



Ambedkar Times

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MAKING SENSE OF DALIT IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY PUNJAB

REVIEW ARTICLE OF A RECENT STUDY IN PUNJABI

Punjab has the highest proportion of Dalits (29 percent, Census of India 2001) in India and this whopping numerical presence has further increased with the inclusion of Mochi and Rai Sikh/Mahatam castes into Scheduled Castes category in the state. Despite having the highest proportion of Dalit percentage in the country, Dalits in Punjab, however, are extensively deprived of agricultural land. Among them less than 5 percent (Census of India) are cultivators. They shared only 4.82 percent of the number of operational holdings and 2.34 percent of the total area under cultivation (1991 Census). Consequently, their landlessness rendered a large number of them into agricultural labourers and made them subservient to the landowners. However, a significant change has taken place over the last few decades. Dalits in Punjab have improved their economic position through hard work, job diversification and emigration abroad. They have entered into a



DR. RONKI RAM

number of professions, which were traditionally considered to be the mainstay of the business and artisan castes. This has led to a sharp decline in the number of Dalit landless agricultural workers in Punjab whose strength has



Surinder Singh

Junior Research Fellow

come down from 24 percent in 1991 to 16 percent in 2001. However, the dissociation of Dalits from the menial and agricultural work in Punjab and their relatively better economic conditions have probably failed to get them entry into the local structure of power, almost totally

monopolized by the so-called dominant/upper castes. This is what forced them to look for alternative ways of social mobility and empowerment.

The story of Dalit identity, emancipation, empowerment and mobility is quite different in Punjab from that of the rest of India. There happened to be two main models of social mobility available to the socially excluded sections of the Indian society. These two models are: Conversion and Sanskritisation. Conversion and Sanskritisation aim at seeking Dalit emancipation by crossing over to something new/external that would facilitate them to quit their centuries-old entrenched subordination [Ram 2012: 639]. But as far as Punjab is concerned, Dalits seem to have avoided this two fold way of social mobility for the reasons best known to them. They prefer to improve their social status through highlighting their caste identity.

What distinguished caste in Punjab from the rest of the coun-

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Japanese Institute Honors

BHAGAT SINGH THIND

Sacramento : The Fred Korematsu Institute for Civil Rights and Education, a program of the Asian Law Caucus, held the Fred



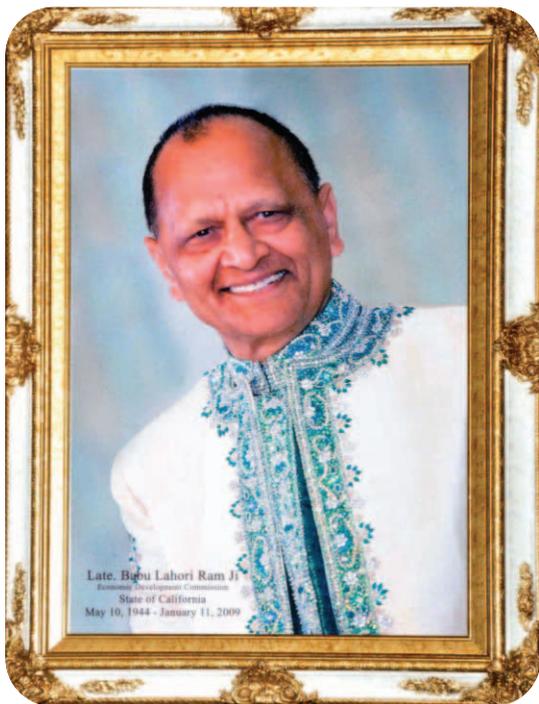
Korematsu Day Heroes Celebration on Sunday, January 27, 2013 in the Herbst Theatre, San Francisco. Despite a \$25 ticket, this 900-capacity theatre was full. In all, 16 civil rights heroes were honored. These included a Sikh, Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind. He was one of the three heroes in the category of "Race in the Courts Heroes".

He was honored for fighting for U.S. citizenship in the U.S. Supreme Court,

In their landmark decision of Feb.10, 1923, the Supreme Court conceded that he was a Caucasian (A requirement for citizenship, then), but unfortunately for him, the Court declared him "alien ineligible to citizenship", saying that he was not "white". At the celebrations, he was represented by his son, David Thind, who has published his many manuscripts, and maintains an excellent web site. Dr Thind was a great orator and delivered numerous lectures on Sikh philosophy and the right of freedom of India from British Rule. He could get citizenship only in 1936 under the New York State's law new law that allowed citizenship to World War I veterans. Readers will enjoy the music and the information at http://www.bhagatsinghthind.com/military_thind.php The Korematsu Institute distributes Free Korematsu Teaching Kits to any teacher who requests one on their web site (www.korematsuinstitute.org). This writer is happy to note that, the sponsor of the celebrations included the Sikh Coalition, Sikh American Legal Defense & Education Fund, and South Asian Bar Association of Northern California. However, he did not see any Sikh among the 900 attendees at the function. For further details, the readers may e-mail info@korematsuinstitute.org or phone. 415-848-77370.

Dr. Onkar Singh Bindra (osbindra@sbcglobal.net)

LATE COMMISSIONER LAHORI RAM'S FOURTH BARSII CELEBRATED



Senator Jerry Hill presents Jagdev and Ajaipaul Ram with a Certificate of Recognition



Ajaipaul Ram, Roger Dicikinson & Jagdev Ram



Assemblyman Bill Quirk's representative presents the Ram Family with a California State Legislative Honor



"Time is not measured by the years that you live but by the deeds that you do and the joy that you give."

On January 20, 2013 the Ram Family hosted a religious function celebrating the life of Late Commissioner Lahori Ram.

The Ram family hosted the Akhand Path at the Shri Guru Ravidass Temple in Pittsburg, CA. The function commemorat-

ed the fourth anniversary of the passing of Mr. Lahori Ram. Over 1000 friends, family and well-wishers attended the memorial.

People traveled from all over the United States to attend the function. Many people traveled

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Editorial

SOCIAL JUSTICE, POLITICAL POWER AND DALIT EMPOWERMENT

The key to Dalit empowerment is to first hold political power (master key) and then to deploy the same for bring social justice. It is through this way, as meticulously emphasized first by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and later on by Babu Kanshi Ram, that the lot of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), the other Backward Castes (OBCs) and the minorities can be improved and that they can be brought into the mainstream to reap the fruits of the fast globalizing Indian economy and polity. On 25 January 2013, India has celebrated her 64th Republic Day. It was on this auspicious day in his national address the Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, asserted that "India has changed more in last six decades than in six previous centuries. This is neither accidental nor providential; history shifts its pace when touched by vision. The great dream of raising a new India from the ashes of colonialism reached a historic denouement in 1947; more important, independence became a turning point for an equally dramatic narrative, nation building. The foundations were laid through our Constitution, adopted on 26 January 1950, which we celebrate each year as Republic Day".

During his engaging speech, the Hon'ble President of India, also made a special reference to the Constitution of Independent India as a "second liberation" from the "stranglehold of traditional inequity in gender, caste, community, along with other fetters that had chained us for too long". He further referred to the "unflinching commitment of leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Babasaheb Ambedkar" to help bring social justice through the enactment of the Hindu code bill in 1955. It is to be boldly underlined here that Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar resigned from the post of Law Minister of Independent India (of which he was the first incumbent) during the proceeding of this very bill in which he fiercely fought for the equal rights for the women. The Hon'ble President of India concluded his national address with the following promise: "If India has changed more in six decades than six previous centuries, then I promise you that it will change more in the next ten years than in the previous sixty".

Yes, India can change definitely more in the coming ten years than its record in the previous sixty provided it has been able to annihilate caste and practically preserve gender equality in its social, cultural, political and economic sectors. For this to become reality and to ensure social justice and gender equality in its vast variegated society, India needs to do much more than its constitutional affirmative action operation. The constitutional social transformative endeavors need to be corroborated, in fact, with similar concerted efforts on the part of civil society in India. The civil society has to come forward for this herculean task of mega social transformation. Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar used to emphasize that if Indian parliamentary democracy ought to survive it soon has to introduce social democracy at its grassroots. Political equality has to be matched with social and economic equality. It is political equality buttressed with social and economic equality that can pave the way for real social justice ultimately leading to the genuine Dalit empowerment from below up rather than top down based on patronage and sycophancy. For such a genuine grassroots social transformation and Dalit empowerment to become reality one needs to give a serious thought to what Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Babu Kanshi Ram used to emphasize on the practical devise of master key.

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-in-Chief

WE the PEOPLE of INDIA

The text of the Preamble of the Indian constitution reads:

"WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY, of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, DO HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION."

The constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. The January 26 became the Republic Day of India. Let us look back with some sense of introspection and consider whether we have lived up to the lofty ideals of the Preamble of the constitution of the Republic India. It is a mixed bag, to my mind, of good and bad.

The Good - we are prevailing as a sovereign country and are a dignified member of the comity of nations. We are the largest democracy of the world. The words 'Socialist and Secular' were added to the preamble were added on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee later sometime in the early 70s. It could be anybody's guess or opinion whether we are socialist and secular? The redeeming factor is that the constitution is working. If, somehow, polarization of political forces on the basis of ideology and pro-



RAMESH CHANDER
Ambassador (IFS Retd.)

gramme happens, Indian democracy would be the most vibrant and successful.

The Bad - Could we secure for ourselves Justice, Liberty and Equality and promote Fraternity, as visualized by the founding fathers? The answer, most probably, is in the negative. The justice is delayed, costly, lopsided and hard to find. The liberty is discriminatory. The Media is totally commercialized. The intellectual class is self-centered.

The Equality is yet to come by in the caste ridden society. We have failed to promote fraternity in the society at large. Communal strife is getting strengthened. Religious bigotry is gaining support. But it is satisfactory to note that we still swear to uphold the constitution. Many positive things have happened and much is underway. Anyway, we have

come a long way but still we have to go a long way. We need to work and strive in unison.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar rightly said in his last speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 and I quote "..... I shall not therefore enter into the merits of the Constitution. Because I feel, however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary.

The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics."

We the people of India must consider and realize this if we want to see India succeed and prosper. It seems that the constitution has not failed us. And we must not fail the constitution

ATTORNEY ASHWANI BHAKHRI'S MOTHER MRS. KALAWANTI BHAKHRI NO MORE

Mrs. Kalawanti Bhakhri (Mother of Ashwani Bhakhri, Attorney at Law, "THE BHAKHRI LAW FIRM") passed away on January 22, 2013 at the age of 99. The funeral service was held on January 27, 2013 in South San Francisco and approximately 500 people were present. Among others, Senior State Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco, Senator Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo), Hon' Betty Yee, member of the California Board of Equalization, Kevin Mullin, Member of the State Assembly, Don Horsely, Supervisor San Mateo County, and George Gascon, District Attorney of County & City of San Francisco, were in attendance to pay tribute to

Mrs. Bhakhri. She had long and blessed life. She survived by three sons, 11 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

A prayer meeting will be held on this Sunday, February 10, 2013, at Sunnyvale Hindu Temple, 450 Persian Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94089, from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. According to the Bhakhri family, the prayer service is expected to be attended by family, friends, relatives and official dignitaries. Among others who have confirmed to attend on this Sunday are Congressman Mike Honda, Congresswoman Jackie Spier, Senior State Senator, Leland Yee, Senator Jerry Hill, Betty Yee, member of the California Board of

Equalization, Former Speaker Pro Tempore, Fiona Ma, Kevin Mullin (D-San Mateo), Member California Legislative Assembly, Don Horsely, Supervisor of San Mateo County, Steve Wagstaffe, District Attorney of San Mateo County, Gina Papan, Mayor of City of Millbrae, Ash Kalra, Councilmember of City of San Jose, Pradeep Gupta, Councilmember of the City of South San Francisco, David Canapa, Councilmember of the City of Daly City, & Kansen Chu, Councilmember of the City of San Jose. Your presence on the occasion will be highly appreciated by the Bhakhri family. Ambedkartimes.com pays its tribute to late Mrs. Kalwanti Bhakhri.

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try is the primacy of the material (land) and political factors over the principle of purity and pollution dichotomy. Punjab is primarily an agrarian state. Social status in Punjab is basically measured in terms of possession of land. In Punjab, land is basically under the absolute control of the dominant caste i.e. Jat Sikh [ibid: 656]. Therefore, Jat Sikh considered themselves at the top of caste hierarchy in Punjab, particularly in Sikhism. Since Purity-Pollution is not the criterion of social exclusion in Punjab, it does not make much difference whether you follow the cultural norms of priestly class or not. Even if someone embraces some other religion in Punjab to get rid of caste-based discrimination rampant in Hinduism, it still does not make much difference so far, as long as he fails to acquire some land in agriculture-dominated state of Punjab. So Dalits conversion into another religion becomes meaningless and they prefer to improve their social position through reconstructing their identity on the basis of caste and reinventing their cultural heritage.

Dalit Pachhan Mukti Ate Shaktikarn (Dalit Identity, Emancipation and Empowerment) is the second book written by the author in the Punjabi language. This ethnographic work, under review, is based on historical and analytical methods. The main argument of the book is that Dalits in Punjab are consciously and systematically constructing their caste/religion based identity. Caste based identity helps them in emancipation from the inferiority complex and gaining empowerment in the otherwise oppressive mainstream Punjabi society. It also discusses the sources and stages of Dalit identity formation in Punjab by focusing on various Dalit movements like Ad Dharm, Ambedkarite, Bahujan Samaj and the mushrooming growth of Ravidass Deras. Relying on archival and ethnographic sources, the study meticulously explores the causes behind the rise of Dalit identity in Punjab and the ways it exhibits the same. Before exploring the various themes which the book analytically discusses, there is a need to highlight the prologue of the book.

In the prologue, the author has described the importance of vernacular/mother language. In the views of the author mother tongue is not only used as a tool of conversation but in reality it also helps in understanding the complexities of social existence, culture, identity, nationality, econo-

my and psychology. Language and culture are the two intricate determinant factors of the existence and development of a community. There is a common impression that one can write about the complex aspects of life and society rather more comfortably in ones mother tongue. Till date, the most renowned literary works, opinioned the author, were written by authors in local languages. The writers who achieved this reputation through mother/local language are: Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Derrida among many others. Similarly, Punjabi i.e. the local language of Punjab, was popularized by Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith, in gurmukhi script. Punjabi language, culture and literature eventually developed through the gurmukhi script. Today, the domain of Punjabi language is shrinking while relying more on ditto vocabulary of other languages than making use of original Punjabi vocabulary. The author alarms that by doing so we would not only weaken our mother tongue vocabulary but also dwarf our culture. The book is arranged into eight chapters in addition to a detailed prologue, foreword, introduction, epilogue (Dalit suppression and emancipation: synthesis and reaction) and a detailed bibliography based on scattered but rich Punjabi sources.

The first chapter explores the long journey of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment in Punjab. The chapter opens with the ubiquity of Dalit question in Indian society which remained inflamed during the period of Buddhism, Bhakti movement, the mission of social equality and justice run by Sikh Gurus, Adi movements and also during the movements run by Phule- Periyar- Ambedkar- Kanshi Ram. The protest against the silence of upper castes on Dalit question is raised from time to time. However, the big silence on Dalit question at the time of Indian national movement has not only revealed its narrow canvas but also separated it sharply from its wider social domain deeply drowned in social inequalities and social evils. Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment are discussed in two perspectives: first, Marxist/Leftist and second, caste prestige. Marxists/Leftists study Dalit question from economic/class perspective. They observe Dalit identity in terms of class. They argue that the Dalit oppression is based on their economic subjugation. They consider caste to be the superstructure on class. They criticize the newly emerged middle class among Dalits who follow the bourgeoisie

and casteist parties. Particularly, they criticize the Bahujan Samaj Party leaders who limit themselves to 'caste politics'. They argued that bourgeoisie Dalit class wants to maintain its position in present political system. They never participate in Marxist struggle and always oppose it. Therefore, Marxists adopt similar planning for bourgeoisie, religious and Dalit political parties. They also argue that Dalit consciousness is a hurdle in revolutionary thinking. Although, Dalit consciousness recognises the revolutionary spirit but in the end it goes in favor of capitalism and makes it strong. Second, the author argues that in Punjab, Dalit identity is emerging on the basis of caste. The caste inferiority is challenged through the proverb of caste prestige. The caste based Dalit identity is giving birth to Dalitism. And Dalitism has become victim of one-sidedness which looks at the Dalit emancipation only through the prestige of caste. The author questioned caste based Dalit emancipation while asking a pertinent question that is it a positive way of Dalit emancipation? He described that Dalit question is not a question of Dalits only. This question, in his views, is related to the change of social, economic and political structure of the entire Indian society. Quoting Dr. Ambedkar, the author says that Dalit question is facing two main rivals: Brahmanism and Capitalism. If Dalit movement failed to abolish Brahmanism and in the presence of capitalism somehow able to gain slightly through reservation, then this type of change will be far away from Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment as defined by the author. Dalit emancipation, emphasized the author, is related with the freedom of individuals from individuals who are encircled within oppressive structures of social dominations based of hoary caste system. The struggle for Dalit emancipation is waged by Dalit middle class. The Dalit middle class is the product of constitutional affirmative actions and the teachings of Ambedkarite ideology. This Dalit middle class firmly observes that Marxist parties are their opponent. The basic reason of their opposition to the Communist parties is that such left parties are themselves votary of capitalism and therefore are unable to understand the everlasting caste based division of Indian society.

The instances of caste based Dalit identity are normally observed in Doaba region of Punjab. Couplets of caste prestige such as "putt Chamaran de"

(the babes of Chamars), Guru Ravidass di foj kardi a moj" (the children of Guru Ravidass are relishing) etc. are often found written on cars, jeeps and bikes in the Doaba region of Punjab. The religious places popularly known as Deras/Ravidass Deras are mushrooming on caste line. Such caste based religious places are providing most sought after socio-religious space to Dalits which differentiates them from other communities. Ravidass Deras, as argued by the author, are providing a new and different identity to Dalits by combining spirituality with politics. Dr. Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass have become the center of Dalit identity. It was first highlighted by Ad Dharm movement. The question of Dalit emancipation and empowerment has been continuously raised by different persons through different ways for instance Buddha, Sants of Bhakti movement, Sikh Gurus, Jotirao Phule, Adi/Ad Dharm movements, Ambedkarite movement, and Kanshi Ram. Dalit empowerment critically analysed through different ideologies. Gandhian philosophy emphasises on Dalit emancipation and empowerment within Varna Vyastha through eliminating the caste hierarchy from the minds of people. It represents Varna Vyastha with moral principles. In other words, it emphasises on Dalit emancipation without elimination of the caste system. Ambedkar-Gandhi Poona Pact is the outcome of such philosophy. Efforts of British government (divide and rule policy) had also empowered the Dalits in a limited way. On one hand, Britishers empowered Dalits through communal award and, on the other hand, they kept away Dalits from land ownership. The reservation provided by the Colonial government in electoral system, recognition of Ad Dharm as a new religion of Dalits, victory of Dalits on the reserved seats of Punjab provincial Assembly election in 1937 and 1946 etc are known as examples of Dalit empowerment. In the views of the author, it shows that such a process of Dalit empowerment is ultimately went in favour of further strengthening the already entrenched institution of caste system. The educated and middle generation Dalits have been trying to seek emancipation and empowerment through constructing separate religious/caste identities. The educated class has legitimized their act by using the idea of caste based identity as popularized by Kanshi Ram. From the last few decades, religion/caste

based Dalit identities have emerged as hub of Dalit emancipation and empowerment. However, the emergence of caste based Dalit identities are fast becoming the cause of routine caste conflicts in Punjab.

Second chapter is a detailed account of the changing basis of Punjabi Dalit identity. Dalit identity is related to resourceful, prosperous and respectable life. It is a demonstration of positive efforts of Dalits who consciously put emphasis on projecting themselves as an altogether a separate different social group/community. It also helps them in flouting their distinct political value in the arithmetic of electoral politics. Earning respectable space in society through political power, seems to be the sole purpose of emerging Dalit identity. It also looked at as if providing freedom from Brahminical structures. Historically, the idea of distinct Dalit identity started from the Buddhism. Buddha was the first to raise voice against the symbols and behaviors of Upper Castes which were responsible for oppression of Dalits. Due to the efforts of Buddhist prophets Dalits attained opportunities to capture the political power. After a long period, in medieval time, in north India Sants of Bhakti movement and Sikh Gurus' mission of social equality provided a new meaning to Dalit identity. However, during Ad Dharm movement, Dalits for the first time took initiative to construct their identity on their own. The leaders of Adi Dharm movement created religion based Dalit identity i.e. Ad Dharmi. The religious paradigm of Dalit identity was a process of regenerating the hitherto eclipsed Dalit history, culture and heritage. 'Ad Dharmi' as a religious identity separates Dalits from the mainstream religions such as Hindu, Sikh and Muslims. In edition of religion, the leaders of the movement also constructed the different Dalit identity through religious texts, Gurus (Guru Ravidass, Bhagat Kabir, Balmik, Namdev), shrines, slogans (Jo Bole So Nirbhye – Sri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai" and Jo Bole So Nirbhye – Ad Dharm Ki Jai"), symbols (Sohung), prayers, dress codes, construction of religious places, and salutations. Ad Dharm movement also encouraged the Dalits to attain political power and to become resourceful to further strengthen Dalit identity. Subsequently to the Ad Dharm, Ambedkarite movement played a significant role in construction of Dalit identity. It is

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notable that Ad Dharm movement constructed Dalit identity on religion. However, Ambedkarite movement focused on the rational Buddhist identity. Dr. Ambedkar argued if Dalits want to live like human beings than they should construct their distinct political identity.

Dr. Ambedkar was highly respected among the Dalits in Punjab. Dalits of Punjab not only respect Guru Ravidass but also adhere to neo-Buddhism that concentrated on rational thinking in respect of devotion. Dr. Ambedkar's understanding toward caste and its solution through democratic way presents him as the most effective leader of downtrodden. After the Ambedkarite movement, Bahujan Samaj movement played a vital role in formation of Dalit identity. Babu Kanshi Ram emphasized on caste based Dalit identity and its importance for gaining political power. He organized middle class of Dalits Bahujan Samaj at a platform i.e. Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF). Systematic organizational structure of BAMCEF provides a new Dalit identity that organised Dalits around political programmes. The sole purpose of this identity is to make Dalits as the holders of political power. The next two stages of Bahujan Samaj's political programmes which play a vital role in construction of Dalit identity are: Dalit Soshit Sangarsh Samiti (DS4) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). This was for the first time when Dalits realized to capture political power through caste line. BSP through its caste card is providing different meaning to Dalit identity. It is also providing a new alternative to young Dalits of rural and urban Punjab. The roots of Dalit identity are based on political alternative or capture of political power. In Punjab, the distinction of Dalit identity did not gain appreciation in political field but it has become fashionable in cultural field. In the earlier stage of BAMCEF, caste symbols were used in derogatory sense but now they are deployed to gain recognition as Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment.

Ravidass Deras are the major socio-religious institutions that hold the command of the Dalit identity in the state. Ravidass Deras are dedicated to the Guru Ravidass mission. The Deras demonstrate distinct Dalit identity through different religious traditions, customs, slogans, prayer, festivals, hymns, dress etc. It revolved around the Bani and teachings of Guru

Ravidass. In the rural Punjab, particularly among Chamar community, new socio-cultural movements are silently growing its influence. The numbers of Dera followers are increasing day by day due to their adoption of the blended philosophy of Guru Ravidass and that of Dr. Ambedkar. The credit of blending the philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass goes to Dera Sachkhand Ballan. Ravidass Deras do not only exist in Punjab but also in abroad. The growing numbers of Ravidass Deras are taking the shape of new socio-cultural Dalit movement. The Sants of Deras Sachkhand Ballan are leading the movement of Ravidass Deras. Dera Ballan, also known as Dera Sant Sarwan Dass, is playing a vital role in construction of Dalit identity. Since, Sant Sarwan Dass Dera is providing multifarious facilities (schools, hospitals etc.), religious places, symbols, salute, slogans, and respectable social space to Dalits for led a descent life. Recently, Dera was in news to provide new religious identity to Dalits i.e. Ravidassia and holy book "Amrit Bani of Guru Ravidass".

In the third chapter, author describes the role of Punjabi qaum in Dalit emancipation and empowerment. He has criticized those people who defined Punjabi qaum narrowly. He defines Punjabi qaum in broader and positive sense that includes common language, area, economy and mind-set. In other words Punjabi qaum constituted all the people who reside in and outside of Punjab and have common language, culture and worldview. Due to influence of different religions, the Punjabi qaum is believed to become synonymous with the welfare of all, brotherhood and commonhood, serve freely, and secure the interest of poor and humble. It demonstrates that Punjabi qaum represents devotion of love, equality, sharing-ness and democratic values. It neither opposed anyone nor oppressed anyone. Because of these characteristic of Punjabi qaum castism never become much rigid as in the other parts of India. In Punjab castism has been based on materialistic things i.e. land. Therefore, Dalits are free from the notion of Purity and Pollution. It becomes the major cause of their emancipation from Brahminical ideology and elastic attitude toward castism that can help for their empowerment. Author argued that not only the question of Dalit emancipation and empowerment but the problem like communalism also can be solved through

the philosophy of Punjabi qaum. The larger qaumi identity (Punjabi) will liberate Punjabis from all other small identities. It will teach the lesson of love and social equality not only to Punjabis but to the whole world.

The fourth chapter describes the issues related to caste and class and Dalit emancipation in Indian Punjab. It is generally perceived that Punjabi society is free from Brahminical Varna system. However, the criticism of caste system by Sants of Bhakti movement, Sufis and Gurus, argued the author, highlights the fact of caste system in Punjabi society. According to the author the existence of caste system in Sikh panth can be judged from two questions: first why Dr. Ambedkar, who once wanted, changed his decision to convert into Sikhism? Second, what was the reason that Sikh leadership started a campaign to seek the constitutional provisions of affirmative action for Scheduled Castes for the lower castes among Sikhs? Sikh Gurus vehemently criticized the evil of caste system both theoretically and practically. The author further discussed that the period from Sikh Gurus to the missals was known as 'golden period of Sikhism'. During this period Sikh panth was free from caste system at all. This was the period when Shudras joined the Sikhism and played an important role in the emerging egalitarian Sikh identity. Not even a single example of caste based discrimination can be found during that period. Subsequently, caste system emerged into Sikh panth: first, due to its close relationship with Hinduism. Second, it entered into Sikh panth with the adoption of the cultural patron of Jat community. During the second half of 19th century Singh Sabha movement was launched to reform the Sikh panth. Though the movement offered some relief from castism but it failed to eliminate caste system from Sikh panth. Caste hierarchy in Sikh panth, however, is different from that of Hindu religion. Among the Sikh, Jat Sikhs are recognized as superior. The lower castes in Sikh panth are largely categorized into two groups; Chamars and Chhuras. The Chamar Sikhs also known as Ramdassia Sikh and Khalsa Brader. The Chhuras Sikhs are known as Mazhabis and Rangretta Sikhs. They are kept in the lowest rung of caste hierarchy in Sikh panth as well as in Hinduism. Caste hierarchy in Sikh panth is based on materialistic things not on purity and pollution. Priestly activities in Sikh shrines are not

only limited to upper/dominant castes in Sikh panth.

The fifth chapter deals with Guru Ravidass, Ad Dharm and Dalit emancipation. According to the author, Bani (spiritual poetry) of Guru Ravidass is a major source of Dalit consciousness in Punjab. Guru Ravidass did not only write in spiritualistic sense. In fact, his poetry also challenged insidious caste system and oppression of the lower castes. In his Bani Guru Ravidass also talked at length about Beghampura (an ideal state) where no one would be found sad and each one would live a happy life. The author wrote in detail about how the leaders of Ad Dharm movement highlighted Guru Ravidass and his bani which was already a great source of Dalit consciousness. Ad Dharm leaders meticulously spreaded this consciousness among Dalits. The movement made every attempt which ideologically and philosophically was necessary for the establishment of a new religion including religious book, symbol, prayer, salute, slogans, etc. But in the post independent period, the movement did not sustain. However, the seed of Dalit consciousness that were sown by Ad Dharm movement are now nurtured by Ravidass Deras. Recently, the Ravidass Dera of Sachkhand Ballan announced a new religion i.e. Ravidassia. And Dera also appealed to Dalit communities to register their religion 'Ravidassia'. The author ends this chapter with a critical note that time will tell whether Dalit will accept Ravidassia as their religion or it will end up like Ad Dharmi as a new caste category among Dalits.

The sixth chapter is a detailed description of the ideas and efforts made by Dr. Ambedkar for Dalit emancipation. Dr. Ambedkar's vision about Dalit emancipation and empowerment are discussed by the author broadly in the following three aspects: first, the problem of Untouchability should be resolved through reforms in Hindu religion and society. Secondly, by constitutional provisions of reservation and social inequality should be reduced and anti-Dalit elements should be dealt strictly by law. Thirdly, emancipate the Dalits from caste system by converting into Buddhism. For Dr. Ambedkar issues like social equality, self-esteem and respectable life are more significant than poverty and resource-less for Dalits. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar suggested the necessity of social democracy for Dalits' emancipa-

tion. Social democracy, for him, is based on the three principles; freedom, equality and fraternity. These three principles are necessary to live a dignified life and establish political democracy. That's why he set up three political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Caste Federation and Republican Party of India) for Dalits' emancipation. However, he failed to organise Dalits to attain political power. Beside the political and legal methods to resolved the problems of Dalits. He also emphasised the peacefully social protest against the discrimination. He lunched many movements for emancipation of Dalits for instance temple entry movements and to get water from restricted pounds.

In the seventh chapter the author discussed in details the views of Shaheed Bhagat Singh towards the question of Untouchability. The two waves of non-Dalit movement that raised voice for Dalits' emancipation along the national independence were Gadhar movement and Hindustan Socialist Republic Party (an organisation established by Bhagat Singh). Due to the influence of Arya Samaj, Bhagat Singh and his family were against the caste and Untouchability. Bhagat Singh discussed deeply the problem of religious fundamentalism and Untouchability in his three writings; Firkhu fasadh ate uhana da ellaaj (communal violence and their solutions), Dharm ate sadhi azadi di jang (religion and war of our independence), and Achhut da swal (question of Untouchable). In his essay Achhut da swal, he argued that religion is the foundation of Untouchability and caste system in India. Religion morally confesses the lower castes to serve the upper castes for salvation. Therefore, he called himself atheist. As contrary to Congress, he did not prefer only political independence but also wanted to resolve the social and economic problems of Dalits, labourers, artisans and farmers. He criticized the disgust of Upper Castes towards Dalits. He argued that Dalits are hatred because of their bad economic condition. Therefore, we should remove their poverty rather than hate them. He asked Dalits to organised and struggle for their emancipation. He argued "you are real labourers, labourers be organised. You will not lose except the chains of your slavery. Awake and revolt against the ruler. Nothing will happen with these slow reforms." He also warned

contd. on page 9



SHRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA (CA)

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

**GURPURB SHRI GURU
RAVIDASS MAHARAJ JI**



**ਨੀਚਹੁ ਉਚ ਕਰੈ
ਮੇਰਾ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਕਾਹੁ ਤੇ ਨ ਡਰੈ**

DHAN DHAN SRI GURU RAVIDASS JI

Bole' So Nirbhay! Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai!

Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg is celebrating the 636th, Birthday Anniversary of our revered Lord

SATGURU RAVIDASS MAHARAJ JI

on Sunday, March 3, 2013 at the temple as per program noted below:

**ARAMBH SHRI AKHAND PATH
BHOG SHRI AKHAND PATH
KIRTAN DIWAN**

**March 1st, 2013 (FRIDAY) 9:00 AM
March 3rd, 2013 (SUNDAY) 9:00 AM
AFTER BHOG CEREMONY UNTIL 2:00 PM**

Representatives of all Sabhas, Prominent Kirtani Jathas of Giani Harjinder Singh Rasia - Head Granthy of Shri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg, Giani Baldev Singh and Giani Manjit Singh from Yuba City, Religious artists, distinguished Speakers and community leaders well versed with life and teachings of Satguru will embellish this Kirtan Diwan.

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony will be held on March 2nd 2013 (SATURDAY) at 3:30 PM

The Sangat of Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha will perform Langer, Path and Parshad Sewa for this program.

The entire Sangat is cordially invited to participate in this celebration with family and friends and receive the benign blessings of Guru Ravidass. He devoted his entire life against inequity based on caste and class. Satguru Ravidass Ji was a great religious and social reformer dedicated his whole life for the welfare of the humanity. May Guru Ravidass Ji bless the SANGAT. The committee and SANGAT are remodeling the 2nd building of the Gurughar. We need your help and support. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated.

Managing Committee :

SHRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA PITTSBURG (CA)

For doing any SEWA or information, please call Gurughar at (925) 439-2355.

SEWADARS:

<i>Chairman</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>General Secretary</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
Moti Baru	Salinder Singh Bhatia	Resham Singh	Gyan Suman

ਸਮੂਹ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਦੇ 636ਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ ਦੀਆਂ

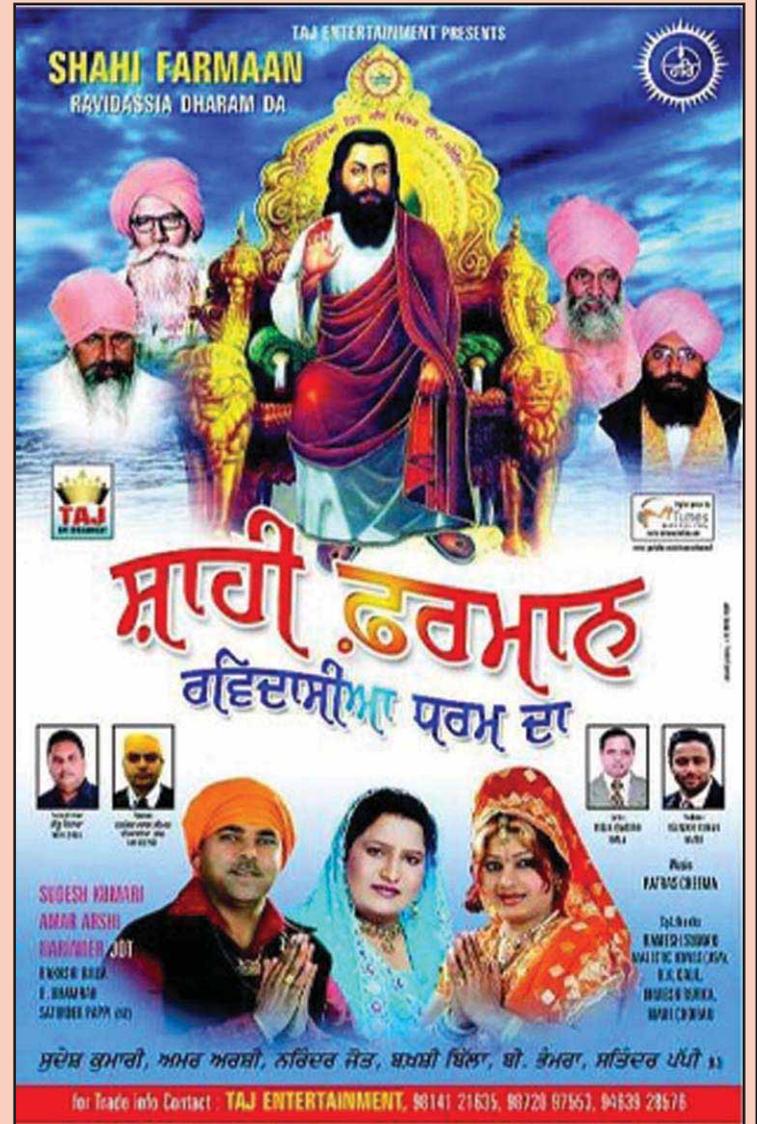


ਸਮੂਹ ਸੁਮਨ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਮੁਬਾਰਕਾਂ



Gyan Suman and Ramesh Suman

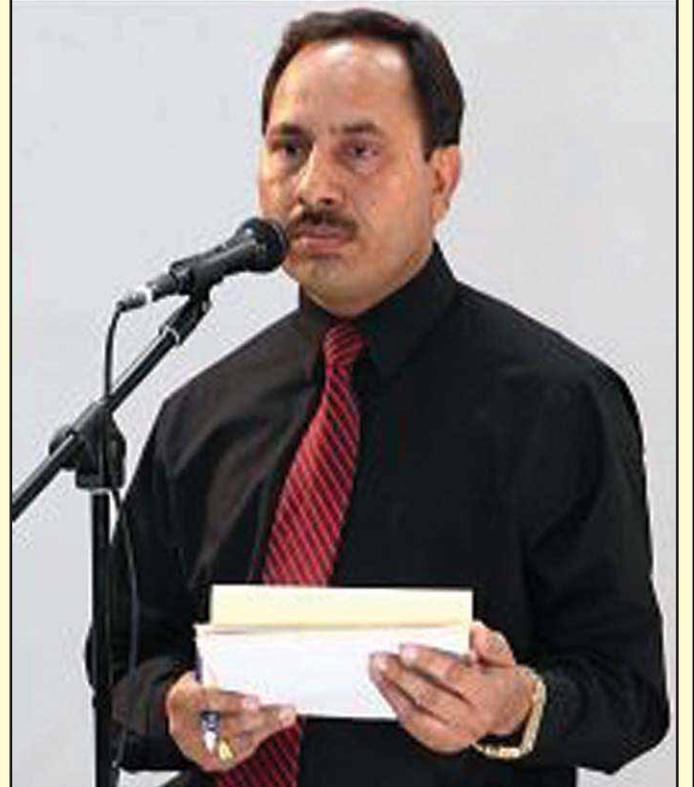


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ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ

ਪਹਿਲੀ ਵਾਰ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਕਸ਼ੇ ਉਤੇ ਆਇਆ “ਰਵਿਦਾਸੀਆ ਧਰਮ” ਇੰਗਲੈਂਡ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਵਾਰ “ਰਵਿਦਾਸੀਆ ਧਰਮ” ਨੂੰ ਮਾਨਤਾ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਤਹਿ ਦਿਲੋਂ ਧੰਨਵਾਦ



ਵਿਨੋਦ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਚੰਬਰ



ਸਮੂਹ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਦੇ 636ਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ



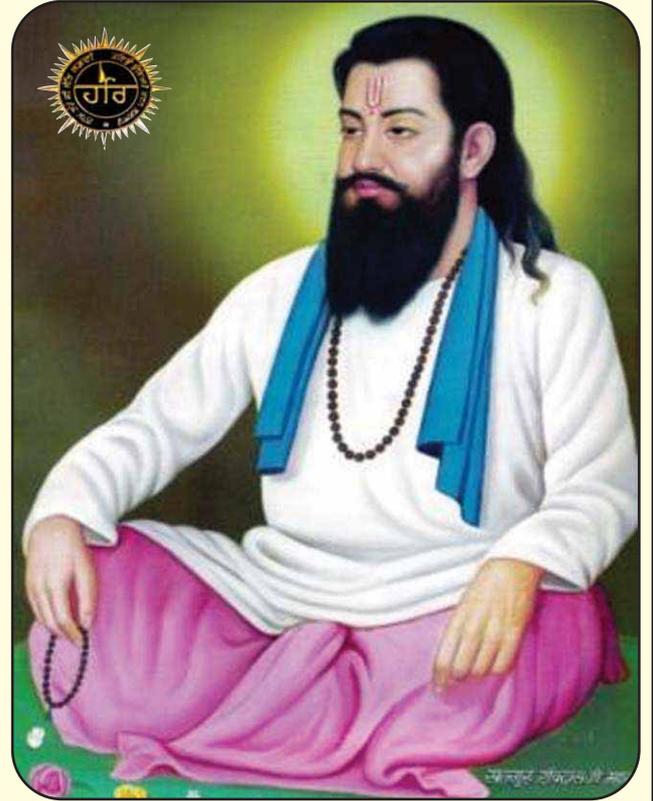
ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ ਦੇ ਸ਼ੁਭ ਅਵਸਰ ਤੇ
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ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਿੱਖਿਆਵਾਂ ਤੇ
ਚਲਦਿਆਂ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰੀਏ।

ਵੱਲੋਂ



ਸ੍ਰੀ ਜਗਦੇਵ ਰਾਮ ਅਤੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਜੇਪਾਲ ਰਾਮ
(ਸਖੰਤਰ ਸਵਰਗਵਾਸੀ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਲਾਹੌਰੀ ਰਾਮ) ਅਤੇ ਸਮੂਹ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ

ਸਮੂਹ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਦੇ
636ਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ



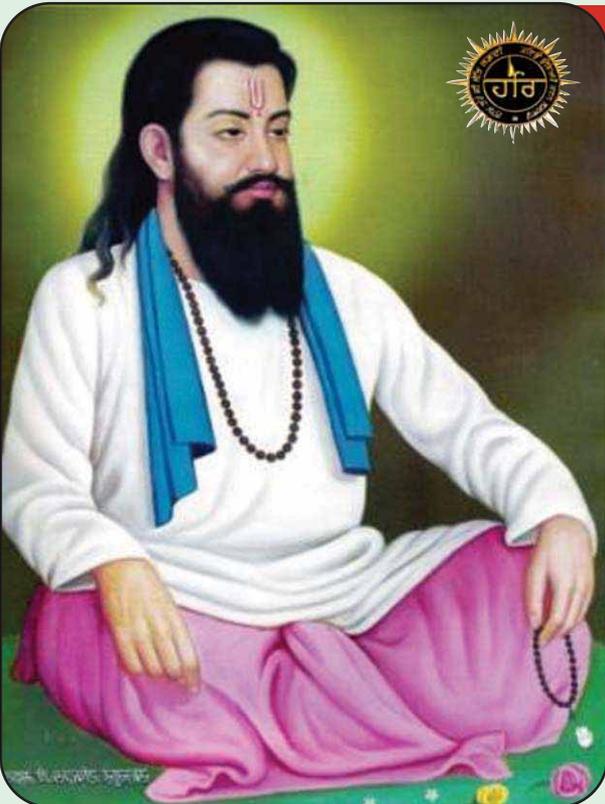
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ



ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਬਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਐਡਵੋਕੇਟ
ਸਹਾਇਕ ਸਕੱਤਰ
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਟੈਂਪਲ
ਪਿਟਸਬਰਗ

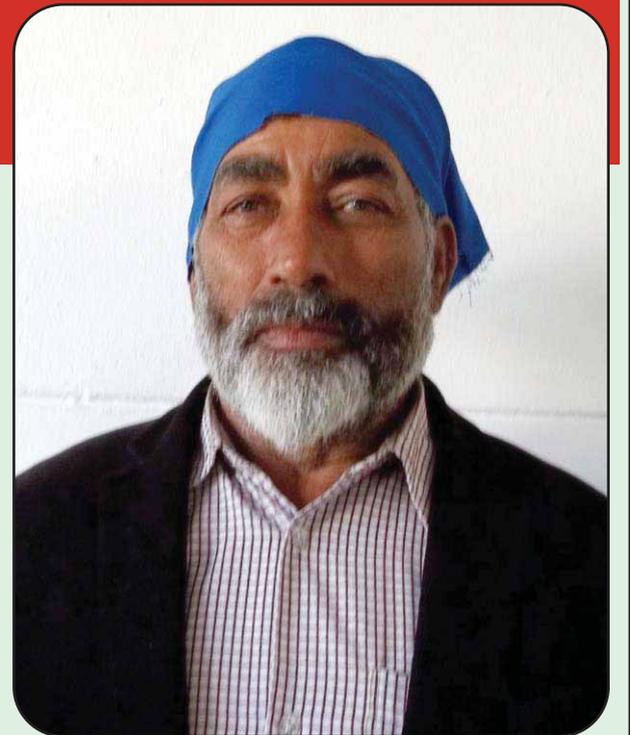
ਬਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਐਡਵੋਕੇਟ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਹੁੰਤਰ ਨਾਲ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਟੈਂਪਲ ਪਿਟਸਬਰਗ ਵਿਖੇ



ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ

ਸਮੂਹ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਦੇ
636ਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ

ਦੀਆਂ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ
ਵਧਾਈਆਂ



ਜ਼ੈਲਾ ਜੱਗੀ, ਪਿਟਸਬਰਗ

ਵੱਲੋਂ

ਜ਼ੈਲਾ ਜੱਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਮੂਹ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ

Bhagat Singh Thind

Bhagat Singh Thind was a pioneer, civil rights hero and spiritual leader that was born in the Punjab state of India. With the encouragement of an understanding father, he left India, stayed briefly in Manila, and arrived in Seattle, WA in 1913. A year later, he was paying his way through the University of California at Berkeley by working in an Oregon lumber mill during summer vacations.

When America entered World War I, he joined the U.S. Army— one of the few East Indians to do so at the time. He was honorably discharged in 1918 and in 1920 applied for U.S. citizenship from the state of Oregon. Since several applicants from India had thus far been granted U.S. citizenship, he too was approved by the district court. However a naturalization examiner appealed this court's decision and the rest is history.

On February 10, 1923, in United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind, the US Supreme Court ruled that one must be white in order to qualify for citizenship and that "Hindus" are "aliens ineligible to citizenship."



What is less well known is that Bhagat Singh Thind remained in the U.S., completed his Ph.D., and delivered lectures in metaphysics all across the nation. Basing his lessons on Sikh philosophy, he enriched his teaching with references to the scriptures of several religions and the work of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. He campaigned actively for the independence of India from the British Empire, and helped Indian students in any way he could. In 1931, he married Vivian Davies and they had a son, David, to whom several of his 15 books were dedicated.

"You must never be limited by external authority, whether it be vested in a church, man, or book. It is your right to question, challenge, and investigate."

Ironically, Dr. Thind applied for and received U.S. citizenship through a law granting citizenship to World War I veterans in 1936, 18 years after he started the process, and within a few years of being turned down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

(Source: adapted from PBS' *Roots in the Sand*)

SHUDRA - The rising

Shudra : The Rising is a Hindi language period film with subtitles in English set in the Indus Valley Civilization with a storyline based on the beginning of caste system in ancient India. Shudra is based on about 250 million people born Out Castes in Hindu Varna system. They were treated as Unclean & Impure, so much so that nobody ever even touched them or even allowed their shadow to fall on upper caste. They were named differently at different times such as 'DASYU', 'DAS', Chandala, Antyaja, Out Caste, lower Caste and "Shudra- The Untouchable". "Shudra- The Rising" highlights the depth that evil



human mind can succumb, to cling on to power and supremacy. An out caste man 'Shudra' died for want of a sip of water, a child is publicly killed for uttering Holy Mantras, a pregnant woman is forced in the physical submission, a wounded man dies in need of medicine, all for one crime only....Born in the caste of "Shudra-The Untouchable"

The initial part narrates the invasion of the people of west Asia to India. They were of the Aryan race and they took over the local tribe and started controlling them. Finally their learned scholar Manu wrote a code book of caste system which turned the local population as the Shudras (lowest of the low), who were imposed with cruel rules in the society. They were suppressed and exploited at every level of their lives by the upper caste people. The film shows various rules imposed on the Shudras such as walking with a bell around their ankles and a long leaf as tail. The film also sheds a light on the struggle by the Shudras. This film is a must see for everybody who wants to know the history and effect of caste based discrimination on the Indian society. The proceeds of this film will be given to the Rudraksh Productions for their future project which is again on the bravery of Dalits in 'The Battle of Koregaon' - a saga of fight between the Mahar soldiers and Peshwas.

Arun Kumar, Ambedkar Mission Society, Bedford (UK)

LATE COMMISSIONER LAHORI RAM'S FOURTH BARS CELEBRATED contd. from front page

internationally to pay homage to their dear friend and give support to the family to continue the annual memorial to keep Mr. Ram's memory alive.

Many dignitaries attended on Sunday and praised the work Mr. Ram accomplished in his lifetime. The elected officials included: California State Senator Jerry Hill from District 13, California State Assemblyman from the 7th District Roger Dickinson, California State Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla who represents the Pittsburg area in the 14th District, a representative from California State Assembly from the 20th District Bill Quirk's office, City of Lathrop

Mayor Sonny Dhaliwal, and City of Pittsburg Mayor Nancy Parent.

NP Singh and Anand Jha from the Indian Consulate in San Francisco also represented the Indian Embassy.

Kirtan was performed by Shri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg head priest Bhai Harjinder Singh Rasia, Bhai Baldev Singh's Jatha, Bhai Rashpal Singh's Jatha from the San Jose Sikh Temple, Bhai Alam Singh and Bhai Jivan Singh from the Modesto Sikh Temple, Rajinder Singh Khaira head priest of Tierra Buena Sikh Temple Yuba City, Bhai Hardev Singh and Jatinder Dutt.

Most of the local bay area Sikh

Temples sent their representatives to attend the memorial. Committee members from Fremont, Yuba City, Sacramento, Rio Linda, Fresno, Bakersfield, San Jose, Hayward, Modesto, Livingston and El Sobrante were all present.

State Senator Jerry Hill, who represents the district where the Ram family live, thanked the family for allowing all community members an opportunity to get together and remember the contributions of their Father. He said, "Lahori Ram was a self made man and a role model for all." Senator Hill presented Jagdev and Ajaipaul a Certificate of Recognition to honor the Fourth Memorial.

Assemblyman Roger Dickinson said that he can't believe four years had already passed since he lost his friend. He encouraged more members of the Indo-American community to get involved in politics. He mentioned that the Ram Family and the Indus Valley Chamber of Commerce host a Picnic every year in his district in Elk Grove, CA which he never misses.

Mayor of Pittsburg Nancy Parent spoke about Lahori Ram's drive to establish the Temple in the city of Pittsburg. She said that by founding the Temple, Lahori Ram did a great service to her City. During the program, a bone marrow drive was held for Gurjeet Brar. Many attendees

became bone marrow donors. Gurjeet is a friend of the Ram Family and is in desperate need for a match to save her life.

Many prominent Indian leaders also spoke about the life and legacy of late Lahori Ram. Didar Singh Bains from Yuba City spoke about his close relationship with Mr. Ram.

Jagdev and Ajaipaul Ram thanked everyone for helping out in the three day service and especially thanked the community and elected officials for their encouragement and support. They appreciated the great things said about their Father and hope to continue the work their Father started

MAKING SENSE OF DALIT IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY PUNJAB contd. from page 4

Dalits about bureaucrats and feudals which he said were also responsible of their slavery. He argued that it is through awareness that Dalits could achieve their emancipation from caste.

The eighth chapter deals with the question of Dalit emancipation in Punjabi Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry, as pointed by the author is not only related to life of Dalits but also criticized the perpetrators of Dalit atrocities. It challenges, writes the author, the political and religious authority which supports Dalit oppression. The oppression of Dalits was first time challenged in the radical poetry of the Bhakti movement of medieval period. Subsequently, the leaders of Adi movements of 1920s also used poetry as a medium to criticize Dalit subjugation, documents the author with a number of examples. It is an

excellent achievement of the book that it elaborates minutely how the poetry of Babu Mangu Ram, Gurdass Ram Alam, Charn Dass Nidhark and Chanan Lal Manak clearly draw the pictures of Dalit life, oppression and empowerment. This chapter also talked in detail about the Dalit poetry that was written during the Ambedkarite movement in Punjab. In the opinion of the author, Dalit thinkers observe the Dalit identity and emancipation in Dalit poetry from two perspectives: small stories and social criticism. Dalit poetry criticizes all types of socio-cultural, religious and political conditions which preserve the social hierarchy based on oppressive four-fold Varna categories. Dalit poetry, said the author, represents the labourers, farmers, poorer, untouchables, cobblers, wavers as

its hero who were earlier ignored. The author further states that at present, Dalit poetry addresses the Dalit struggle from both caste and class perspectives. But to receive relief from caste system it lays stress on Ambedkarite and medieval Sants' philosophy than Marxist. Dalit poetry, writes the author, has been in the process of inventing counter culture as against the mainstream culture of social domination and all pervasive hegemony.

The epilogue includes various interviews of the author which were published at different intervals in various local/vernacular newspapers and magazines. These interviews help in understanding the complex issues of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment. It provides us deep understanding of the author on the issues like

Dalit identity, education, literature, their social, economic and political position in the pre and post liberalization, privatization and globalization period.

On the whole, this book is another good attempt by the author to analytically explore in Punjabi language the complex theme of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment. The book provides a compact and rich account of the rise of Dalit consciousness, identity and assertion in Punjab. Based on ethnographic and archival methods, this analytical volume in Punjabi is a welcome addition to the growing critical Dalit literature on Punjab in vernacular. The publisher too deserves commendation for bringing out the book in an impressive form and wrapped up in an artistic cover with a reasonable price tag. It is a

must read for lay, academic, political and media persons.

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Panjab University, Chandigarh
singhsurinder333@gmail.com

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Ref. Mochi and Rai Sikh/Mahatam were added in the list of Scheduled Castes by the Constitution Scheduled Castes Amendment Act 2002 (Act No. 25) and 2007 (Act No. 31 of 2007) respectively. With the inclusion of these two castes the numbers of SCs have reached up to 39 castes

For more detail see Ronki Ram (2012), Beyond Conversion and Sanskritisation: Articulating an Alternative Dalit Agenda in East Punjab, Modern Asian Studies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 639-702.

Posted on www.ambedkartimes.com
(January 12, 2013)

Silence over Dalit Rape Victims

Are They not the Daughters of India ?

Delhi saw an unprecedented public outrage over the recent cruel gang rape and vicious attack on the 23 year old girl. This incident brought out many people to protest against this heinous crime. This brutal attack must be strongly condemned and perpetrators of this offence severely punished so that no body dare to commit such a crime in future.

Judging the public anger, it appears that no such incident had happened before Delhi rape case. What happened in Delhi is not an exception. Many more cases are hushed up regularly or are not reported. The National Crime Records Bureau records reveal that during 2011 India witnessed 228,650 crimes against women, 24,206 of them of rape and 35,565 of kidnapping and abduction and majority of them were belonging to Dalit communities. Most of the crimes against Dalit women go unnoticed. In the most horrific cases of sex abuse, Dalit women have not only been raped, but mutilated, burned, paraded naked through villages, and even forced to eat human faeces.

Either the people are ignorant or just turn their blind eye to such incidents. Nobody from the so called civil society took notice of those crimes. In spite of all these sex offences against Dalit women, victims do not get even half the response neither from the social organizations nor from the media as was given to Delhi gang rape victim. A rape is a rape and all women deserve the same media attention, same justice, the same mass protests and the same political will.

India's middle class wears such glasses from where they can only see the crimes committed against the upper castes. Their heart throbs only for their own clan. Women folk from the Dalit communities mean nothing to them. Society must feel guilty and act against atrocities against women irrespective of their caste or class.

Double standards of the upper middle class raise many questions which need answers. Shenali Waduge raises a very valid question, "While rape in any form is abhorred and should be severely punished by all nations what needs to be answered is what makes the recent gang rape by 6 men of a 23 year old on a bus in Delhi any different from the gang rape of a 16 year old Dalit women by 8 men who having taken photos of the crime had circulated it

amongst the village leading to her father committing suicide out of shame?"(1) This Dalit girl was raped in September 2012 and Shenali questions why there were no mass protests, no media attention for her or calls to arrest the perpetrators but the recent rape has turned into a mass protest all over India? Can somebody from the civil society answer these questions?

Similarly where were all Indians when Khairlanji massacre occurred in 2006 when a Dalit family was lynched in Maharashtra? In Khairlanji, on 29 September 2006, 44-year-old Surekha Bhotmange and her daughter Priyanka Bhotmange were stripped, paraded naked,



Arun Kumar
Ambedkar
Mission Society,
Bedford
(UK)

and raped repeatedly. Surekha's sons Roshan and Sudhir were slaughtered. The entire village was involved. The Bhotmanges were Dalits. The Bhotmanges have been forgotten. After all, two Dalits are murdered every day in India. (2) The Indian media didn't even bother to cover this incident until Dalits in Nagpur came on streets to protest. Unfortunately all India was sleeping as if the Dalit women were not the 'daughters of India'.

Dalit rape victims in Ajmer district in Rajasthan are waiting for justice for the last seven years. There are 68 reported cases of rape in the district since 2006 but only one accused has been convicted in 2007. Just in the months of September and October, 2012 around 19 Dalit women were raped in Haryana. An 18 year old Dalit girl in Badhshapur village in Patiala committed suicide on December 26, six weeks after being raped by three men as she couldn't tolerate humiliation and tormenting by police and culprits anymore. Her mother stated that when she went to complain to the police they humiliated the girl with lewd questions. On 5th January, a 16-year-old Dalit girl was abducted, raped and forced to eat some poisonous pesticide by an upper-caste man and dumped outside her house in a village in Faridkot district in Punjab.

The tale of sexual abuse doesn't end here. In an article in Counter-currents, Cynthia Stephen quotes a Dalit girl from a village in Tamil Nadu as saying

"There is no girl in our lane who has not been coerced or raped by the dominant caste men when they go to the fields to fetch water or for work."(3) Men from the dominant castes threaten the Dalits with dire consequences if they dare complain to the police. Sexual violence against Dalit women is a systemic way of enforcing status quo of the Dalits. Rape is often used as a tool for political and social subjugation of Dalit women. Rural areas are full of such incidents. Vast majority of crimes against Dalit women are not reported owing to fear of social exclusion and threats to personal safety and security. Every village in India has such tales to narrate.

Instead the leaders such as RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat give us lesson on Indian culture and advocates that gang rapes and sexual abuses happen only in urban areas as a result of Western influence and not in rural areas. If this Hindu ideologue tries to preach us about ancient Hindu culture, he must feel ashamed of Davdassi system in South India where girls as young as 6 years old become "brides of gods" and are raped by men of higher castes in temples. Young women are also later forced into prostitution through this system. Violent atrocities occur regularly in the names of tradition and religion. When are we going to get rid of hypocrisy? Other holy man blamed girl for the rape as she didn't beg enough for mercy. Women are placed on the pedestals and are worshiped daily. On the other hand, the same women are treated as toys to play with and discard them when they are not needed. There is a plenty of evidence in Hindu scriptures where women's low status is justified. The verses from the scriptures are still recited where cattle, drums and women are considered worthy of beating. That is why Dr. Ambedkar publicly burnt down Manusmriti, a manifestation of inequality and cruelty towards women, and condemned other scriptures which contain humiliating strictures against women. Women don't want the status of goddesses but need equal treatment and respect.

Unprecedented outcry and coverage surrounding the recent Delhi gang rape has forced the government to act fast. They have set up a fast track court for a quick trial and also a commission to bring changes in the law to deal with rape cases. They are positive steps to pacify the feelings of general public but one should not



have high expectations from the politicians, police and administrators. As a result of the high profile rape case in Delhi, it is expected that police would be more vigilant and conscious and act promptly. But right under their nose another woman was raped on 6th January, 2013 and her body was dumped in Noida, suburb of Delhi.

Of course there are flaws in the laws relating to rapes and other offences against women. But what is worst that even the existing laws are not implemented fairly and speedily. Speaking on the merits of the constitution, the architect of the Indian constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stated, "I feel, however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution". Same principle implies to the existing legislation on sexual abuse. The problem lies in the lack of political will to implement laws. It doesn't matter how good laws are made to prevent sexual offences, it depends upon the law enforcing agencies how quickly the offender is caught and prosecuted. So far the laws have done little to change the attitudes and are often ignored.

The ground reality is that politicians, administrators, police and even judiciary collude with each other and offender gets free to offend again. Justice Ashok Ganguli, retired judge, Supreme Court of India, himself admitted on national Television that judiciary didn't treat women with dignity. The cases pertaining to sexual violence are delayed for 10-15 years. Justice delayed is justice denied. In majority of cases, the kith and kens or supporters of politicians and bureaucrats are involved in such cases. That is why police don't dare to take action

against those culprits. Even they, themselves, face criminal charges pertaining to sexual offences. According to the National Election Watch (NEW) and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), in last election there were 260 contesting candidates from various political parties who were charged under different sections of Indian penal Code for crimes against women such as outraging modesty of a woman, assault, insulting the modesty of a woman etc. What justice is expected from these people? Such politicians should be named and shamed in public, expelled from the political parties and debarred from the public office

What we need is the overhaul of administration and police. Coupled with tough laws, it is essential that an intensive training is imparted to the officers dealing with the atrocities on women. Only women police officers should be deployed to handle such cases where victim feels free to lodge the complaint. They need an easy access to the police. Fast track courts are important to deal with all sexual offences so that victim is given justice in a specific time limit. Most importantly, Indians must change their mind set and treat women with respect and give them equal status irrespective of class or caste. It is only possible if every member of the society feels responsibility and is sincere to treat women with respect and dignity. Mere lip service won't help. One must be bold enough like Dr. Ambedkar to condemn, if needed, the religious dogmas which preach hatreds against women.

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BABA SAHIB DR. AMBEDKAR (A Revolutionary)

"We will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction or else those who suffer inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously built." These are the words which Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar spoke on 25th November 1949 while addressing the Constituent Assembly after completing the Indian Constitution piloted by him which he presented to the President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 26th January 1950 in the presence of Pandit Jawaher Lal Nehru and other prominent leaders.

In my view, these words were more directed towards the sufferers of inequality i.e. downtrodden and unprivileged of India rather than administrators of it. Baba Sahib extremely worked hard to frame the constitution and get it passed with its preamble:-

JUSTICE Social, economic, and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, and worship;

EQUALITY of status and opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuming the dignity of the individual;

Interalia he included the Fundamental Rights, such as Equality before law (ART 14); Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or the place of birth (ART 14); Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (ART 16); Abolition of untouchability (ART 17); Protection of traffic in human beings and forced labor (BEGAR) (ART 23); Remedies for enforcement of fundamental rights (ART 32, 226); by the judiciary i.e. the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts of States. Besides this, the directive principles of state policy under which states shall endeavor to secure social order for promotion of welfare of the people were also provided. These principles specially include an adequate means of livelihood to all citizens, men or women, equally (ART 39); Rights to work, to education, and public assistance in certain cases (ART 41). Living wage etc. for workers (ART 43); and promotion of educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward sections (ART 46).

This all would show that all these provisions have been made

especially to confer, to protect, and safeguard the basic rights upon and for the S.Cs. and S.Ts. who had been hitherto deprived of them for centuries under the Manu's Laws contained in the Manu Simiriti due to which these communities became downtrodden, unprivileged and untouchable. So that such castes, tribes may not be ignored, their list was drawn out later on by the President of India in consultation with Governors of the States and made a part of the Constitution as directed by it under articles 341 and 342. To further insure the amelioration of these classes, a particular section has been added as part XVI to the constitution under the caption, special provisions relating to certain classes under which seats shall be reserved in the house of people and legislative assemblies of the states in proportion of their population in the states, for S.Cs*and S.Ts,(ART 330). Reservation of S.Cs, and S.Ts in the services and posts has been provided under article 335 in connection with the affairs of the Union and the States.

To watchdog and safeguard the interests of the S.Cs. and S.Ts., a National Commission (ART 338) consisting Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and three other members has been provided.

Considering the concerted effort accompanied by versatile genius put in by Baba Sahib in framing the constitution and unique leadership of the downtrodden, Mr. Sharad Pawar the former chief minister of Maharashtra, paid his heartiest tribute to Baba Sahib in his Foreward of "Ambedkar's Writings". In the following words;

In Baba Sahib Ambedkar, we have not only a crusader against the caste system, a valient fighter for the cause of the downtrodden in India but also an elder statesmen and national leader whose contribution in the form of Constitution of India will be cherished forever by posterity. In fact, his fight for human rights and as an emancipator of all those enslaved in the world gave him international recognition of a liberator of humanity from injustice, social and economic. Pt. Jawhar LaL Nehru, the then prime minister of India paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Ambedkar while moving a condolence resolution in the parliament as follows, "Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive feelings of the Hindu socie-



ty," (Foreward to Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches)

Pt. Nehru once said that he was accidentally born in a Hindu family to indicate that he did not believe in casteism and its edicts. But during his lifetime he did not shed off Hinduism. As against this Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar, after thoroughly studying the Hindu religion and its social and cultural tenets took the vow that though he was born a Hindu because it was not in his power but he would not die as a Hindu.

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To keep his solemn vow, Baba Sahib embraced Buddhism and took,"Diksha on Dusehra Day in 1956. Before his death on 6th December 1956. Baba Sahib adopted Buddhism because it is the most secular and scientific religion in which there is no caste and class prejudice but equality, fraternity, love, and affection." The former prime minister Indira Ghandhi also said, "The life of Dr. Ambedkar gives a lesson to us that most of evils in our society can be eliminated by domestic reforms as introduced by this great leader." In framing new constitution, Baba Sahib was undoubtedly a larger than life persona. This is established from further words of Sharad Pawar," Dr. Ambedkar incorporated the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the Constitution of free India, ft is a living tribute to his juristic genius and social conscience that over the years, the high courts and supreme court have shaped the law to serve the social ends of governmental efforts to improve the lot of the poor."

In pursuance of edicts, of the constitution, certain laws have been enacted and certain ordinances/directions have been promulgated for the upliftment

and welfare of the S.Cs. and STs but little has been achieved so far. Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and S.Cs and S.Ts. (Protection of Atrocities) 1989 have been passed but despite this the offences to attract these provisions are still being permitted in Indian societies. Very few cases are registered, tried, or result into conviction due to general prejudice. Reservations in central or state appointments proportionate to the population of these caste or classes have been notified but their quotas have not been fully filled up. There is a great backlog, though there is no dearth of qualified candidates among the SCs and STs for appointment on such posts. There is no reservation in private sector. Now the state trading is also being squeezed to be picked up by private firms and agencies. This will further limit the appointment scope of the SCs. and STs. candidates on key posts.

The reservation in legislation of course is fully implemented but the MLAs and MPs belonging to the SCs and STs are doing nothing tangible to better the fate of the castes or tribes whom they are supposed to represent, because they occupy the reserved seats for and on their behalf on reserved quotas. They are elected on the tickets of national or regional parties of non- S.Ss, and non STs, financially supported by the millionaires and as such they never raise any point in the parliament or the state assemblies for the welfare of the S.Ts. and S.Cs. to whom they are expected to represent. They are after filling their own coffers with money by indulging in corruption. They are in a way running with the hares and hunting with the hounds. Ours to be elected members do not form a strong independant party to press for the fulfilment of the demands of our people on account of whom they contest the reserved seats in the elections. They do not gain the political power which is most needed in the words of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar as expressed by him in the following lines/Political power is the most precious thing in tine life of the community especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its position" (in Pakistan or Partition of India)

According to Baba Saheb," lost rights are never regained by begging and by appeals to con-

science of usurpers. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition." He has asked us, "write down on the walls of your houses that you were Dassas (slaves) of yesterday but want to be Rulers of tomorrow." During more than 6 decades from the adoption of indian constitution there has not been caused an appreciable dent in the abysmal plight of S.Cs. and STs. Also untouchability has been abolished by the constitution it still exists in some parts of India. Yet it exists in the mind bf caste hindus and non SCs. who feel ill at ease in the matters of reservation in the appointments and the posts. There is lack of education among the S.Cs. and S.Ts. due to poverty and unemployment. The schemes of their welfare are not fully implemented. The funds earmarked and given the disposal of the states by the central govt. for the purpose are either misappropriated or mis-utilised. Most of the S.Cs, and S.Ts. constitute labor class but suffer from unemployment. The higher education and medical facilities have become out of their reach being most expensive. Still these people have not blown up the structure of political democracy as prophesied by Baba Saheb. This is because they have not united under one banner. Their population in all the states is not less than 25% of the total population. In Punjab it has risen up to 32%. In case they all get together and form a compact unit like Sikhs in Punjab and BSJ? in U.P and make alliance with some national or regional parties, they can have balance of power in their hands to form the govt, of their choice and rule as contemplated by Baba Saheb. Let a better sense prevail upon the S.Cs. STs. and their leaders to recollect Baba Saheb's philosophy and attain political power. Let them shed off fatalist notion that they are born to suffer the atrocities at the hands of Hindus due to their mythological previous deeds. They should learn the universal truth, "The fault does not lie with our stars but with us that we are underlings" in the words of Shakespeare. According to Baba Saheb, "The political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community, especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its power".

BABU MANGU RAM MUGGOWALIA

A VALIANT HERO OF THE SUPPRESSED

I congratulate Ambedkar-times Group and the followers of Ad-Dharam movement on the commemoration of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia's 127th Birth Anniversary which falls on January 14th, 2013. On this historic day I feel an imperative urge inside to vent my impressions about the legacy of this great leader who was a freedom fighter and founder of glorious Ad-Dharam movement which gave the Dalit community in Punjab, a distinct and a separate identity to live a life of respect and dignity like other communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. To understand Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia's vision to achieve his goal we have to evaluate the role played by him in totality for the upliftment of the Dalit community as a whole. Some of the glimpses of his struggle and sacrifices which speak for themselves are shared as under:

Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia, as he was affectionately called by his followers, was born on January, 14th, 1886 in village Muggowal (Near Mahilpur), District Hoshiarpur, Punjab, India. He had acquired a very good grasp of the social inequalities, inherently built in India's social hierarchy as codified by Manu's Smiriti and Chaturvarna.

TRAVEL TO USA AND ROLE IN GADHAR MOVEMENT: - After completing his school education he helped his father for a while in promoting his family business in tanned leather. In 1909 he was persuaded and encouraged by his father, Mr. Harnam Dass to go to USA at the young age of 23. After working for a few years in Agricultural farms in Fresno and adjoining areas of California, he came in contact with the Gadhar movement established in San Francisco to support the liberation of India from British colonialism. During his years in USA Mangu Ram developed a new insight and a revolutionary spirit of liberation and dignity. At the instance of Lala Hardyal and Sohan Singh Bhakna, the senior leaders of the Gadhar movement, he undertook a very dangerous mission of shipping weapons to India in support of the liberation movement. He along with his other companions was captured by the British but



he managed to escape under very difficult conditions.

After a sojourn of almost 16 years abroad Mangu Ram Muggowalia arrived back in Punjab in 1925 and found that the lower sections of society still had to live under carping humiliations and slave-like conditions at the hands of the upper caste people. This made Mangu Ram Muggowalia realize that that liberation from British colonialism would not serve the real purpose until the down-trodden are not freed from the shackles of social injustice, prejudice and discrimination.

BIRTH OF AD-DHARM MANDAL WITH A DISTINCT IDENTITY: - Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia's agenda was very candid and clear that we were the original inhabitants (Ad Dharmi/Mulnivasis) but with the invasion of India by Aryans, our culture and civilization, which once thrived, was completely erased and obliterated from the pages of ancient history of India and was rewritten as per the dictates of Manusmriti. This led to the birth of a new and a vigorous movement which appealed to the conscience of the lower sections of society and started to spread and flourish in the entire province of pre-partition Punjab. In 1931 census, Ad-Dharam was recognized as a separate religion and led to many electoral alliances and victories in the legislative Assembly of Punjab making Babu Mangu Ram a house-hold name in

Punjab.

In fact, the Ad-Dharam movement launched by Babu Mangu Ram had carved out such a deep impact on the minds of the people, especially in the Doaba region of Punjab, that some of our ancestors from Punjab who migrated and settled



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in Fiji Islands in the early 1930's, established their first Guru Ravidass temple outside India, under the name of Ad-Association of Punjab, in Nasino Suva, which still stands as a living example of its past history.

ROLE OF ARYA SAMAJ - Before the foundation of Ad-Dharm Mandal under the leadership of Babu Mangu Ram the other leaders in the Ad-Dharam movement were associated with the Arya Samaj which wanted to make some reforms in Hindu social order, but only by staying within the fold of their Vedic philosophy. There were conversions from untouchables to Islam and Christianity and it ultimately posed many difficulties for the Ad-Dharam movement in maintaining its distinct religious entity.

MANGU RAM 'S SUPPORT FOR BABA SAHEB: - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who had assumed the dynamic leadership of the entire

Dalit community at the national level, was strongly supported by Babu Mangu Ram at a very critical phase of Baba Sahib's leadership during the Round Table conferences and at the time when coercive pressures were used by Mahatma Gandhi and his supporters for signing the Poona Pact Agreement in 1932, to avoid separate electorates for untouchables awarded by the British Government. Baba Sahib's approach to liberate the untouchables by building a egalitarian social order at the national level which he believed was not possible within the fold of Hinduism. In the words of Baba Sahib "The basis of my politics lies in the proposition that the untouchables are not a sub division or sub section of Hindus and they are separate and distinct element in the national life of India".

Internal dissensions between the Congress and Muslim league leadership in the wake of the division of India into two nations, appeared to have led to some distractions in the progressive and prolific growth of the Ad-Dharam movement, but its objective and spirit which were born out of the fundamental truth of ancient history of India, remained alive. The caravan, which halted for some time due to various factors of history will be moving forward with a renewed vigour and zeal.

My PERSONAL VIEWS AND COMMENTS: - In the year 1963 I visited village Muggowal to

attend the marriage ceremony of my brother-in law in the family of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia and had a chance to meet him and talk to him for many hours on the historic role of his mission in the 1920's. Before that I had also met Baba Sahib many times in Delhi in 1955-56 and thus I had personal grasp and knowledge of their missions. Baba Sahib's mission as well as Babu Mangu Ram's for the emancipation of the suppressed humanity in India were the same, but variations in their approach and organizational structures, perhaps, became one the characteristic reasons why they could not be presented together from the same platform.

Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia's life is an inspiring example of what a man can achieve by his indomitable courage, perseverance and great self-denial, even under the most depressing conditions. He was bestowed with the charisma for social transformation. Prof: Mark Juergensmeyer who has written a very exhaustive assessment of Babu Mangu Ram's mission in his book "Religious Rebels In the Punjab" and interviewed him many times at his village, states "He was a restless, ambitious man, socially sensitive and politically astute."

I also appreciate Ambedkartimes.com, its regular contributors and readers for the efforts to revive and reinvigorate the mission of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia in North America. Ambedkartimes.com's editor Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber is also appreciated for providing copies of Babu Mangu Ram's photos to Guru Ravidass Sabhas in the United States of America.

In the end I will not hesitate to say that a Nation can be united only by erasing all artificial barriers and divisions created by so called upper strata of society and the onus of responsibility to discard the very structure of this social malady of caste system, lies with them. I again congratulate you all on Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia's 127th birth Anniversary on January 14th, 2013.

Thanks.

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