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Weekly

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Remembering Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his Birth Anniversary – April 14, 2021

Prem Kumar Chumber (Editor-in-Chief)
Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weekly Newspapers



Let me join our all-esteemed readers, contributors and sympathizers in paying floral tribute to Boddhisattva Bharat Ratan Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on the auspicious day of his 130th Birth Anniversary. Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar devoted his whole life in learning, cultivating and disseminating the essence of social democracy, beginning from the grassroots, for building an egalitarian social, political and economic order free from the constraints of religious compartmentalization and caste-based social segmentations. He has been fondly remembered not only in Bharat but the entire world over for his strictly adhering to the principles of democratic struggle within the sovereign constitutional ways and deep

concern for the lowest of the low and poor people. He earned highest available degrees of higher education from the best of the universities in India, the United States of America, and United Kingdom. He adopted legal-constitutional methods to win the long-denied rights of the hapless and socially excluded sections of the society and made them aware of their rights by establishing three newspapers (Mook Nayak, Janata and Prabudh Bharat), and organized them by founding three political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation, Republican Party of India). Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar was a true democrat, great organizer, erudite scholar, eloquent speaker, conscientious philosopher, brilliant parliamentarian, audacious administrator and a thoroughly fine human being. He served the nation at various top offices but never compromised with the integrity and cause of poor people and egalitarian principles of social order based of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity! His contribution as the Chief-architect of the constitution of Independent India, advocate of women rights, laborers and the savior of the lowest of the low and staunch defender of social democratic values would be remembered fondly for the times to come.

Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum also fondly remember 13 April; on this day in 1699, Tenth Master Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji baptized the five beloved (Punj Pyare) at Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh Ji infused a new spirit in them - the spirit of freedom, equality, justice - and put to an end for all times the oppressive social system of caste-based binaries of purity and pollution. *Manas Kee Jaat Sabhe Akay Pehchanbo - Equality of Mankind. We wish to all Very Very Happy Khalsa Sathapan day and Happy Vaisakhi!*

It is matter of great honour and pleasure for us to share with our esteemed readers, contributors and sympathizers that with your continuous support and encouragement, Ambedkar Times (English Weekly) has entered its 13th year of uninterrupted publication on March 15, 2021, and Desh Doaba (Punjabi Weekly) its 10th year of onward journey in the service of society. Ambedkar Times, named after Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and dedicated to Sahib Kanshi Ram, reminds us the golden time spent by Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at the Columbia University (New York) that exposed him to the basic tenets, philosophy and the practice of true democracy. After reaching Bharat, Babasaheb developed a great movement for the restitution of social democracy at the grassroots. Desh Doaba, named after Doaba Punjab, reminds us of our roots and the great sacrifices made by the sons of the soil for the liberation of our land from the British Raj. The inhabitants of Doaba Punjab played a significant role in the Ghadar Lehar and the subsequent Babbar Akali Lehar. Desh Doaba weekly has been dedicated to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, who arrived in the United States of America in 1909 and was among the forerunners of the Ghadar movement, and after reaching India in 1925 founded the Ad Dharm movement for the emancipation and empowerment of the Scheduled Castes. His contribution towards the mission of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar is well known during the London Round Table Conferences.

Once again, the Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum join with our esteemed readers, contributors and sympathizers in fondly remembering Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his birth anniversary – April 14, 2021.

Tribute to Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his 130th Birth Anniversary

The central theme of the teachings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar lies in his philosophy of social democracy. He was of the firm views that political freedom of India will remain incomplete unless it is buttressed by social and economic equality. One man, one vote and one value - the signpost of political democracy - will fail to realise its essence in Independent India in the presence of caste-based boundaries of social segregation and the resultant dominant structures of social oppression, economic exploitation and political marginalization. Caste, he stipulated, negates equality. It is antithetical to very idea and phenomenon of democracy. Caste divides not only labour but also labourers; and creates deep social fissures of political apa-

order. He organized long temple satyagrahas and other peaceful protests. Finally, he embraced Buddhism as he articulated in his classic - Buddha and his Dhamma - published posthumously.

D r . A m b e d k a r wanted his people to know about the possible reasons behind their hard life conditions and political marginalization. His slogan: edu-



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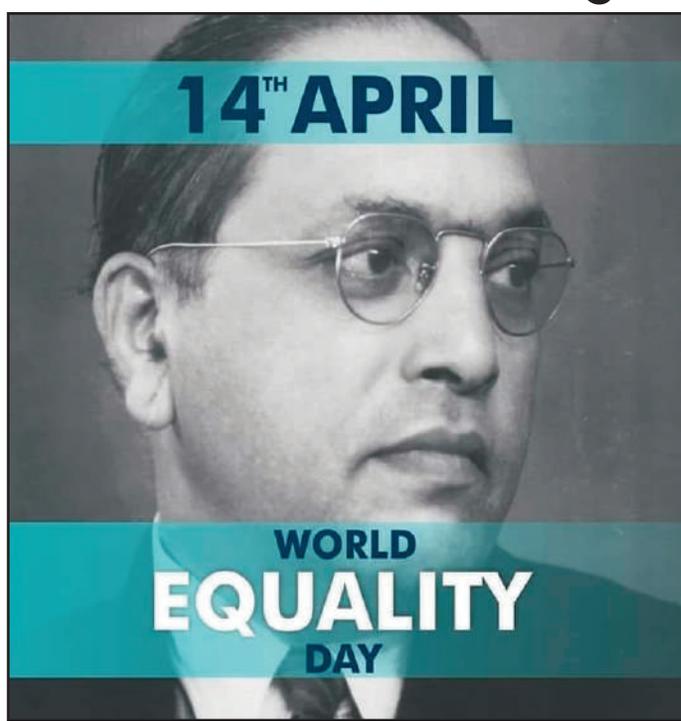
During Tribute to Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar at a Seminar (GCAMC, Abohar, Feb 24, 2015)
From left to right: Satisk K. Sharma, K.C. Sulekh, M. Dwivedi, Prakash Ambedkar (Grandson of Dr. Ambedkar), Neeraj Kumar, Ronki Ram P.S. Verma and the Convener of the Seminar

thy that eventually leads to invisible islands of dissension and structural violence. The virulence of caste-based social order hampers the progressive growth of the idea of a true nation which the protagonists of Indian renaissance honed so meticulously in their communitarian philosophical discourses over the long span of late nineteenth and the twentieth century freedom movement of India. Dr. Ambedkar views on caste and its eradication for building social egalitarian order and thereupon inter-community-faith based nationalism, resembles many of his contemporaries and predecessors who had the opportunity to become familiar with the evolving democratic world of Europe and North America. Like Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Ambedkar underlined the utmost importance of social reforms to build democracy on strong footing in independent India. He made all efforts to improve upon the social set up within the mainstream Hindu

cate, agitate and organize aimed at awakening people about their social constraints and conditions so that they can critically think about them (agitate) and make efforts to get organize themselves for building a new India free from the binaries of high and low and social exclusion. His was a unique approach from below towards nation building in India. His nationalism was all inclusive. It ensures communal harmony and equal participation to all sections of society irrespective of caste creed, class, region, and language. His freedom mantra - liberty, equality and fraternity - clearly elaborates that fraternity without equality would be an empty word. And without fraternity liberty is a mirage. It is in this crucial context that we need to re-read Ambedkar at present when not only we alone in Asia but the whole world has been grappling with Covid and the inequitable consequences of the much talked about neo-liberal economic regimes having its bearings on the victims of the pandemic!

Growing International Recognition of Babasaheb Ambedkar

In the run up to the forthcoming birth anniversary of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar on April 14, international recognition of the greatest son of India is growing by the every passing year. It is a matter of great satisfaction to the followers of millions and millions of followers of the icon, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, both in India and abroad and the international community at large yearning for the equitable world order. The latest in the series is a happy development – Province of British Columbia of Canada in a proclamation

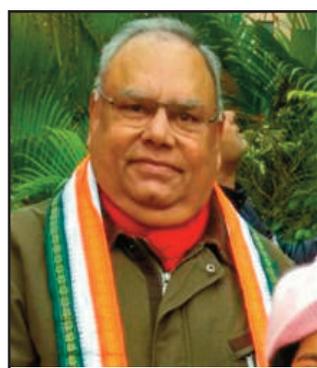


on April 1, 2021 has declared April 14 as "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Day of Equality. The timely gesture of an im-

portant province of Canada has been much appreciated and rightly so. The Administration of British Columbia Province of Canada under the stewardship of Lt. Governor Janet Austin deserves full marks and hearty congratulations on upholding the lofty ideals of "equality and fraternity" in the multi-racial and multicultural society of British Columbia and Canada. It is a matter of gratification to add that last year in April, 2020 yet another city of Burnaby of Canada took the lead in honouring the champion of equality, fraternity and liberty, Babasaheb Ambedkar. In this regard, it

may not be out of place to thank and congratulate our friends in Chetna Association of Canada namely Jai Birdi, Harmesh Chander, Manjit Bains, Surjit Bains among others for their untiring efforts in promoting the idea and proposal of April 14 as International Day of Equality currently lying with the Government of India since June, 2015. It is a matter of satisfaction for me, as the Chair person of the Chetna Association's Committee on International Day of Equality, to see the proposal being accepted in foreign lands while my own government back home in India is still sitting tight. Let it be but we

ing to the ruling dispensation in New Delhi namely; Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot, MOS Som Parkash, MOS Ramdass Athawale, MOS Rattan Lal Kataria and MPs Hans Raj Hans, Ram Shankar Katheria, Sunita Duggal, Dushyant Gautam and also Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes Vijay Sampla with the hope that they would stand up and pay attention to this important proposal on International Day of Equality. It goes without saying that it will add to India's international standing as 'Soft Power' as International Day of Yoga and International Day of Non-violence did in the recent past besides contributing to millennium goals of the UN in establishing a just and equitable world order. It will be much appreciated if the government of India understands the importance of the proposal, the sooner the better. The followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar both in India



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940

International Day of Equality. I wrote to you on the proposal in this regard, resting with MEA since June, 2015, vide my letters dated April 15 and September 13, 2020 (Copies enclosed for ready reference) but till date no decision appears to be in sight. The next anniversary of the great leader will be celebrated in the coming days and I thought of reminding you and soliciting your kind attention and support to the proposal on International Day of Equality.

Meanwhile, I am confident,

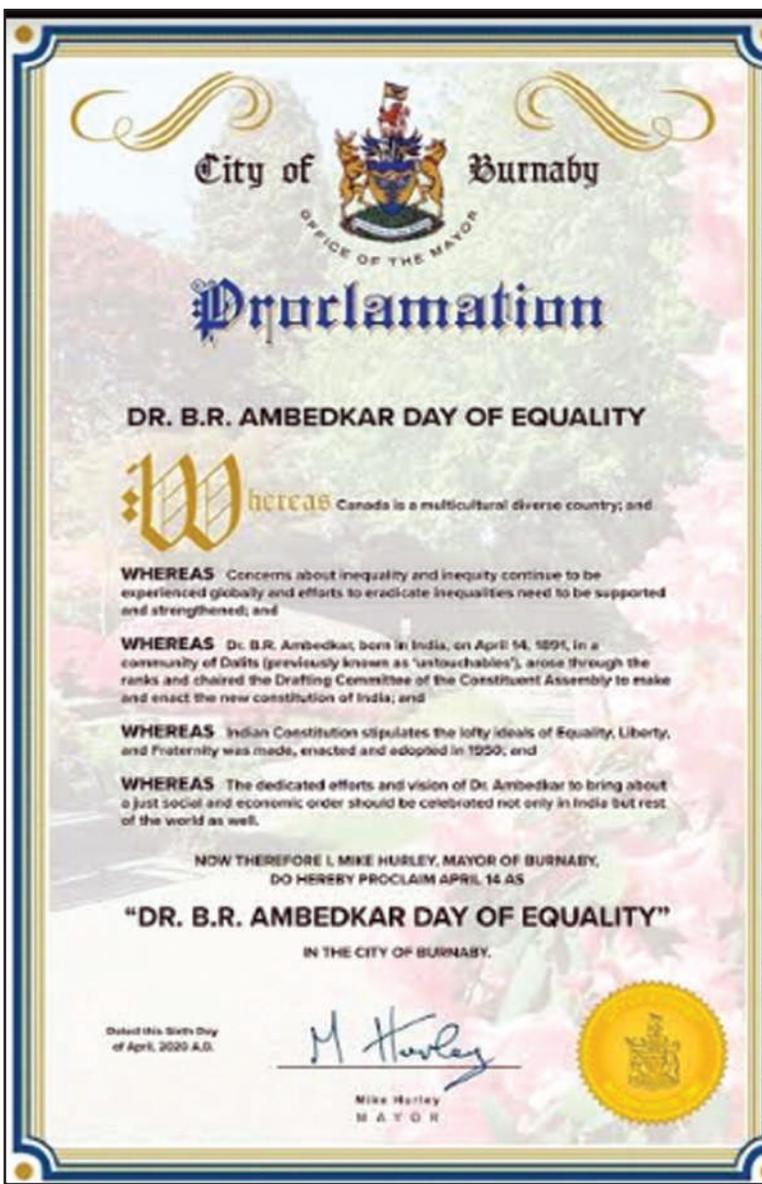
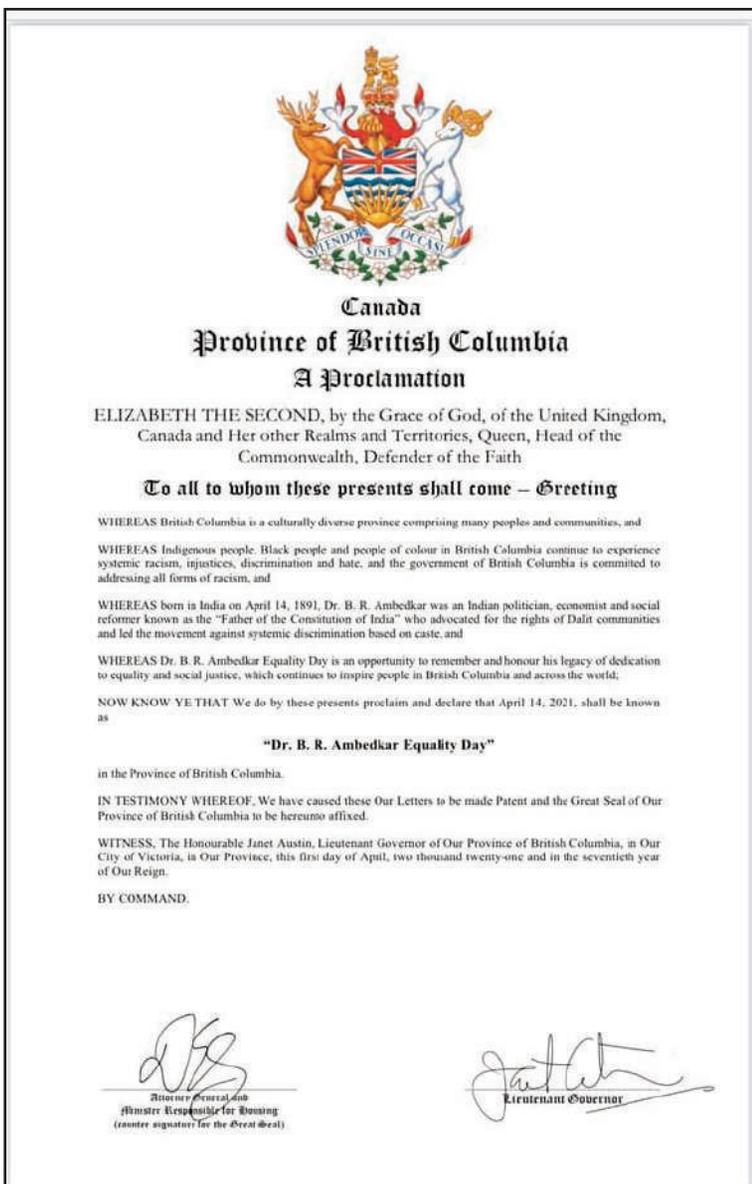
Sir, April 14 will be observed and celebrated appropriately with a befitting function at the UN in New York, as usual since April, 2016 when GOI, and rightly so, decided to observe 125th anniversary of one of the greatest sons of India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

You are fully aware, Sir, if this proposal is accepted and taken up at the UN, it will not only provide a sense of recognition to the cause dear to the weaker sections of the society in India but also add to the stature of India's international standing as did by International Day of Non-Violence and International Yoga Day.

Kindly look into this and take appropriate action which will be appreciated by millions and millions followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar in India and abroad and also the international community yearning for 'Equality'.

With personal regards,

Yours truly,
(Ramesh Chander)



for long. After the Burnaby Proclamation last year, I wrote and reminded EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar on April 15 followed by a reminder on September 13. I also tried to engage other stakeholders in this regard both in India and abroad. The result is the latest development in British Columbia, yet another milestone in our journey to realize our goal – April 14 as International Day of Equality. I have written yet another letter to EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar on April 1, 2021 (Text appended below) under intimation to PM Narendra Modi and important Ministers and MPs belong-

and abroad are fully alive and awakened to the situation and fully determined to carry forward the mission and philosophy of their icon Babasaheb to further heights for the benefit and advantage of our beloved India and the international community at large.

Appendix
Text of the letter dated April 1, 2021 to EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar:
April 1, 2021

Respected Sir,

Kindly allow me to revisit the subject of April 14, birth anniversary of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar, as the

Dr. S. Jaishankar,
Minister of External Affairs,
South Block, New Delhi

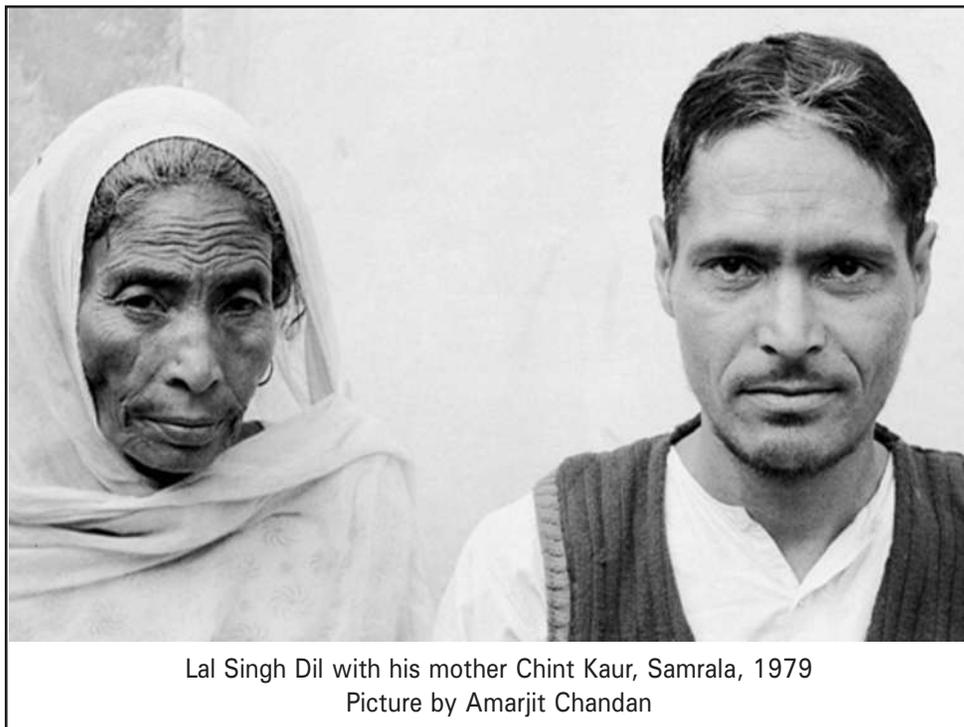
Lal Singh Dil: Voice of the Voiceless

Lal Singh Dil (April 11, 1943 – August 14, 2007), revolutionary poet, left an indelible mark through his poetry on the struggle for equality, social justice and freedom that began in late 1960s in Punjab, popularly known as Naxalite lehar (movement). He was born at his maternal village, Ghungrali Sikhān, near Samrala, a small town in Punjab on the Chandigarh-Ludhiana highway. He belonged to a Dalit family, Ramdassia Chamār (an ex-untouchable community of tanners). Dalits were mostly deprived of agricultural land and other sources of livelihood. Like other community members, the mainstay of Dil's family was manual labour on the agricultural lands of their village farmers. During off-seasons, landless Dalits earn their livelihood through various forms of manual wage works, such as labouring at construction sites or other manual-intensive daily-wage work. His father Raunqi Ram worked as a daily wager throughout his life. During a conversation with Gayatri Rajwade, Dil recalled a time when his grandmother used to sit and grind wheat the whole day for a single paisa. And in Dil's own words, "[a]t the end of the day, we would dust our clothes, collect the wheat stuck on our clothes and mix that with water and drink it before sleeping" (based on forwarded (April 7, 2021) email from Nirupama Dutt to Amarjit Chandan dated August 13, 2007).

Despite extreme poverty at home, Dil's mother Chint Kaur sent him to school at Samrala. The atmosphere at the school was not very congenial to Dil. He wrote: "When I graduated to the higher classes, I started picking up some skills which thrilled me. I especially liked to trace out a picture and then shade it. I traced an image of Ravidas Bhagat, which showed him standing. Below the image was a pair of shoes and some cobbler's tools. The teacher in charge of the class was intrigued looking at the drawing and then laughed at it with disdain that was shared by the students. I brought the picture home in my satchel." (Simran Kaler available at: <https://poetlalsinghdil.wordpress.com/category/simran-kaler/> accessed on April 8, 2021). Against all odds, Dil became the first matric qualified member of his clan. His mother sold her ear-rings to enable him to reach college to become a schoolteacher. He studied for a year in A.S. College, Khanna, close to his hometown. Thereafter, he got enrolled in Junior Teachers' Training course at SHG College in Behlolpur, again near his hometown, but had to leave after two years without completing the course. He also joined a Gyani, an honours course in Punjabi literature, but again had to quit without completing it. From his school days, Dil had to support his studies along with by working part-time as a manual wage labourer/herder as well as providing tuition; this was likely one of the main reasons behind the repeated

failures to complete several study courses which he had joined after successfully qualifying in the matriculation examination.

Along with extreme poverty, Dil also experienced social exclusion and caste-based oppression during different intervals in his life. He recalled various instances of such bitter experiences in his autobiography *Dastan* (The Story). How as a small boy of five or six, he was whip-lashed and driven out of a landowner's fields in his village for daring to bathe at his well was just one such instance which expressed the gruesome scale of the prevalence of caste-based oppression in a society that otherwise boast of its casteless social



Lal Singh Dil with his mother Chint Kaur, Samrala, 1979
Picture by Amarjit Chandan

order. He also narrated how a comrade, a senior dominant caste writer, took away a jug of water when he tried to reach it at a party meeting, and how he felt deeply humiliated to learn that the mother of his female classmate, whom he was very fond of, had 'purified' the tumbler in which he had given tea, by casting it in the fire of the household hearth. Amarjit Chandan, a close comrade of Dil, writes in his "A Complete Story of an Incomplete Journey", an introduction to the *Dastan*, how Dil had suffered and exposed graphically the prevalence of the arrogance of caste superiority in his locality, at his school, and in the Naxalite organizations and even in police custody.

Though Dil was forced to withdraw from his studies, he continued to reflect critically on his surroundings. He continued to capture subtle nuances of the exploitative system around him till his last moment. The medium that he chose to give expression to his experiences and observations during his struggleful life was the subtlety of poetry. He was one of the most popular poets of the Naxalite movement in East Punjab, with a gravitas to match. As narrated in his autobiography, Lal Singh Dil was subjected to many inhuman tortures during police custody, and remained in jail for a long period of time. It was during his imprison-

ment that his first collection of radical poetry entitled *Satluji di Hava* (The Satluji Breeze) was published in 1971. His poetry immediately became an icon of the revolutionary struggle in Punjab as well as of the sorrows and sufferings of the poor and Dalits in the state.

After his release from the jail, Dil went underground where he spent about 15 years of his active life. He did all sorts of labour to keep himself and his struggle going on. He did not ask any help from any quarter. During free time from his hard manual labour, he continued to write and penned two more books: *Bahut Sāre Suraj* (So Many Suns), 1982; *Satthar* (A Sheaf), 1997; and an autobiography *Dastān*. His entire poetry is available in a

collection entitled *Naglok* (The World of the Nagas) published in 1998 and 2008. Nagas were the sons of the soil. It is commonly believed that Nagas were snake worshippers and the sovereign rulers of their land before the alleged arrival of the alien Aryans. He talked about them nostalgically in some of his poems. Two of them – *Sham da Rung* (The Shades of Evening) and *Lamma Larra* (The Long Caravan) are reproduced below. A narrated long poem called *Billa Aj Phir Aaya* (Billa Visited Again Today) was published posthumously in 2009.

Dil had started writing poetry at his early age, while he was still studying at school. That some of his poems were published in reputed vernacular magazines like *Preetlari*, *Nagmani* and *Lakeer*, even before the publication of *Satluji di Hava* (The Satluji Breeze) in 1971, his maiden collection of poetry, proved his hold over intricacies of poetry writing. His life and poetry, writes Nirupama Dutt, a writer and journalist: "... became grist to the mill of revolutionary politics, which worked happily for Dil, as he envisioned a new order free of caste and creed" (Scroll.in, 23 June 2019. Available at: <https://scroll.in/article/927571/i-saw-how-he-sought-to-break-the-chains-of-caste-nirupama-dutt-on-translating-lal-singh-dil> accessed on April 7, 2021).

Though familiar with Dil's poetry earlier, Nirupama came to know about the man himself only in the 1990s, when Dil returned to Samrala after spending many years out of Punjab (Scroll.in, 23 June 2019). By that time the spring thunder

was almost over and many of the activists had resumed their normal course of life. Some of them had settled into respectable positions in the higher echelons of government, media, academic and

even business. A few of them settled abroad. However, for Comrade Dil, the only refuge was his mud house in his caste ghetto at Samrala, and the citadel of his thoughts and philosophy; he was quintessentially a gyan yogi. He was a lonely fellow, Gulzar Mohammad Gorla, one of the closest associates of Dil in Samrala, told me during an informal conversation a few days after his passing away. He also mentioned that with the financial support from some of his comrades abroad, Dil opened a small tea-stall near the bus terminal close to his home in Samrala. It was also during this time that Dil used to spend long periods in solitude in the cremation grounds of his hometown for reasons best known to him. Nirupama met him at this stage, and since then she has been writing intermittently about Dil in newspapers and journals.

After Dil's death in 2007, Nirupama translated his autobiography and selected poetry that introduced him widely beyond his Punjabi speaking region. In 2017, Trilok Chand Ghai, an academic of Delhi University, translated 100 poems of Dil, entitled *Lal Singh Dil: Selected Poems – exclusion, deprivation and nothingness / translated from Punjabi* (Delhi: LG Publishers). Five of these poems were published in the reputed translation magazine MPT (Modern Poetry in Translation), 3 (18) – *Transitions*, Oxford UK, 2012, and two of them were reproduced in MPT's golden jubilee anniversary publication *Centres of Cataclysm*, Blood Axe Books in 2016. Writing about Ghai's translation David Constantine, poet editor, MPT observed 'And Trilok Chand Ghai's English serves that cause. Translators carry fraternity across the frontiers of space and time. Again and again, in these translations, there is a tone, an accent, a phrase as in music, that will touch readers of English as the poet himself does through his mother tongue.' Harbhajan Singh, Punjabi poet and critic expressing his opinion about Dil's poetry writes: 'These poems don't give us joy; they shame us. The poems that give us pleasure work to stabilize the already established values. The shaming poems uproot a person from his fixed position and challenge him to renew himself.' On the same back cover flap of the book, Amarjit Chandan wrote: 'Contemplating the word images of the people portrayed by Lal one is reminded of Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings'. His poetry is full of images of hard life, poverty, isolation, struggle, grief for the hapless, and faith in the victory of the toiling people. He wrote extensively on the *Ghandilasand Tapprivasi* (ever roaming vagrants

(Contd. on next page)



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Lal Singh Dil: Voice of the Voiceless

(Continue from page 3)

(itinerants) and fuel-gatherer nomad girls. Below are reproduced two of his poems Sham da Rung (*The Shades of Evening*) and Lamma Larra (*The Long Caravan*) that crisply depict the life of the *Ghandilasand Tapprivasi*:

The Shades of Evening

*The shades of evening like many before
The paths are heading for settlements
The lake turns back from offices
thrown out of work
The lake is drinking its thirst
Some city has set off on the road to
the village
Throwing off all wages someone is
leaving*

*Dogs are dear to young men
fancying loving faces in palaces
is not for them*

*These starving ones have left behind
yet another's land*

The long caravan moves on

His poetry valiantly confronted the deeply entrenched caste-based social exclusion and other variants of oppressive dominant social structures. Dil sarcastically touched the subtle nerve of caste that followed its victims even after death in his often quoted poem *Zāt* (Caste) reproduced below:

Caste

*You love me, do you?
Even though you belong to another*

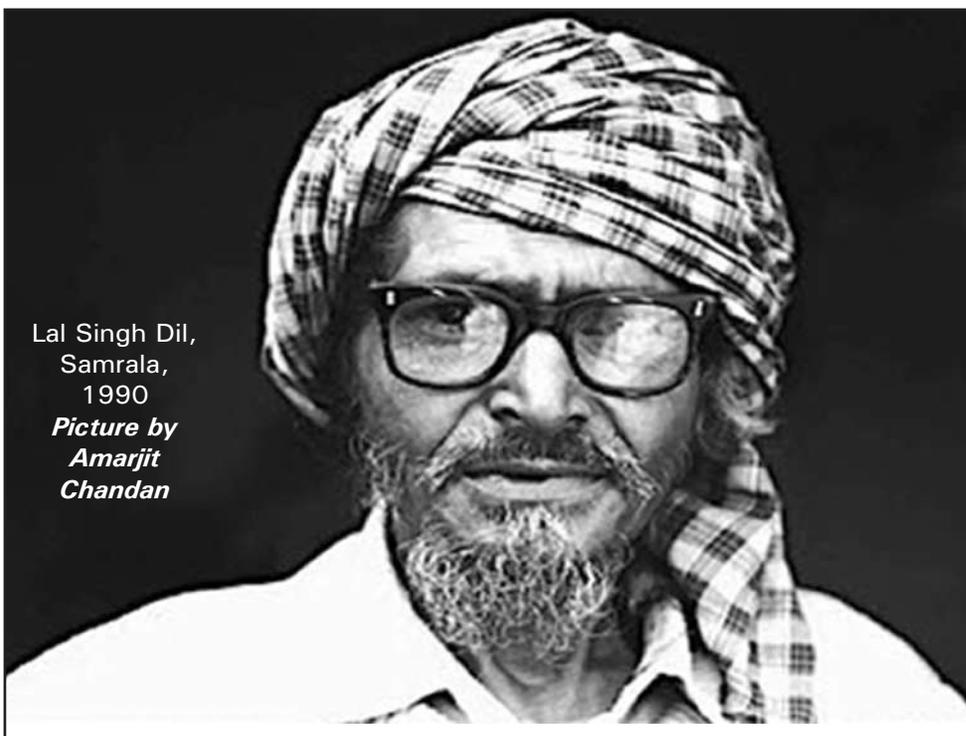
Dil was a humble and visionary poet never hankered after fame, and was happy to work incognito. He was often present in progressive programmes in different parts of the state, but never made efforts to make his presence felt. I vividly remember him once standing so unassumingly on a side of the entrance to the seminar hall of Amardeep Singh Shergill memorial College, Mukandpur (SBS Nagar, Punjab). Neither did he made any gesture nor did any of the visiting dignitaries take notice of him. One of the participants whom I was accompanying, conveyed this to me about him. Dil used to

Available at <https://scroll.in/article/927571/i-saw-how-he-sought-to-break-the-chains-of-caste-nirupama-dutt-on-translating-lal-singh-dil> accessed on April 7, 2021).

What distinguished Lal Singh Dil from his contemporary revolutionary poets was his sole concern not only for the lowest of the low, but also for those who were severely marginalised and thrown out of the society in toto, and forced to live vigrant life. He deeply sympathised with the landless manual workers, daily wagers, nomadic men and women, especially the black cloth-donning girls who gathered fuel to keep



From left: Lal Singh Dil, Amarjit Chandan and Prem Parkash, Samrala.



Lal Singh Dil,
Samrala,
1990
Picture by
Amarjit
Chandan

*Someone comes wiping on his dhoti
the blood of weak animals on his goad
The shades of evening like many before*

The Long Caravan

*Leaving behind another's land
Loaded with the humiliation of rebukes
the long caravan moves on
along with the lengthening
shadows of evening
Children on donkeys' backs,
fathers cradling dogs in their arms
Mothers carrying cauldrons
on their backs
their children sleeping in those cauldrons
The long caravan moves on
carrying on their shoulders
the bamboo of their huts
Who are these
starving Aryans
which India's land
are they headed to occupy*

*caste. But do you know
Our elders do not even cremate their
dead at the same place*

His poetry also boldly communicated the vivid expression of his verbal revolt against the oppressive dominant social structures. Dil audaciously underlined the presence of rebellion beneath the repression in another widely lauded poem *Shabad* (Words):

Words

*Words have been uttered long before
us,
And for long after us,
Chop off every tongue if you can,
But the words have still been uttered*

(Translated from the Punjabi by Nirupama Dutt. Available at: <https://parchanve.wordpress.com/category/authors/lal-singh-dil/> accessed on April 8, 2021).

keep himself busy in his own unique way and was never heard indulging in self-propagation as well as complaining about his personal concerns.

He was reticent to the core, but at the same time there existed a volcano of revolutionary thoughts and ideals within his frail physical frame. He wanted to see radical political transformation during his lifetime, and was impatient to put an end to the sufferings of those considered the lowest of the low. Nirupama said that 'Dil was looking for the revolution that would break all shackles. In his poetry he became the sensitive spurned child and engaged with god, empowered as he was by hopes of thundering spring.' How sweet are these words dedicated to god. I wish my last words would be, 'I have complete faith in you!' I want to steal this line and dedicate it to the Revolution' (Scroll.in, 23 June 2019.

the fire burning in the hearths outside their thatched huts under the open blue sky.

Though he was not able to continue his study and reach higher education, his deep association with the existential harsh situations at the grassroots level taught him precious lessons about the varied dimensions of life – his bitter experiences at school and college, in the Naxalite movement, police custody, and day-to-day social interaction across religions, imbued and enriched his poetry with subtle nuances, anecdotes, signs and symbols, which enabled readers to see beyond the immediate and catch a glimpse, however fleeting, of life as seen through very different eyes, the eyes of the oppressed and the wretched of this earth. Dil's poetry, in fact, is the voice of the voiceless and the cradle of struggle for an egalitarian social order.



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Goodie Takhar, PhD

UNPUBLISHED PREFACE THE BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA

Source Courtesy: Columbia University
www.columbia.edu

April 6, 1956

[Text provided by Eleanor Zelliot,
as prepared by Vasant Moon]

A question is always asked to me: how I happen[ed] to take such [a] high degree of education. Another question is being asked: why I am inclined towards Buddhism. These questions are asked because I was born in a community known in India as the "Untouchables." This preface is not the place for answering the first question. But this preface may be the place for answering the second question.

The direct answer to this question is that I regard the Buddha's Dhamma to be the best. No religion can be compared to it. If a modern man who knows science must have a religion, the only religion he can have is the Religion of the Buddha. This conviction has grown in me after thirty-five years of close study of all religions.

How I was led to study Buddhism is another story. It may be interesting for the reader to know. This is how it happened.

My father was a military officer, but at the same time a very religious person. He brought me up under a strict discipline. From my early age I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi, though his father was Ramanandi. As such, he did not believe in Murti Puja (Idol Worship), and yet he performed Ganapati Puja--of course for our sake, but I did not like it. He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house to hear the Katha. This went on for a long number of years.

The year I passed the English Fourth Standard Examination, my community people wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a public meeting to congratulate me. Compared to the state of education in other communities, this was hardly an occasion for celebration. But it was felt by the organisers that I was the first boy in my community to reach this stage; they thought that I had reached a great height. They went to my father to ask for his permission. My father flatly refused, saying that such a thing would inflate the boy's head; after all, he has only passed an examination and done nothing more. Those who wanted to celebrate the event were greatly disappointed. They, however, did not give way. They went to Dada Keluskar, a personal friend of my father, and asked him to intervene. He agreed. After a little argumentation, my father yielded, and the meeting was held. Dada Keluskar presided. He was a literary person of his time. At the end of his address he gave me as a gift a copy of his book on the life of the Buddha, which he had written for the Baroda Sayajirao Oriental Series. I read the book with great interest, and was greatly impressed and moved by it.

I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist lit-

erature. After this, I was determined to ask my father this question. One day I did. I asked my father why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and repeated the stories of the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "You must not ask such silly questions. You are only boys; you must do as you are told." My father was a Roman Patri-



arch, and exercised most extensive Patria Pretestas over his children. I alone could take a little liberty with him, and that was because my mother had died in my childhood, leaving me to the care of my auntie.

So after some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had evidently prepared himself for a reply. He said, "The reason why I ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana is this: we belong to the Untouchables, and you are likely to develop an inferiority complex, which is natural. The value of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana lies in removing this inferiority complex. See Drona and Karna--they were small men, but to what heights they rose! Look at Valmiki--he was a Koli, but he became the author of [the] Ramayana. It is for removing this inferiority complex that I

ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana."

I could see that there was some force in my father's argument. But I was not satisfied. I told my father that I did not like any of the figures in [the] Mahabharata. I said, "I do not like Bhishma and Drona, nor Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did quite the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. His life is nothing but a series of frauds. Equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine

was the only religion which a society awakened by science could accept, and without which it would perish. I also pointed out that for the modern world Buddhism was the only religion which it must have to save itself. That Buddhism makes [a] slow advance is due to the fact that its literature is so vast that no one can read the whole of it. That it has no such thing as a bible, as the Christians have, is its greatest handicap. On the publication of this article, I received many calls, written and oral, to write such a book. It is in response to these calls that I have undertaken the task.

To disarm all criticism I would like to make it clear that I claim no originality for the book. It is a compilation and assembly plant. The material has been gathered from various books. I would particularly like to mention Ashvaghosha's Buddhavita [= Budhacharita], whose poetry no one can excel. In the narrative of certain events I have even borrowed his language.

The only originality that I can claim in [=is] the order of presentation of the topics, in which I have tried to introduce simplicity and clarity. There are certain matters which give headache[s] to the student of Buddhism. I have dealt with them in the Introduction.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to those who have been helpful to me. I am very grateful to Mr. Nanak Chand Rattua of Village Sakrulli and Mr. Parkash Chand of Village Nangal Khurd in the district of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) for the burden they have taken upon themselves to type out the manuscript. They have done it several times. Shri Nanak Chand Rattu took special pains and put in very hard labour in accomplishing this great task. He did the whole work of typing etc. very willingly and without caring for his health and [=or] any sort of remuneration. Both Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Mr. Parkash Chand did their job as a token of their greatest love and affection towards me. Their labours can hardly be repaid. I am very much grateful to them.

When I took up the task of composing the book I was ill, and [I] am still ill. During these five years there were many ups and downs in my health. At some stages my condition had become so critical that doctors talked of me as a dying flame. The successful rekindling of this dying flame is due to the medical skill of my wife and Dr. Malvankar.

They alone have helped me to complete the work. I am also thankful to Mr. M. B. Chitnis, who took [a] special interest in correcting [the] proof and to go [=in going] through the whole book.

I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism. The other books are: (i) Buddha and Karl Marx; and (ii) Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.

B. R. Ambedkar
26 Alipur Road, Delhi
6-4-56

his conduct in the Sarupnakha [= Shurpanakha] episode [and] in the Vali Sugriva episode, and his beastly behaviour towards Sita." My father was silent, and made no reply. He knew that there was a revolt.

This is how I turned to the Buddha, with the help of the book given to me by Dada Keluskar. It was not with an empty mind that I went to the Buddha at that early age.

I had a background, and in reading the Buddhist Lore I could always compare and contrast. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and His Dhamma.

The urge to write this book has a different origin. In 1951 the Editor of the Mahabodhi Society's Journal of Calcutta asked me to write an article for the Vaishak Number. In that article I argued that the Buddha's Religion

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 through. 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 greatness.

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 1915 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 Ghadar Party, whom Babu M.R. Mugowalia remembered as "Godha" sent the five to Los Angeles, where they boarded an intermediary boat, after depositing all of their personal identifications with "Godha", for the rest of the journey's saga. Mangu Ram would be known by a pseudonym, "Nizamuddin".

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

It is after 1925, that his career as a crusader against untouchability and casteism began. As he travelled from Ceylon to Punjab through Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Sitara, 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 visited the Meenakshi Temple, he was told to be careful not to touch Achhut (Untouchables) since they assumed by his dress that he was of a decent caste. By the time Babu M.R. Mugowalia had reached the Punjab, he was convinced that there was need for social change.

Babu M.R. Mugowalia wrote to the Ghadar Party headquarters in

San Francisco about the difficult conditions of the Untouchables in India. He wrote them that their freedom 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 (Untouchables), 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 of Indian Society - the then Untouchables.

When he started his task of social reform i.e. establishing schools for untouchables 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 Punjab of those days. It must be remembered that Punjab was already witnessing political upheaval and each class was trying to reap at political harvesting. Babu Mangu Ram 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's 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 M.R. Mugowalia and the early leaders of the Ad-Dharma perceived their first task to be the creation of a new religion. In their initial meetings, even before they developed an organisational structure, they labored over a basic ideological theme upon which they could build a system of religious ideas and symbols. Its central motive was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a qaum, a distinct religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and that the qaum had existed from time immemorial. It was a myth of 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, "The untouchables have their powers: communal pride (qaumiat), religion (mazhab), and organisation (mazlis)". 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 political in a converted way. The Ad-Dharma, under the dynamic leadership of a 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 protest 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 a followers of new religion. In 1931 A.D. census, almost half a million of them registered as "Ad-Dharmi" rather than Hindus or Muslim or Sikh. Mr. Mark Juergensmeyer writes as, "Later in the 1930, their political influence turned towards electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with the Congress. 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-Dharmis 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 groups carried no inherent mark of judgment 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 humanist his vision of the world was near to rationalist view of the universe (we can even say 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 the universe and equality of all men are echoed in

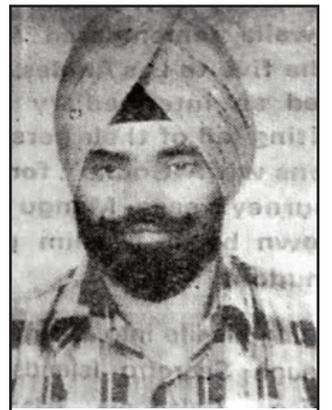
the Ad-Dharma Mandali (1926-1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played a big role. It reads as follows:

"Nature (Qudrat Ka Mela) created human beings from original source (Adi) at the time that it created all beings in the earth. The knowledge of moral behaviour (karm-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 or low caste. God (Ishwar) was meditating; 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, 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 Adi-Purkh for the divine - literally "the originator", or the "Original Being". All these designations, although they are theistic terms, are impersonal in intent.

He, all his life, stood like a rock against social evils such as untouchability, caste-system, women slavery, exploitation 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 a 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 - patriot, social revolutionary, a successful strategist and, above all, a humanist.

Courtesy: Souvenir Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia 99th Birth Anniversary published by MR. C. L. Chumber



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



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-

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 Rajniti aur Sanghathan." (Dalit Politics and Organisations)

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

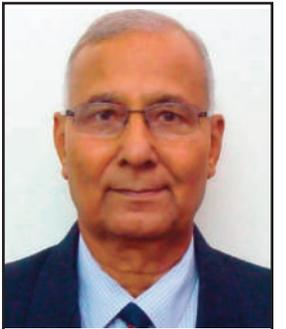
uled Castes and Tribes - VIII Plan' set up by the Government of India and also a member of Ambedkar Centenary Committee of the Government of India. Mr. Das has written many books in Urdu, English and

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-ParichayEk 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 BauddhDhammkapurjagrathasamasyayen. 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."

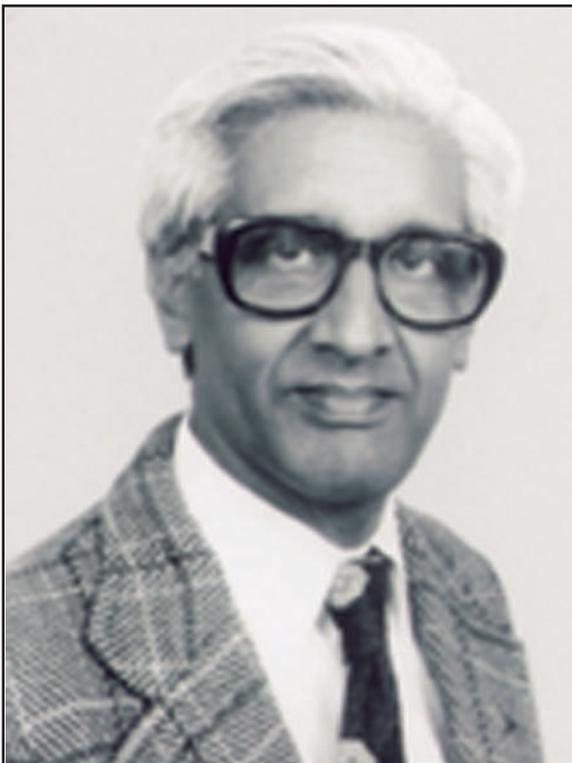
Mr. Das has toured almost the whole of India to study the problems of Hindu-Muslim riots, religious conflicts, atrocities committed on the Untouchables and tribal people, with the group 'Threat to Diversity', 'Swaraj MuktiMorcha and as Chairman, Samata Sainik Dal.' He is also the founder President of "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

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Reader and Deputy Director



Bhagwan Das: A Profile
(23.04.1927 -18.11.2010)

Indian State needs to shed its colonial mindset: Farmers know what is good for them, listen to them, don't teach them

India lives in its village'. It was Mahatma Gandhi who popularised this image and identity of India. Most of his contemporaries agreed with him. Even B.R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, who disagreed with Gandhi on the social composition of the village, or the path that India ought to choose for its economic growth/development, nearly completely accepted the underlying demographic claim made in this statement. This was despite the fact that a good number of Indians had, in fact, lived in urban settlements, almost for ever. At the time of India's Independence, urban Indians made for nearly 15 percent (approximately 300 million) of the total population. However, in popular nationalist common-sense, city dwellers did not represent the "real" India. For Gandhi, urban residents were not only a demographic minority, but were also "inauthentic" Indians. Village was where the soul of India lived. Gandhi, also went much further than this. He also founded his theory of India's colonization and its freedom around the idea of the 'village'. 'City', for him, accompanied western civilizational influence and thus was a symbol and signifier of colonization, both of mind and space. In his view, therefore, it symbolised moral corruption. India's true independence could only be through the recovery of its "lost" self, the village.

Gandhi was obviously being ideological in his celebration of the village life. He would certainly have known that cities had been a part of Indian life even much before the British landed on the western coast. He was himself not born in a village and his family had perhaps always been urban. So was the case with Nehru. However, there were serious issues with Gandhi's advocacy of 'village as India'. As Ambedkar had rightly

pointed out, his idea of the village as a cohesive and harmonious community had been borrowed from the British colonial administrator, Charles Metcalfe. For the colonial rulers, India was a land of 'village republics', small, isolated, and independent of outside influence. According to them, the Indian villages had seen no change or dynamism, for centuries, in their internal social and economic organization.

As Bernard Cohn had famously argued, such a notion, or construct, of India as a land of village republics had been very useful for the British rulers. It helped legitimize their colonization of India. They were here to help us because, in order to change, we needed an external agency. As the colonial and the earlier orientalist constructs had told the world, the Indians, stuck inside their tiny villages, were incapable of changing on their own, and moving on the path of progress. The rationality driven Europeans, with their scientific temper and knowledge of technology, could help village India move out of its eternal old and stagnant economic order.

Gandhi's advocacy of the village-city binary also overlapped with the acceptance of the tradition-modern binary, which was being proposed and propagated as a western hegemonic narrative around the same time. In his attempt to celebrate the 'rural', Gandhi inadvertently also reinforced the colonial view that those who lived in the village were bound to their past tradition, incapable of thinking rationally and instrumentally. They were simple people, always driven by their community culture and past moral codes.

Gandhi's view of the village being the site of "authentic" India was not only empirically untrue, but also polit-

ically problematic. It undermined the reality of caste, which had kept it always divided. There could never have been a feeling or sense of community, which included those on the village periphery, the untouchables. Dalits not only experienced untouchability in the village, they were also materially deprived and excluded from the economic life of the village. More importantly, such a binary construct of the 'rural' as simple and 'urban' as rational and scientific also naturalized the hegemony of the new native-nationalist elite over the rural. The rural had thus to be developed by the state and it was only the urban elite who could understand what was good for the village. The very idea of development infantilised the villager.

While Gandhi's idea of **Swaraj** has long been forgotten, the simplistic binary of the rural and urban that he popularized, has become part of our common sense. This is very evident once again in the manner in which the ongoing mobilizations of the Indian farmers are being viewed by the ruling establishment and a large section of the urban elite, including the mainstream electronic media. When the farmers came out to protest and pointed to how the newly enacted laws by the NDA government would hurt their interests, they were firmly and repeatedly told that the new laws are, in fact, good for them. Even when the farmer organizations were called for discussions by the central government, during the initial meetings they were given presentations by government officials as a way to explain the various clauses and to emphasize the point that they had not actually understood the new laws. A senior minister even suggested that the concerned ministry and its officials, who were engaging with farmers, ought to

prepare better-quality power point presentations, in simple and clear language, to remove the farmers' doubts about the new laws.

Some mainstream television channels too repeated this narrative, through their reporting and their discussions, with "experts". They invariably tended to accuse the "leaders" of farmers of collaborating with opposition politicians to fool the *bhole-bhole* kisan (innocent farmers). Even some well-meaning experts have described the ongoing farmers movement as a peasant uprising. The protesting farmers are not subsistence-oriented peasants. They are enterprising cultivators, who use a wide range of farm inputs and produce primarily for the market. They have been doing this for decades.

Beyond farms, they are also integrated in the larger economic, social and political life of the nation and the world. Their organizations are named 'unions' because they function like the trade unions of urban/factory workers, as interest groups, meant to bargain with relevant "others" on their behalf. Today, an average farmer of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab or Madhya Pradesh is likely to be as educated, if not more, as an average trader of Gujarat. However, the old binary or rural-urban continues to dog a large section of the urban elite and their capacity to make sense of the farmers' assertions.



Farmers are citizens, they need to be engaged with, not 'defeated'

Arguing on behalf of the Central government during a hearing on the newly enacted farm laws and the ongoing farmers' protests demanding their repeal, Attorney General K. K. Venugopal claimed before the Supreme Court of India that the farmers protests have been 'infiltrated by elements that support the idea of Khalistan'. This was not the first time that such an allegation had been made by the ruling establishment. Some senior ministers of the central government and spokespersons of the ruling party have also repeatedly raised such allegations. They have also taken issue with the fact that some of the participating farmers' organizations are left-leaning and raise issues of human rights. 'Farmers ought to be speaking only about farming related issues and nothing else', they insist.

Interestingly, if we look at it closely, the stated position of the farmers' unions and their leaders is not very different. Anyone interested in verifying this needs to listen to the videos of the lectures they have been delivering at the sites of the ongoing protest, all easily available on YouTube. However, this is not to suggest that farmers movements are 'non-political' or 'pre-political'. Social movements are always constituted by politics, often even producing unintended consequences with far reaching political implications. The reference point here is the party or electoral politics.

What has been the relationship of farmers' movements with party politics in India?

Present-day farmers are different from the older category of peasants. When their mobilizations first emerged in the 1980s, they were described as

"new" farmers' movements because they were different from their earlier variants, the peasant mobilizations. The peasant movements of the 20th century were often led by outsiders and were invariably part of larger political struggles. One of the popular books on the subject by Eric R. Wolf published in 1969 was titled as the Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century. Some of the well-known peasant movements produced "revolutionary" changes in prevailing political systems. From Russia and China to Vietnam, Algeria and Mexico, peasants actively participated in movements that were firmly political. Even in India, peasants actively participated in the freedom struggle, mobilized by Gandhi. Similarly, left-wing political parties mobilized them around questions of land reforms and social equity. The farmers' movements of the 1980s have had a different focus. Their demands are generally very specific. They organize themselves as "unions", which are almost always led by farmers themselves. They emerged in response to the increasing integration of agriculture into the larger market economy which led to it being directly subjected to the vagaries of market. Post-Green Revolution agriculture could not be carried out without purchasing a large volume of inputs that were only available in the urban markets. This implied their 'compulsive market participation', as John Hariss described. Even the small cultivators, who produced very little surplus over their subsistence requirements, is compelled to take the farm produce to the market. 'Farm unions' came up to ensure a fair deal for the agricultural sector in an economy which was becoming increasingly "urban" domi-

nated. From day one, their politics was, therefore, focussed around the "terms of trade". They frequently appealed to the State and looked up to it as the negotiating agent, that would protect them from the uncertainties of the market through regulations and subsidies. The State is thus normally seen by them as a protector and a moral patriarch.

Such a mobilizations of "unions" and pressure groups is not only a normal part of a modern market economy, but it is also essential for a democratic polity to function and flourish. The electoral process is not a substitute for such politics. Unions and the interests they represent could be electorally insignificant. But as citizens, small and large, they represent opinions and interests that are legitimate. The citizens who join these "unions" do not carry singular identities, of being merely farmers or workers or teachers. Like everyone else, they too live with multiple identities, ascriptive and professional. They are bound to bring these into their unions as well. In a country like India, these identities could range from region, language and religion to a variety of "secular" political orientations. Those leading the current farmers movements are acutely aware of these realities and have always worked with them. Speaking from the site the dharna to a YouTube television reporter, Ajit Anjum, Rakesh Takait, the BKU leader from Uttar Pradesh, explained that theirs was not a movement for political power. Many of his supporters, he pointed out, had been voters of the ruling party, the BJP. Though they were sitting on dharna with him on the current issue, many were likely to go back to the political space that they came from once the agitation

ended. 'We are not a political party and we are not competing with any political party', he said. Similarly, a large majority of the Jat farmers from Haryana, who have been sitting on the dharna alongside the Punjab farmers, had in fact voted for Modi during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The union leader from Punjab, Balbir Singh Rajjewal, is similarly aware of the diversity of his constituency. A large section of Sikh farmers has traditionally been supporters of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal), which until recently was a part of the NDA, and many would have voted for its candidates in the last elections. Many Sikh farmers would have also voted for the Indian National Congress or the AAP. Speaking to his supporters at the Singhuborder, he has been constantly reminding them about the need to stay focussed on the sole issue relating to agriculture, firmly and peacefully. He reiterated this again from the stage on the 13th of January, when he said that, 'If some people wish to fight for Khalistan, they ought to go to America and create it there. Our struggle is different'.

The challenge for the democratic political establishment is to learn to engage with such social movements, recognizing their value. They are not simply expressions of dissent. They also mobilize vast volumes of positive energy that revives social solidarities and democratic spirits. Diversities of interests, culture and opinions mark all nations of the world today. Targeting social movements as "enemies" to be defeated would only drain out the positive energy that such movements produce. They need to be engaged with.

Summit on Climate Change in April 2021

The US President Joe Biden has convened a two-day virtual Summit on Climate Change on April 22-23. Leaders from 40 countries have been invited to the virtual meeting. The invited leaders include the Presidents of China, the Russian Federation, and Brazil, the Prime Ministers of India, Australia, France, and New Zealand, the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, South and North America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East along with leaders of some other European nations and small island nations. Joe Biden has also appealed to the leaders of these countries to submit their updated commitments on carbon emission cut plans which were already submitted to the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015.

In 2015, the then-US President Barack Obama raised the issue of climate change in the Paris Climate Agreement. In 2017, the then-US President Donald Trump announced his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement as soon as he came to power. In those four years, the United States increased its carbon emissions as President Donald Trump, during his tenure, approved high-carbon projects such as coal-fired power plants and refineries, he also withdrew over 100 environmental protection laws. President Joe Biden after President Trump's four-year term sent a request to the United Nations on the first day of his term in 2021 to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement, which was accepted the same day. In fact, President Joe Biden wants to re-establish the United States as a pioneer in Climate Change. He has called for this virtual Summit on Climate Change as a prequel to the 26th Conference of the Parties in Glasgow which will be held from November 1-12 in collaboration with the United Kingdom and Italy. The motive of the virtual summit to push the Paris Climate Agreement forward and the United States to reclaim its leadership on this front.

With the US announcing its withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, many countries in the world besides the European countries, especially China, India, the Russian Federation, Japan, Canada, Indonesia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and some others have not taken the Paris Climate Agreement seriously. As a result, the past six years from 2015 to 2020 have been the hottest on record so far. According to a NOAA 2020 report, the average temperature of the Northern Hemisphere in 2020 was the highest in 141 years, 1.28 degrees Celsius higher than the average temperature of the Pre-Industrial Revolution period. Despite the Covid-19 and La-Nina year, the average temperature in Europe and Asia is recorded higher by 2 degrees Celsius in 2020. Temperatures in Australia, South America, the southern parts of North America, and the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian Oceans have also been above average. Arctic temperature has risen three times since the Pre-Industrial Revolution period. Siberia recorded an average temperature of 30 degrees Celsius in June 2020. Rising temperature has led to widespread wildfires in California, Siberia, and Australia in 2020.

An IPCC report (2014) revealed that the average surface temperature of the earth is rising rapidly due to human

activities. The various research studies also show that humans are harming other organisms (from plants to all kinds of living beings) cohabitating on earth for their own selfish needs. Two-thirds of the land use patterns on earth's surface have been changed by the human population due to the development of agriculture during the last 11000 years, natural vegetation has halved. About 85 per cent of the wetlands have been wiped out in the last 300 years, and more than 65 per cent of the oceans were compromised to some extent by humans. In the last 200 years, 50 per cent of the coral reefs have disappeared.

The human population has grown rapidly from 1.6 billion (1900) to 7.8 billion (2020) in the last 120 years. Along with human activities, the growing human population, its way of living and choice of food are responsible for the rise in the average temperature of the earth. According to a study conducted by



Arden Dier, only 1 per cent of the world's population causes about 50 per cent of air travel emission. Each of Australia, the United States, Canada, South Korea, and the Russian Federation emits 16.92, 16.56, 15.32, 12.89, and 11.94 metric tons of carbon emissions, respectively, through their living style. Today, to accommodate an increasing carnivorous diet, large-scale deforestation is taking place to create pastures for breeding animals. A meat rich diet instead of vegetables increases the concentration of two types of gases in the atmosphere - carbon dioxide and methane. Deforestation and domesticated animals both result in producing large amounts of carbon dioxide. Animal digestion process is responsible for increasing the concentration of methane gas in the environment. Both gases are important greenhouse gases that raise the temperature. Methane gas is capable of heating the atmosphere 25 times more than carbon dioxide. One animal emits 220 pounds of methane gas each year. According to a study conducted by U.C. Davis, domesticated animals are responsible for producing 14.5 per cent of the total greenhouse gases. The forests of the tropical region have the potential to absorb more carbon. A research study by the World Resources Institute shows that between 2019 and 2020, deforestation in the tropics has increased by 12 per cent covering 10 million acres.

Despite the warning given in a 2014 IPCC report and the facts stated at 2015 Paris Climate Conference regarding

rising average temperature of the earth, many countries around the world still have not taken steps to reduce their carbon emissions. According to the Climate watchdata organisation, there are 80 countries in the world that have not yet made any changes in the framework for reducing carbon emissions according to the Paris Climate Agreement. These countries release 47.2 per cent of the world's total carbon emissions into the atmosphere. It is pertinent to mention here that out of these 80 countries, 78 countries emit only 4.2 per cent of the total carbon emissions and the remaining 43 per cent carbon emissions are emitted by two countries China (28 per cent) and the United States (15 per cent). China, which currently emits more carbon than any other country in the world, is still generating 60 per cent of its energy from coal. China made an announcement in March 2021 to have a peak in emissions by 2030 for accelerat-

ing economic growth and then later will aim for carbon neutrality by 2060. The United States is second only to China in coal-fired power generation and total carbon emissions. President Joe Biden has recently declared a carbon free electricity goal by 2035, a switchover to renewable sources which will eliminate greenhouse gas emissions produced while generating electricity and also setting a goal of "net-zero emissions, economy-wide, by no later than 2050."

It is important to note that the average temperature of the earth will increase speedily if carbon emissions are not reduced rapidly and the current safe average temperature rise limit (1.5 degrees Celsius) 'set by the Paris Climate Agreement' will be exceeded in the next few years. According to a recent study published by the Australian Academy of Sciences, if carbon emissions continued at the current rate for only three to four years it would be impossible to achieve the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius increase in temperature but the temperature will rise by an alarming 3 to 4 degrees Celsius.

Although greenhouse gas emissions were reduced during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020 is still the second hottest year on record. The concentration of carbon in the atmosphere is also constantly increasing. On April 6, 2020, its concentration was 415.70 parts per million (ppm) which on the same day in 2021 increased to 418.64 ppm. Before the Industrial Revolution, it was only 280 ppm. Power gen-

eration, transportation, and industry produced large amounts of carbon. The United States alone produces 5 billion metric tons of carbon each year from these

sources. In order to control the average global temperature, all the countries of the world should promptly reduce their carbon emissions by imposing a climate emergency.

The 11th Annual Gap Emission Report(2019) of the United Nations shows that if all the countries of the world cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 7.6 per cent per annum in the coming years, the temperature would still be above the safe limit by the end of the century. The report also said that if serious measures had been taken in 2010, greenhouse gas emissions would have been reduced by 3.3 per cent per annum. Taking actions to address this imminent issue should not be delayed any longer. Firstly, China and the United States, which account for 43 per cent of the total carbon emissions in the atmosphere, should, like New Zealand, declare a climate emergency in their respective countries and cut carbon emissions expeditiously without wasting time. Both these countries should seek guidance from the European countries as well who have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by 24 per cent in 2019 as compared to 1990's level. These countries have now pledged to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions to at least 55 per cent by 2030 as compared to 1990's level. Great Britain has gone even further vowing to reduce green gas emissions by 68 per cent during this period. In contrast, China is still demanding another 10 years to start reducing its carbon emissions. The United States has already backed down at every conference. India, Japan, and the Russian Federation have not yet submitted their new plans to reduce carbon emissions to the United Nations. The targets set by nations such as the USA, China, India, and Russian Federation (those are still emitting the major share of greenhouse gas emissions) could dramatically affect whether the world can reach the goals set in Paris.

In the April 22-23 Summit on Climate, all countries of the world should agree to outline measures to reduce carbon emissions, increase their dependence on renewable natural resources for energy production and implement actions immediately.

All countries must make drastic changes in their living style, eating habits and accelerate their forest cover and focus on replacing the corporate economic growth model with a pro-nature and people economic development model so that all living beings can avoid the scourge of natural disasters caused by rising temperature.



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GURU GOBIND SINGH CREATED KHALSA, A NEW MAN



"Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" forum fondly remember 13 April; on this day in 1699, Tenth Master Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji baptized the five beloved (Punj Pyare) at Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh Ji infused a new spirit in them - the spirit of freedom, equality, justice - and put to an end for all times the oppressive social system of caste-based binaries of purity and pollution. *Manas Kee Jaat Sabhe Akay Pehchanbo - Equality of Mankind. We wish to all Very Very Happy Khalsa Sathapan day and Happy Vaisakhi!*

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-In-Chief

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Vivekananda on Guru Gobind Singh

Speaking of the great powers that used to be infused in those days into the initiates of Guru Gobind Singh, Swamiji recited a popular doha (couplet) on Khalsa. Sava Lakh Se Ek Ladaun Tabi Gobind Singh Nam Kahaun.

The meaning is - When Guru Gobind Singh gives the Name i.e., initiates, a single man becomes strong enough to triumph over a lakh and a quarter of his foes. Each disciple, deriving from his soul filled with such wonderful heroism. While holding forth thus on the glories of this religion. Swamiji's eyes dilated with enthusiasm seemed to be emitting fire, and his hearers dumb-stricken and looking at his face kept watching, the wonderful sight. After a while the disciples said: "Sir, it was very remarkable that Guru Gobind Singh could unite both Hindus and Mussalmans with the fold of his religion and lead them both towards the same end. In Indian history, no other example of this can be found. Swamiji: "Men Can never be united unless there is a bond of common interest. You can never unite people merely by getting up meetings, societies and lectures, if their interests be not one and the same. Guru Gobind Singh made it understood everywhere that the men of his age, be they Hindus of Mussalmans, were living under a regime of profound injustice and oppression. He did not create any common interest. He only pointed out to the masses. And so both Hindus and Mussalmans followed him. Yes, in Indian history, such an example is indeed very rare.

Swami Vivekananda's Works

Vol. VI P. 469, Conversations and Dialogues

Sikhism is a unique, continuous and complete revolution. The ultimate goal of any revolution is to create a new man. Only the Sikh revolution has succeeded in creating a new man. Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa, a new man on Vaisakhi in 1699. Vaisakhi is a harvesting festival.

Peasantry was the main force of the Sikh revolution.

Punjab is mainly an

man. Most of the philosophies in the world believe that man is imperfect and can never be perfect. The Sikh ideology believes that man is perfect because he is created by "the perfect" and there is no difference between the creator and the creation, only a curtain of ignorance separates the creation from the creator. If we are perfectly enlightened and the curtain of ignorance is lifted then we realize that we are part of the

the perfect life but also glorified death which occurs when one is engaged in these internal and external battles. Guru Gobind Singh justified use of weapons when all peaceful means have been exhausted to fight against oppression. Guru Gobind Singh's concept of Khalsa was a concept of transformation of a man into a new man who has dissolved and transcended his old identity based on caste and creed.



agricultural state. Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh chose Vaisakhi to create Khalsa. The word Khalsa was used by Bhakat Kabir in Guru Granth Sahib. The general impression is that the word Khalsa means pure. Therefore, Khalsa is spiritually pure, who has attained the spiritual enlightenment and has cleaned oneself from all impurity of Ego. When someone completely frees himself from Ego then he merges with God, all doubt and duality end and there is complete unification with the ultimate reality. The Persian word Khalas means sovereign.

It means the land which is not in the revenue record and is directly under the king, in other words it is a Sovereign land.

Therefore, Khalsa means the Sovereign army of God which is not under control of any human being. Khalsa is a saint soldier. He has attained the highest spiritual level by subduing the five messengers of wickedness, Kam (lust) Krodh (anger), lobh (greed), moh (attachment) and ahankar (arrogance). He has conquered these internal enemies by bhakti (devotion) and him as the sovereign army of God, is ready to fight injustice, inequality, exploitation, discrimination and oppression in society. To fight these wars he needs Shakti (power). Khalsa is a confluence of Bhakti and Shakti. halsa is a perfect

ultimate reality, the eternal truth.

Guru Gobind Singh did not give only a theoretical concept of a perfect human being but actually set an example of a perfect man's life. Nowhere in history have we found an example of a perfect man except the

Khalsa is a new man with a new identity.

He is the image of the timeless creator. This creation of a new man is the most unique and the highest achievement of the Sikh religion. Guru Gobind Singh used the force of history and the myths understood by the people, to help with the transformation of man. He

Dr. Sawraj Singh

worldly life of Guru Gobind Singh. He showed us what we can achieve in our life. He was a religious leader, a philosopher, a poet, a saint, a soldier, a historian and he was a king and holy man (Badshah Dervish) at the same time. It is generally believed that you can only write poetry in one language but Guru Gobind Singh wrote poetry in many languages, including Punjabi, Persian, Brij Bhasha and Sanskrit. Again, it is thought that literature can be only created in peaceful times but Guru Gobind Singh created literature while fighting battles.

Guru Gobind Singh promoted the concept of constant struggle against oppression. There was no question of surrender. Khalsa engages constantly in both battles, the internal battle against the live messengers of wickedness and the external battle against all discrimination, injustice, inequality, exploitation and oppression. Guru Gobind Singh not only set an example for

gave new meanings to the myths. While using the history and the myths, Guru Gobind Singh made absolutely clear that he and his Khalsa only believe in one, the eternal truth, the timeless creator (Akal Purkh). Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy is completely compatible with Guru Nanak's philosophy.

Guru Gobind Singh gave a practical shape to Guru Nanak's philosophy.

Khalsa is a concept of a perfect man but at the same time Khalsa Panth is also a concept of universal brotherhood. This brotherhood is based upon the principles of complete equality and is without discrimination of any kind. It is a community of the spiritually enlightened people who have transcended all prejudices, differences and inequalities and have transformed themselves into a harmonious community dedicated to eradicate evil and promote good in the world.

Future of Parliamentary Democracy

This speech was delivered by Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar at D.A.V. College, Jalandhar on October 28th, 1951

I am indeed thankful to you for the great honour done to me of asking me to address the special session of your parliament. During my whole life I have been, so to say, a wanderer from subject to subject, from profession to profession. I began my career as a Professor of Political Economics in the Government Commerce College, Bombay after my return from England. But I soon felt that the Government Service was no good for a man who was bound by rules of discipline. He is hampered at every stage in his work of public service. I then went back to England and qualified for the Bar. After my return I rested for a short period and then accepted the post of the Principal of the Law College at Bombay. I came back to the profession of teaching. I worked as the Principal of the Law College for five years. Then the 1935 Government of India Act came into being which brought the popular legislatures into being for the first time. I then thought of taking a jump into politics and I left the service and took to politics. Since then I have alternatively been doing legal practice and serving the public. Legal practice and public service are thus the alternating currents in my life, and I do not know on which current my life will end, whether A.C. or D.C.

I am very fond of the teaching profession. I am also very fond of students. I have dealt with them. I have lectured them in my life. This is the first opportunity I have got to address students since my resignation from the Cabinet. I am very glad to talk to students. A great deal of the future of this country must necessarily depend on the students of this country. Students are an intelligent part of the community and they can shape public opinion. I, therefore, take special pleasure in addressing you the members of the Parliament and I am really thankful for the opportunity given me.

When your principal wrote to me requesting me to address you, he did not indicate any particular topic on which I shall speak to you this morning. But suddenly, as usually happens in my case, in the flash of a moment the subject became clear to me and I have decided to speak a few words to you on the subject of parliamentary government. The time at my disposal is very short and I will therefore be able to give only a brief analysis of the subject.

During the discussion in the Constituent Assembly there was a variety of opinion as regards the nature of the Constitution that we should have. Some preferred the British system; some the American system. There were others who did not want either of these two types of government. But after a long discussion, a large majority of members came to a conclusion that the system of the Parliamentary Government as it is in Britain is best suited to our country.

There are some sections of people who do not like Parliamentary Government. Communists want the Russian type of government. The socialists are also against the present Constitution of India. They are agitating against it. They have declared that if they come to power, they will modify it. Personally speaking, I am very attached to the Parliamentary system of Government. We must understand what it means and we must preserve it in constitution. What is meant by Parliamentary Government? There is a book on the English Constitution written by Walter Baggot; it

are innumerable references in our literature to prove that the Parliamentary system of Government was not unknown to us. There are many rules about Parliamentary procedure. May's parliamentary practice is generally followed. One rule that is invariably followed everywhere is that there can be no discussion without a motion. That is why there is no discussion on a question. The rule was also practiced in our land in ancient times. The system of secret ballot now in vogue is also not new to us; it was followed in Buddhist Sanghas. They had the ballot papers which they called Sala-

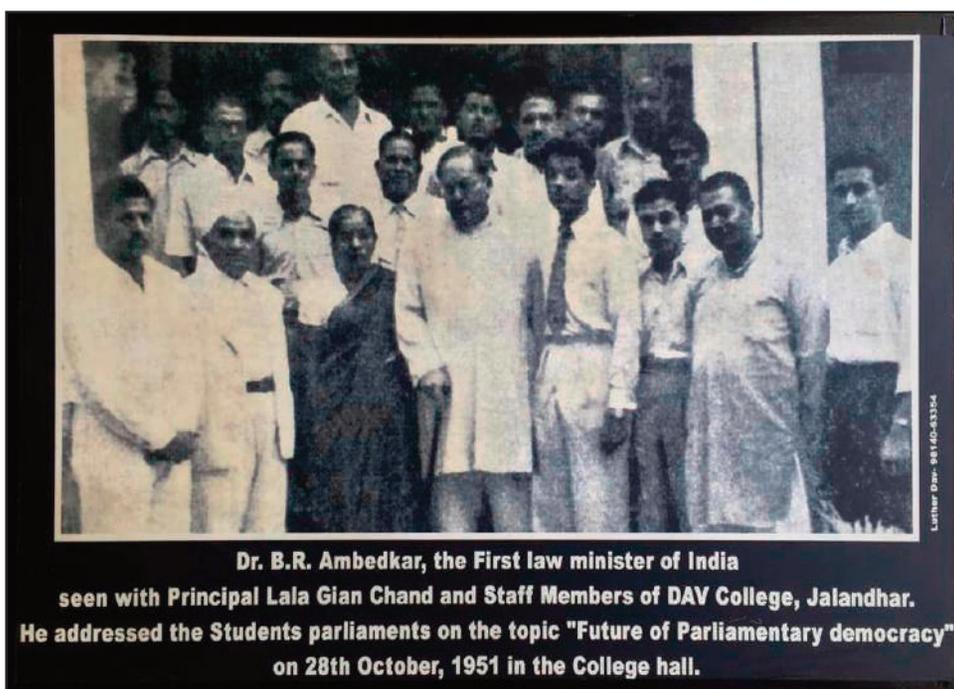
rule must be elected by the people from time to time. He must obtain the approval of the people. Hereditary rule has no sanction in the Parliamentary system of government.

Secondly, any law, any measure applicable to the public life of the people must be based on the advice of the people chosen by the people. No single individual can presume the authority that he knows everything, that he can make the laws and carry the government. The laws are to be made by representatives of the people in the Parliament. They are the people who can advise the men in whose name the law can be proclaimed. That is the difference between the monarchical system Government and the democratic system Government. In monarchy, the affairs of the people are carried on in the name of the monarch and under the authority of the monarch. In democracy the affairs of the public are carried on in the name of the head of state but the laws and the executive measures are the authority on which the government is carried on. The head of state is the titular head; he is merely a symbol. He is consecrated 'Murti'. He can be worshipped but he is not allowed to carry out the government of the country. The government of the country is carried out, though in his name, by the elected representatives of the people.

Thirdly and lastly, the Parliamentary system of government means that at a stated period those who want to advise the head of state must have the confidence of the people in them renewed. In Britain, formerly, the Parliament were carried out every seven years. The Chartists agitated against this; they wanted annual elections. The motive behind this agitation was very praiseworthy indeed. It would have been best in the interests of the people if annual elections were held, had it been possible, of course. But Parliamentary elections are very costly affairs. So some sort of compromise was arrived at and a five year period was supposed to be the responsible period at which the legislators and the ministers were to go back to the people and obtain the fresh renewal of their confidence.

This is also not enough. The Parliamentary system of Government is much more than government by discussion. There are two pillars on which the Parliamentary system of Government rests. These are the fulcrums on which the mechanism works. Those two pillars are an opposition and free and fair elections. For the last 20 or 30 years we acclimated to one single political party. We have nearly forgotten the necessity and importance of opposition for the fair working of Parliamentary Democracy. We are continuously told that opposition is an evil. Here again we are forgetting what the past history has to tell us. You know that there

(Contd. on next page)



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the First law minister of India seen with Principal Lala Gian Chand and Staff Members of DAV College, Jalandhar. He addressed the Students parliaments on the topic "Future of Parliamentary democracy" on 28th October, 1951 in the College hall.

is indeed a classic treatise. It was later expanded by other authorities on constitutional government like Laski and others. He has put the conception of the Parliamentary Government in one sentence. He says Parliamentary Government means government by discussion and not by fisticuffs. You will always find in the British system of Government that they hardly ever resort to fisticuffs when taking any decision. The decision is always taken after discussion. Nobody introduces the element of disturbance in the British parliament. Look at French Politics. Decisions are arrived at more than often by knocking knockout blows. You will find that this system is hardly adequate to those not born in that system. It is an alien institution to them. We must learn, understand and make it a success.

Parliamentary democracy is unknown to us are present. But India, at one time, had Parliamentary institutions. India was far more advanced in ancient times. If you go throughout the Suktas of Mahaparinirvan, you will find ample evidence in support of my point. In these Suktas it is stated that while Bhagwan Buddha was dying at Kusinara (Kusinagara) a message to the effect was sent to the Mallas who were sitting in session at that time. They were decided that they should not close the session but would carry on with their work and would go to Kusinara after finishing the business of the Parliament. There

patrakaGrahakas. Unfortunately, we have lost this entire past heritage that was good. Historians of India must tackle this question as to why these parliamentary institutions disappeared from our land. But I find that they cannot or do not want to find out the reasons for it. Ancient India was the master of the world. There was such intellectual freedom in ancient India as was nowhere else to be found. Then why was it that this ancient civilization went to the dogs? Why was India subject to autocratic monarchies? We were familiar with parliamentary institutions, we knew about votes, voting, committees and other things related to parliamentary institutions. Today the Parliamentary system of government is alien to us. If we go to a village, we will find that the villagers do not know what it is to vote, or what a party is. They find it something strange something alien. It is, therefore, a great problem as how to preserve this institution. We will have to educate the public; we will have to tell them the benefits of Parliamentary Democracy and of the Parliamentary system of Government. We know what Baggot means by Parliamentary government. But today his definition is of no use, it is utterly inadequate. There are three main things inherent in the Parliamentary system of Government. Parliamentary Government means negation of hereditary rule. No person can claim to be a hereditary ruler. Whoever wants to

Future of Parliamentary Democracy

(Continue from page 11)

were Nibandhnars to interpret the Vedas and Smritis. They used to begin their comments on Slokas and Sutras by stating firstly the ParvaPakshs, the one side of the question. They used to follow up by given the Uttar Paksha, the other side. By this they wanted to show us that the question raised was not an easy question, it is a question where there is dispute, discussion and doubt. Then they used to give what they termed as Adhikaran where they used to criticize both the Pakshas. Finally, they gave the Siddhant, their own decisions. From here we can find that all our ancient teachers believed in the two party system of Government.

One important thing in the Parliamentary Democracy is that people should know the other side, if there are two sides to a question. Hence a functional opposition is required. Opposition is the key to a free political life. No democracy can do without it. Britain and Canada, the two exponents of the Parliamentary system of Government, recognize this important fact and in both countries the Leader of the Opposition is paid a salary by the Government. They regard the opposition as an essential thing. People of these countries believe that the opposition should be as much alive as the Government. The Government may suppress the facts; the government may have only one-sided propaganda. The people have made provision against these eventu-

alities in both these countries.

A free and fair election is the other pillar on which Parliamentary Democracy rests. Free and fair elections are necessary for the transfer of power from one section for the community to the other in a peaceful manner and without any bloodshed. In older times, if a king died, there was at least one murder in the palace. Revolution used to take place in the palace resulting in murders before the new king used to take the reign of his country into his authority. This has been the history of India. Elections must be completely free and fair. People must be left to themselves to choose those whom they want to send to the Legislatures.

Now the question arises as to whether there is any desire on the part of the party in power to permit any opposition to be created. Congress does not want any opposition. Congress is attempting to gather people of sundry views under one canopy. I ask you whether this is a desirable trend in the Political life of this country. What about free and fair elections? We must not lose sight of the fact that Big Business is trying to play a great part in the political life of this country.

The amount that is being contributed to Congress on behalf of Big Business is a very dangerous thing. If moneyed people try to influence the elections by contributing to the election fund of any political party, what will be the result? If the party which

they have supported financially comes into power, they will try to extract concessions for themselves either by modifying the present legislation or by influencing the party in power to legislate in such a manner as would be beneficial to their interests. I ask you, gentlemen, whether under these circumstances there is any hope left for the Parliamentary system of Government to do any good to the country. I would like to refer to the Mahabharat. During the battle between the Pandvas and the Kaurvas, Bhishma and Drona were on the side of the Kaurvas. The Pandvas were in the right and the Kaurvas were in the wrong. Bhishma admitted this. Whensomebody asked Bhishma as to why he was supporting the Kaurvas if he found the Pandvas to be in the right. Bhishma replied in the memorable sentence. I must be loyal to the salt if I eat the food of the Kaurvas. I must take their side even if they might be in the wrong.

Today the same thing is happening. Congress is accepting the financial help of the Baniyas, Marwaries and other multimillionaires. Congress is eating their food and it follows therefore naturally that Congress will have to take the side of these Big Businesses at all crucial times. We also find that the government servants are influencing the elections in favour of the party which is feeding them and their dependents. No less a personality than Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, at the inaugural session

for the Bhartiya Jan Sangh at Delhi recently, openly charged government servants of helping the Congress and thereby nullifying the elections from being free and fair.

Under these circumstances, do you, gentlemen, think that there is any hope for Parliamentary Democracy to succeed?

If Parliamentary Democracy fails in this country, and is bound to fail for the reasons mentioned by me, the only result will be rebellion, anarchy and Communism. If the people in power do not realize that people will not tolerate hereditary authority, then this country is doomed. Either Communism will come, Russia having sovereignty over our country, destroying individual liberty and our independence, or the section of the people who are disgruntled at the failure of the party in power will start a rebellion and anarchy will prevail.

Gentlemen, I want you to take note of these eventual certainties and if you wish that the Parliamentary system of Government and Parliamentary Democracy prevail in this country If you are satisfied that we cherish the inherent right of individual liberty, then it is your duty as students, as the intelligent community of our country, to strive your utmost to cherish this Parliamentary system of Government in its true spirit and work for it. Gentlemen, I have done. I thank you for having given me this opportunity to address this august gathering.



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