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## Mark Juergensmeyer: Pioneer of Critical Dalit Studies

**P**rofessor Mark Juergensmeyer is a household name among social scientists, scholars, students and Dalit activists in the Doaba of East Punjab – a stronghold of Ad-Dharmi and Mazhbi Dalits. This region has given rise to a good number of radical social and political movements during the British rule over India. The most prominent among them were the Ghadar, Babbar Akali and the Ad Dharm. Mark's familiarity with the people of this region evolved during his field work on the genesis, organization, ideology and functioning of the Ad Dharm movement. Half a century ago, he made this place, between two rivers – Sutlej and Ravi – the universe of his doctoral research work. He became affiliated with the department of Political Science at Panjab University (PU) in the 1960s and from there he used to frequent different places in the Doaba to look for first-hand information from leaders, activists and sympathisers of the Ad Dharm movement – the most prominent among them being its founder: Babu Mangu Ram (also called Ghadari Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia; hereafter Babu Mangu Ram.)

Babu Mangu Ram is to Punjab what Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is to Maharashtra. Both of them were from the lower castes, and struggled for

the emancipation of their fellow caste members, and with time became the forerunners of Dalit movements in their respective regions. As the Maharashtra Dalit movement owes its origin to Phule, so the Punjab Dalit movement is indebted to Babu Mangu Ram. Phule was influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, the English-born American political activist,

theorist, philosopher and revolutionary of the nineteenth century. Babu Mangu Ram learnt about the importance of democratic and liberal values of equality and freedom during his stay in the US. It was a coincidence that when Babu Mangu Ram was active in the USA Ghadar movement, Dr. Ambedkar – the chief architect and messiah of Dalits – was pursuing his higher education at Columbia University NY. Like his nineteenth century Maharashtrian counterpart, Babu Mangu Ram established the first school of its kind in his native village of Mugowal for children

of lower castes – a group which were later designated Scheduled Castes (SCs) under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936. He also faced stiff opposition, like his predecessor in Maharashtra, from the self-proclaimed upper/dominant castes of Punjab in his fierce struggle against oppressive structures of domination, especially that of untouchability – the most egregious one among them. Following into the footsteps of his revolutionary Ghadarite leadership in the US, Babu Mangu Ram aspired

to fight against these social evils. Babu Mangu Ram came from a village named Mugowal near Garhshankar Tehsil indistrict Hoshiarpur. He left for the US in 1909 to seek his fortune like many of his compatriots from this region. It was in the US that he came in contact with the Indian migrants (mainly Punjabis), who formed a radical organization named Ghadar (revolt) to

liberate India from the British Empire by armed struggle. He became one of its pioneers and took upon himself the herculean task of smuggling weapons to India for the proposed armed struggle against the British rule. However, that mission could not succeed, and Babu Mangu Ram disappeared in the Islands of the Philippines to evade arrest by the colonial British government. Finally, to the surprise of many, he returned to his native village in December 1925 and founded the Ad Dharm movement.

I came to know about Babu Mangu Ram and the Ad Dharm Movement from the classic work of Mark Juergensmeyer entitled *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement against Untouchability in Twentieth Century Punjab*, published by the University of California Press, Berkeley in 1982. This book was based on his PhD thesis. It was republished later in India

(Contd. on next page)



Ronki Ram

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Dr Ronki Ram with Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer



During lecture at Dept of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh



Prof Mark felicitated by the faculty of Dept of Political Science, PU, Chandigarh, January 31, 2020.



Interacting with Prof Kuldip Singh. On Prof Mark's left is Prof Devinder Singh and on his right is Prof Harish Puri



With students and faculty at Dept of Political Science, PU, Chandigarh

# Mark Juergensmeyer: Pioneer of Critical Dalit Studies

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in 1988 by Ajanta (Delhi) under the title *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*, and again a third time by the Navayana press under the title *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad Dharm Challenge* in 2009. I had stumbled upon this book while searching for another title in the A.C. Joshi Library of Panjab University, which I joined in 1995 after completing my doctorate in International Relations from the Jawaharlal Nehru University and subsequently serving there as a Research Associate for three years (1992-95) including a brief stint as a faculty in the Goa University. The very title of this relatively thick volume generated my interest in its subject matter. Although the author was unknown to me then, this volume completely transformed the trajectory of my research interests and has otherwise had a profound influence on me personally as well.

As I began reading this engaging narrative on the rise of the downtrodden against the then prevalent oppressive social structures in East Punjab – the region I myself come from – I became completely absorbed and was unable to rest until I had finished the entire book. The minute details about each and every aspect of the Ad Dharm's organisation, leadership, context, the socio-cultural milieu and the way all this had been so coherently contextualised, all bear witness to the intimate knowledge of the author *vis-a-vis* his subject. The author being an English-speaking researcher further makes it more astonishing as to how he could have been able to capture the kernel of the local narrative in vernacular. It is an academic *tour de force*. Such a work is the distillate of years of selfless dedication.

Mark nurtured close ties with Punjab over several decades. He first visited Chandigarh (capital city of Punjab and Haryana) in January 1966 after completing his first set of graduate studies in Religion and International Affairs at Columbia University (NY) and began teaching a course in Political Theory for Economics Undergraduate (Hons) Program in the Department of Economics at Panjab University. During this period (1966-1967) he stayed in the bachelor faculty housing building next to the main Guest House on the Campus of PU. Thereafter, working on his PhD in Political Science from 1967-69 in Berkeley, he returned to East Punjab in 1970-71 to do field work on his research theme Ad Dharm and other dalit movements as a part of his dissertation. During this time again he became affiliated as a research scholar with Panjab University and the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. It was during his stay in Chandigarh and Amritsar that Mark used to make repeated field trips to Jalandhar and spent some time in Boota Mandi and the Dera Ballan (strongholds of so-called lower-castes) – in the periphery of the city.

During one such study visit,

Mark was fortunate enough to meet with Babu Mangu Ram himself – the founder of Ad Dharm movement – on his farm near Garhshankar. Mark also used to frequent the Center for Sikh Studies at Baring College, Batala (near Amritsar) where WH McLeod was teaching at the time, and continued his language studies at the language school in Landaur, above Mussoorie. In 1973, he returned to complete his research on Dalits, travelling widely over the East Punjab. However, his central area of research work was confined to village studies of Scheduled Castes around the districts of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, and Anandpur. In 1978, he again returned to Punjab to begin work on his Radha

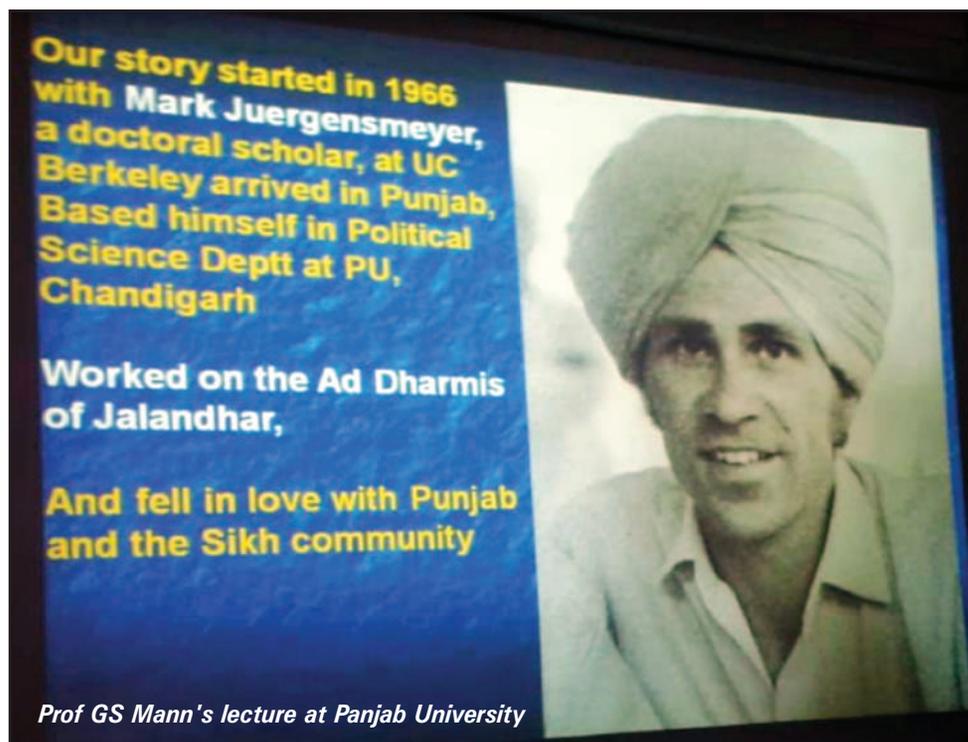
delivered a talk entitled "Reminiscing Ad Dharm" in the department of Political Science (PU) on January 31, 2020. It was also a great occasion for Mark to refresh his half-century-old memories as well as to meet friends from his old days at the PU Campus, especially Devinder Singh who had taught him Punjabi. This exceptionally long association with the region and its people is what has made Prof Mark's study of the Dalit movement in Punjab a must-read for anyone who wants to pursue research in the fast-emerging discipline of Critical Dalit Studies.

Personally, academic literature on social and Dalit movements was unfamiliar territory, as I was deeply in-

Mangu Ram). Except Bailey and Mahey, the others are regrettably no longer alive today. It was a great experience to meet and know from them about the Ad Dharm almost thirty year after they had first spoken about it with Mark, then a young researcher from University of California, Berkeley, and working on his doctoral dissertation. C.L. Chumber, who collected good amount of literature on Ad Dharm and brought a Souvenir (Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia) on its memorable journey, provided me the Punjabi and Hindi editions the Ad Dharm Mandal Report (originally in Urdu, and translated in English by Mark and included in. Prem Kumar Chumber, younger brother of C.L. Chumber, runs two weeklies – *Ambedkar Times (English)* and *Desh Doaba (Punjabi)* – both dedicated to the memories of Babu Mangu Ram and Dr. Ambedkar – from Sacramento, CA. Prem Kumar Chumber has distributed many hundred copies of "*Religious Rebels in the Punjab*" in North America free of cost over the last few years since he settled in the US.

During my fieldwork on the Ad Dharm movement in Jalandhar city, C.L. Chumber helped me in locating old copies of *Adi Danka* (Drum of the indigenous people), the newspaper of the Ad Dharm movement, which was published in Urdu. It took me a long time to cover various villages in the districts of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr and Gurdaspur where some of the activists of Ad Dharm movement and their families live now. The more I come to know about this historic Dalit movement, the more I realised that what Mark had accomplished while doing research and subsequently writing a book on it was much more than documenting its socio-cultural and political journey. Prof Mark's pioneer work has once again ignited the Dalit spirit for its lost consciousness and radical assertion. It is not an exaggeration to say that since the publication of the *Religious Rebels in the Punjab*, a new wave of learning about the Ad Dharm movement and its founding father, Babu Mangu Ram, started blowing among the Dalit activists in general, and scholars of Dalit studies in particular. A good amount of research work has been done in the disciplines Social Sciences and Humanities of various universities in North India.

Ad Dharm was the only movement of its kind in north-western India which aimed at securing a respectable space for the lower castes through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration and political assertion among them, rather than seeking patronage from above. Comprising all the lower castes people of the state, the Ad Dharm built its headquarters named *Ad Dharm Mandal* in Jalandhar. Seth Kishan Das of Boota Mandi – leather business centre in the vicinity of the British military cantonment at Jalandhar – provided major financial support to



Soami book (which began as a chapter in his classic on *Religious Rebels in the Punjab*). Since then, Mark visited Punjab every year or two for about 6-8 years (1979, 1985, 1986, and 1988) until the book was finished – the Indian edition. His latest research project on Punjab concerns itself with how the Khalistan movement ended. For this purpose he made several visits to Punjab in the last several years and interviewed some former militants and others knowledgeable about the movement, including Wassan Singh Zaffarwal and the late police chief KPS Gill. A part of his latest research work will be included in one section of his forthcoming book *When God Stops Fighting: The End of the Imagined Wars of the Islamic State, Khalistan and the Moro Movement* to be published by the University of California Press later this year or early next year, as shared by Mark in his correspondence with me. He has kept his Punjab connections intact in California, where he is perhaps the only non-Sikh on the board of the US Sikh Foundation, and has played a leading role in establishing the first chair of Sikh Studies in the US at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Prof Mark's deep connections with Punjab, developed during his frequent research visits, continue even today after a long period of half a century. On his most recent visit, he

involved in the discipline of International Relations. What attracted me most in the "Religious Rebels in Punjab" was the story of the uprising of the lower-castes in my native region. While reading this classic, I had enquired from a good number of people, even in my own village in Hoshiarpur district – the place of the origin of Ad Dharm – about this movement, and to my surprise everyone showed her/his ignorance. It further elevated the importance of the great narrative built by Prof Mark as well as my curiosity to verify first-hand the contents of this classic work. This was the beginning of my shift from international studies to Dalit studies. All this would not have been possible, but for my chance reading of Mark's *Religious Rebels in the Punjab*. This has widened and deepened both my personal and professional perspectives, and for this I am eternally grateful and indebted to Prof Mark.

I began reading Dalit literature in 1997. At the same time, I also met some of the people whom Mark had interacted regarding the Ad Dharm during his field study in East Punjab in the early 1970s. Many of them were at that time in their late 80s and early 90s, and prominent among them were: Isher Das Pawar, Bhagwan Das Advocate, Lahori Ram Bailey, K.C. Shenmar, Chanan Lal Manak, Manohar Lal Mahey, Pritam Bala, Chattar Sen (son of Babu

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# Mark Juergensmeyer: Pioneer of Critical Dalit Studies

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the Ad Dharm movement. Babu Mangu Ram literally took the movement to the doorsteps of the untouchables in the region, soon emerging as a cult figure and household name among the Dalits of Punjab. It was for the first time in the forgotten history of the lower castes that a golden opportunity knocked at their doors to get them united on a common and distinct platform under the leadership of their fellow-traveller who had tasted the fruits of freedoms and democracy during his stay in the US and his close association with radical Ghadar movement.

What made Ad Dharm the most politically noticeable and powerful movement of its time was the foresight of its visionary leaders in setting the goal of bringing the divergent lower caste communities under a single flag and to transform them into a distinct 'Qayum' (community) at par with Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians etc. This was the most crucial political move on the part of Babu Mangu Ram, the master strategist, who intervened at a critical period when limited direct elections were scheduled to be held in the state. He pressed for a separate religion for the lower castes of Punjab to be recorded in the 1931 Census, who in his opinion were neither Hindus, Sikhs, Muhammadans nor Christians. The lower castes, reiterated Babu Mangu Ram, were the original inhabitants –

Moolnivasis (aboriginal people) of this land. The alien Aryan invaders, he continued, deprived them of their kingdom, and finally enslaved them. In the poster announcing the first annual meeting of the Ad Dharm movement, Babu Mangu Ram, along with Swami Shudranand and Babu Thakur Chand, devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the *moolnivasis* at the hands of the *Hindus* (Aryans). He also made an appeal to the *moolnivasis* to come together to chalk out a programme for their liberation and upliftment. He had put forth the demand of a separate *mazhab* (religion) for these low caste peoples in order to forge them together into a distinct *qaum*.

To invigorate and further empower the Ad Dharm movement, recognition as a new religion for the native lower castes people was the next necessary step. For that purpose Babu Mangu Ram underlined the need of *majlis* (organization). The claim that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enor-

mous psychological impact on them. It provided a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity. The articulation of the consolidation of the lower castes power through the conceptual categories of *mazhab*, *quam* and *majlis*, as deployed by Babu Mangu Ram, was the

original contribution of the pioneering Dalit Studies conducted by Prof Mark. The Ad Dharm was based on the teachings and inspiration from the spiritual figures of

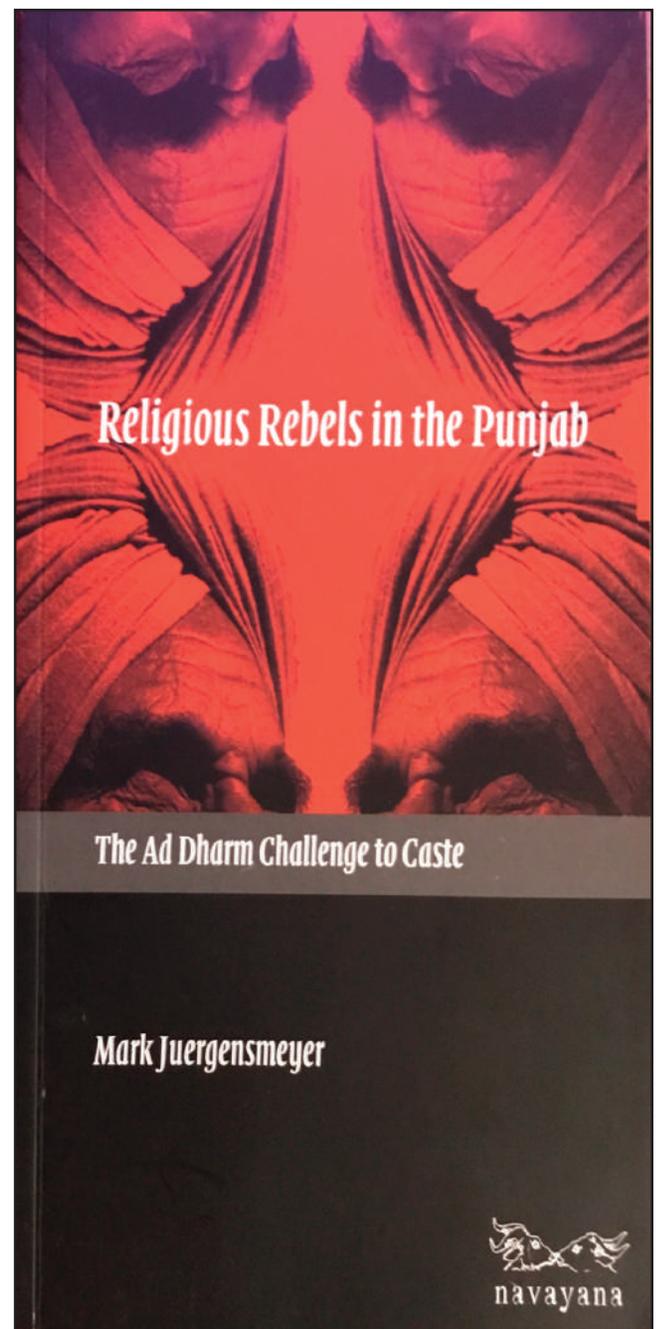
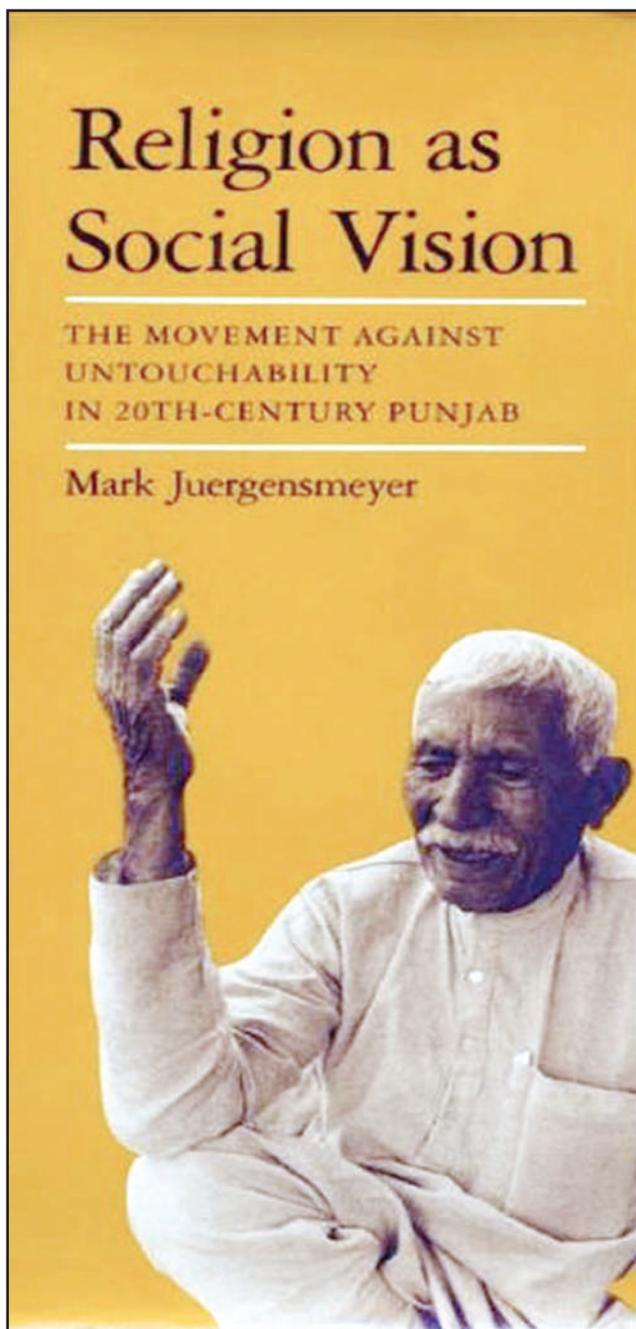
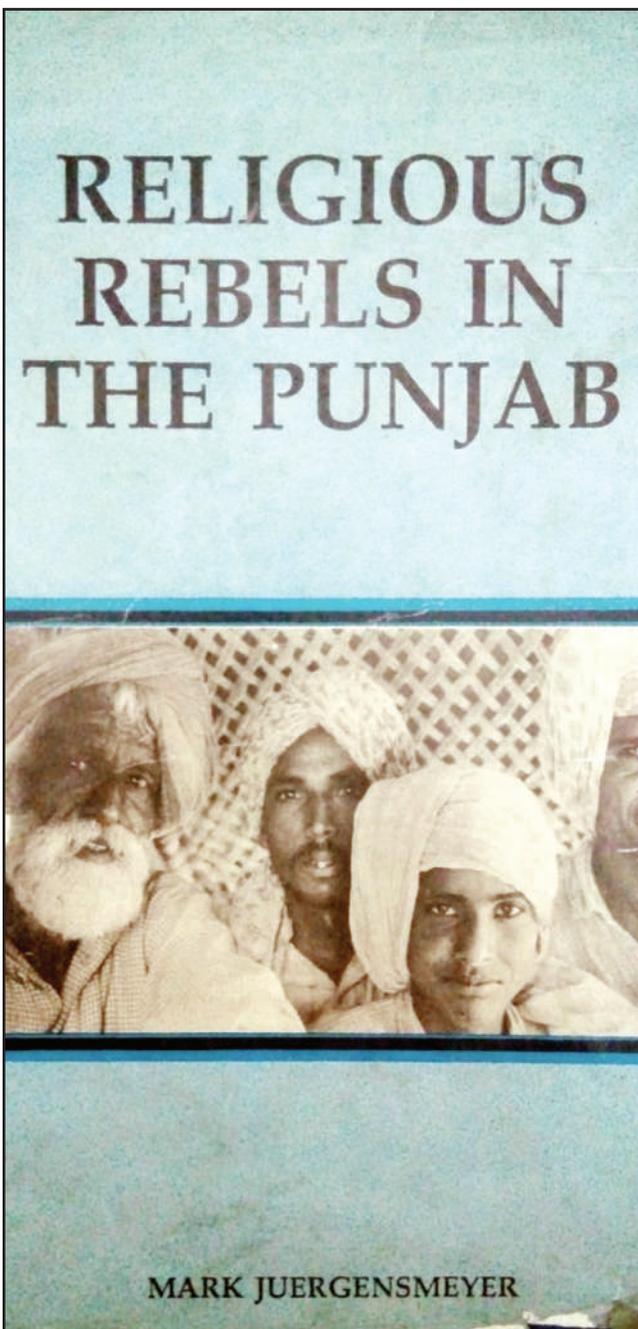
dressed as Ad Dharmis. Another equally great achievement of the Ad Dharm movement was that it swept the Punjab Provincial assembly elections in 1937 & 1946, which made it an equally important stake-holder in the Punjab legislature, perhaps for the first time in the history of the lower castes in the colonial India. Moreover, Babu Mangu Ram and the Ad Dharm movement provided a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of the mission of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Punjab. During Dr. Ambedkar's struggle for the separate electoral status for the Depressed Classes at the London Round Table conferences, Babu Mangu Ram supported him by sending many telegrams in his favour, vying with Mahatma Gandhi over the question of the leadership of the Depressed Classes in India. Mark Juergensmeyer documented in his classic 'Religious Rebels in the Punjab', the tremendous contribution of Babu Mangu Ram and his Ad Dharm movement towards the generation and channelling of social and political consciousness among the lower castes in Punjab and assert themselves against millennia-old deeply oppressive caste structures by envisioning an egalitarian socio-political order in the image of *Begampura* (the Abode of Joy) of Guru Ravidass.

\* 1. I am thankful to writer Amarjit Chandan for bringing this point to my notice.

**Dear worthy readers of  
"Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba"**  
This is an enlarged version of Dr. Ronki Ram's article entitled, "Critical Dalit Studies." In Mona Kanwal Sheikh and Isak Svensson (eds.), \***Religion, Conflict, and Global Society: A Festschrift Celebrating Mark Juergensmeyer**,\* Danish Institute for International Studies: Copenhagen, 2021, pp. 91-97.  
Prem Kumar Chumber  
Editor-in-Chief  
Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weeklies  
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North India Bhakti movement, particularly Guru Ravidass, Bhagwan Valmik, Sant Kabir and Sant Namdev. Babu Mangu Ram, argued Mark, played a dominant role in chiseling the three elements of Dalit religious identity – *qaumik*, *panthik*, and *dharmik* – thus strengthening their resolve to become rulers themselves.

During the Census of 1931, around half a million SCs in Punjab returned themselves as followers of their newly recognized religion – Ad Dharm. Thenceforth, the followers of Ad Dharm took pride in being ad-



# Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhaya

**Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:  
Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba  
Weeklies Newspapers**

The history and the contemporary texture and structure of Hindu society are caste ridden. It is basically an exploitative society. What further distinguishes it from rest of the varied forms of exploitations and exploitative social systems is its birth-based-purity-pollution principle of graded caste hierarchy that perpetuates hereditary occupation laced discrimination. Traditionally it draws its sustenance from the Varna system social stratification having its roots in the Hindu Dharmasastras. The most horrible aspect of this India-specific system of social exclusion and exploitation is that it has been able to inculcate in the minds of its victims that the latter are supposed to undergo such discrimination rather willingly as a penance of their bad deeds they have had accumulated in their earlier enumerable low births.

Religion of the Hindus is nothing but a sacred reinforcement of the above obnoxious system of social exclusion of their inhabitants cursed as ex-Untouchables. However, as far as the hard labour of these lesser human beings and its expropriation is concerned that is welcomed! For centuries no one objected to this inhuman social practice. On the contrary, this inhuman social practice was considered as a normal practice and an integral part of the Hindu social and political order. So much so that the Hindu religious texts were designed to justify such a horrible social muck meticulously.

Tathagat Buddha was the first rational and forceful voice against the Hindu caste system and its consequent system of untouchability. He contested the Hindu system of birth-based social stratification with his new and innovative slogan of Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhaya. He took on the Hindu socio-religious system head-on and turned it upside down while coming out with a scientific interpretation of the maladies of the society and its rational ground-based practical solutions. He categorically discarded the supernatural/ extra-worldly/ mythological God/Avatar based Hindu world view. He very politely but equally firmly emphasized on the equality of all Human beings and very strongly rejected the rotten institution of caste. He very strongly advocated that looking after the

interests of all would definitely give way to the much desired goal of the welfare of the all.

Tathagat Buddha came out with four noble truths: (a) suffering is an inherent part of existence, (b) the origin of suffering is ignorance and the main symptoms of which are attachment and craving, (c) the cause of suffering can be removed, (d) the way for its removal is AshtangikaMarga (the eight-fold path). The eight-fold path includes: (1) right understanding, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right efforts, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration.

Let us follow Tathagat Buddha's AshtangikaMarga in properly understanding the real problem of the community and finding its practical solution by bringing everyone on a common platform for furthering the cause of Dalit liberation and empowerment without accusing each other.

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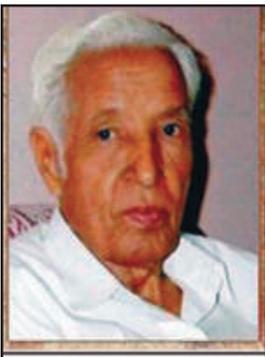
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D. C. Ahir

# The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

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

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

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the tats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again". Fearing another beating, Mangoo Ram hastened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

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



nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British as Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in absentia, and sentenced to death for taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites. Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake,

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

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during this period he had no contact with his family as no letters could be written

for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower. The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangoo Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar Party had broadened his outlook, and sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his



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

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

The headquarters of Ad

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

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion. Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiat (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding, the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, if forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever. The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis. This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Juergensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

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

# BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA - A PROFILE

**B**abu 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

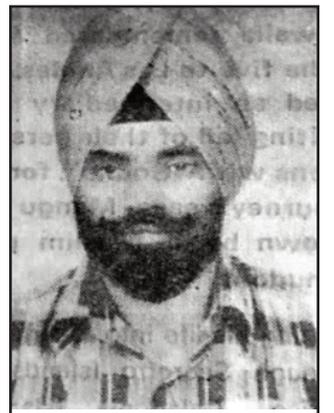
the Ad-Dharma (1926-1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played a big role. It reads as follows:

"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*



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Ishwar Das Pawar  
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# My Struggle in Life

## Mission Schools at Khanna and Ludhiana

**T**he annual examination results had been declared. I had passed the third class. I, along with my brother, decided to go home and spend the period with our parents till the starting of new classes. So we went home. I told my father that I wanted to join a school where English was also taught. He liked my idea and promised I would be admitted in such a school. On the expiry of the intervening period, my brother went back to the school to resume his studies in the new class. I stayed back in the hope that I would be admitted in a school where English was also taught. It had to be urgently done as, with the lapse of time, I was likely to forget even what had been learnt in the school.

My father tried here and there for the school of my choice but without success. As the time passed, my mind started getting restive. But what could I do? Days passed, months went by, but no school of my choice was in sight. Disappointment and frustration were gripping me. The time became dull and drab, and it had already started hanging on my drooping spirits. After long months, the New Year 1921 was ushered in, but it brought neither any new message nor any hope. I, however, had a brain wave. "I should go back to my old school" was the idea that flashed across my mind. No English teaching school was possible at this stage. January was the time by which teaching courses had been completed and revision had started. "But what will be the position if I go back to my old school?" was also a serious question. "Who will permit me to join the school almost at the fag end of the academic year? And even if I get permission to rejoin, what would be the gain? Is there even a ghost of a chance to pass the final fourth class examination which used to be quite tough?" were the thoughts that haunted me. After all said and done, I asked my father to take me to the old school. Walking on foot through villages and lush green fields of seasonal crops we reached the school on January 12, 1921. It was really a pleasant surprise for me to find that I was welcomed by the management of the school but with the necessary advice and warning that it was the virtual end of the academic year. I joined and got books for the fourth class, but I found myself neither here nor there so far as studies were concerned. Others had already practically finished their regular courses.

I started anew but with full determination. The teachers were very kind to me. They gave me every help I needed. In this connection, the names of Master Bala Singh, his younger brother Master Hari Singh, and Master Timtous are worth men-

tioning. They were all Christians. Master Bala Singh was regarded as very able and competent man all round, a versatile genius. He had joined the school after passing his Vernacular Middle School examination. Master Timtous was known for his gentlemanliness and helpful attitude. I trudged on with my studies as diligently and laboriously as was humanly possible for me. Sometimes my class fellows smiled and laughed at me with an element of taunting but not without some lurking sympathy. Paradoxically, some top students of the class considered me a rival even though they knew the helpless condition in which I was in.

March came on. The annual examination had been scheduled to start on the twelfth of the month. Incidentally, this was exactly two months after I had rejoined the school on January 12. The day for the trial of luck was no longer far away, not even two months or one month away. The last day, i.e., March 11 was intended to be thoroughly devoted to revision work. That day a herd of elephants of the Maharaja of Patiala happened to be tethered alongside Grand-Trunk road, hardly half a mile from our school. All of us decided to go there to see the awe-inspiring giant animals. The waste of time in this pastime was proposed to be made good by devoting more time in the night. We returned late in the evening when it started drizzling. Many a prudent student had purchased from the close-by bazaar wax candles for study in the night, as they anticipated rain. Electricity was unknown there in those days, and there were no lanterns either for studies during the night. Rain prevented us from going to the bazaar. I was without wax candles. I requested a few of the students to allow me to share the light of their candles. On one pretext or the other, my request was not acceded to. Helpless, seeing no way out, I entered my bedding spread on the floor of the big dormitory and went to sleep while others burnt midnight candles. I was not an early riser. Therefore, morning also could not be usefully availed of for glancing through the books on the relevant subject.

The examination started at the appointed time, one paper a day. It was over in as many working days as the number of subjects. I assessed my performance in the examination as all others did. I was not quite sure of the result though I thought I had not done so badly. In a few days, the result was announced. It took everybody, including myself, completely by surprise to hear the headmaster announce that I came first in each subject, obviously, also first in the aggregate. Consequently, I bagged all the first prizes. I also got a beautifully bound copy of the Bible as a prize "for faithful work in Bible," as written by the missionary principal of the

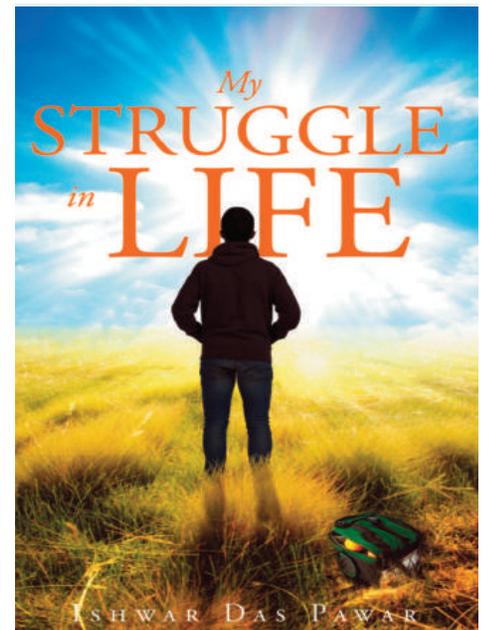
school, Rev. Swagger.

Thus I had completed my studies in the Khanna Primary Mission School. I had therefore to go home. Meanwhile, another affectionate gesture came from the staff. A high school had come into existence the same year at the outskirts of the town at the junction of Grand-Trunk and Samrala roads. The staff of the mission school offered to render me financial assistance if I agreed to join the new high school. It was so kind and nice of them to make the very generous offer. I, however, decided to first go home before thinking of joining a new school. Accordingly, I left for home.

As I could not undertake the long journey alone, I had to stay for some time with Rev. Andrews and his family at Baghanwali (Morinda). Unluckily, I fell ill there and was confined to bed with typhoid fever. Medical aid was very poor in those days, and in addition, I was away from my family. My condition grew serious. During those days, Rosy, the daughter of Rev. Andrews, and her friend Daisy also came to spend their holidays there.

These two young girls served me so well in my illness that I can never forget their affection and kindness. In view of my serious condition, I was pushed on to Ropar and left in the care of Rev. Sant Lal. My condition deteriorated. My parents were therefore informed of the illness. They promptly came. Their presence gave me heart. Gradually I rallied, and on getting better, I went home with my parents. I was with my family and recovered speedily.

Again the same old question: I wanted to join a school where English was also taught and not just a mere vernacular school; once again, the same problem of finding a school arose. Days and months passed without any solution to the problem being within grasp. It was the month of November when it was decided that I should go and join the mission high school at Ludhiana. Accordingly, accompanied by my father and a



brother, I made for Ludhiana. But disappointment awaited me there. Master Sardar Khan, the grim-faced disciplinarian headmaster of the school refused pointblank to allow me admission at that late stage of the year, almost eight months after the commencement of the academic year. He was right, but I was also helpless. His refusal was firm and final.

This set us thinking. No person was known to us in the school or even in the city. We went hither and thither in desperation. We, however, got a clue that the principal of the Khanna Mission School, Rev. Swagger, was staying at the close-by colony of the Christians with a friend of his. We were successful in locating and contacting him. He was a man known for his rather harsh temperament while, on the contrary, his wife was very popular for her sweet and kindly nature. We spoke to Rev. Swagger of our difficulty. Without a second thought, he took us to the headmaster.

He gave a knock at the door of the latter's residence. Master Sardar Khan came out and greeted Rev. Swagger, who then spoke to him about me in English, which we could not understand. But I could make out that he recommended me very strongly in view of the record of my studies in his school. The headmaster agreed to accept me but without my name being shown on the rolls. When an inspector of schools came to inspect the school, I was asked to stay away, and I spent the day at the railway station. I passed my fifth class in that school. *(Continue)*

**Ishwar Das Pawar's book "My Struggle in Life" is a philosophical, in-depth autobiography that delves into the ideas of poverty, success and courage.**

**Recent release "My Struggle in Life" from Page Publishing author Ishwar Das Pawar is both captivating and cultural; this work details a life injustice, discrimination and inequality.**

# New Maharashtra Sadan, New Delhi

**D**uring his visit to India (July 24, 2017), Shri Prem K. Chumber, Editor of "Ambedkar Times" (English) and "Desh Doaba" (Punjabi) published from Sacramento, California, USA, requested me to accompany him to a meeting with some social activists' friends in New Maharashtra Sadan on Copernicus Marg near India Gate, New Delhi. The engrossing discussion centered on various issues and subjects closely connected to taking the Mulnivasi Bahujan movement forward in the time of confusion and stress and went beyond the stipulated time.

Every state of the Indian union has a Sadan in the national capital. These Sadans have been set up under the scheme of subsidiary alliances devised by the Britisher between 1798-1805 after the battle of Plassey. Thereafter, it has undergone changes. Most of the princely states in the erstwhile Bombay province were from presently area under Gujarat state; hence, on formation of Gujarat and Maharashtra as separate states, state of Maharashtra established its first state level office in Delhi under name Maharashtra Sadan. The majestic and grand building of New Maharashtra Sadan was inaugurated by the President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India on 4th June, 2013.

In the foreground of this splendid building stands three different statues of three great men who have played vital role in laying the foundation of making India a society based on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. These revered names are Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Rashtrapita Jyotirao Phuley and Babasahib Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It is a great cultural symbol and a token of gratitude to the cultural ethos of Mulnivasi Bahujan reformers who are prominent makers of modern India. In the inside lobby stands a statue of Rajrishi Chhatrapati Sahuji Maharaj. All four of them fought vir-

ulently against the domination of upper castes against the sudras and untouchables. Who can forget the humiliation Chhatrapati Shivaji has to face, even when he was king, at the hands of Brahmins when they refused to perform his coronation ceremony on the pretext of being a sudra and showed utmost disdain and disrespect to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. While inside the building, the editor saw the statue of Rajrishi Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaj of Kolhapur - a social reformer of utmost zeal and a

through religious scriptures against sudras and untouchables and says that they abrogated the right of education of sudras and untouchables as a result of which these groups remained illiterate for thousands of years. The lack of education led to absence of intellect and knowledge, the lack of intellect and knowledge led to lack capabilities to articulate strategy of their own welfare and development, lack of strategy led to lack of development, lack of development led to evaporation of wealth,

he set a chain of 18 schools in the middle of 19th century in area around Pune in Maharashtra and made his wife Mata Savitri Bai Phuley as Headmistress. In modern Indian, she is the first lady teacher.



Rajinder Kashyap

Babasahib Ambedkar in his book Annihilation of Caste has said, ".....In my judgement, it is useless to make distinction against between secular Brahmin and priestly Brahmin. Both are kith and kin. They are two arms of the same body and one bound to fight for the existence of other." Therefore, he cautioned us by saying that they are not bound to participate in any movement of social reform as such movement would bring their hegemony in the social-religious affairs of Hindus. Hence, the Bahujan themselves have to create and lead any such movement for their betterment.

Homer, the ancient Greek author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* says, "The date that reduces a man to slavery takes away from him the half of his virtue." The chains of mental slavery are worse than the physical slavery as it kills the aspiration and passion amongst the slaves to strive for freedom. Such is the thralldom of long spell slavery on sudras and erstwhile untouchables that they have been reduced to live a life worse than animals. The life struggle and knowledge created by Rashtrapita Jyotirao Phuley, Rajrishi Sahu ji Maharaj and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar - a symbol of knowledge and global icon, are mine fields of gold which have potential to make Bahujans powerful and vibrant the moment they explore it.

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Rajinder Kashyap & Prem Chumber

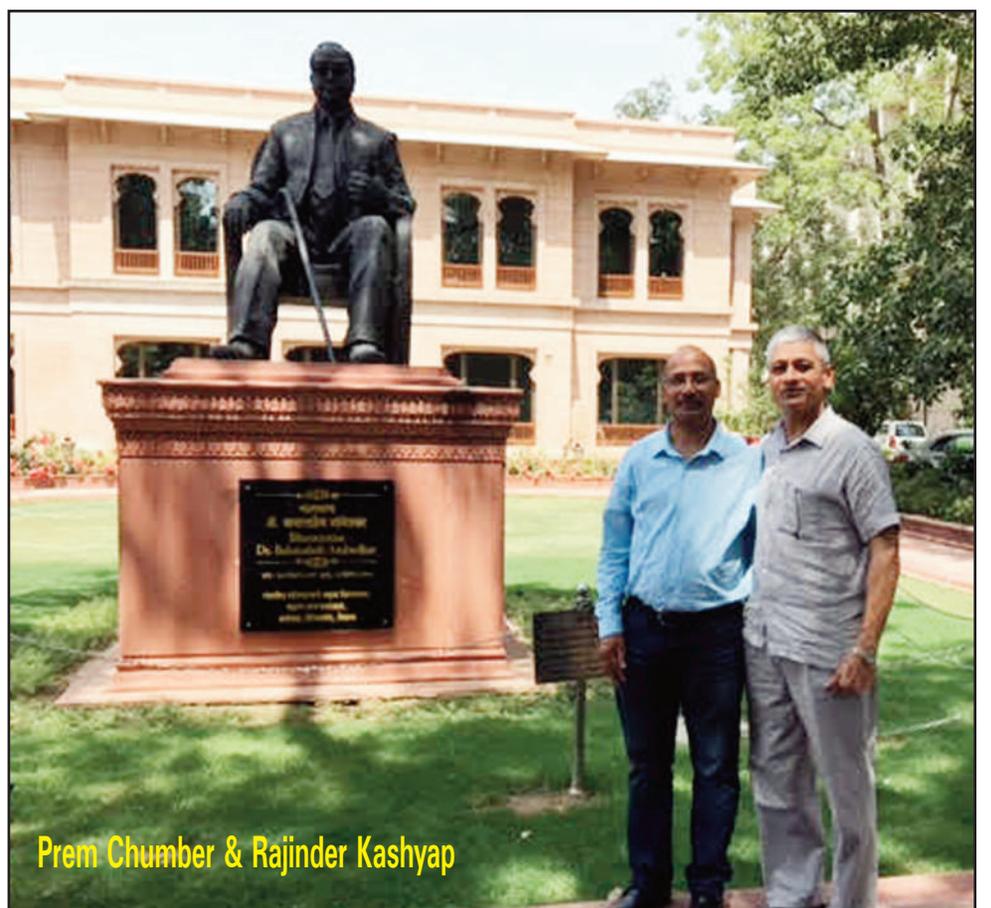
benefactor of Bahujans, who carried out a large number of socio-cultural and religious reforms in his state and under the principle of representation, provided reservation to untouchables in 1902.

Rashtrapita Jyotirao Phuley in his book 'Slavery' highlights the conspiracies woven by the Brahmins

business, trade and commerce, without wealth sudras and untouchable fell into the prey and collapsed. This entire horrible situation prevailed due to lack of education amongst sudras and untouchables. Therefore, the core of Phuley's efforts was on bringing education to sudras, untouchables and women and for this sole purpose



Prem Chumber & Rajinder Kashyap



Prem Chumber & Rajinder Kashyap

# A True Tribute to Sunderlal Bahuguna- Protector of Environment

**P**rominent environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna was born on 9 January 1927 in a small village named Maroda of Tehri district in Uttarakhand and he died on 21 May 2021. Sunderlal Bahuguna started his social service work in 1949, when he was 22 years old, under the influence of Thakkar Bapa and Mira Behn. His first few stints involved building a hostel for Dalit students, starting a movement to allow visit of Dalits in temples, setting up an ashram in Silvarya village to educate youth about environmental conservation to name a few. After the Sino-Indian War in 1962, the Indian government started building roads in the Himalayan region to strengthen security. While constructing roads, indiscriminate deforestation started without considering the geological structure of the mountains. Sunderlal Bahuguna, along with his associates, started the famous

to the United Nations in the hope that it would do everything possible to protect the Himalayan environment and its resources.

Sunderlal Bahuguna also opposed the construction of roads, big dams, the proliferation of the tourism industry and the growing number of hotels in Uttarakhand. He also opposed the construction of Tehri Dam in Uttarakhand. He advocated that the project would endanger the ecosystem of Uttarakhand as it falls in an earthquake sensitive area and millions of people in the surrounding villages would be displaced.

He even fasted for a long time to show his disapproval for the project and an aim to stop it. The Union Government, in view of his grievances, constituted a committee to review the project, but failed to implement the recommendations of the committee. Bahuguna went on

name of development in the Himalayan region. He even went to jail several times for agitating on environmental issues, but he never gave up. "My fight is to save the Himalayas and it will continue," he said.

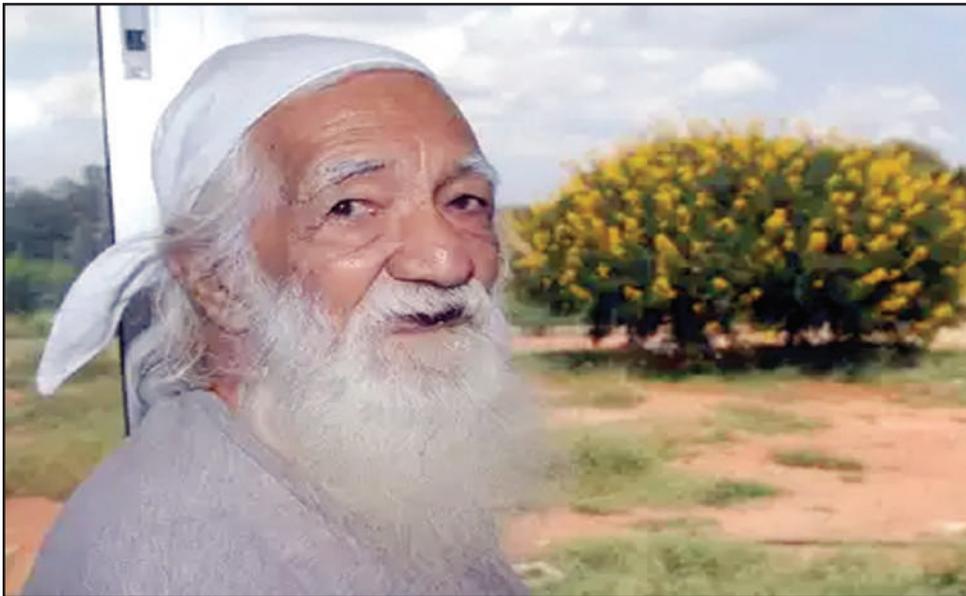
The Uttarakhand tragedy of 2013 came 40 years after he started the Chipko Movement in which millions of locals were made homeless and dozens of villages were displaced due to sliding of mountains from their actual places. The people of Uttarakhand paid heavy environmental costs as the result of initiation of economic development projects by the government. Sunderlal Bahuguna had opposed the construction of dams and deforestation as well as the massive expansion of roads. Since the formation of the new state of Uttarakhand in 2000, a network of roads has been laid in the state to promote it as a tourist place. The

hand were aware of the environmental sensitivities here and had been involved in environmental issues since the time of British rule before the country's independence. After the deforestation, when the British government started planting pine trees in the area, there was a lot of opposition from the local people as from their earlier experience they know that pine trees increase chances of wildfires in the areas they are planted.



**Dr. Gurinder Kaur**

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Chipko Movement in the 1970s to prevent indiscriminate deforestation, which made him renowned all over the world. The slogan of the Chipko Movement is 'Ecology is a permanent economy'. According to Sunderlal Bahuguna, soil, water and forests are the basis of life for all kinds of living beings. If forests are not sustained, then eventually water sources, springs and rivers will also dry up. Without water there will be no food, without trees the soil will erode and henceforth every field will become desolate.

The Chipko Movement spread beyond the Himalayas to the rest of India, and in 1980 the Friends of Nature of the United States, influenced by the movement, honored Sunderlal Bahuguna. With this movement started by Sunderlal Bahuguna, people of the Himalayan region became so aware that they vehemently opposed deforestation in the Himalayan region in the 1980s. As a result of their protest in 1981 the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi banned deforestation in environmentally sensitive areas for 15 years.

Between 1981-83, Sunderlal Bahuguna trekked 5,000 kms from Kashmir to Kohima in the Himalayan region to raise awareness about the environment. During the visit, he collected data on indiscriminate deforestation under the guise of development plans and sent a report

another hunger strike, but construction of the dam continued. Due to the construction of this dam, Sunderlal Bahuguna was deeply saddened by the devastation of the people and the environment. The dam had also hit his ancestral home and he had to leave the village.

Following Gandhi's footsteps, Sunderlal Bahuguna mobilized the people of Uttarakhand as well as the Himalayan region from village to village to save the environment. He started this initiative in the 1970s and the Chipko Movement gained momentum in 1974. This was the time when the developed countries of the world just started talking about environmental issues at an international level. The first international conference on environmental issues was held in 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden. Earlier, Sunderlal Bahuguna, in collaboration with his colleagues, had launched a massive awareness campaign in the Himalayan region. Women in the region have also been instrumental in the Chipko Movement to environmental conservation.

Sunderlal Bahuguna was a mobile organization. His campaign to save the trees was known as the 'Appiko Movement' in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. Sunderlal Bahuguna was such a great personality that he refused to accept the Padma Shri award in 1981 because of the indiscriminate deforestation in the

length of roads, which was only 2,000 km in 2000, increased to a staggeringly high number of 24,000 km in 2013. The government neither consulted the geologists nor complied with environmental regulations to build roads, also ignoring views of the local people and environmentalists, while local people and environmentalists briefed the government in detail about the sensitivity of the environment before any development work began. If the government had obeyed environmental activist Sunderlal Bahuguna, the 2013 tragedy in Uttarakhand would not have happened.

In February 2021, a landslide in Chamoli killed about 100 people. The Chamoli tragedy happened on the same hydroelectric project site from where the Chipko Movement was started. The state of Uttarakhand is prone to frequent natural calamities. Earthquakes, cloudbursts, landslides, and forest fires are all natural disasters, but the increase in their number and damage is due to human activities.

In April 2021, two months after the Chamoli tragedy, a forest fire broke out in Uttarakhand, which again caused severe damage to the environment and the people. Since the formation of the state of Uttarakhand in 2000, about 48,000 hectare of forest area has been affected by fire by 2021. The people of Uttarak-

Sunderlal Bahuguna was a man of farsightedness. In an interview to the Times of India in 2018, Sunderlal Bahuguna had said that the new Char Dham Road and Pancheshwar Dam would further destroy the state of Uttarakhand as millions of trees and miles of mountains would be cut down to make way for the construction.

The center and state governments should be aware by now that such environmental abuse will expose the already vulnerable mountainous region to more natural disasters. Sadly, the Central and the state Governments have not implemented any actions based on the experience of an environmentally aware person like Sunderlal Bahuguna. However, the Government of India did honour Sunderlal Bahuguna with various awards over the years. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2009, but the real award for him was to save the environment of Uttarakhand and its people. If the central and state governments want to pay true homage to a great environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna, then they should follow his footsteps and start efforts to save not only the environment of Uttarakhand or the Himalayas, but of the entire country which would be helpful in reducing the number, frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

# How to Protect India from Natural Disasters

On May 17, 2021 cyclone Tauktae from the Arabian Sea in over two decades barrelled up the country's western coast, making landfall in Gujarat. The cyclone hit the coast with such a force that waves of more than three metres rose in the Arabian Sea. These waves flooded thousands of villages in the adjoining areas, damaging many buildings and houses. Strong winds uprooted trees and power poles, disrupting traffic on the roads and causing power outages. After the formation in the Arabian Sea the cyclone moved towards Kerala. The cyclone has caused severe damage in five west coast states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat and the Union Territories of Daman and Diu. Kochi, Goa, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Vadodara, and Kandla airports were cordoned off for security reasons. On May 17, Vadodara airport remained closed all day and about 18 flights were cancelled from Ahmedabad airport. Similarly, other airports were closed during the cyclone. Ships were also sent back to the sea from ports along the way so that they would not collide with each other due to strong winds. This is the first time that such a threat has been felt in India's west coast ports. More than 2 lakh people living in the coastal areas of various states have been evacuated due to early warning from the Indian Meteorological Department. The early warning about the passage and speed of the cyclone by the Indian Meteorological Department is a commendable step, which saved millions of lives.

Despite all this, about two dozen people have lost their lives in the cyclone. Tauktae is the first cyclonic storm to hit the Arabian Sea in 2021, and especially in May (before the monsoon). According to the Indian Meteorological Department, there were an average of five cyclonic storms in the Indian Ocean each year during 1891-2017, of which four were in the Bay of Bengal and only one in the Arabian Sea and cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea were less severe than those in the Bay of Bengal during this period (1891-2017). But in the last few years, the number of cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea has been increasing and the intensity of destruction caused by these storms is also increasing. In 2018, a total of seven cyclonic storms hit the Indian Ocean, out of them three in the Arabian Sea and four in the Bay of Bengal. In 2019, there were eight cyclonic storms, five of which hit the Arabian Sea and three the Bay of Bengal. In 2020, there were a total of five cyclonic storms, two in the Arabian Sea and three in the Bay of Bengal. The average number of cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea each year remained the same until 2017, but since then the number has been steadily rising in recent years.

According to a study by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorol-

ogy (IITM), the Arabian Sea is also turning into a hotbed of cyclonic storms, like the Bay of Bengal, as Arabian Sea Surface temperature has risen by 1.2 to 1.4 degree Celsius over the last 40 years. Cyclones are more common in the Bay of Bengal, where sea surface temperature remains above 28 degree Celsius. According to the Indian Meteorological Department, when Cyclone Tauktae passed through Goa this year, the sea surface temperature there was 30-31 degree Celsius, which increased the speed of the winds in it, resulting in more damage caused by the cyclonic storm. Cyclone Tauktae has arisen from the Arabian Sea for the fourth year in a row and is preceded by a monsoon. It has turned into a fast-moving cyclone during the period from May 14 to 16, compared to previous cyclones. Rising cyclones in the Arabian Sea are a cause of concern for India as they are linked to rising temperature, which are contributing



to the rapid increase in the number of natural disasters.

According to a study by the University of Oregon, the Indian Ocean is warming faster than the other oceans. As the sea surface temperature rises, the intensity of cyclones/hurricanes increases manifold. According to a study by Daniel Levitt and Nico Camnada, if the sea surface temperature rises by one degree Celsius, the wind speed in a cyclone/hurricane increases by 5 per cent. High-velocity cyclonic storms wreak havoc. Cyclone Tauktae has wreaked havoc in an area of 1,200 km across all states from Kerala to Gujarat.

Heavy rains in Kerala before the cyclone caused severe flooding in its districts, causing severe damage to crops and buildings and killing two people, while eight people died in Karnataka. Seventy-three villages in six districts of Karnataka have been badly damaged by strong winds and heavy rains. In Goa, two people have died, 200 houses have collapsed and 500 trees have been uprooted. Goa airport was closed for a day. Mumbai, a city of Maharashtra 120-130 kms away from the path of Cyclone Tauktae, was also badly affected by the strong winds and heavy rains. Flights and local public transport were shut down for several hours, and strong winds caused power outages and disrupted official business.

The strong and humid winds of the cyclone are affecting Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and some other states in the form of rains. As the average temperature of the earth rises, so does the temperature of the oceans. According to a NOAA report, rising sea levels also increase the number of natural disasters such as cyclones and tsunamis. According to the Indian National Center for Ocean Information Service of Hyderabad, the sea level in the coastal areas of India is rising at an average rate of 1.6-1.7 mm per annum. The rate of sea level rise is not the same in all the coastal areas of India. In the Bay of Bengal, Kolkata has a rate of 5.4 mm per annum, while in the Arabian Sea, Mumbai has a rate of 1.2 mm per annum. Rising sea level not only causes natural disasters related to the sea but also affect the people living in the coastal areas.

About 40 per cent of India's

more than tripled and intensity of disasters has doubled as compared to 1970. Above description of natural disasters clearly highlights the fact that excessive tampering with nature is becoming the cause of man's own destruction.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also a natural warning. At one time, even developed countries could not get any relief. Although the introduction of the vaccine has brought some relief to the developed world, it has not yet completely eradicated the scourge. Moreover, it is not known how the disease originated and what is the main cause of its occurrence. So, we must stop tampering with nature too much. In spite of the fact that in India people are given advance notice of the onset of cyclones and the State Government manage to evacuate them from time to time, it was a shame that three barges and an oil rig went adrift in the Arabian Sea on Monday endangering the lives of about 700 personnel on board.

In view of the increasing number of natural calamities due to rising temperature, the

Central and State Governments should take care of natural resources to avoid any kind of natural disasters. The governments need to keep cyclone as well as tsunami warning devices in place. In addition, the coastal states should assess the environmentally sensitive areas of each district of their state, plan to take safeguards to overcome the natural calamity in the area and take precautionary measures. The Central and State Governments should impose a complete ban on any kind of construction and development projects in the environmentally sensitive coastal areas. The governments should maintain the presence of natural wetlands and vegetation in the coastal areas as these help in preventing and reducing the damage caused by natural disasters. The Central Government should not relax construction rules in the coastal areas as it did in 2018 by relaxing the rules of the 2011 Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, which will make already environmentally sensitive coastal areas more prone to natural disasters. We should remember that development of any place should be for human beings, if they do not remain alive then development will have no meaning. To save the coastal areas from natural disasters, the government should adopt pro-people and nature-friendly development models.



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# Jai Singh Phillaur – An Obituary

**J**ai Singh Phillaur (1954-2021), a social and community activist of his own standing passed away on May 22 due to the deadly virus of Corona. I did not know Jai Singh Sahib very intimately and met him only a couple months ago at a meeting of Scheduled Caste Ekta (Entrepreneur) and Empowerment Forum (SCEEF) at Chandigarh and more recently at a Webinar of SCEEF some two weeks ago. Jai Singh himself informed that he was not well and was running a high fever and was found Corona positive. I was impressed by his commitment to and engagement with matters of community interests. Jai Singh was suffering from some sort of infirmity in legs as even in Chandigarh he was using a walker to help himself. I



found Jai Singh was a man of brevity and would tend to say his mind and view point candidly but briefly. Though I was impressed by his presentations and dignified demeanor yet I was yet to fathom his depth. He himself informed that he was engaged in the issue of bonded labour and other matters pertaining to the weaker sections of society particu-

larly dalits and felt that Jai Singh was an activist belonging to the left orientation. But his presence at the meetings of SCEEF which is an outfit affiliated to the right-wingers like the BJP and RSS waffled me. Later I came to know that Jai Singh and his family have had RSS connection from the days of his grandfather, who was an employee with the Railways, was an active RSS Swayamsevak. Notwithstanding all this, it was certain that Jai Singh was a much re-

spected and sought after personality as mentioned and referred to by many like Dr. Varinder Garg an RSS Swayamsevak, BJP leader Rajesh Bagha and Former Chief Parliamentary Secretary Avinash Chander, Social and Political activist Paramjit Singh Kainth among others.

After getting the sad news of the demise of Jai Singh and obtaining

the telephone number from Rajesh Bagha, I spoke to one of the Aides of Jai Singh, Jasbir Singh to register my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. Jasbir Singh, giving the background of the departed soul, informed that Jai Singh was fully engaged in the welfare and wellbeing of the weaker sections of the society through his various outfits like - i) Volunteers for Social Justice ii) Dalit Dasta Virodhi Andolan iii) NAREGA workers Union etc. Though Jai Singh

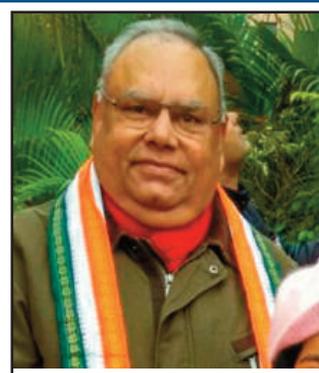


privileged particularly dalits both in India and international and multi-lateral fora. Jasbir Singh connected me to one of the two

sons of Jai Singh, Jaskaran Singh and I spoke to him. I felt that Jaskaran, an advocate like his father, must be a good and humble personality. Giving the family details, Jaskaran informed that they were two brothers and one sister. The brother and the sister were also advocates. Jai Singh's father was a teacher by profession. One may observe that the whole family, from the grandfather onwards, was a well placed and educated lot and was engaged in social and community matters. I was fully impressed by the persona and credentials of Jai Singh in a short span of our association. The

deadly virus did not allow us to carry on and learn from each other and work together for the wellbeing of our fellow brethren in the weaker sections of the society. I feel cheated and robbed and conclude it with a heavy heart and prayers for the nirvana of Jai Singh ji.

ਨ ਫੁੱਲ ਥਾਮ ਸਕੋ; ਨ ਪਕੜ ਸਕੋ ਦਾਸਨ,  
ਬਹੁਤ ਕਰੀਬ ਤੇ ਉਠ ਕਰ ਚਲਾ ਗਯਾ ਕੀੜੀ



**Ramesh Chander**  
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# Firoz Khan – a singing sensation of Punjab

**O**ff and on in my blogs, I have been writing about performing artists like singers and lyricists of Punjab, particularly belonging to dalit communities, writers - Gurdass Ram Alam, Charan Singh Safri, Charan Dass Nidhadak, Pritam Ramdasspuri, Rattu Randhawewala, Chan Goryanawala among others and singers - Hans Raj Hans, Nooran Sisters, Ginni Mahi among others. I like good songs with moving tunes and meaningful wording. It was surprising to note that I got many mails and calls both within the country and abroad from research scholars about these matters after reading my blogs. In a few cases it turned out to be that these scholars were non-Indians. It was rather surprising pleasantly.

The other day on April 5, I bumped into a singing sensation of Punjab, Firoz Khan just by fluke. I was to meet my friend Baldev Bhardwaj, who is fully engaged with the activities of Ambedkar Bhawan in Jalandhar, at the Bhawan. On reaching there Baldev called me in and introduced me to a smart and good looking well dressed young man, Firoz Khan, the heart-throb of Punjabi music and song lovers. He was shooting some of his forthcoming songs on Babasaheb Ambedkar which is scheduled to be released on

or before pril 14, birth anniversary of the greatest son of India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It was good to meet Firoz a charming personality oozing with confidence in the presence of other



senior functionaries of Ambedkar Bhawan, Dr. Ram Lal Jassi, Dr. Gian Kaul and facilitator of the shooting Mohinder Sandhu of Meheru who himself is an established writer and promoter.

These performing artist look good on screen and enjoy huge fan-following but seeing them shooting, at least to me, remained a boring exercise. Later, we sat together for a cup of hot masala tea after their pack up. I found Firoz a simple man without any tantrums of a celebrity.

On my query about his training and background, Firoz told me that music and vocal talent was in his genes which he got from his maternal side. Later it was fine tuned by his Guru

Shaukat Ali. Firoz belonged to Phagwara, an industrial town of the Doaba region of Punjab. I enquired about his famous and acclaimed songs and albums, with great humility he answered that there were many and better it would be if I access him on YouTube for details. Back home I checked with my son, Rupesh, who knew a bit better and he told me that some years before Firoz was one of the sought after singers of Punjab. Reluctantly, on query as he was a good looking and

baby faced chap, Firoz informed that he acted too in one of the films named Juggadi.com apart from giving his voice as a playback singer in a couple of Punjabi films. These days he was busy in missionary songs for the awakening of dalit communities. It was just a co-incident that he was shooting songs at Ambedkar Bhawan written by one of my fellow Bootan-Mandians, Khuswinder Billa who was residing in the UK. The theme of these songs was to focus on the famous dictum of Babasaheb "Educate, Organise and Agitate". It was not surprising to listen from him that he had the honour to adorn the stages of Guru Ravidass Gurburab at Bootan Mandi many a times like many of his worthy seniors and juniors did every successive year. Guru Ravidass Jyanti at Bootan Mandi Jalandhar is an important event on the calendar of cultural and social events of the area. One of his missionary songs written by Kashmir Thakkarwalia much acclaimed by the public was - ਲੋਕੀ ਕਹਦਿ ਜੁੱਤੀਆਂ ਗੰਦਾ; ਉਹ ਗੰਦਾ ਤਕਦੀਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ . Firoz Khan sang that song at one of the Gurburab's of Guru Ravidass at Bootan Mandi which was still engraved in the memory of the faithfuls. It was good to meet Firoz Khan, a celebrity by own right. I wish him all the best in the days to come.



## Remembering Late Sh. Piara Ram Lakha Ji

On this day (May 26, 2019) Sh. Piara Ram Lakha, father of Sh. Amrik Chand Lakha (CPA), a well known personality, left his mortal frame to abide in the eternal kingdom of Almighty. Sh. Piara Ram ji hailed from village Paddhi Jagir of district Jalandhar (Pb). He was living with his family in Fremont (CA) for a long time. Sh. Piara Ram ji was very humble and spiritual being who looked after the well-being of his family and friends circle very well. His son, Sh. Amrik Chand CPA, following into the footsteps of his father also always stood in the front line of community service. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum fondly remember Sh. Late Piara Ram Lakha ji and pray Almighty for His grace on the departed noble soul.

**Prem Kumar Chumber**

**Editor-in-Chief**

**Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba**

### Change of Name

**I, Kawaldeep Singh s/o Jagraj Singh**

**Resident of:  
2242 Citrine Way  
Sacramento, CA-94565**

**Now I have changed my name**

**From:**

**Kawaldeep Singh Gill**

**To:**

**Kawaldeep Singh**

**All concerned kindly note it.**

### Change of Name

**I Subhash Sil s/o Jatindra Mohan Sil**

**Resident of :  
9504 Ravenna Ln,  
Stockton, CA- 95212**

**Now I have changed my name**

**From:**

**Subhash Sil**

**To:**

**Subash Sil**

**All concerned Kindly note it.**



**Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD**

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**Goodie Takhar, PhD**