



# Ambedkar Times *Weekly*

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## Floral Tribute to Ghadarite Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Ghadarite Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was one of the few adventurous Indians who entered the United States of America in the first decade of the 1900 and forged the historic Ghadar Lehar in 1913. He entered America in 1909 and began working the agricultural farms of Fresno city of California. That he had the honour of being one of the pioneers of the Ghadar movement is well established by the fact that his name figured in the official record of those five members (Hari Singh, Gambhir Singh, Harcharn Das, Harnam Chand and Mangu Ram) who were arrested on board ship Maverick. These five Ghadarite comrades carried with them "an ample supply of revolutionary literature," writes L. P. Mathur in his seminal book on "Indian Revolutionary Movement in the U.S.A.," published by Chand and Co., New Delhi in 1970. He further continued: "After some days the ship anchored off the Coronado islands, seventeen miles from San Diego (CA), (then)... to proceed to Hilo port to Hawaii, for receiving further orders.... The Dutch authorities seized the Maverick and arrested the Indians at Anjer. Out of these five Indians four escaped from the custody of the Dutch. They were, however, captured on the coast of Sumatra during their flight and were taken to Singapore." Another authentic source about his connections with the Ghadar movement is "Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad Dharm Challenge to Caste," a seminal work authored by celebrated academic, Mark Juergensmeyer, who has done exhaustive field research on Babu Mangu Ram and his Ad Dharm movement in Punjab. Based on his detailed conversations with Babu Mangu Ram, Prof Mark provided vital information about his close association with the Ghadar movement. Yet another equally authentic source about Babu Mangu Ram's deep association with the Ghadar movement is an article published in Milap (Jullundur) on October 3, 1953. It revealed how old Ghadarites in California remembered Babu Mangu Ram even after almost forty years. During his extended conversations with Mark Juergensmeyer, Babu Mangu Ram himself told him that his Ghadar connections were discovered while he was in Philippines. After exposed by the Marshall Field people, he was interned for six months during the visit of the Prince of Wales to Manila in 1922. Since he was among the earlier visitors to America and one of the pioneers of the Ghadar movement, his name also figured among the founder members of the first Sikh Temple at Stockton (CA) established in 1912, as mentioned by Charanjit Singh Pannu, the learned author of "Meri White House Pheri" published by Sangam publications of Patiala in 2015.

On return to his village after spending more than one and a half decade abroad, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia pained to experience similar caste-based social discriminations that he used to endure until his departure to America in 1909. His exposure to the equality before law and democratic way of living in the United States of America, on the one hand, and experience of secular and egalitarian mode of social relationship within the Ghadar movement, on the other, prompted him to openly challenge the centuries old oppressive caste-based hierarchies of high-low and pure-impure. When he sought the approval of his fellow comrades in the Ghadar party in America to launch a movement against caste and untouchability back home, true to their mission of achieving freedom from all sorts of social evils and foreign rule, as is clearly evident from their revolutionary writings and patriotic poetry (Ghadar Dian Gunjjan), they quickly agreed to his noble proposal. Consequently, it led to the formation of the historic Ad Dharm movement by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and rest is the story. With the consistent efforts of the forum of Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba his framed photo was added to the column of his fellow comrades hung on the walls of the Ghadar Memorial (the birthplace of the Ghadar Lehar) in San Francisco (CA).

## WHY WE LIKED THE POPE



Pope Francis did not radically reform the church the way that Pope John Paul did several decades ago. But in his own way he was just as revolutionary.

He stayed within the structural and doctrinal limits of his tradition, not upsetting any institutional apple carts. But he did surprise some, delight many, and disturb quite a few traditionalists by being... well, nice.

Every religious tradition has a hard side and a soft one. The hard side is about rules and doctrines. Think of the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, the Sharia laws of Islam, the Rahit Nama of the Sikh tradition. These can be simply good guidelines for righteous living, a nice set of standards in the background of daily life. Or they can come forward and dominate attitudes. They can be rigorously enforced, sometimes severely so.

There is also a soft side, a kindler, gentler side to religion. This is the admonition to "love your neighbor as yourself," to "welcome the stranger for you once were a stranger as well." It is the call for mercy and justice and inclusion that Bishop Budde spoke about in preaching to President Trump in the National Cathedral during his inauguration. This is the side of faith that Pope Francis exhibited in spades.

His kindness was especially apparent in his approach to other religious traditions, to refugees and prisoners, to marginalized people including prisoners and the LGBTQ community. They were all God's children, in the Pope's view. And for that he had the Biblical teachings as his authority.

He traveled the world and was greeted by throngs that included not just his Roman Catholic

followers, but also people of various faiths or no faith at all. They wanted to see and be in the presence of this great human spirit.

It is true that he met with US Vice President J. D. Vance the day before he died. But he had remarks prepared that were delivered to Vance on that occasion, excoriating the Trump administration for their approach to cruelly capturing refugees and forcing them back to their lethal homelands, or sending them to a foreign prison with no ability to challenge the conviction and no hope of returning.

Three days before he died, the Pope was in prison. Not as a prisoner, of course, but to perform a remarkable act of humility and service.

There is a practice of Popes during Holy Week, the week before Easter, to wash other people's feet, just as Jesus had. It is a sign of humility and service that says more in its simply actions than words could ever say. Often the Popes would wash the feet of Nuns and Priests and other faithful Catholics.

Not Pope Francis. He also washed feet during Holy Week, and in his last hours he went to a prison to wash the feet of the inmates, regardless of what crime had sent them there.

He also went to refugee camps on the same mission. He washed the feet of African and Middle Eastern refugees, many of them Muslim who probably wondered who this strange, white-robed elderly White man was, and why he was bending down to wash and kiss their feet.

But the world knew. He was a Pope not just for the baptized few, but for all humanity. We are all better for his example.



MARK JUERGENSMEYER

# Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Ad Dharm and Dalit Social Mobility in Punjab

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia is to Punjab what Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is to Maharashtra, and just as the Maharashtra Dalit movement owes its origin to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Punjab Dalit movement is similarly indebted to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia. If Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, the famous English-born American political activist, theorist, philosopher and revolutionary of the nineteenth century, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia learnt his lessons of equality and freedom from the proclaimed democratic and liberal values of the United States of America wherein he came into contact, during his sojourn, with the revolutionary freedom fighters popularly known as Ghadari Babas, of the historic Ghadar Lehar. This further cemented his resolve to fight for a dignified life for the masses by liberating India from the clutches of the British Empire, and to establish in its place democratic and egalitarian home rule with equality and freedom for all irrespective of caste, class, creed, language, gender and regional differentiations.

Like his nineteenth century Maharashtrian counterpart who was also a revolutionary social thinker of the so-called lower castes, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia – from one of the lowest castes in Punjab - established the first school of its kind in his native village of Mugowal for the children of those self-same socially excluded sections of the society that later came to be designated Scheduled Castes (SCs) under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936, which contained a list (or schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces. He also faced stiff opposition, like his predecessor in Maharashtra, from the so-called upper/dominant castes of Punjab in his fierce struggle against oppressive structures of domination including untouchability - the most egregious one among them. Following into the footsteps of his revolutionary Ghadarite leadership in the United States of America, he aspired to both fight against the caste-based social evil of untouchability and to replace it with an all-encompassing social freedom, as well as to join the fight to free the subjugated India and return to it its political freedom.

On return to his native village after spending 16 years abroad and discovering the pervasiveness of untouchability, Babu Mangu Ram decided to dedicate rest of his life for the emancipation and empowerment of the so-called low-caste people. In his own words: "While living abroad I had forgotten about the hierarchy of high and low, and untouchability; and under this delusion returned home in December 1925.

The same disease from which I had escaped started tormenting me again. I wrote about all this to my leader Lala Hardyal Ji, saying that until

and unless this disease is cured, Hindustan could not be liberated. Hence, in accordance with his orders, a programme was formulated in 1926 for the awakening and upliftment of the Achhut qaum (untouchable community) of India" (*Kaumi Udarian* 1986: 23-24).

To give a practical shape to his above-mentioned resolve, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia founded the famous Ad Dharm movement in the first quarter of the 1920s. It was the only movement of its kind in the north-western region of the

country that aimed at securing a respectable place for the lower castes through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration and political assertion, rather than seeking patronage from above. Comprising all the lower caste people of the state, the Ad Dharm built its headquarters named 'Ad Dharm Mandal' in Jalandhar. Seth Kishan Das of Bootan Mandi - leather business centre in the vicinity of the British military cantonment at Jalandhar – provided major financial support to the Ad Dharm movement. Babu Mangu Ram literally took the movement to the doorsteps of the untouchables in the region and soon emerged as a cult figure of the Dalits (lower castes) in Punjab. Like the Satyashodak Samaj movement in Maharashtra, the Ad Dharm soon became a household name among the Dalits of Punjab. It was for the first time in the forgotten history of the lower castes in the state that a golden opportunity knocked at their doors to get them united on a common and distinct platform under the leadership of their fellow-travellers to fight for the most sought after goal of dignified life and to collectively press their long-pending claim for a share in the local structures of power.

In the wake of the limited democratic political process in 1919 prised from the British Government for the institutionalization of the electoral system, every community was busy in organizing its respective members into well-organized socio-political forces

(political parties/organizations); and as a young man freshly-returned from the US, and meticulously chiselled in the superb companionship of the proud Ghadarite Babas, Babu Mangu Ram successfully gathered many of his fellow community members to build a separate social and political organization at par with that of the upper caste communities like the Hindu Mahasabha of the Hindus, Muslim League of the Muslims and Singh Sabhas of the Sikhs. This limited election-based legislature-forming-process also led to

the formation of similar Adimovements in other parts of the country like Adi-Andhras, Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Karnataka in South India and Adi-Hindus in the Uttar Pradesh province of North India. Though these different Adimovements emerged almost at the same time in different regions of the country, there is no evidence to prove that they were

instrumental in the rise of one and another. Each Adimovement was influenced by the then prevailing situations in its own specific context in the given state.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia formed the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab to fight for land rights of his people who were legally denied to purchase agriculture land by the Land Alienation Act of 1900, which prohibited the lowest castes along with other non-agriculture castes from owning agricultural land. Moreover, under the local customary law, popularly known as 'rayit-nammās', the so-called untouchable peoples were even denied the ownership rights on the residential plot of their houses in the segregated neighbourhoods of the mainstream villages and neither were they allowed to build 'pucca' houses. They were only permitted to build mud/ thatched houses and in return were supposed to perform some begar (forced labour without wages) in the agriculture farms of the legal owners of their residential plots. Another important task towards the material empowerment of the lower castes that this versatile leader of the Ad Dharm movement included in its mandate was the official

provision of education and government employment for the lower castes under the state affirmative action.

Apart from the material upliftment of the lower castes, what made Ad

Dharm the most politically noticeable and powerful movement of its time was the foresight of its visionary leader in setting the goal of bringing the divergent lower caste communities under a single flag and to transform them into a distinct single Qaum at par with other separate Qaums of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians etc. This was the most crucial political move on the part of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, the master strategist, who intervened at a critical period when limited direct elections were scheduled to be held in the state. He pressed for a separate religion for the lower castes of Punjab to be recorded in the 1931 Census, who in his opinion were neither Hindus, Sikhs, Muhammadans nor Christians. The lower castes, reiterated Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, were the original inhabitants - Moolnivas (aboriginal people) of this nation. The alien Aryan invaders, he continued further, deprived them of their kingdom, looted them, and finally enslaved them. In the posterannouncing the first annual meeting of the Ad Dharm movement, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with Swami Shudranand and Babu Thakur Chand, devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the Moolnivas at the hands of the caste Hindus. He also made an appeal to the Moolnivas to come together to chalk out a programme for their liberation and upliftment. Addressing them as brothers, he said: "We are the real inhabitants of this country and our religion is Ad Dharm. Hindu Qaum came from outside to deprive us of our country and enslave us.

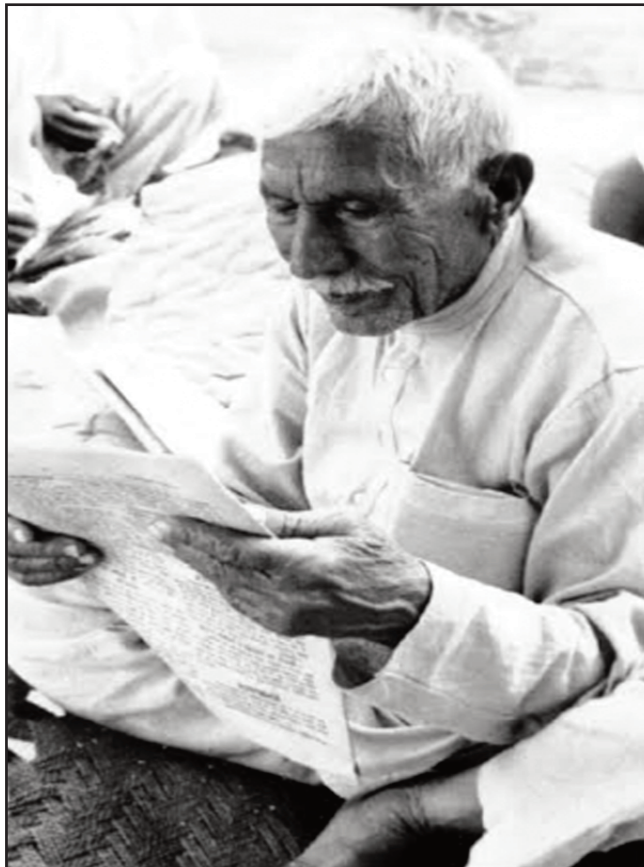
At one time we reigned over 'Hind'. We are the progeny of kings, Hindus came down from Iran to Hind and destroyed our Qaum. They deprived us of our property and rendered us nomadic. They razed our forts and houses, and destroyed our history. We are seven crores in numbers and are registered as Hindus in this country. Liberate the Adi race by separating these seven crores. ... Our seven crore number enjoy no share at all. We reposed faith in Hindus and thus suffered a lot. Hindus turned out to be callous. Centuries ago, Hindus suppressed us; sever all ties with them. What justice can we expect from those who are the butchers of the Adi race. The time has come; be cautious, now the Government listens to appeals.

(Contd. on next page)



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**Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia**  
January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980  
Founder of the Ad Dharm Movement Punjab

# Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Ad Dharm and Dalit Social Mobility in Punjab

(Contd. from page 2)

With the support of a sympathetic Government, come together to save the race. Send members to the Councils so that our Qaum is strengthened again. British rule should remain forever. Make prayer before God. Except for this Government, no one is sympathetic towards us. Never consider ourselves as Hindus at all; remember that our religion is Ad Dharm" (*Kaumi Udarian* 1986: 21-22). Keen readers of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia have observed that he was conflicted on the issue of the British Raj - on the one hand he feared even greater oppression under Hindu majoritarian rule than under the British - whom he also viewed as possible partners in facilitating a more equal Indian society - but on the other hand he aspired for the dignity of national independence, which necessitated the removal of the British. This remained a recurring paradox in his political approach till the achievement of Indian independence in 1947. In his brilliant article entitled *Achhut da Swaal* (Untouchability Question), Shaheed Bhagat Singh supported the Ad Dharm leadership in its tirade against the caste system, but at the same time had cautioned them to keep their distance from the British.

The leaders of Ad Dharm thus chose to restore dignity and freedom to the untouchables by detaching them

completely from Hinduism and re-consolidating them into their own ancient religion (Ad Dharm). The long domination by the Aryans, they alleged, made them oblivious of their native religion. In fact, the task of reviving their ancient religion was not an easy one for the *Moolnivasis* who had forgotten their Gurus and other religious symbols during their long period of persecution under the rule of the outsiders. They had been condemned as impure and declared unfit to have their own theology. In order to establish their hegemony and legitimacy over the enslaved *Moolnivasis* of Bharat, the Aryan invaders eventually metamorphosed themselves into upper castes of the first three Varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) of their imposed fourfold social order based on Chatur-Varnavyavastha. The natives of the conquered land were pushed into the fourth Varna of Shudras - consisting of artisan castes and still other further reduced into lowest of the low castes, contemptuously dubbed as Untouchable peoples. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia strongly put forth the demand of a separate religion for his low caste peoples in order to forge them together into a distinct Qaum. To revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing a new religion for the native lower castes people. Babu Mangu Ram's claim that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enor-

mous psychological impact on them. It provided a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity. The British Government granted them, as demanded, distinct status of a separate religion - Ad Dharm. The Ad Dharm was based on the teachings and inspiration from the spiritual figures of North India Bhakti movement, particularly Guru Ravidass, Bhagwan Valmik, Sant Kabir and Sant Namdev. In fact, the leaders of the Ad Dharm movement placed the spiritual figure of Guru Ravidass in the centre of their discourse around which the entire socio-political and spiritual paraphernalia of the movement and the separate Dalit religion of Ad Dharm was woven. In this way, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia played a dominant role in chiseling the distinct markers of separate Dalit identity and restoring the natives their lost heroes, Gurus, rich cultural heritage. He strengthened their resolve to become rulers themselves.

During the Census of 1931, around half a million SCs in Punjab returned themselves as followers of their newly recognized religion - Ad Dharm. Thenceforth, the followers of Ad Dharm took pride in being addressed as Ad Dharmis. Another equally great achievement of the Ad Dharm movement was that it swept the Punjab Provincial assembly elections in 1937 & 1946, which made it an equally important stake-holder in the Punjab leg-

islature, perhaps for the first time in the history of the lower castes in the colonial India. Moreover, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and the Ad Dharm movement provided a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of the mission of Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar in Punjab. During Dr. Ambedkar's struggle for the separate electoral status for the Depressed Classes at the London Round Table conferences, Babu Mangu Ram supported him by sending many telegrams in his favour in a tie with Mahatma Gandhi over the question of the leadership of the Depressed Classes in India. An eminent American social scientist, Mark Juergensmeyer, had also noted in his classic 'Religious Rebels in the Punjab,' the tremendous contribution of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia towards Dalit upliftment in Punjab, by his founding of the Ad Dharm movement to generate social and political consciousness among the lowest of the low to help them rise against the centuries old discriminatory caste system and to establish an egalitarian socio-political order in the image of Begampura of Guru Ravidass.

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*Kaumi Udarian* (Punjabi), vol. 1, no. 2, January 1986, pp. 21-24 (Jalandhar, C.L. Chumber, ed.).



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# BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA

## A SYMBOL OF PATRIOTISM AND CRUSADER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the history of his struggle for India's freedom from British rulers and unrelenting efforts for social justice during the first half of the 20th century the contributions of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, though overshadowed for a while by unruly elements of society, have come back with a renewed spirit of a glittering empowerment.

As the mortal frame of human body is subject to extinction sooner or later, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia departed from this world on April 22nd, 1980 and the following few lines, on the occasion of his 45th death Anniversary, are just a humble tribute to his remarkable legacy as a true patriot with an eternal quest for equality and social justice.

**Victim of discrimination in his youth:-** Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, born in a untouchable family in Muggowal, a small village, in Hoshiarpur District of Panjab (India) on 14th January, 1886, had to face all the odds and difficulties so inherently built in a society dominated by Brahminical Samaj. In spite of being a brilliant student he was hardly able to go upto high school education.

**Migration to USA:-** Babu Mangu Ram's father who owned a flourishing business in leather trade managed to send him to U.S.A where he arrived in 1909 to better his prospects in life. In U.S.A he became an active member of the Ghadar movement to fight for India's freedom from the British rule for which he even risked his life when captured on coming back to India with a shipment of weapons for use by Ghadarites in India. He luckily escaped with the help of some German supporters and remained in hiding for many years.

**Return to india:-** On coming back to India in 1925 he was shocked to find social discrimination worse than slavery which agitated his mind to lay the foundation of Ad-Dharm Mandal in

1926. The movement was so strong that he became an indisputable leader of the untouchables in Northern India from Delhi to Peshawar, winning seven seats out of eight in the provincial legislature.

The following are some of the salient and indelible features of his lasting legacy for future generations: The most prominent contribution of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's mission and foundation is that he was able to establish a distinct identity for the Ad-Dharmi Community, separate from Hindu Hierarchy by claiming to be the original inhabitants of India before the invasion of Aryans from Easter Europe and Central Asia. Ad-Dharm Mandal was one of the most successful movements for Dalit Mobilization and empowerment with a separate identity.

### Revelations of Professor Mark Juergensmeyer:

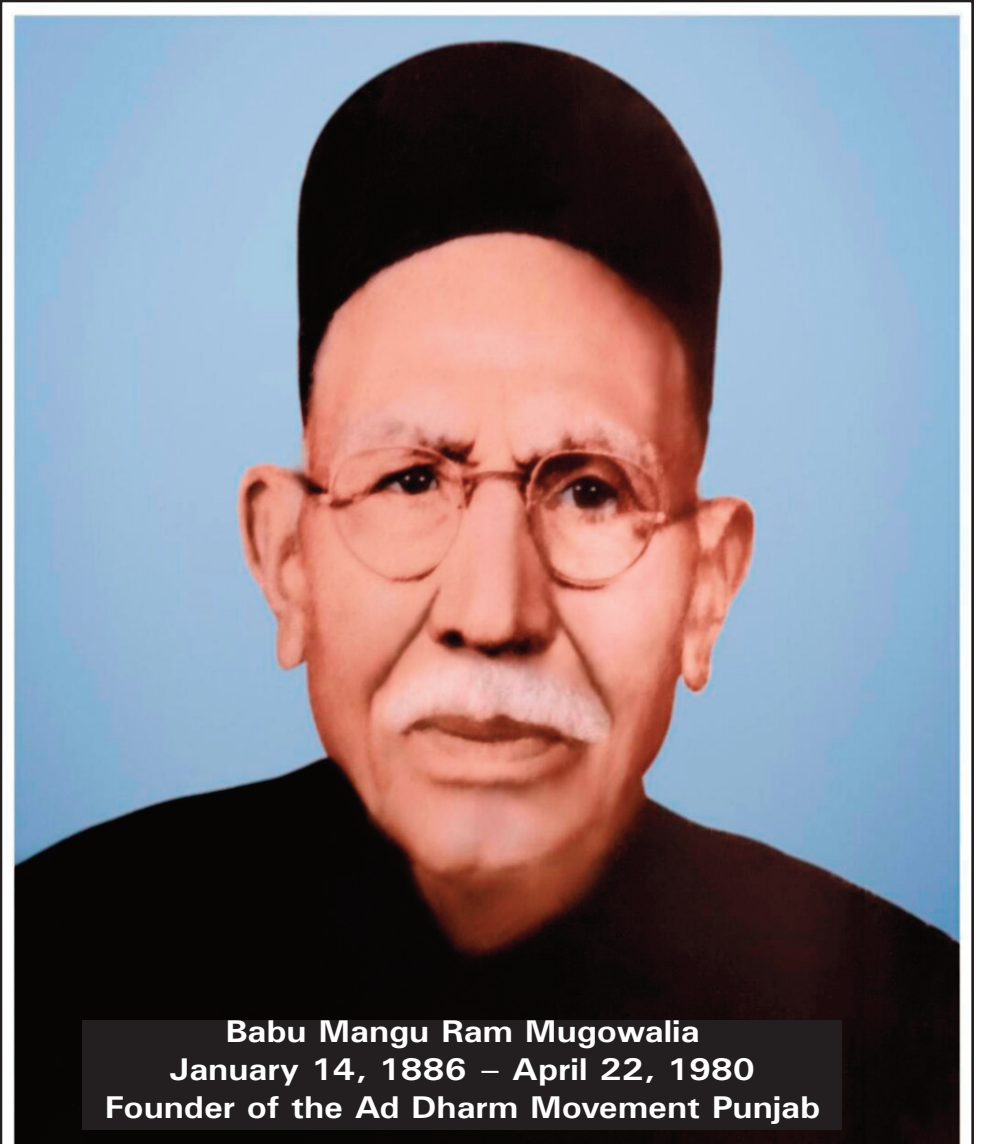
-Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer, now a renowned Professor in Santa Barbara University and an eminent scholar of international fame was the first international scholar who met Babu Mangu

Ram Mugowalia personally in India more about fifty years ago and made an extensive study on him as revealed in his book "RELIGIOUS REBELS IN PANJAB" "The Ad-Dharm Challenge to Caste".

**Staunch Supporter of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar:** - Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Ambedkar with his support and telegrams during his crusade in Round Table conferences in London, reiterating Dr. Ambedkar as the sole representative of the down-trodden to participate in the deliberations for award of separate electorates for the depressed classes and rebuffing the claims of Gandhi Ji that untouchables were a part of the Hindu Community. He even started a counter fast unto death against Mr. Gandhi's which ended in the signing



O.P. Balley (General Secretary)  
Supreme Council  
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA



Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia  
January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980  
Founder of the Ad Dharm Movement Punjab

of Poona- Pact in 1932.

**Desh Doaba & Ambedkar Times:** The two weekly publications in circulation among the Indian diaspora all over the world have played a very prominent role in reviving the legacy of this forgotten hero to be remembered by the modern youth and future generations.

A special souvenir issued in 1985 by late Mr. C.L. Chumber, Editor "Kaumi Udarian" (National Flights) Jalandhar depicted a remarkable resuscitation of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's accomplishments of life. Let us commemorate the 40th death Anniversary of this true patriot and a valiant fighter for human rights, denied to the down trodden for centuries. Let us commemorate the 45th death Anniversary of this true

patriot and a valiant fighter for human rights, denied to the downtrodden for centuries.

In his dynamic political career that spanned 65 years, he emerged as the beacon of light and hope for untouchable communities suppressed throughout the Indian history.

In the end I must acknowledge and affirm that the roles played by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, as a freedom fighter and founder of Ad Dharm movement, will keep his legacy alive in the hearts and souls of those who know him, for generations to come.

I salute to the greatness of this noble soul as a true patriot, as a nationalist and a ceaseless fighter for social transformation.

## Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and Ad Dharm School of Dalit Awakening

**Prem Kumar Chumber**  
Editor-in-Chief:

**Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba**

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was one of founding members of the Ghadar movement, which aimed at building an egalitarian society and polity after liberating India from the British Raj. He participated in the weapon smuggling mission of the movement. He was arrested and awarded capital punishment, but was saved from the death sentence by chance. The news of his supposed death reached his village. According to the tradition of his community, his widow named Piari married his elder brother. After his return to India in

1925, he remarried and had four sons from his second wife, named Bishno.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia did not find any change in the life of his fellow villagers in Punjab after spending 16 years abroad. The social malady of untouchability had continued to torment the Scheduled Castes people. He wanted to overcome the social oppression that his people were undergoing for centuries. While living in USA, he realized what it meant to be equal, free and lead a dignified life. He made his mind to devote his life towards the awakening and uplift of the Scheduled Caste people.

He thought that the most vi-

able way to bring social and political consciousness among his people was to establish schools for the Achhuts. Settling in his native village, Muggowal, he founded a school for the lower caste children in the village. The school was temporarily housed in the garden of Risaldar Dhanpat Rai, a landlord of village Muggowal.

Later on Lambardar Beeru Ram Sangha, another landlord of village Muggowal donated half an acre of land to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to build the school.

The school had five teachers including Babu Mangu Ram ji. One of the teachers was a Muslim, Walhi Mohammad, and another was

a Brahmin.

Now-a-days, the school land has been declared as Shamlat (common land) and no remnants of the school building exist except the old dilapidated structure of its well.

It was in this historic school founded by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji that the first mammoth meeting of the Ad Dharm movement was held on June 11-12, 1926.

Excerpted with thanks from Dr. Ronki Ram's article entitled "Untouchability, Dalit Consciousness, and the Ad Dharm Movement in Punjab," Contributions to Indian Sociology, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004, pp. 323-49].

# BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA – A PROFILE

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia combined in his personage the qualities of a fierce revolutionary, a staunch patriot, a devoted crusader against social evils and above all a true humanitarian though and thought born among the lowliest of the low, he crossed all social barriers dauntlessly and suffered all sorts of indignities of life and made his way to reach the pinnacle of gray.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia represents a rare example among the revolutionaries Ghadarite philosophy. In those dark days, it was rare for an untouchable to understand the essence of revolution against imperialism. But he rose to the occasion and proved his mettle. He joined the Ghadar party when he went to California (U. S. A.) in 1909 A. D, as its active member, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, it appears desired an establishment of society which must be based on equality, and he saw one being fought for by the Ghadarites as they had abolished all social distinctions among themselves first-which, perhaps. Is not the practice with the modern community or who profess change of the sort? As Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia spoke of the Ghadar party. It was a new society; we were all treated as equals".

As a Ghadarite, he took part in the organizational activities at first but in 1951 A.D., an occasion came when he volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites in a dangerous mission involving smuggled weapons shipped from California to the Punjab. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was chosen by the leader of the Ghadar Party at that time. Mr. Sohan Singh Bhakna, the secretary of the Ghadar Party whom Babu M. R. Mugowalia remembered as "Godha" sent the five to Los Angeles, where they boarded identifications with "Godha" for the rest of the journey's saga, Mangu Ram would be known by a Muslim pseudonym, "Nizamuddin".<sup>1</sup>

Putting his life into danger and travelling through Socorro Islands and halting at Mexico, Caledonia Islands, Manila, Singapore and again to Manila where he stayed for some time and finally to India where he reached in 1925 A.D.

It is after 1925 that the career as a crusader against untouchability and casteism began. As he travelled from Ceylon to Punjab through Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Satara, Nagpur and Delhi, he observed the condition of the untouchables on route and was dismayed to see these people being treated so badly. In Madurai, when Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia visited the Meenakshi Temple, he was told to be careful not to touch Achhut (Untouchable) since they assumed by his dress that he of a decent caste. By the time Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia had reached the Punjab, he was convinced that there was need for social change.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia wrote to Ghadar Party Headquarters in San Francisco about the difficult conditions of the untouchables in India. He wrote them that their free-

dom was more important to him than Indian Freedom. According to Babu Mugowalia, leaders of the Ghadar Party then disengaged him to work with scheduled castes (untouchable), and wrote him that they would support him in his tasks. Thus in a new context, the old revolutionary from Fresno continued the Ghadar spirit. This clearly shows that even Ghadarites had realized the need to awaken these slaves on Indian Society the then untouchables. When he started his task of social reform i.e.

establishing schools for untouchable poors, he began to look for an alternative which may provide a lever for the unity of the untouchable poors and then to demonstrate through that alternative the political presence of the untouchables in the politics of the



(Late) Prof. G. S. Ball, M.A., M. Phil.  
President, Ambedkar Mission Society, Punjab (Regd)

Punjab of these days. It must be remembered that Punjab of was alternative the politics of Punjab of those days. It must be remembered that Punjab was already witnessing political up haul and each class was trying to reap at political harvesting, Babu M. R. Mugowalia, along with other conscious men from his class, then founded on June 11-12, 1926 A. D. at his village Mugowal Ad Dharma as the alternative.

Ad Dharma main aim was to create a feeling of identity among the untouchable class which numbered at that time about one fourth of the entire population of India. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and the early leaders of the Ad-Dharma perceived their first task to be the creation of a new religion. In their initial meeting, even before the developed an organizational structure, they labored even a basic ideological theme upon which they could build the system of religious ideas and symbols. Its central motif was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a Qaum, a distinct religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. And that the Quam had existed from time immemorial. It was a power addressed to the people without power. It was intended to communicate the sense of strength that Babu M.R.Mugowalia felt belonged to his caste fellows by right. As he explained, partly stating a fact, partly expressing a hope, "The untouchables have their powers: communal power (Qaumiat, religion (Mazhab), and organizations (Majlis)." The hope was that / these powers could be fostered and splintered through force of ideology.

Ad-Dharma was almost Babu M.R.Mugowalia's show. It inspired the lowliest of the low to fight for equality, economic, social and politi-

cal in a converted way. The Ad-Dharma under the dynamic leadership of true revolutionary like Babu Mugowalia was an aggressive and autonomous movement or compared to similar movements that took birth in other parts of the country. Within a short span of time, it jolted the 'haves-not' through its rallies, publications, deputations and demonstrations to demand new government policies or to protect upper caste discriminations. The most influential political action of the movement that can be listed as one of its great achievements, was to get Scheduled Castes registered as followers of new religion. In the 1931 A.D. census, almost half a million of them registered as "Ad-Dharmi" rather than Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs.

Mr Mark Juergensmeyer writes as "Later in the 1930, their political influence turned toward electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with congress."<sup>2</sup> It was the logical consequence of the political awakening created among them by Ad-Dharma movement in Punjab, whose undisputable leader was Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

Thus through several means, then, the Ad-Dharma presented to its followers a vision of a world which both confirmed and transformed the rude experience of untouchables. And in doing so it implied that a different sort of world was coming into being for the separate identity so defined signaled hope for a society in which social grounds carried no inherent mark of judgement and in which the benefits of progress could be shared by all.

Cultural and humanistic aspects of the personality of Babu M.R.Mugowalia were even more glaring. As a humanistic his vision of the world was near to rationalist views of the universe (we can say even materialistic as well though in rudimentary form), he believed in the inherent equality of all human-beings; he was against all sorts of exploitations of man against man; and he earnestly devoted his bodily energy and financial resources in founding a new society based upon the gospel of equality. His ideas about universe and equality of all men are echoed in the Ad-Dharma Mandal (1926 to 1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played big role. It reads as follows:

"Nature (QuadratKa Mela) created human beings from original source (Adi) at the time that it created all beings in the Earth. The

knowledge of moral behavior (Karam-Dharm) was also given to them at that time by Nature. Nature made humans superior to animals, but among humans all were equal.

In the beginning, when Nature created human beings, there was no discrimination. There were no differences and no quarrels. In particular, there were no such concepts as high a law caste. God(Ishwar) was mediating; all was in harmony. Everyone believed in one dharma which Nature had given then through intellect and knowledge." Babu M.R.Mugowalia did not mean by the word 'God' as something supernatural beings who is said to have created the world and since then regulating it as is believed in theology. Mark Juergensmeyer makes it quite clear in his work, Religion as social vision<sup>3</sup> thus; "Occasionally there is mention of God in a more formal sense"; "God (Ishwar) was meditating: all was in harmony." And Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia made a practice of using the name Ad-Purkhfor the divine –literally "the originator," or the original being." All these designations, although they are theistic terms, are impersonal in intent.<sup>4</sup>

He, all his life, stood like a rock against social evils such as untouchability, caste-system, women, women slavery, exploitation etc. etc. His life in cultural side symbolized with the creation of new social virtues such as women's rights, the value of education, abstinence from alcohol and drugs – which were 'nothing less than a new concept of moral order.'

Thus Babu M. R. Mugowalia, a Ghadarite revolutionary, social crusader, political activist, and strategist and as an humanitarian fought for the establishment of an ideal society till he breathed last. The noble way of commemorating celebrating the 99th birth anniversary (for that matter every birth anniversary) of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia- who desired his movement to coincide with Ambedkarite movement to give the movement of depressed classes a country-wide stature, is to emulate him. Therefore, let us resolve to emulate the great Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia- a patriot, social revolutionary, a successful strategist and, above all, a humanist.

1. See an article entitled "Political Origin of a Punjab lower Caste Religion" by Mark Juergensmeyer in "Political Dynamics of Punjab" edited by Paul Wallace & Surinder Chopra – pages 209-30

2. Please see an article entitled "Political Origin of a Punjab lower Caste Religion" by Mark Juergensmeyer in "Political Dynamics of Punjab" edited by Paul Wallace & Surinder Chopra – pages 230

3. University of California Press, London Page 51

4. This, the author says, is based on his interview with Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia at Garhshankar, April 17, 1971.  
Courtesy: Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Souvenir 1985  
by Mr. C. L. Chumber

# Remembering Advocate Bhagwan Das: A Profile

**Mr.** Bhagwan Das was born in an Untouchable family at Jutogh Cantonment, Shimla (Himachal Pradesh), India on 23 April 1927. He served in the Royal Indian Air Force during World War II and after demobilisation served in different capacities in various departments of Government of India at Saharanpur, Shimla and Delhi. He did M.A. in History (Punjab University) and LL.B from Delhi University. He did research on the 'Indianisation of the Audit Department from 1840-1915'. He has been contributing articles and short stories to various papers and journals published in India.

His father Mr. Ram Ditta was fond of reading newspapers and a great admirer of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Inspired and encouraged by his father, Mr. Das worked with Mr. T. R. Baidwan of Simla who was the most prominent leader of the Untouchables in Simla Hills, and joined the Scheduled Castes Federation at the tender age of 16. Since then he has been actively associated with the Ambedkarite movement and has done a great deal to promote the ideas of Babasaheb Ambedkar and to unite and uplift the downtrodden not only of India but also of other countries of Asia. Mr. Das is associated with many organisations of lawyers, Buddhists, Scheduled Castes and Minorities in India. He was General Secretary, United Lawyers Association, Supreme Court, New Delhi; General Secretary, BouddhUpasak-Sangh, New Delhi; Founder Chairman, Ambedkar Mission Society which has branches in many parts of the world; Revived Samata Sainik Dal (Volunteers for Equality) founded by Dr. Ambedkar in 1926-27; Regional Secretary (North). Indian Buddhist Council; Founder, Society for the Protection of Non-Smokers; Founder President of Society for Promoting Buddhist Knowledge; edited Samata Sainik Sandesh (English) 1980-1990. He was also the main person behind publication of "Bheem Patrika" an Urdu and the Hindi magazine published from Jullundur (Punjab).

His mother tongue is Urdu. He learnt English from class 7th. His command over English and his British accent compelled many to label him as a "Black English Man." He is Adib-Fazel in Persian. He can speak and write in Hindi and Punjabi. Just like Dr. Ambedkar he was not allowed to read Hindi and he had to take up Persian at school. His knowledge about Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism, Hindu Castes, Religion and many more subjects is so vast and thorough that he is often marked as a "Moving Encyclopaedia." He is very modest and simple which made Bhadant Anand Kaushalyan to remark, "You are so humble."

He was married to Rama Devi (Lucknow) on 9 February, 1957 through the mediation of Shiv Dayal Singh Chaurasia who was a member of the Parliament. He has one son Rahul and two daughters Zoya and Shura. He became a Buddhist in 1957. His devotion to Ambedkarite movement is

very high and he is known as a True Ambedkarite.

He remained in close contact with Dr. Ambedkar at Delhi from 1942 till his death. He also adopted Buddhism in 1956 when Dr. Ambedkar launched his Buddhist Conversion Movement on 14th October, 1956. He has written his autobiography which has been published as "In the Pursuit of Ambedkar" in English and "BabaKeCharnon me" in Hindi. A documentary film on his life has also been prepared by S. Anand of Navyana.

Mr. Das has been associated with the 'Peace Movement' since the end of World War II, in which he served on the Eastern Front with the Royal Air Force (RAF) under South East Asia Command. He is one of the founder members of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) (India) and has participated in the Conferences held in Kyoto, Japan, 1970; Princeton USA (1979); Seoul, Korea (1986); Nairobi, Kenya (1984) and Melbourne Australia (1989). He was appointed Director, Asian Centre for

Human Rights (Asian Conference on Religion and Peace) in 1980 and continued to serve in this capacity till 2004 monitoring the news of violation of human rights in Asian countries and organising camps for training of human rights workers, speaking and writing for the cause.

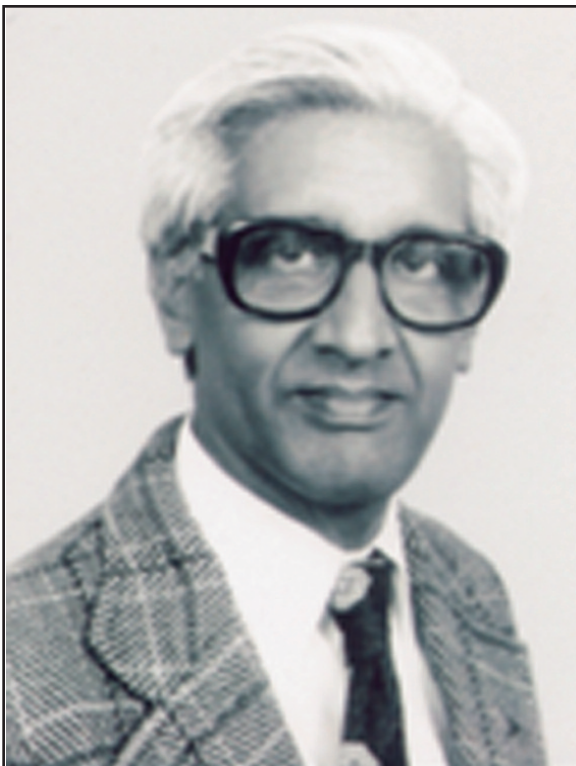
Mr. Das was invited to deliver a lecture on 'Discrimination by the Peace University, Tokyo (1980) and also addressed several meetings organised by the Burakuminsof Japan. He gave testimony before the United Nations in regard to the plight of Untouchables in South Asia, in the meeting of Sub-Committee on Human Rights held at Geneva, Switzerland in August, 1983. He visited England in 1975, 1983, 1988, 1990 and 1991 in connection with lectures and seminars. He participated in the seminar held in 'Hull University in 1990 as a representative of the Ambedkar Centenary Celebration Committee, UK and also a seminar on Human Rights in India held at London University, School of Asian and Oriental Studies in February 1991.

He was invited to deliver Ambedkar Memorial Lectures in Milind Mahavidyalaya, Aurangabad (1970); Marathwada University (1983); Nagpur University, PWS College, Nagpur; Ambedkar College,

Chander Pur and Amraoti University in 1990.

Mr. Das also visited Nepal (1980 and 1990); Pakistan (1989); Thailand (1988); Singapore (1989) and Canada (1979) to study the problems of deprived and disadvantaged members of society, women and children. Delivered lectures in Wisconsin University (USA) 1979 and Northfield College (USA) on Caste in contemporary India. He was invited to give lectures on Dr Ambedkar at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow in June, 1990.

Mr. Das practices law in the Supreme Court of India. With a view to improve the professional competence of and helping upcoming advo-



**Bhagwan Das: A Profile**  
(23.04.1927 -18.11.2010)

c a t e s belonging to Untouchable and indigenous groups he founded Ambedkar Mission Lawyers Association and Legal Aid Society in 1989. He was General Secretary of 'Professions for People', an organisation founded in Delhi to elevate professional standards.

Mr. Das was invited to preside at the Dalit and

Buddhist Writers Conference held at Akola in 1989 and is closely associated with various organisations of Dalit Writers.

Mr. Das has written more than five hundred articles, papers for seminars, short stories for various newspapers and journals. His papers on 'Revival of Buddhism'; 'Some problems of minorities in India'; 'Reservation in Public Services' have been published in Social Action brought out by Indian Social Institute, New Delhi and Delhi University Buddhist Department. He has written many papers on Reservation and Representative Bureaucracy, Discrimination against the Dalits in Public Services and Minorities etc. His short stories were published in Sarita (Urdu), NayaZamana (Urdu), Milap (Urdu), Bheem Patrika (Urdu and Hindi). He has edited "Slavery and Untouchability" incomplete book written by Babasaheb Ambedkar). He also edited "Untouchable Soldiers-Mazhbi and Mahar" wrote M.A. Thesis by Ardith Basham, an American Scholar. He has also written about Dalit politics under the title "Dalit RajnitiaurSanghathan." (Dalit Politics and Organisations)

He was a member for the 'Committee for evolving new strategies for the development of Sched-

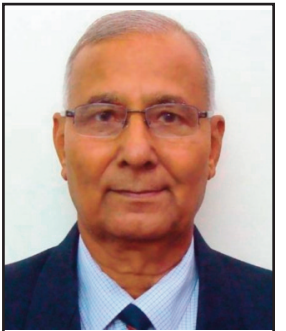
uled Castes and Tribes - VIII Plan' set up by the Government of India and also a member of Ambedkar Centenary Committee of the Government of India. Mr. Das has written many books in Urdu, English and

Hindi on Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar; Untouchables; Scavengers and Sweepers; Human Rights Discrimination etc. Prominent among them are Thus Spoke Ambedkar (Vol I to IVEd) a pioneer work; Ambedkar on Gandhi and Gandhism (Ed); Ambedkar Ek-ParicheyEk Sandesh (Hindi); Main BhangiHoon(Hindi), the story of an Indian sweeper told in the first-person (this book has been translated into Punjabi, Kannada and Marathi and German); Valmiki AurBhangiJatian (Hindi); Valmiki (Hindi); Dhobi (Hindi), Revival of Buddhism in India and Role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; Dr. AmbedkarEkParichayEk Sandesh; Dr. Ambedkar aurBhangiJatiya and Bharat me BauddhDhammkapunrjagrathasamasyayen. He has translated into Urdu former President of the USA Lyndon Johnson's book 'My Hope for America'; Dr Ambedkar's 'Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah'in to Urdu; besides editing Bhadant Anand Kaushalyayan's 'Gita KiBuddhivadiSamiksha.'

Other books in hand are "Reservation and Representative Bureaucracy in India"; "Untouchables in the Indian Army (Mahar, Mazhbi, Chuhra, Pariahs, Mangs, Dhanuks, Dusadhs, Chamars, Kolis, Bheels)"; "Mandal Commission and the Future of Backward Classes"; "Twenty-Two Oaths of Buddhism and Conversion"; "Balmiki; Ravidassis and Balmikis of Northern India"; "Buddhism and Marxism" and "Ambedkar as a Religious Leader."

Mr. Das has toured almost the whole of India to study the problems of Hindu-Muslim riots, religious conflicts, atrocities committed on the Untouchables and tribal people, with the group 'Threat to Diversity', 'Swaraj MuktiMorcha and as Chairman, Samata Sainik Dal.' He is also the founder President of "Dalit Solidarity People", an organisation aiming at uniting Hindu Dalits, Dalit Christians, Sikh Dalits, Muslim Dalits and Burakuminsof Japan and Korea. Like Marx his slogan was "Dalits of the World Unite."

Mr Bhagwan Das has been a storehouse of insight and information, his residence at Delhi has been a mandatory stopover for many renowned scholars like Eleanor Zelliot, Mark Juergensmeyer, Owen Lynch, Marc Gallanter, RK Kshirsagar, SukhadeoThorat down to younger scholars like Vijay Prashad, Nicolas Jaoul and Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp.



**SR Darapuri**

Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy,  
Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Lucknow (U.P.)  
Reader and Deputy Director

# The RTE Act of 2009 – Students belonging to EWS

I recall that I had written in one of my blogs about the Right to Education (RTE) in September, 2015 with reference to PM Narendra Modi's views on the subject which read as "The provisions of the RTE Act require to be enforced strictly. The educational institutions, which claimed and are enjoying the facilities and concessions offered and extended by the government, have become totally commercial. Neither they pay due remunerations to the teachers for their work nor provide seats to the economically and socially marginalized students. The vested interests tend to flout these provisions in one way or the other."

The situation is as bad as it was. No one has paid any attention to solve the problem of students be-

simple. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. The Right to Education (RTE) Act mandates that private schools reserve 25% of their seats for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Disadvantaged Groups. This reservation ensures that children from marginalized backgrounds have access to quality education in private schools. The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of this provision. Key aspects of the EWS provision under the RTE Act:

tional validity of Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act, which mandates the EWS reservation.

**State Responsibility:**

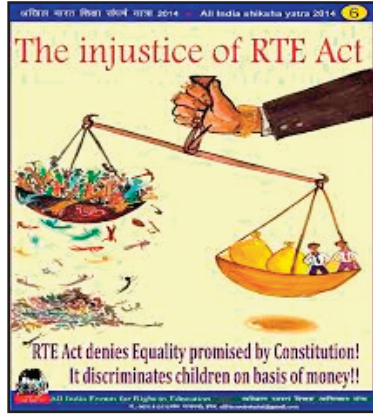
State Governments are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the EWS provisions in schools.

**Impact of the EWS provision:**

**Social Inclusion:**  
The EWS reservation aims to promote social inclusion and provide equal educational op-



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longing to EWS. My immediate motivation to right again on the subject is the struggle of one of family friends, Onkar Nath, a highly placed but retired bureaucrat (Deputy CAG). The struggle and efforts of Onkar Nath and many other likeminded individuals and outfits under the banner of 'Action Committee for RTE Act 2009 have been highlighted by the media and rightly so. I take this opportunity to congratulate and support Onkar Nath and his associates in the cause of education of the children of the marginalized sections of the society. It is a matter of worry and shame that in spite of Judicial Court's directions, the concerned authorities and educational institutions are blissfully ignorant and silent.

The provisions of the RTE Act are clear and

**Mandatory Reservation:**

Private, unaided schools are legally bound to reserve a minimum of 25% of their seats for EWS and disadvantaged groups, according to the RTE Act, 2009.

**Free Education:**

The reserved seats are free of cost, ensuring that children from weaker sections can access quality education without financial barriers, according to the RTE Act, 2009.

**Eligibility:**

EWS and disadvantaged groups include children from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, orphans, and children with disabilities.

**Constitutional Validity:**

The Supreme Court has upheld the constitu-

portunities for children from diverse backgrounds.

**Addressing Inequality:**

It addresses educational inequality by ensuring that marginalized children have access to quality education alongside their peers from higher-income families.

The lofty policy as stipulated in the RTE Act, 2009 is the only remedy to address the educational backwardness of the weaker sections of the society. While I fully agree with PM Narendra Modi who rightly said some years ago while addressing the students, teachers and educational administrators that 'Mother gives birth and Teacher gives life', it is time to act and deliver. Many more Onkar Naths are sitting and watching on the fence. Why should the authorities and the other stake holders hold back the provisions of the RTE Act particularly with regard to the children belonging to EWS?

Masjid To Bana Di Sabbhar Mein;  
Iman Ki Hararat Walon Ne  
Man Apna Purana Papi Hai;  
Barson Se Namazi Ho Na Saka

**Source Courtesy: Census of India, 1931, Volume XVII, Punjab**  
**By Khan Ahmad Hasan Khan**  
**Superintendent of Census Operations**  
**Punjab & Delhi**  
**Printed by: Civil & Military Gazette Press, Lahore (1933)**

The following are relevant extracts on "Ad-Dharm" from the above-mentioned source.

Page No.289

A "New" Religion

The most notable feature of the present census from the standpoint of return of religion has been the adoption of the term "Ad-Dharmi" by numerous Chamar and Chuhras and other untouchables. At previous censuses Chuhras, unless they returned some recognized religion, were always included among Hindus. In this respect the instructions for the return of religion at the present census were the same as in 1921, viz. "All Chuhras, who are not Muslims or Christians, and who do not return any other religion, should be returned as Hindus. The same rule applies to members of other depressed classes who have no tribal religion." Thus under the instructions if a Chuhra refused to be recorded as a Hindu he was to be so recorded in case he failed to return any other religion. An addition was, however, made to the instructions by the insertion of the clause: "Persons returning themselves as Ad-Dharmis should be recorded as such." The Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal had petitioned the Punjab Government before the census operations started in 1930, representing that the depressed classes should be permitted to return Ad-Dharm as their religion at the time of the census as they were the aborigines of India and while the Hindus kept them at a respectable

distance they did not believe in the Hindu religion. The President of the Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal was informed that a clause was being provided in the Census Code requiring that persons returning their religion as Ad-Dharm would be recorded as such. Ad-Dharm literally means original or ancient religion.

Page No.294

**Revolt of Untouchables**

There has been in the last few years a movement among the untouchable classes to organize themselves as a separate community in order to consolidate their position, and many of them have returned themselves, particularly in the central districts, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, as Ad-Dharmi or the followers of Ad-Dharm, meaning the ancient or original religion of Hindustan. The figures of Ad-Dharmis are given in the margin for the districts returning more than 100 of them.



Neeraj Paul

**Source Courtesy: India Divided**  
**By Dr. Rajendra Prasad**  
**First Published: 1946**

Reference about the Ad-Dharmis is given in a paragraph on Page No.228 from the book:

Before analysing the figures given in the above table it is worth noting that under 'others' are included Adi Dharmis, Jains, Parsis, Jews and those who returned no specified religion or community. Of these the most numerous are the Adi Dharmis, who according to the Census Commissioner though included in scheduled castes do not claim to be Hindus and are hence recorded separately not only from the Hindus but also from the scheduled castes. They number 3,43,685 or 1.21 per cent of the total population of the Punjab. They are concentrated very largely in the Jullundur Division where their number is 2, 50, 267 or 4.60 per cent of the population of that Division. Their next largest concentrations are in the Multan Division and Lahore Division where they number 68,641 or 20,488 respectively. Their number is negligible in the Ambala and Rawalpindi Divisions being only 2,795 and 1,534 respectively. As has been pointed out in the Census Report of 1931: 'The most notable feature of the present (1931) census from the stand-point of returns of religion has been the adoption of the term Adi Dharmi by numerous Chamars and Chuhras and other Untouchables. At previous censuses Chuhras unless they returned some recognized religion were always included among Hindus. The 1941 Census Report also notes that all those who are recorded as Adi Dharmis belong to the scheduled castes but have not claimed to be Hindus. The last two census days have thus succeeded in reducing the number of Hindus in the Province by excluding the Adi Dharmis from amongst them.'

# Babasaheb Ambedkar's Legacy and the Future of India

It was Ambedkar Jyanti on April 14. Going by the scale and tenor of the celebrations of the day to felicitate and own Babasaheb Ambedkar and his legacy throughout India and beyond by all and sundry, I thought of sharing my off the cuff observations on Babasaheb Ambedkar and the future of India in the given socio-political landscape of the country that is Bharat.

The situation, it seems, has come circle. Let us begin from the founding of Samata Sainik Dal (SSD) by Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1927, after the establishment of RSS in October, 1926. Its primary goal was to protect the rights and safety of marginalized sections of Indian society, a. The SSD aimed to create a more equitable society and mobilize the oppressed against caste discrimination. Ambedkar kick started with his agenda of social reform of the Hindus and education and empowerment of the depressed classes, now called Dalits or Scheduled Castes. He fought tooth and nail with the caste hierarchies of the main stream of the Hindu soci-

powerment of dalits, making of the constitution of independent India i.e. Bharat needs no elaboration and is well documented. Today, with the fast changing scenario in the country, I thought of underlining Babasaheb's role in streamlining of the society or say reforming the Hindu society and establishing a just social order as an 'Indian first and Indian last' which always remained at the back of his thought and mission – signing of Poona Pact to integrate the depressed classes with the main stream of the Hindu Society, Hindu Code Bill to reform the Hindu society, embracing of Buddhism to remain the cultural and spiritual embrace of the Indian tradition and many other such stances and considerations.

I did not intend to write a long piece but it happened so spontaneously. Unfortunately, in the caste ridden social set up, Ambedkar never got due space consideration in spite of the fact that he proved himself as the greatest son of the soil. Till 1970s, Ambedkar

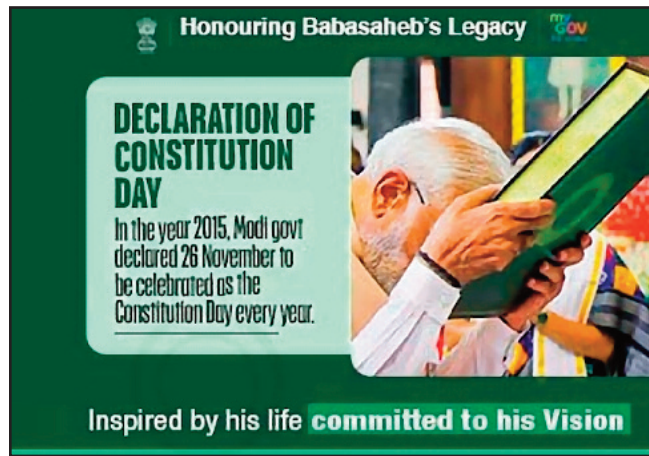
Babasaheb Ambedka rightly said that Ambedkar's legacy will guide the future generations. Prime Minister Modi, in his tribute said, "His principles and ideas will strengthen and speed up the building of an 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) and developed India." While speaking in Kanpur, RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat hailed Ambedkar for his efforts to unite Hindu society and said, "Babasaheb had to face sever hardships in his life. From childhood, he faced discrimination and inequality yet throughout his life he tried to bring the Hindu society together. His commitment to social unity and



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progress is an inspiration to all." The future of India lies with Babasaheb Ambedkar. I think that his thought and mission of as enshrined in the basic principles of the Constitution of India will carry us forward. There is no other way.

I have purposely quoted PM Narendra Modi and RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat with regard to their thinking on Ambedkar and his contribution and also relevance. There have been doubts and misgivings in the past. But we are to bury the hatchet. Ambedkar's life and legacy is clear and laud. The social and political leadership which was



ety on one hand and political rights and space of the socially weaker sections in the polity of India on the other. His struggle through socio-cultural agitations to reform the social ills of the Hindu society in the second half of 1920s, articulation at the Round Table Conferences in London in the early 1930s resulting in the Communal Awards of PM Ramsey Mac Donald in 1932 and the Poona Pact with Mahatma Gandhi, socio-political struggle through the lectures/books Annihilation of Caste to assert the rights of the depressed segments of the society and also to streamline and reform the main stream of the society, laying the foundations of the constitutional framework of through the Act of 1935, discussing and negotiating the socio-political rights of the Dalits with the British Rulers on hand and engaging with the Congress Party and Hindu leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and others on the other. Babasaheb Ambedkar always remained in the thickness of things in the emerging socio-political scenario in the 1940s before and after Independence of India in 1947 – as a Member of the Viceroy's Executive and also as a Member of the Constituent Assembly and as the chief architect of the Constitution of India and later as the first Law Minister of the Independent India. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a nationalist, humanist and a reformer of the highest order to put it in nut-shell till his death (Mahaparnirvan in Buddhist parlance) in 1956. His immense contribution in building the socio-political edifice of the country – as an intellectual in shaping the labour laws, financial and fiscal discipline, women empowerment, developmental projects, social reforms and em-

remained a pariah not only in the socio-political circles irrespective of political parties and their leaderships but also socio-cultural organizations like RSS among others. But Ambedkar's stamp on the Indian landscape was firmly fixed with indelible ink. It is difficult to erase it easily. His legacy is so potent that Ambedkar rises like the proverbial 'phoenix'. I often said and say it again that India is India because of the Constitution of India so ably made and given by our forefathers led by Babasaheb Ambedkar. In spite of enormous difficulties, we the people of India have reached a stage where all of our political and social bigwigs swear by the Constitution given by Babasaheb. It is a matter of great satisfaction. Incidentally, the newspaper of April 14, birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar was overloaded by the greetings by the political and social leaderships terming him – 'symbol of social justice and equality', 'Architect of the Indian Constitution', 'Modi Government is realizing Dr. Ambedkar's vision of an inclusive Bharat' by establishing as a tribute: Panchteerath to honour Babasaheb's legacy – Janam Bhoomi (Mhow in MP), Siksha Boomi (London), Diksha Boomi (Nagpur in Maharashtra), Mahaparnirvan Bhoomi (Delhi) and Chaitya Bhoomi (Mumbai in Maharashtra), Legendry Statesman and a great social reformer. With a view to cut the matter short, it will be suffice to say 'Ambedka arrived and has reached' to steer the caravan of Bharat to become a developed and prosperous country as by 2047 as visualized by PM Narendra Modi. We are on rails as President Droupadi Murmu while paying tributes to

somewhat hostile to Babasaheb Ambedkar and his vision due to some historical reasons, right or wrong, have realized that the things are to be put in their right perspective to transform India into Bharat. We should take them on their face value to bring about Samrasta in the society. There is no gain in harping on the old and the past as to who said and did what. Let us standup for India that is Bharat of today to ensure and secure its future. Let us adopt constitutional methods and approaches to get things done. Let us practice and profess constitutional morality and propriety in implementing the constitution in its letter and spirit as visualized by Babasaheb Ambedkar and others. I conclude with a poetic assertion of AllamaIqbal:  
Hawaida Aaj Apne Zakhm-e-Pinhan Kar Ke Chorun Ga  
Lahoo Ro Ro Ke Mehfil Ko Gulistan Kar Ke Chorun Ga

(I will surely exhibit all my hidden wounds today  
I will surely change assembly to a garden with blood=mixed tears)  
Jalana Hai Mujhe Har Shama-e-Dil Ko Souz-e-Pinhan Se  
Teri Tareek Raaton Mein Charaghan Kar Ke Chorun Ga

(I have to light every heart's candle with hidden pathos  
I will surely create bright illumination in your darkness)  
ParonaAik Hi Tasbeeh Mein In Bikhare DanonKo  
Jo Muskhil Hai, To Iss Mushkil Ki Asan Kar Ke Chorun Ga

(If stringing these scattered pearls in a single rosary  
Is difficult, I will surely make this difficult task easy)

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