) publicly. This marked the beginning of the anti-caste and anti-priest movement. The temple entry movement launched by Dr. Ambedkar in 1930 at 'Kalaram Temple', Nasik is another landmark in the struggle for human rights and social justice.

Dr. Ambedkar, organised the Independent Labour Party, participated in the provincial elections and was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly. During these days he stressed the need for abolition of the feudal system and pleaded for workers' right to strike.

He attended all Round Table Conferences held in London to negotiate more political rights to the Indians. Each time, he forcefully projected his views in the interest of the 'untouchable'. He also exhorted the downtrodden sections to raise their living standards and to acquire as much political power as possible. In 1930s, the British government set up Simon Commission to give representation in the government to various groups.

Ambedkar pleaded his case for the untouchables. The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald announced the findings of the Commission and as a result several communities including the 'depressed classes' (Untouchables) were given the right to have separate electorates. But Gandhiji didn't want to see the Hindu community divided and went on a fast unto death against separate electorate. Pressure was put on Ambedkar to abandon his demand and save Gandhi's life. Consequently on 24th September 1932, Dr.

Ambedkar and Gandhi reached an agreement by which reservations (quotas) were provided for untouchables in Government jobs and legislative assemblies. This agreement carved out a clear and definite position for the downtrodden on the political scene of the country. It opened up opportunities of education and government services for them and also gave them a right to vote. During the Second World War, he called upon Indians to join the Army in large numbers to defeat Nazism, which he said, was another name for Fascism.

Before Independence of India, Ambedkar was appointed the Labour Minister in the Viceroy's Council. As a Labour Minister, he fixed the working hours of the labourers. He also stopped pregnant women working in the mine industry.

As Law Minister in the Independent India, he framed a Hindu Code Bill by which Indian women received equal rights at par with men. For the first time she could inherit the parents property.

She was given a right to divorce to leave an unhappy married life. Because of the pressure from the conservative population, the government was not prepared to pass this bill. Rather than compromising on this issue, he resigned from the government. Later on this bill was passed in instalments.

On 14 October, 1956, he embraced Buddhism along with nearly half a million of his followers and three months later on 6 December 1956, he passed away.

In 1952, Columbia University from where he



earned his MA in 1915 and PhD in 1927 presented him with an honorary doctorate for his service as "a great social reformer and a valiant upholder of human rights". In 1995 a bronze bust of Dr. Ambedkar was installed in the Lehman library of the Columbia University. Similarly a bronze bust of Ambedkar also adores the London School of Economics from where he obtained a DSc degree in Economics. Ambedkar was also posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 1990. On 24 September, 2015, Government of Maharashtra acquired a property in London where Dr Ambedkar stayed during his studies in 1921-22. The proposal was submitted by the Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations, UK to convert this house into an Ambedkar Memorial.

This house was opened on 14 November 2015 by the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narinder Modi.




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D. C. Ahir

The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

When in 1915 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was giving final touches to his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University in New York, a Punjabi

youth, who had gone to America a few years earlier, was involved in a dangerous mission of smuggling suns from California to the Punjab for inciting mutiny in India. This Punjabi youth later became famous as Babu Mangu Ram, the founder of the Ad Dharm Movement. Mangu Ram was born in a small village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 14 January, 1886 in an untouchable family; his father was a leather merchant. As by then the doors of education had been opened to all by the British rulers, Mangu Ram was sent to the school in the nearby village, Mahilpur, but the treatment meted out to him by the Hindu teacher was far from human. Like Bhim Rao in Satara, Mangu Ram too was made to sit outside the classroom. Not only that, even the teacher would not teach him directly; he was invariably given lesson through a Muslim student. Somehow, Mangu Ram passed his middle examination and joined high school at Bajwara, a nearby town. Here too. He was subjected to the same humiliation, and was made to sit outside the classroom. One day, it rained so heavily that in spite of taking shelter under a tree, Mangu Ram was completely drenched. And when the snow-balls, accompanied by high velocity winds, fell like missiles on him, he was unable to bear it any longer. So, he ran to take shelter inside the classroom. As soon as he had entered the room, the teacher saw him, and instead of showing any sympathy, he started beating him with a stick for having come inside. Weeping and crying, Mangoo Ram went out, and somehow reached his home.

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the tats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again".

Fearing another beating, Mangoo Ram hastened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

With his education coming to an abrupt end, Mangu Ram became unemployed, and bit frustrated too. In 1909, he, along with some other young men from the village, went to California, U.S.A. in order to earn some money by working in the Peach Orchards of Fresno and elsewhere in the San Joaquin valley of central California. Instead of earning money, he,

however, became involved in the activities of the Ghadar Party, an international network of militant Punjabi nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British as Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in



absentia, and sentenced to death for taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites. Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake, however, the ship reached Singapore. Unfortunately for Mangu Ram, here he was recognized by some traitor Indians who had earlier worked for the Ghadar Party. They informed the Police. By now, for running away from Batavia, death warrants had been issued by the British Government to be executed wherever any one of them was found. Accordingly, the Singapore Police began preparing for his execution. Then a miracle happened. Just half an hour before his execution, a gentleman named Barde, whom Mangu Ram had never seen or met, came, caught him by the arm, took him out of the Thana, and putting him on the same ship in which Mangu Ram had come, he asked the Captain of the ship to sail for Manila. By the time the Police swung into action, the ship had crossed the Singapore Port Limits. Having failed to intercept the ship, the police caught hold of some drunkard; executed him to cover up their lapse, and announced that Mangu Ram had been executed. This news was later published in the Indian Newspapers.

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during

this period he had no contact with his family as no letters could be written for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower.

The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangoo Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar



Party had broadened his outlook, and sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his ideas, Babu Mangu Ram convened a Conference at his village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur on 11-12 June, 1926. Addressing the largely attended Conference, Babu Mangu Ram proclaimed that the Untouchables constituted a separate Qaum, a religious community like the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and those they were the original inhabitants of this country. Hence, the movement was named as Ad Dharm; and its leaders devised distinctive costume, bright red turbans and shashes; coined a new sacred mantra or symbol, "So-hang" and exhorted the people to call themselves as Ad Dharmis.

The primary object of the Ad Dharm was to give the untouchables an alternative religion. Its another object was to reform the society from within. As social movement, the Ad Dharm exhorted the people to abstain from immoral practices; to lead a life of purity and piety; to discard the use of alcohol, drugs, give education to boys and girls, and to treat all men and women equal in the society. On the whole, the movement was aimed at giving the untouchables a sense of pride and dignity as members of the Ad Dharm.

The headquarters of Ad Dharm Mandal were established in Jalandhar city from where the movement was organized in a systematic manner, and the devoted missionaries spread the message far and wide in the Punjab, and even beyond. Since the Mandal had accepted Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji as its spiritual leader, the movement became primarily popular amongst the Chamars, and they readily adopted the nomenclature of Ad Dharmi.

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion.

Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiya (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding, the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, if forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever.

The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis. This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Juergensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

Courtesy: Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab by D. C. Ahir