



Antim Ardass for Mata Bishan Kaur Chumber



Late Smt. Bishan Kaur Chumber



Ramesh Chander Ambassador (I.F.S. Retd.)

My friend Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief of the esteemed Weeklies, The "Ambedkar Times" and The "Desh Doaba" of California (USA) and the bereaved Chumber family lost their beloved mother Smt. Bishan Kaur Chumber on November 29, 2021. It was a matter of great loss not only for the family but for the entire community. The Antim Ardass for the departed soul was held at the Sri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara at Urban Estate in Jalandhar (Punjab) India on December 5, 2021 at a solemn ceremony of the Path of Shri

Sukhmani Sahib and Shabad Kirtan of Gurbani at a well-attended congregation.

With the Ardass, some prominent persons, friends and relations of the family, paid wholesome tributes to Smt. Bishan Kaur for her grit and toil to bring up her four sons (Charanji Lal, Prem Kumar and Tarsem Lal, Ravi Parkash) and three daughters (Resham Kaur, Balwinder Devi, Naranjan Kaur), nicely with good education and made them successful in life but also gave them a much needed attribute to belong to the community and do good for the greater benefit of the society at large. Many prominent people, some of

them namely; Prof. Ronki Ram of Panjab University Chandigarh, Ambassador Shri Ramesh Chander, Dr. Kulwant Singh of KMG Hospital Jalandhar City, Principal Raj Kumar Badhan (Jabalpur), Shri Harmesh Jassal of Ambedkar Bhawan Trust, Shri. Charanjit Singh Bipalke (General Secretary of Sri Guru Ravidass Mission Parchar Sanstha Punjab (Regd.), Shri Santokh Singh Jassi Sarpanch, Shri S. L. Mahey, among others paid glowing tributes to the gracious lady, Bibi Bishan Kaur. Shri Tarsem Lal Chumber while thanking the present friends and relations for joining at the Antim Ardass of his mother broke down and said with a choked voice that

he was fortunate to be with the beloved mother in her last days.

Punjabi translation of the booklet 'An Introduction to BAMCEF' written by Manyawar Kanshi Ram was released at the occasion as a befitting tribute to the departed soul. As usual in the continuing efforts to generate awareness in the community by the Chumber family, the booklet has been translated into Punjabi S. Fatejung Singh (Chandigarh) and published by Prem Kumar Chumber Editor-In-Chief: worthy son of Bibi Bishan Kaur, under the aegis of the "Ambedkar Times" (English) and "Desh Doaba" (Punjabi).



PLEASURES AND PAINS OF LIFE (KABHIE KHUSHI KABHI GUM)



Late Smt. Bishan Kaur Chumber

My dear Mr. Prem Chumber

I am sharing these few lines with you as a sequel to our earlier conversation relating to perception and emotional impact of pains and pleasures of life which you and your family have experienced during the last few weeks. The reason prompting me to choose this subject as my individual expression is especially connected to your son's wedding and reception party followed by sadness with your mother's sudden demise.

Joys and griefs of life are two sides of the same coin and are intrinsically woven in the fabric of human life. As we see these events happened in your family so close to each other, just within the last few weeks, are a living illustration of God's mysterious acts.

Your mother was so happy at her home in India on the occasion of her grandson's (Kabir) wedding festivities on 6th and 7th of November, 2021, but ironically within a

few days the family was plunged into sadness with her sudden departure for her heavenly abode.

As already mentioned in my letter of condolences, God even wanted her to share her pleasures with you and the family when Tara Singh Hayer Journalism Award was bestowed upon you in a special ceremony held under the auspices of International Co-ordination and Chetna Award Association of Canada, just 3 days before she had to leave her mortal frame. In another event

she was no more there to share the happiness of an Award bestowed upon you on December 10th, 2021 by Indus Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The untimely and sudden loss of your elder brother a few years ago is an unforgettable loss leaving a great void which is hard to fill.

These events clearly demonstrate how "Khushi and Gum" always play hide and seek with each other in the game of human lives.

My Personal Views and Ob-

servations: - God's acts of creating joys and sorrows are always shrouded in mystery and impossible to understand and explain. Based on what I have learnt from the teachings of Guru Granth Saheb Ji and from the writings of some intellectual theologians I wish to share some of my personal observations on this emotional issue which has always been a delusion in human existence.

1. The ultimate cause for all the change within the Universe must ultimately come from an unchanging power that exists outside the bounds of the universe and we must call that unchanging power "GOD". God is infinite and beyond the reach and knowledge of His creatures.

2. Joys and Sorrows always follow each other just like summer will be followed by winter and spring and vice versa. We would like to have an unending joy and be permanently free from sorrow but that is just not possible under the mysterious laws of Providence. It is like a ride with joy-ups and sorrow-downs.

3. Life is a fusion of happiness and sorrow and they go hand in hand. Sorrow in the beginning darkens our mind and then illumines our mind and then gives us new hope, new promise and new aspirations and determination. Sorrow throws our body into a sea of helplessness then

it lifts our body up and teaches how to swim in the sea of light and delight.

Life can also be termed as a blend of thorns and roses. Rose is an embodiment of love, passion and beauty. Its fragrance touches our heart and its soft petals sooth our emotions. But whenever we try to hold it, it hurts with its prickling thorns.

To conclude we have to admit that "Khushi and Gum" come to exist at the will of God and cease to exist at the will of God. God has blended them as soft and harsh realities of life. We have no choice but to submit to His will.

Guru Arjun Dev Ji's holy Shabad depicts this message so well:

"TERA KIYA MEETHA LAGE-

HAR NAM PADARATH NANAK MANGE"

In the end I again pay my respects to the departed soul of your adorable mother and wish her soul to rest in peace. It was her resilience, spiritual leanings and self-confidence which provided her the strength and fortitude to overcome adversity to keep her moving forward against the challenges of the time.

Some family pictures with loving memories of your respected mother may also please be added, as discussed.

With due regards and best wishes for a Happy New Year- 2022.



O.P. Balley

Founder Member Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA) USA



Get Masks Out of Classrooms

On the heels of a new statewide mask mandate and the continued declaration of a COVID-19 state of emergency, it feels necessary to once again advocate for a population left seemingly voiceless throughout this saga. After a year of being forced out of the classroom, California children have returned only under the condition that they wear masks. Regardless of your perspective on the pandemic and experiences thus far, I think we all need to take a step back and thoroughly evaluate the benefits versus impacts of masking an entire generation during their developmental years. Rather than continue to hinder the ability to verbally and non-verbally communicate, it is long past due that we allow children to remove their masks and provide them with alternatives to protect against the airborne spreading of viruses.

If we heard it once, we have heard it a million times: follow the science. However, science tells us that the vast majority of children who get COVID have mild symptoms, or no symptoms. So, the masking of children cannot be about the children at all; instead, it is about preventing

them from spreading the virus to adults. By now school staff who fall in an at risk category have been advised to vaccinate or test regularly. In fact, teachers were given priority in the line to get vaccines. Getting teachers back in the classroom was just as crucial as getting kids back, but taking kids from virtual learning to masked learning is not much of an improvement.

Children often report symptoms of shortness of breath, headache, nausea, vomiting, syncope, fear, anxiety and depression as a result of masking up. Some children who have extenuating circumstances such as autistic disorder, cerebral palsy, lung disease or hearing disorders, suffer a great trauma from masking. If we genuinely wish to unburden students from the social, mental and physical impacts of the pandemic, we need to let them remove their masks.

I am sure we have all had conversations where someone or both people had to pull their masks away from their faces so the other person could understand what was being said. Imagine doing that

through an entire school day. Masks make it difficult to hear or understand what someone is saying, but they also cover facial expressions. Children need to see a smile, a frown, or a silly face as part of their social development. They also need to show their expressions to feel seen and understood. The hindering of their social development has potentially severe long-term consequences. As things like depression and anxiety are already becoming more prevalent in our society, stunting the emotional growth of an entire generation seems like a dangerous decision to make. As we approach two years of this crisis, we need to think about how we may be creating new, potentially worse, problems.

If masks are intended to prevent the spread of the virus, there are alternatives to masking children such as classrooms getting better ventilation and being provided with air filters. The health and safety of children should remain a priority, but that means every aspect of their health. When a child walks into their classroom, they should be entering an environment where they can learn, feel

safe, and express themselves meaningfully.

Let adults shoulder the burden of government mandates and states of emergency and leave the children out of it.

I sincerely hope that our Governor, our teachers, and all school officials would agree that the well-being of children should be a priority and that we can take on a little extra risk for ourselves to protect them.

Thank you for reading – and as always, if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@saccounty.net.

Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes all or part of the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, Rio Linda, Elverta, Gold River, Rancho Murieta, North Highlands, Carmichael, Foothill Farms and Fair Oaks



Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor

An Assessment of Conference of Parties-26

(Continue from page 2)

in Kyoto, Japan which set specific targets for carbon emission reduction for developed countries. In both the conferences, although developed countries have promised to reduce their carbon emissions, neither country has done so.

This series of conferences continued, but the developed countries did not provide the committed financial assistance to the developing countries and did not reduce their carbon emissions. At the 2009 conference in Copenhagen, Denmark developed countries pledged 100 billion American dollars a year to help developing and poor countries to cope with climate change, but that did not materialize by 2020.

According to a 2020 report by the United Nations Environment Programme, in 2019 this amount was only 80 billion American dollars. COP-26 also discussed the issue of developed countries not fulfilling their

responsibilities and commitments, which led to the conclusion at the end of the conference that the type of behaviour of developed countries is regrettable and suggested developed countries that 100 billion American dollars should be provided every year to the developing countries upto 2025.

Like every conference, COP-26 proved to be a bundle of agreements, with the average global temperature rising 1.1 degree Celsius higher above the Pre-Industrial Revolution Period. Almost all the countries of the world are facing some kind of natural calamities. In the last week of June this year (2021), a 50 degree Celsius temperature was recorded in about 23 countries. The temperature in the small Canadian town of Latin was recorded at 49.6 degree Celsius.

Generally, temperature in this town averaged between 20 and 22 degrees Celsius during June. Many

people died in the scorching heat. On December 12 and 13, 2021, tornadoes wreaked havoc in the six states of the United States of America. More than 70 people have been killed in the state of Kentucky alone. The United States of America is planning to build a high wall along the sea to protect New York City from rising sea levels.

We must work in harmony with nature to save the people from the ravages of natural disasters caused by rising temperature. To reduce carbon and other greenhouse gasses, forest cover should be increased and old trees should not be cut down. Instead of building walls to prevent natural disasters related to the oceans, the natural vegetation there should be taken care of as it is disaster resistant created by nature. In addition, the local vegetation should be given priority. Natural vegetation suits the local needs of any place.

Developed countries should dispel the illusion that they will be able to protect themselves from natural disasters through new technology. They should seriously reduce greenhouse gasses and carbon emissions.

Fulfilling the promises made in the conferences would be helpful in saving people throughout the world. Countries like China, the United States of America, and India, which are currently emitting large amounts of carbon to generate energy through the use of large quantities of coal, need to generate energy from renewable sources instead of coal. Every country in the world needs to streamline the public transport system and make public transport electric-operated. Along with the governments, it is the duty of every citizen to change their living, eating and drinking habits so that at least targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions can be achieved.



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

URGENT CARE CLINIC

DR. TAKHAR'S FAMILY MEDICINE & URGENT CARE CLINIC

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Goodie Takhar, PhD

An Assessment of Conference of Parties-26

Conference of Parties (COP) - 26, was the 26th conference organized by the United Nations and was held in Glasgow, Scotland from 31st October to 13th November 2021. The conference was originally scheduled for 2020, but has been delayed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An IPCC 2014 report revealed that global warming is causing rapid changes in the climate, which will lead to an increase in the number of natural disasters and the severity of their impact, and affect every country in the world. These natural disasters will hit everyone from rich to poor countries and from large continents to small islands. Frightened by the report's alarming warnings, all countries signed an agreement in 2015 in Paris, France, known as the Paris Climate Agreement, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to control global warming. In the Paris Climate Agreement, all countries agreed that a conference would be convened every five years to review the performance of each country. It was the first conference since the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement to increase the reduction in percentage of greenhouse gas emissions in order to control the rising temperature of the earth and save humanity from the scourge of natural disasters.

In COP -26, 197 countries joined and agreed on 13 November 2021 to plan a new climate agreement (Glasgow Climate Agreement) that would not allow the average temperature to rise above 1.5 degree Celsius above the average temperature during the Pre- Industrial Revolution Period. Achieving this goal requires greater and more sustained reductions in greenhouse gasses, which would require all countries to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010 levels and to a net-zero by 2050. Many important decisions have been taken in this conference. At the conference, 100 countries, including Canada, the Russian Federation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the United States of America, signed an agreement on a complete cessation of deforestation and reforestation by 2030. Brazil has also agreed to end illegal deforestation by 2030.

Ninety countries, including the United States of America, and European countries, have signed an agreement to reduce methane gas by 30 per cent by 2030. Methane gas is a very important greenhouse gas that has the potential to heat the atmosphere 80-86 times more than carbon dioxide over a period of 20 years. Leaders in the United States of America, and European countries have said that a rapid reduction in gasses such as methane gas (rapidly warming the atmosphere) is an important decision to limit the earth's average temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius. If methane emissions are reduced by 30 per cent, it could stem the rise in temperature by up to 0.2 degree Celsius by 2050. Fifteen countries, including Brazil, Canada,

and Nigeria, which emit large amounts of methane gas into the atmosphere, have signed the agreement. This is an important agreement reached in COP- 26 because methane gas has the potential to heat the atmosphere much more than carbon dioxide in a shorter period of time and a NOAA report has revealed that during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns there was an increase in methane in the atmosphere by 14.7 parts per billion, which is a matter of concern. The rest of the greenhouse gasses had decreased by 7 per cent during the period. The increase in methane gas is also the result of the increasing preference of non-vegetarian food. To meet the demand for non-vegetarian food, large scale deforestation is



being carried out to create pastures and habitats for the animals. Due to the large number of domesticated animals the emissions of methane gas are increasing rapidly as an animal emits an average of 220 pounds of methane gas every year. A research by Davis UC has revealed that domesticated animals produce 14.5 per cent of the total greenhouse gasses. The agreement regarding a rapid reduction of methane gas is a very reasonable agreement to control the rising temperature.

In COP-26, 45 countries, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Gabon, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uruguay, have pledged 4.4 billion American dollars to convert agriculture into sustainable agriculture. At the conference, several countries have pledged to reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses by using electric cars instead of petrol and diesel cars.

About 140 countries, including the United States of America, Canada, Japan, and European countries, have pledged to achieve net-zero emissions. Countries such as India, Nigeria, Thailand, the Russian Federation, and Saudi Arabia, which had previously not set a limit on net-zero emissions, have also submitted to the conference a net-zero withdrawal time limit. Presenting the performance of the conference despite so many promises and agreements, the COP- 26 President Alok Sharma said that he was sorry that he had to make repeated changes in the agreement as there were so many issues. As there was

no consensus on many issues, attempts have been made to strike a balance in this agreement. The Costa Rican representative said that although the draft agreement could not fully meet the target, it is workable. Many other countries have also agreed with this view because even if carbon emission reduction plans submitted by all the countries in this conference to the United Nations are taken seriously, a Climate Tracker (a non-profit independent analytics platform) report has indicated by the end of the century, the average temperature rise will exceed the safe limit of 1.5 degree Celsius will reach 2.4 degree Celsius, which according to various scientific assessments will be fatal.

An important issue which emerged during the conference is to use renewable sources in place of coal use as soon as possible to generate energy to curb rising temperature. More than 40 countries have signed an agreement on non-use of coal for power generation. These include Poland, Chile, and Vietnam, which are currently heavily dependent on coal use. Another agreement on the use of coal was signed by 20 countries agreeing not to provide financial assistance to coal-fired projects in other countries. China, the United States of America, and India, which are currently the world's first, second, and third largest producers of coal power, have not signed the agreement on coal use for power generation. On the last day of the conference, China, and India diluted the agreement by using the term "phase-down" instead of stopping the use of coal. The United States of America has submitted its blueprint to the United Nations, which indicates not to generate energy from coal use by 2035, but China has said it will start planning to reduce coal use after 2026. There is no mention of planning to reduce coal use by India. The use of coal leads to rapid increase in carbon emissions which not only raises the temperature but also increases air pollution and air pollution also causes smog and acid rain.

China has pledged net-zero emissions by 2060 and India by 2070, while the United States of America has pledged net-zero emissions by 2050. On the other hand, European countries have so far reduced their carbon emissions by 24 per cent since 1990 and have

planned to reduce them 55 per cent by 2035. China, and India have not signed an agreement to reduce methane gas, while China, India, and the Russian Federation all release 35 per cent of the total methane emissions into the atmosphere.



Dr. Gurinder Kaur
Former Professor, Department of Geography, Punjabi University, Patiala.
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More than 100 countries have signed an agreement on deforestation and replanting by 2030. The UN Secretary-General has said that signing such an agreement is easy, but only if it is implemented the earth and people can be saved. He said a similar agreement had been reached by 200 countries in New York in 2014 to reduce 50 per cent deforestation by 2020 and stop it by 2030. Five years later, in 2019, instead of increasing the area under forests, deforestation has increased by 43 per cent. If the promises made in 2014 were fulfilled, the forest area would have increased to 150 million hectare by 2020 and 350 million hectare by 2030 and by 2030, forests would be able to absorb 7 billion tons of carbon dioxide every year. According to Global Forest Watch, 26 million hectare of trees will be cut down by 2020 in all countries of the world.

Objecting to net-zero emissions, Like-Minded Developing Countries said that developed countries push all countries to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 as they are still far behind developed countries in terms of economic growth. By doing so, the developed countries will be further ahead and the poorer countries will be left behind which will further widen the economic gap between developed and developing poor countries. According to the Polluter Pay Principle, the polluting countries should reduce their greenhouse gasses earlier and more than the rest of the world so that the rest of the world can catch up with the developed countries. The United States of America, Canada, Australia, Japan, the Russian Federation, and European countries have released large amounts of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere since 1870. Now all these developed countries have come up with the goal of clean zero emissions instead of reducing their emissions and are running away from their responsibilities.

Developed countries have been running away from the promises made at the climate change conferences since 1992. At the 1992 conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil it was agreed that developed countries would first start cutting carbon emissions to curb global warming and will help developing countries financially in developing new technologies to deal with the effects of natural disasters caused by climate change. This was followed by the 1997 conference

(Contd. on next page)

Kewal Vig Awards – 2021

As usual every successive year, Kewal Awards are held on December 4 in the memory of Shri Kewal Vig, a journalist and social ac-

honour for me to participate as a Special Guest of honour. The AAP leader and former senior police functionary IPS Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh was the Chief Guest. Like every year, many prominent personalities namely; IPS Dr. S.K. Kalia,

and writer. It may be added that Kewal Vig Foundation has conferred, in 29 years, Award to 57 prominent personalities from the literary circles. Kewal Vig Award was instituted in 1994 in the memory of Kewal Vig, a prominent journalist and editor of

ludes of poetry, ghazals, and songs by selected performers who re-



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

To Commemorate the 25th Death Anniversary of
SH. KEWAL VIG Founder Editor, JANTA SANSAR
invites you to join the presentation ceremony of

KEWAL VIG AWARD-2021

To be conferred upon :

Dr. S.S. Chhina
Best Writer

Sh. Lal Athouli Wale
Best Lyricist

at
DESH BHAGAT YADGAR HALL
Near BMC Chowk, Jalandhar
on
Saturday, 4th December, 2021, at 3.00 PM

Chief Guest
Dr. Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh
M.A., LL.B., MBA, Ph.D. (IGNOU Amritsar)
AAP Leader, Punjab

Preside Over
S. Kulwant Singh, IAS
Deputy Commissioner, Tarn Taran

Special Guests of Honour

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| Dr. S.K. Kalia, IPS I.G., P.A. B. Jalandhar | Sh. Ramesh Chander Ambassador I.F.S. (Retd.) |
| Sh. B.N. Virsi De. Commissioner State GST, Patna | S. Chetan Singh Director Language Dept. Ph. (Retd.) |
| Sh. Gm. Parkash Khosla Member, Press Council of India | S. Satnam Bitta Gen. Sp. PCCO |



galed and entertained the audience fully. Lal Athouliwale's famous song "Na Jamin Pardesh Othe Nahin Ma Labhani" stole the show. The Ghazals rendered by Surinder Gulson were impressive and made the evening. An integral part of the cultural life of Jalandhar, Gagandeep Sondhi steered the function very ably as Master of Ceremonies. The bonus for me to sit through the function was the books

tivist of his own standing and founder Editor of The Janta Sansar then in Urdu and now in Punjabi. The Award has been instituted by Kewal Vig's worthy son Jatinder Mohan Vig under the aegis of Kewal Vig Foundation.

This year too a good and befitting function was held at Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall in which it was an

Sardar Chetan Singh Director of Department of Languages, Congress Party leader Sardar Satnam Singh Bitta among others also graced the occasion. This year the function was dedicated to two eminent literary personalities – i) Dr. S.S. Chhina, an eminent agro-scientist and writer and ii) Shri Lal Athouliwale, a renowned lyri-

standing in Jalandhar.

The Chief Guest, Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh and other speakers while paying rich tributes to Kewal Vig appreciated and thanked Jatinder Mohan Vig for undertaking the noble act of honouring the much deserving writers and media personalities. The function was inter-spread with inter-

kindly gifted to me at the function – i) The Vintage of Spirituality of Dr. Sarbjit Singh Chhina who was one of the Kewal Vig Awardees and ii) Kafila-Wafawana De – a collection of Ghazals by Surjit Darshi. I will certainly read these and benefit.

Thanks a lot my friend Jatinder Mohan Vig for inviting me.

Ambedkar Government College Bootan Mandi Jalandhar

I wrote about Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar Government College in my blog on September 1, 2021 which may be seen at: <https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com>

tribute and rightly so. The occasion was scheduled to be graced by Hon'ble CM of Punjab Sardar Charanjit Singh Channi during his short visit to Jalandhar. But, unfortunately, he

and Sat Paul Mahey, Iqbal Bhatia, Sama Masih, Jagdish Mahey from Bootan Mandi and Dr. Gian Kaul, Baldev Raj, Sohan Lal and Harmesh Jassal from Ambedkar Bhawan Trust

the senior members of the faculty were not very humble in underlining the fact, of which they were proud, that 15 member strong faculty was 'as good as that of any good college



/2021/09/ambedkar-college-at-bootan-mandi.html since then many positive developments has given, much desired and planned, lift to the building and academic kick-start. It was a matter of great satisfaction. Thanks to MLA of the area Sushil Rinku, Government of Punjab, PWD Department for the civil works and the faculty of the college headed by the current Principal Balwinder Singh and his predecessor Principal Sarbjit Singh. Today, December 17, Babasaheb Bhim Rao College, a much desired and needed institute to cater to the educational needs of the young students of the area, was formally dedicated to the greatest son of India Babasaheb Ambedkar as a befitting

could not make it to the college function due to exigencies of work and weather and had to leave for Chandigarh from another function nearby the college. He deputed his Minister of Education Sardar Pargat Singh to do the honors. Though it was a disappointment to the stake holders viz. the college administration, PWD and the people of Bootan Mandi who were excited to receive the Hon'ble CM at the solemn occasion. The people's representatives; MP Chaudhary Santokh Singh and MLA Sushil Rinku were present at the event along with prominent residents of the area namely; Manohar Mahey, Ramesh Warriku, Ram Murti, Surinderbir Singh, Harish Mahey, Paramjit Mahey

and also Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar Ghanshyam Thori and Social and Educational Activist Ambassador Ramesh Chander among others.

After the formal closing of the function, I, along with Paramjit Mahey, briefly met Principal Balwinder Singh and senior faculty members to get briefing and feedback on the college and its functioning as a matter of common interest in continuation of my earlier visit in September, 2021.

It was gratifying to know that the college, in its first academic year, was doing well with more than 280 students. It was yet another satisfying factor to know that girl students out-numbered the boys. Principal and

in the area'. On enquiring about the co-curricular activities, it was informed that the college was fully geared to host and undertake these activities and added that just recently, the Constitution Day of India was observed and celebrated on November 26 in which a large of students voluntarily participated with great inputs on the makers and making of the constitution led by no else but Babasaheb Ambedkar in whose memory the college has been named. Responding to this, I commented humbly that we shall see to it that the college soon becomes a 'Centre of Excellence' in the area to justify the name of the college and wished the college all success in the days to come.



SHRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA (CA)

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

Sri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg (CA) Gurughar's coming programs

Guru- Piari Sadh Sangat Ji,
Devoted families are requesting entire Sangat to attend the following functions:

December 24-25-26, 2021

Sri Akhand Path Sahib and Langar sewa by S. Amanjeet Singh

Sri Akhand Path Sahib and langar sewa will be hosted by S. Amanjeet Singh S/o S. Balbir Singh and his family for the Chardi-kala of their family. May Waheguru bless this dedicated family and fulfill their desires.

December 31, 2021

Rain Sabai New Year's celebrations

We will be celebrating New Year's Eve at Gurughar in welcoming the New Year 2022. Let us start the New Year with Ardas for love, happiness and prosperity of our Sangat. After Sukhmani Sahib path, jathas of Bhai Bhupinder Singh, Giani Gurnam Singh/Giani Ompal Singh will do the Shabad Kirtan till mid night followed by Ardas for the entire Sangat.

January 7-8-9, 2022

Sri Akhand Path Sahib and Langar sewa by Bhai Ajayvir Birdi

Sri Akhand Path Sahib and langar sewa will be hosted by Bhai Ajayvir Birdi and his family for the Chardi-kala of their family. May Waheguru bless Birdi family.

January 13, 2022

LOHRI Celebration

Lohri will be celebrated in the Gurughar at 6:00 PM on Thursday, January 13, 2022. Sangat is requested to come with their families and friends. Parents of newborn children are specially requested to come and celebrate first Lohri of their new born children in the Gurughar.

February 18-19-20, 2022

645th Gurupurb of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg will be celebrating the 645th Parkash Utsav of SATGURU RAVIDASS JI on Sunday, February 20, 2022 at the Gurughar.

ARAMBH SRI AKHAND PATH February 18, 2022 (FRIDAY) 9:30 AM

BHOG SRI AKHAND PATH February 20, 2022 (SUNDAY) 9:30 AM

KIRTAN DIWAN After Bhog Ceremony until 2:00 PM

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony will be held on February 19th 2022 (Saturday) at 11:00 AM.

www.srigururavidasstemple.com

Sangat Sewadars

Chairperson
Kulwant Kaur Banga

President
Jagtar Singh Bhatia

General Secretary
Abhishek Pal Narabut

Treasurer
Sunita Singh



Ishwar Das Pawar
District and Sessions Judge (Retd.)

My Struggle in Life

Atrocities and Conversions

No person whose conscience and soul are not dead and in whom the milk of human kindness has not dried up can shut his eyes to what breathtaking

happenings are taking place all over the country but more notoriously in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh; and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are being made the target of the worst type of violence and humiliation because of caste arrogance. As a matter of fact, caste has eaten into the very vitals of the Hindu society itself.

Not a single day passes when one does not read about hair-raising brutalities being committed on the weaker and helpless sections of society, particularly the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Molestation of girls and women, lynching of men and women both young and old on flimsy and imaginary pretexts, burning of their houses, and their use of social boycott have become the order of the day. For the sake of illustration, we may have a look at just a few of the numberless incidents of the kind.

It is agonizing to recall how in 1968, forty-two Harijans (people from low caste), mostly women and children, were burnt alive in their huts by caste Hindus in broad daylight in Kilvenmani village in the east Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. All efforts on the part of the victims to escape from the carnage were foiled by the perpetrators of the ghastly crime. And what happened to the savage criminals? The trial court found some of them guilty and consequently convicted and punished them for the offences proved against them beyond all reasonable doubt. However, on an appeal filed against the judgment of the trial court, the Madras High Court acquitted all of them. The court propounded the curious doctrine that the landlords being "rich and respectable" people could not have possibly set fire to the Harijan huts themselves, and that if indeed they wanted those huts burnt down, they would have hired someone else to do the dirty work. For reasons best known to them, the state government did not bother to go on appeal to the Supreme Court against the acquittal verdict of the High Court. Prima facie there were bright prospects of the appeal succeeding if one had been filed.

This is a glaring example of the shameless failure of the entire administration. What happens to our grandiose principle of justice, which stipulates that everybody is equal before the law, when it comes to dealing with cases involving scheduled caste persons? It needs serious heart-searching to find out where the fault lies. Another case is a shocking tale of the gouging out of the eyes of two Harijan brothers, Gopal and Bakhurvahan Gavai, by the caste Hindus of Dhakoh village in Akola district. Their only fault was that they had protested against the molestation of their girl. As the administration did not lend an ear to the cries of anguish and distress of the victims, the case had to be brought to the personal notice of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when she visited that area. We do not know what had been the fate of the case and whether the culprits have been brought to book.

Then came the blood-curdling outrage of vil-

lage Belchhi in the Patna district of Bihar. According to the first press reports, about fifty armed men raided the village at midday on May 27, 1977. They shot dead a forty-year-old Harijan on his doorsteps. Later they collected wood and dry cow dung, sprinkled diesel on it, and set it on fire. They first threw the body of the dead man into it and then caught hold of two children aged nine and thirteen, and eleven others between the age group of thirty and fifty, tied their hands and feet and dragged them near the fire and threw them into it one by one. The administration put out the story that it was not a case of atrocities on Harijans by caste Hindus, but that the incident was the result of a clash between two gangs of hardened criminals. The story has since been found to be untrue. People have not been told whether any action was taken against the local officers who deliberately gave a false version of the incident.

The sessions judge in Patna decided this case on 19 May 1980 and awarded death sentence to two of the accused and life imprisonment to fifteen others. One of the accused, Indira Deo, a member of the Bihar assembly, died before the trial of the case. Yet another painful incident occurred in village Pathadda (Bihar) where a gang of Yadav landlords of the village let loose a reign of terror on the Harijans of their village because they would not submit to the unreasonable and arrogant commands of the landlords. The Harijans were tied with ropes, paraded through the village streets before being locked up in the village school. A little later, they were dragged outside one by one. Women were also beaten mercilessly and insulted.

In Punjab, close to the 1977 general elections, a Harijan was thrown by a landlord into a boiling sugarcane-juice pan in a village in district Patiala. Sometime later, he died in a hospital. Another incident occurred in another village where a Harijan was shot dead by a landlord. The cause of these atrocities was the refusal of the victims to carry out unreasonable orders of their tyrant masters. Then there came the night of terror, horror, disaster that witnessed the devil's dance staged by the savages disguised in the forms and garbs of human beings. Even the ferocious beasts of the jungle could not have surpassed the outrageously heartbreaking performance of these monsters. At about 10:00 PM on 25 February 1980, a gang of five hundred Kurmi landlords of village Kalyan Chuck along with their hired goondas (hooligans), all votaries of casteism, armed with deadly weapons, swooped down upon the Harijan settlement in neighboring Pipra village in the Poonpoon police station area of Patna district of Bihar. The attack was made from all sides, and as a result, fourteen Harijans, including seven women and four children, were murdered. The carnage continued for nearly six hours. The attackers madly ran about, setting fire to houses, looting the belongings of their victims, and gunning down people fleeing from burning huts. At least twelve persons were shot dead and then tossed into the fire, and the victims included a two-year-old boy who was shot and then thrown into the fire. The entire Harijan population would have been wiped out but for the determined and heroic resistance put up by the Harijans. In defense, they used bricks and stones to keep the aggressors at bay. Even their cattle were not spared and

were roasted alive. Wage dispute between the Kurmi landlords and the Harijans was the main cause of the killings of Pipra. The Harijans had

been agitating for better wages. They demanded that the farm wages should be in accordance with the rates fixed by the government, but the landlords insisted that they would not pay more than one kilogram of wheat and half a kilogram of sattu (barley flour) per day. The Harijans also suggested that in case they were not paid wages at government rates, at least the quantity of wheat and sattu given to them should be doubled. But the Shylockian landlords were after the blood of the poor people, and they would not agree even to so low a demand.

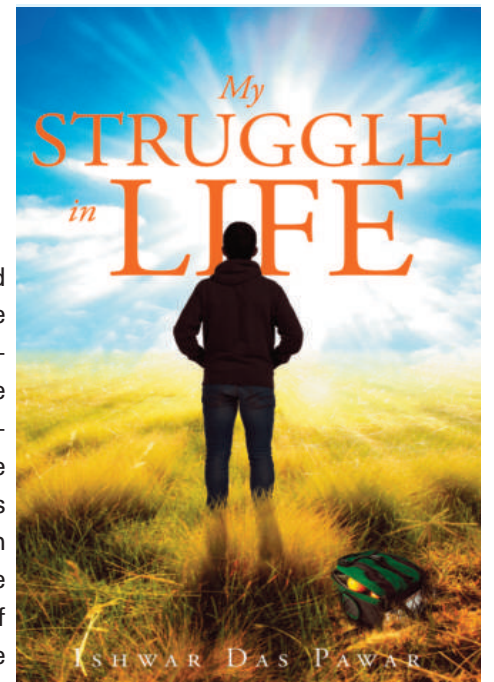
The slaughter of the Harijans by the butcher Kurmi landlords of the nearby village is an unflinching proof of the real intentions, working, and the fruit of casteism. The ghastly and gruesome carnage of the helpless people and even of animals would not have taken place but for the caste arrogance that turned the demoniac landlords rabid. The additional sessions judge in Patna convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment fifty of the sixty-one accused including some landlords and two student leaders of Patna University on August 5, 1981.

Twelve persons were burnt alive or gunned down in the same manner by the landlords of village Dohiya Parasbigha in Gaya district on February 6, 1980, that is, about twenty days before the Pipra outrage. The victims belonged to weaker sections of society. Therefore, these killings also belong to the category of atrocities against Harijans. Furthermore, caste arrogance is a common factor in all these happenings. What is happening in Kanjhawala village situated in the vicinity of Delhi right under the nose of the central government? The Jat landlords of the village are not allowing the Harijans to cultivate the lands allotted to them. The government has provided police protection to them, but in spite of all this, they cultivate the lands under constant fear of the landlords who are extremely headstrong.

An equally heinous and gruesome occurrence took place in Kafalta village in Almora district of Uttar Pradesh, in which fifteen Harijans were massacred by the caste Hindus on 9 May 1980. The trouble arose when the caste Hindus objected to the passing of a Harijan marriage party through the chaupal (public space) of the village. Of the fifteen Harijans killed, six were burnt alive when the house in which they had taken shelter was set on fire. This ghastly and brutal act of the caste Hindus is, as usual, the result of intoxication caused by caste arrogance.

Can there be a more satanic and condemnable social system which permits such beastly deeds? One feels suffocated in such an atmosphere prevailing in

(Contd. on next page)



Atrocities and Conversions

(Continue from page 7)

the Hindu society. Sooner or later, the Harijans shall have to find a way out of this inferno and the sooner the better. A horrifying and woeful tale of atrocity comes from village Ravai, district Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh. On 25 February 1982, the caste Hindus of the village gouged out the eyes and chopped off the hands of a Harijan boy named Lalo. By this roguish deed, they have turned the bright world of the budding boy into a dark world forever. Such is the bitterest fruit of the caste tree. This fiendish deed was committed by the caste Hindus apparently in the service of their religion (if it be a religion at all) epitomized in the Chaturvarna (four basic castes) and truly represented by the caste system. A tree is known by the fruit it yields.

It is not the mystical and labyrinthine philosophy, which is generally misleading and deceptive, that makes a religion great; it is the effect it produces on its followers and votaries as they understand it that determines it as good or bad. Truth is simple and sublime, and it does not need a complicated and confusing mental gymnastics in the form of a philosophy to support it. The scheduled caste, men and women, young and old, of village Hussanpur and neighboring villages of Patiala district in Punjab, who had assembled in the said village on the 5 July last, to lodge their protest against the excesses committed on the Harijans of the village some days before, were attacked by the landowners at the venue of the public meeting they were holding. The meeting was disrupted and the loudspeakers were smashed. A doctor who had gone there from Patiala was also injured. A number of persons who were injured in the assault were admitted to the Rajindra Hospital, Patiala. Later, a large number of Harijans met the deputy commissioner of the district and apprised him of the terror struck in their basti (colony) by the landowners. These atrocities are being committed because the Harijans have started asserting themselves and this the caste-ridden landowners cannot tolerate this. They want to use them as their slaves as hitherto done. They cannot bear the idea that the fruits of freedom should be shared by the poor people also. How unreasonable and unjust this attitude is!

Individual rapes, as well as mass rapes, of innocent and hapless girls and women have become the order of the day. Each day brings awesome and heartrending stories of brutish rapes. In all the reported cases, barring rare exceptions, Harijan girls and women are the victims. These cases are on the increase. The goonda rapists derive encouragement from the fact that even the members of the police force, who are the guardians of life and honor of the people themselves indulge in the outrageous crimes like rape and murder. Such cases are countless.

As an example, at least nine Harijan women of Korina village in Banda district were raped by ruffians toward the end of June last. According to the village headman, the culprits, who were in police uniforms, brought a man and told the headman that they wanted to search the houses to recover some stolen property. But instead, they looted about a dozen houses, took Harijan women to a hill, and raped them there. This harrowing tale was narrated by the headman to the police. What action was taken and with what result nobody knows.

Another ghastly case: a sixteen-year-old Har-

ijan girl, Sheela Devi, who was married to a peon, Nafe Singh, at Dabwali in district Hissar (Haryana) barely six months before the Korina occurrence, was raped by two constables of the local police station on 13 July last. Thereafter, while the girl, along with her husband, was being taken in a jeep by the constables to a hospital for her medical examination, she was thrown down the vehicle before a speeding truck, and she was crushed to death. This case of rape and murder has aroused widespread resentment and anger and has also caused panic among the population of the town. The public held a big demonstration against the police. Without any valid reason, the police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing one person and injuring a number of them.

Nafe Singh, the unfortunate young husband of the police victim, has written to the authorities seeking protection to his life, as according to him, the police are after him in order to destroy the evidence of the sole eyewitness of the murder. His elimination would mean certain failure of the case for lack of evidence. Only two examples typical of the countless cases of humiliation and indignities heaped on the scheduled castes by the caste-dominated people on the basis of caste alone should suffice to illustrate the point. Babu Jagjiwan Ram was invited to unveil the statue of the late Dr. Sampurnanand on the campus of the Varanasi Sanskrit University, of which the latter was the founder. Babu Jagjiwan Ram was then a Union cabinet minister. After the ceremony of unveiling the statue was over, a sizeable section of caste Hindu audience gave the statue a purificatory bath with Ganga-Jal (pure water of sacred river Ganges) as, according to them, it had been defiled by the touch of an untouchable.

In spite of the high and responsible positions Babu Jagjiwan Ram has held and his acknowledged political ability and acumen, he remains to the caste Hindus an untouchable, unworthy of social recognition. This was not the insult only of an individual; it was the humiliation of and an attack on the self-respect of the entire community. Casteism is holding the Hindus in its deadly clutches. Their escape from it does not seem to be within sight.

According to a news item published in the Times of India of 16 July 1980, a case has been registered against three senior civil officials of Delhi under the Protection of Civil Rights Act for contemptuously calling Krishan Lal, a sanitary guide, a "bhangi" (sweeper) and further telling him that he would remain a bhangi. The three officials involved are a joint director, a joint commissioner, and a deputy commissioner. This is a typical specimen of the behavioral impropriety amounting to an offence on the part of very responsible officers toward the Harijans. What can we say about the wrongdoings of ordinary persons against the weaker sections of the nation! Atrocities on Harijans remain unabated. Murder, rape, arson, oppression, and terror have become the order of the day. Gujarat, the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, has excelled in this matter. These happenings have served as an eye-opener to the Harijans. Now they know where they stand. The echo of these incidents could be heard in Parliament also when Hira Lal Parmar, a scheduled caste Congress (I) member of Parliament was physically gagged on the floor of the House as he tried to narrate the atrocities being committed on the innocent and defenseless Harijans.

It caused quite a stir in the House. Parmar took courage, and by shouting about the Gujarat police and waving photographs and newspapers, stated that the state police was torturing and maiming Dalit students and the people. He further stated that the reservation, agitation had been used as an excuse to torture and kill Dalits (oppressed people). He also referred to the false propaganda carried on by the newspapers against the Harijans. Babu Jagjiwan Ram was equally forthright in his denunciation of the atrocities against the Harijans. He warned the House that the problem was the genocide and not reservations. According to him, thousands of scheduled caste people had to leave their hearths and homes and go to other places of safety.

The agitation did not remain confined to Gujarat only. Its fallout traveled to other states as well. The following are some of the instances of how the scheduled castes were terrorized, tortured, humiliated, and put in physical danger. In the early hours of the morning of December 26, 1980, a gruesome occurrence took place in village Jetalpur, eighteen kilometers from Ahmedabad in Gujarat. A Harijan young man, Shakrabhai Premabhai, accused of stealing a wristwatch and a blanket, was rudely woken up by a group of Patel youths of the village, badly beaten up and then taken to the panchayat (village council) house. There they poured kerosene oil on him and set him ablaze. The police arrested ten Patel youths including the police Patel, and eventually they were put on trial for the murder.

The trial first began in the court of the additional sessions judge of Ahmedabad (rural) who lived and worked at Narol, very close to village Jetalpur. After the statements of all the prosecution witnesses had been recorded, both the state and the deceased's family got apprehensive that the trial would not be fair and just in view of the bias shown by the judge against the Harijans and in favor of the accused. This became evident from the conduct of the judge during the recording of evidence. On their application, the High Court transferred the case to the court of V. H. Thakore, additional city sessions judge in Ahmedabad. The trial resulted in the conviction of three of the ten accused, including the police Patel, and they were sentenced to life imprisonment while the other seven were acquitted.

The judgment in this case, delivered on 31 August 1981, is remarkable on various points. Its principal merit is that it has vividly brought to the fore the complex operation of caste prejudices, both subtly and crudely, at various levels of society. It underscores that several power forces tried to swing the case in favor of the murderers. It has also been held that there was no direct connection between the alleged theft by the victim and his brutal murder because there was no way of knowing when the articles were stolen or by whom. According to the learned sessions judge, there was caste tension, and during the Navratri festival some weeks before the ghastly occurrence, there had been a quarrel between Shakrabhai Premabhai and the police Patel, the principal culprit. It is obvious that the cold-blooded murder was the outcome of caste prejudice and arrogance. Even in the face of such occurrences, there are loud but phoney protests against the conversions of Harijans to Islam and Christianity. Let these perpetrators of inhuman crimes and their collaborators

(Contd. on next page)

Atrocities and Conversions

(Continue from page 8)

and supporters stew in their own juice and be happy. Babu Lal Barothe, a Harijan, who had donated a fifty-thousand- rupee temple idol for the recently constructed Sai Baba temple at Nagpur was himself prevented from sanctum sanctorum by the priest and members of the managing committee for the reason that he was an untouchable. He was obviously ill-advised to make a donation to a Hindu temple. The humiliation hurled on him was of his own seeking. He could have spent the handsome amount wisely on a good cause. But the point here relates to the niggardly and dirty Hindu mentality.

Two constables and four Home Guards gang-raped a twenty- eight-year-old Harijan woman on the operation table on the night of Holi (festival of colors) last in the primary health centre of Rajpura, a tehsil (county) town in Chandrapur. Could these shameless criminals dare commit such a grave crime against so-called high-caste woman? Six tribal girls had been raped near Bharoli in Tezpur. The police, instead of taking action against the culprits, joined in committing atrocities against the aggrieved people. The issue was raised in the Assam assembly, but what action was taken ultimately is not known. There is always a soft corner for the culprits as they are so-called high-caste people. There has been in recent times a caste war in Doogwan village of Uttar Pradesh. About sixty-five Harijan families of the village were living in fear following an armed attack on them by the Rajputs on the evening of March 21, 1981. The attack was a sequel to a petty dispute over payment of arrears of wages to a Harijan. Two Harijans, Khacheru, fifty-five, and Naraini, sixty, were shot, and twenty-four others sustained injuries. Among the injured were a seven-year old child Hari Om and eight other children. Hari Om, who sustained as many as twenty-nine bullet wounds, was rushed to the Aligarh Medical College hospital. There were bullet marks on the walls of several houses of the Harijans. Their huts were set on fire. According to the Harijans, the Rajputs had been getting protection from politicians, including an opposition member of Parliament and a Congress (I) member of legislative assembly. How insecure and horrible is the life of these people!

Another heartbreaking incident: about fourteen Harijans were mercilessly gunned down by the dacoit Pothi and his associates in Kunisonpura village of Uttar Pradesh, and three other Harijans sustained bullet injuries. Pothi's gang of decoits was invited to the village by an influential Thakur who was on inimical terms with the members of the Jatav community. Terror gripped the village as about two dozen decoits armed to the teeth entered it. Pothi asked all the Jatavs to gather at a place called Anganlal ki chaupal (common place of Anganlal) where he announced he would hold a panchayat to settle the dispute. At the panchayat, he declared that the Harijans were at fault and asked them to seek pardon from the Thakur. The terror-stricken Jatavs abided by the dacoit chief's directive. Holding their ears with both hands, they lay prostrate before the Thakur. But the story did not end there. The bandits curtly asked the Jatavs to line up outside the chaupal. As they did so, the outlaws fired on them indiscriminately with semiautomatic weapons, killing about fourteen of them. Harijans who survived the massacre fled the village in panic.

What a horrible and cold-blooded butchery of innocent and defenseless persons! Will the conscience

of society and the nation ever prick and be responsive? If so, when? But not after all the Harijans have been liquidated by the arrogant Hindus. Our countrymen's conscience is dull, rather virtually dead. We look at these happenings as something very ordinary and of everyday occurrence. What is then extraordinary? Fourteen tribesmen were shot dead by the police in one firing only in Andhra Pradesh on the evening of 20 April 1981 when the tribesmen were alleged to have clashed with the police. The trouble started when a person wanted to hold a Girijan agricultural-labor conference in the village at about the same time that a non-tribal protection conference was to be held.

According to a news item published in the Times of India on 21 May 1981, houses of eighty Harijan families were set ablaze following a clash between two groups of people of Suruda village (Behrampur Ganjam) on the previous Monday. The clash involving Harijans and caste Hindus left several people injured, two of them were admitted to a hospital. The warring groups exchanged brickbats and crackers.

The effects of the fallout of the Gujarat agitation can better be judged from a series of terribly grim incidents that took place in medical college at Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. A report about the situation there appeared in the Times of India on 28 April 1981. According to the paper's staff correspondent, the discrimination against Harijan medicos of the college by caste Hindu students and others had caused a lot of frustration and resentment among ninety Harijan students. Many of them were feeling that they might be forced to abandon their studies in the middle of the academic session if the situation did not improve.

There had been several instances in which scheduled caste students were beaten up by seniors belonging to the upper castes. The college remained virtually closed on account of the beating up of Mukut Lal, a first-year student on the pretext of ragging. Several scheduled caste students were not allowed to do dissections along with caste Hindu students.

In the latest incident, which occurred on Saturday night, Dr. M. Chandra, an intern, was abused and kicked by a dozen persons, including some outsiders, in the senior boys' hostel. The attack created an alarm among scheduled caste students who had been sore about the failure of the authorities to afford them any protection despite numerous complaints. In a group, they went from one official to another, seeking police protection but without any material results. The complaint made on April 19 related to an incident which occurred the previous day when the scheduled caste students organized a function to celebrate the birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Some non-scheduled caste persons, however, did not like the holding of the function and consequently there was an altercation between the two parties. The matter did not end there. Two first-year students, Mukti Lal and Ravinder Kumar, were locked in a room and beaten up by three caste Hindu students and two outsiders with belts and iron rods. A complaint was lodged with the police. Since then, none of the sixteen first-year scheduled caste students had been attending classes in protest against the incident and also because of the fear that they might be roughed up.

In the early hours of April 20, Rameshwar Dayal, a third-year student, was dragged out of his hostel room and belabored by five persons. The assailants broke into his room and beat him up merci-

lessly. Injuries were inflicted on the chest and left arm with pistol butts. He was taken by his friends to a hospital, and the matter was reported to the police. Since then he had not been attending classes out of fear.

Parmod Kumar, a first-year student, was beaten by some uppercaste students at a place named Khooni Pul, five kilometers from the college. This incident was also reported to the police. The college authorities somehow managed to settle the dispute. When some staff correspondents of newspapers met the principal of the college to find out whether any action was proposed to be taken, he called the victims as well as the culprits to show that a compromise had been reached and that the students were going to attend their classes. But fear was writ large on the faces of the scheduled caste students.

The atmosphere on the college campus was vitiated right at the beginning of the academic session when Ranvir Singh, a third-year scheduled caste student, was beaten up by about twenty students outside the college gate. The incident was reported to the police, but they passed on the complaint to the college authorities. This resulted in a compromise which was frequently violated by caste Hindu students.

The scheduled caste students had met senior civil and police officers, but no concrete step had been taken to protect them from the aggression of Hindu students. These telltale incidents relate to only one educational institution. A host of such incidents are taking place all over the country. This narrative is meant to provide just a glimpse of what is happening to the Harijans everywhere.

During the first half of the current year 1981, when the antireservation campaign was at its peak and rallies were held in public places and objectionable slogans were shouted and written in bold letters on prominent places on roads and walls, the scheduled caste students were boycotted and harassed in several ways in quite a few educational institutions in Punjab too.

To quote just one example, in April-May 1981, in the Guru Nanak Engineering College, Ludhiana, the non-scheduled caste boarders put up separate benches in the general mess for the scheduled caste boarders to take their meals separately there. The scheduled caste hostellers en bloc declined to take their meals in that way and took their meals for two full days in restaurants outside the college premises.

Not only that, the anti-scheduled caste leaders ordered their scheduled caste fellow students to sit separately on separate benches on one side in the lecture rooms. This abominable, old-time mode of segregation in educational institutions could not evidently be brooked by the scheduled caste students of today's India. So they stayed away from their classes. Strangely enough, the college authorities were found to be helpless; they simply suggested to the scheduled caste students to compromise in some way or the other with their so-called high-caste fellow students in order to save themselves from violent clashes and vandalism.

According to a Pauri (Garhwal)-based news item (Times of India, 4 June 1981), inhabitants of a Harijan hamlet of the Patti Sabli area had taken shelter in the district magistrate's office after having trekked a distance of over one hundred fifty kilometers following their harassment by caste Hindus. They alleged that caste Hindus had threatened to kill them.

(Contd. on next page)

Atrocities and Conversions

(Continue from page 9)

To the long list of the heinous crimes and atrocities committed against Harijans has been added another ghastly and heartrending incident that took place in village Deoli in Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh. This is the bloodiest and worst ever massacre in the history of the state. In the afternoon of Wednesday, 18 November 1981, around four o'clock, twenty-four Harijans, including seven women and six small children all below eighteen, some of them invalid, were brutally butchered by sixteen Thakurs of the same village, led by two hardened criminal goondas, Radhe and Santosha. The assailants divided themselves into two groups and encircled the mud hut Basti of the victims, broke open the doors of the huts, and in a senseless attack, gunned down indiscriminately in cold blood twenty-four defenseless persons one by one. The killing spree continued for more than one hour. Among the many injured was an eight-month-old girl. The gangsters, after accomplishing their dark deed, left with a threat, "This time we have killed only the lambs and sheep; the next time, we will come for the real ones."

This shocking tragedy enacted by the caste Hindus intoxicated and turned blind with caste arrogance is yet another irrefutable proof of the dangerous and barbarous social philosophy propounded by shastras (Hindu scriptures) and enforced and implemented by Manu and the faithfuls with the purpose of suppressing and exploiting the original inhabitants of the country. This legacy hardly needs any comments to understand and realize the tyranny and outrageous consequences of this dastardly social system.

As stated by the then Home Minister Giani Zail Singh (1982– 1987 president of India), admittedly there had been a failure on the part of the police to protect the lives and property of the Harijans. After all, the police force also consists of caste Hindus. On the evening of 30 December 1981, barely six weeks after the Deoli massacre, about six bandits armed with self-loading rifles and carbines made it straight to the Harijan basti (colony) of village Sorhupur in the Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh and, in a wanton attack, opened fire with impunity at the hapless Harijans and shot dead ten of them including six women.

Coming on the heels of the mass killings of Harijans in village Deoli and Sorhupur is the horrible happening that took place in village Kesatara of Durg district of Madhya Pradesh when thirteen of a single Harijan family were brutally murdered.

In the evening of Sunday, 24 January 1982, the caste Hindus of the village attacked a Harijan family, dragging its members out of the house and beheading all the six men and a woman who were there. Besides these gruesome killings, three women and three children were burnt alive when the hut in which they had taken shelter was set on fire.

According to a complaint lodged with the nearby police station, the Hindus initially had tried to set on fire the house of the family and molest its women. A police force sent to the village following the complaint was, however, withdrawn on January 16. The heartless killings followed a week later. In the Times of India, March 2, 1982, a Madras-based news appeared under the heading: "13 TN Harijan families on the run." They had been hounded out by caste Hindu landlords of their village Konalam in North Arcot district, ten kilometers from Arakonam town. The cause of the misery of the Harijans was the lack

of a place to bury their dead, denial of right to draw water from the community well, and a sense of insecurity. Briefly stated, the facts of the case are like this: The relations between the Harijans and the Hindu landowners of the village got strained when a dispute arose between them over the use of the new burial ground as, according to the Harijans, the old one was in disuse and most of its land had been encroached upon by the landowners. The Harijans wanted to bury the dead body of an old woman in the new burial ground, and the funeral procession crossed fields of caste Hindus. Before the body could be lowered, a group of caste Hindus appeared on the scene and objected to the burial of a Harijan there. The Hindus remained adamant in spite of the remonstrations by the Harijans for allowing them the burial. Leaving the dead body at the site, they went to the authorities to seek their help in this behalf. Burial was possible only the next morning with the intervention of the police. The dispute over the use of the burial ground, however, continued. In the course of the dispute, the caste Hindus enforced boycott of the Harijans by denying them work. Under pressure from them, the boycott was extended to neighboring villages. To add to their misery, the Harijans were denied access to the common well situated in the dry bed of a tank.

The trouble was accentuated when the Harijans refused to beat drums at the funeral of the father of the village headman, Kappu Reddiar. When drummers were hired from outside, there was a clash in which ten local Harijans were injured. The next day, a twentythree-year-old Harijan woman, mother of three, was abducted and raped by four caste Hindus.

Being unable to bear all these troubles, the entire Harijan population moved to the taluk office at Arakonam and squatted on the office compound. The authorities asked them to return to their village, but they refused and instead moved to Mulvai six kilometers from their village. There too, the caste Hindus had been trying to bring pressure upon the local caste Hindus not to give any job to the "fugitives."

Such is the pitiable life of the Harijans at the hands of caste Hindus. It was on 6 April 1982 that the landlords, armed with deadly weapons, raided the houses of Harijans of Subhanpur village in the Nawada district (Bihar) and shot dead the Harijan leader Sahadeo Manji and wounded ten others. The assailants then took away the dead body of their victim. Some of the Harijans left the village in panic.

The motive for the dastardly attack is most shameful. The only fault of the Harijan leader that cost him his life was that he had been protesting against the physical and sexual exploitation of the Harijan women by the landlords. How evil minded and degraded these brazen-faced votaries of caste are.

In Orissa, Kutruguda village in Lanjigarh block, seven Harijans, five of a family and their two guests, were burnt alive on Thursday, the 27 May 1982, by hired goondas who bolted the house of their victims from outside and set it on fire. This massacre was masterminded by a local primary school teacher who had promised to pay sixteen hundred rupees each to the three criminals for the commission of the dark deed. Land dispute is said to be the cause of the crime. Then there comes the heartrending carnage of Harijans of Ayyapuram village in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. The outrage was the work of caste Hindus, and it was a sequel to a series of events spread over days that had occurred in Puliangudi and the ad-

joining areas. It was intended to teach the Harijans of Puliangudi a lesson for their impudence in showing independent thinking. As the plan envisaged a sweeping butchery and destruction of the entire Harijan population, Puliangudi was not considered to be a safe place for its execution, being too close to the police station. For this reason, the Hindus conspired to march on the nearby village Ayyapuram, which is tucked in isolation and is difficult for the police to reach quickly. It was a well-organized and calculated plot, and its purpose was to strike terror among the Puliangudi Harijans.

Suddenly at 11:00 AM on 11 June 1982, the stillness of Ayyapuram was shattered by a prolonged thunderous roar when about two-thousand-strong crazed mob of Hindus of the region, armed with guns, lathis (big sticks), knives, and country-made bombs, converged on the hamlet and swarmed the Harijan huts, shouting and cursing in their local language, "You curs, you bastards, you sons of bitches! You all are not fit to live. We will cut you, we will kill you, and we will set fire to you." Within an hour, two hundred Harijan huts were set ablaze and razed to the ground. Of the seven Harijans butchered, six, including an eighty-year-old woman, were burnt alive in horrible and heartrending scenes of agony while one was killed by a country-made bomb. Fleeing women were chased by the invaders, and the ears of two girls and the nose of a third one were cut. In the massacre, twenty-one Harijans were also seriously injured and admitted to a hospital. Out of them, eight women had head injuries and arm and leg fractures. The pogrom lasted for an hour. The only pump set of the Harijans was destroyed, and petrol was poured into the five wells of the village in order to render their water unfit for drinking by the Harijans.

Six Harijans, five men and one woman, were shot dead by Hindu gangsters in the village of Rampur in the Manipuri district of Uttar Pradesh on 28 June 1982. They descended on the village at about 1:00 AM and immediately started firing on the sleeping Harijans. The motive for this cowardly crime is stated to be revengeful reprisal against the victims for naming two Brahmans as suspects in the dacoity committed some months earlier.

Six Harijans, including women and children, were gunned down by caste Hindus on 28 June, 1982 in the village of Giani in Aurangabad district of Bihar, and their dead bodies were thrown into hutments, which were then set on fire. The story goes that when some farm workers went on strike, demanding payment of wages at the rate of minimum wages fixed by the government, they were surrounded by musclemen of landlords and made the target of indiscriminate firing, resulting in the killing of six of them on the spot. Here is a harrowing tale of harassment of Harijans: Fifty-six scheduled caste families of Naya Vas village in the Jaipur district were allotted house sites by the state government in January 1975, and they were granted pattas (deeds of lease for land tenure) of the sites by the minister of State for Home Affairs, Mrs. Kamla Beniwal. They were also promised financial assistance for constructing houses on the sites. The allottees were extremely happy over the prospects of building and owning houses from where nobody would be able to oust them. But the very next morning, about two hundred Jats of the area, armed with lathis and other lethal weapons, attacked the allottees' families, pulled down their huts, beat up their

(Contd. on next page)

Atrocities and Conversions

(Continue from page 10)

womenfolk, and evicted them from the land. The tyrannized Harijans approached Mrs. Beniwal to seek justice, and they were assured by her that the land now belonged to them, and that none had the right to dispossess them from there. On this unqualified assurance, the allottees rebuilt their huts on the allotted house sites. The Jats again retaliated by demolishing their newly built huts.

This gory drama of building huts by the Harijans and their demolition by the Jats had been going on for the past seven years. On 12 March 1982, after an armed attack on the Harijan Basti (colony where people from the low caste reside) by about three hundred Jats, the harassed Harijan lodged a report with the police, but no action was taken on the complaint. A delegation of the Harijans led by Kajod Panch called on Mrs. Beniwal for the umpteenth time, but their efforts to get justice proved fruitless. They then approached the health minister, C. L. Kanwaria, who himself is a Harijan. After making an on-the-spot study of the situation, he wrote a letter to the collector of Jaipur, asking him to take stern action against the miscreants. But the collector took no action on the directive. Thereafter, the Harijans met the minister of State for Rehabilitation, Dinesh Dangi, who issued fresh orders to the collector to take action against the troublemakers. The collector once again ignored the directive from the top. It has been alleged that Mrs. Beniwal (now agriculture minister) was shielding the errant Jats.

It is evident that the writ of the Rajasthan government does not run in the state. Otherwise, how could the police and the district officers have the cheek to ignore government directives with impunity? Imagine what would be the state of affairs if the states are granted political autonomy. The weaker sections of society and the minorities will, in that event, be at the mercy of the Hindu landlords who are intoxicated with caste arrogance and want to grab everything. In cases of blatant defiance of state government authority and the state authority's helplessness, the Centre (Central government) should step in. This is the only way the tormented Harijans can be reassured of safe living. Three Harijans were shot dead by the so-called high-caste landowners at Bhawanpur area in Gaya district of Bihar on 10 August 1982.

The trouble began when the Harijan farm laborers stopped working as a protest against the refusal of the landowners to pay them at the rate of the minimum wages fixed by the government. Armed landowners then besieged the Harijans and opened fire, killing three of them. Two of the landowners also sustained injuries when the Harijans attacked them in retaliation. In Bihar state, there is no government worth its salt. The bureaucracy is a helpless dead mass. Situated as we are, it should be clearly understood that for the safety and progress of the weaker sections of society and the minorities two things are a must: one, parliamentary form of government based on adult franchise, and two, strong Centre (Central government). One Harijan was shot dead, many others were injured, and ten Harijan houses were set ablaze by a big landowner along with twelve of his accomplices in Karanbari village in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar on 18 October 1982. This crime was committed because the Harijans had refused to work on the fields of the landowner on low wages. The terror-

stricken Harijans left the village and took shelter with their relations elsewhere. Janki Manjhi, aged forty-five years, and Rajendra Manjhi, aged nineteen years, Harijans of village Duhobar of Gaya district of Bihar were brutally murdered and their hutments razed to the ground on October 26, 1982, by musclemen of a local influential landowner who resented their presence near his house though they had been living in the Harijan Tola (suburb where people from the low caste reside) for long. The police arrived on the scene of the occurrence only after the perpetrators of the crime had made good their escape. Panic had gripped the other residents of the Tola (suburb). The landowner and his supporters then started terrorizing the other residents of the basti (colony) to deter them from identifying or deposing against the killers so that the case was hushed up.

In-between October 1982 and October 1992, there have been a number of acts of aggression and violence committed by the Hindus against the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people in different parts of the country, but the unpleasant stories of all of them cannot and need not be told here. However, to illustrate the continuing trend and to refresh memories as to which way the Hindu social and religious wind blows even after the lapses of forty-five years of independence, one recent incident must be mentioned. The ghastly carnage took place in Bada Mohalla of the village Kumher near Bharatpur in Rajasthan. The echoes of this outrageously inhuman brutality have reached each and every nook and corner of the country. The account of this incident was published in The Tribune of Chandigarh on 18 and 20 June 1992.

The animosity of the Jats toward the Jatavs is the product of the false notion of superiority born of caste arrogance. This is invariably the case whenever and wherever excesses are committed by the so-called upper castes on the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In the instant case of the massacre of Jatavs in village Kumher also, the basic cause of the trouble was the caste superiority complex. The Jats nursed a grievance against the Jatavs for various reasons. Firstly, the landless Jatavs were skilled construction workers and had lately become a little better off financially. Secondly, there is the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act passed by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1989. Section 3 of the Act makes the caste offences against the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes cognizable and non-bailable. And thirdly, the Jatavs had started asserting themselves as also for the growing awareness among leaders about their community, and they had been exhorting their people to hold their heads high and feel the glow of freedom.

All this, especially the self-assertion by the Jatavs, was too much for the Jats to stomach as they considered these changes in thinking and status as an affront to their arrogated commanding position. There were also a few skirmishes between the Jatavs and the Jats, and this added to the bitterness between them. To give expression to their anger, the Jats reminded the Jatavs contemptuously that Manu was not outdated. Therefore, they wanted to teach them a lesson. It is hardly necessary to remind that it is Manu Smriti that is mainly responsible for condemning and debasing the scheduled castes/tribes by laying down discriminatory and barbarous socioreligious laws. Tension seemed to boil over as highly exaggerated and

mostly false rumors were spread by the Jats. According to one rumor, the Jatavs had stripped naked a Jat woman, cut off her breasts, and knived her in the vagina. The story was found to be totally false.

On the complaint of the Jats that the Jatavs were preparing to attack them as they had collected arms, and that they had also dishonored a Jat woman, the police swung into action and rounded up 150 Jatav youths and marched them off to the jail. This happened on the early morning of the day of attack, on 6 June. About a week before the carnage, Attar Singh Jatav's father, Buddhilal, was brutally hacked to death. This caused a lot of horror among the Jatavs of the village. Jatavs of Kumher were hated for having the audacity to assert themselves.

Thus the ground had been prepared for the execution of the wellplanned attack on the Jatavs in Bada Mohalla of Kumher. Around two o'clock in the afternoon of the fateful day, 6 June, hundreds of tractor trolleys carrying thousands of Jats from neighboring villages surrounded the Jatav bustee (colony). Firearm-, sword-, spear-, lathi-, and hockey-stick-wielding Jats led by Mahraj Singh, former sarpanch (village head) and the Jat chief of twenty-four villages, jumped out, and like infuriated savages, pounced on the Jatavs. The Jatavs had no place to run away. Fourteen of them were bludgeoned done to death, and a large number of others were grievously injured. As the Jatavs ran helter-skelter, they were caught, beaten, and hacked to death or carried half dead to a pile of firewood at the back of Bada Mohalla where their pyre was lit. The orgy continued till six in the evening. It was a windy Saturday, and the tongues of fire performed their macabre dance throughout the night.

In a moment of utter helplessness and frustration, Chittariya, a Jatav woman, grumbled and burst out to remark, "Even God became our enemy and nature was not with us." Buffalos and goats tethered to their pegs had no way of escaping the fire that raged around them. Many had died, and many were burnt and had to suffer in mute agony. Chickens caught under the baskets perished. A total of 157 houses of the Jatavs had been gutted and razed to the ground, and goods worth lakhs of rupees had been destroyed. Charred utensils peeped out of the ashes; 681 families, comprising over half the inhabitants of Bada Mohalla, had fled and all scattered. Young girls were showing their aching backs, bearing marks of violence. There laid a dead body waiting to be identified. Yet another body, which would never be identified because there was in fact nobody but just a few pieces of scalp and bones that bore evidence that a human being had been burnt and not an animal.

Even then, on June 7, Jats in the close-by Sainthry village murdered three Jatavs in an extension of the previous day's Kumher massacre. The Jatav youths who were taken into custody by the police early morning on the day of occurrence were released the next morning, and they came back home to see what a dreadful havoc had been wrought by the rampaging marauders. The Jats say it will happen again, and the Jatavs also say it will happen again. It is not difficult to visualize who will do it again and who will be the victims. It needs no further explanation. The incident itself speaks volumes of the terrible tragedy.

The society to which we have the misfortune to belong is like a vast expanse of a tangled jungle infested with savages, ferocious beasts, devils, and

(Contd. on next page)

Atrocities and Conversions

(Continue from page 11)

vampires. In view of the alarming happenings all over the country, the proposition of supplying arms to the scheduled castes to defend themselves against caste aggression has been the subject of controversy both in parliament and in the public. The opinion against this proposal seems to have an upper hand for reasons, which cannot be regarded as valid and sound. Providing arms to these empty-handed and defenseless people is the real and effective method of putting new life into them as also affording them the much needed protection. At the same time, this will act as a strong deterrent to the headstrong aggressors. Denial of arms for self-defense would be tantamount to denying them the right of self-preservation, which is a constitutional and legal right of everybody.

The apprehension that the arms supplied to the scheduled castes are eventually likely to pass into the hands of the undesirable elements, and that it will also aggravate caste tensions, stems from the fear which is more imaginary than real. It also smacks of onesided thinking. It is further maintained that giving protection to the scheduled castes is the duty of the government. This plea is nothing short of a cruel joke. It is common knowledge that the police, who is expected to protect and safeguard the lives and honor of these people, consists of non-scheduled caste personnel, and therefore, it suffers from anti-scheduled caste animus. Furthermore, the police make its appearance on the scene of crime only after the ghastly drama has been enacted and the miscreants had made good their escape at their leisure. The only function of the police seems to be to remove the dead bodies and send them for post-mortem examination. It is also not always possible to have prior information of the crime. How then to protect these people?

The main function of the concerned administration also seems to be to proclaim loudly that "the government is fully determined to maintain law and order at all costs," adding that "the situation is well under control." These ceremonial declarations are repeated every time an aggression takes place. Evidently, it is, in the main, a hollow and meaningless exercise. The faint suggestion of disarming the potential and known anti-scheduled caste elements is neither practicable nor purposeful because a hue and cry is sure to be raised by the power-hungry leaders of all hues to foil the attempt as they consider the criminal segments of society as their vote banks. It is an open secret that a sizeable number of these leaders are hand-in-glove with the antisocial elements. Even if it be assumed for a moment that the licensed and some of the unlicensed arms can be withdrawn, it will be of no material consequence as illegal, country-made arms of all sorts are easily available everywhere and in any numbers. Even smuggled arms are not very difficult to obtain.

Keeping all the aspects of the problem in view, the only result yielding remedy that can immediately be pressed into service to counter the untold brutalities being perpetrated on the scheduled is to equip them with arms and also give them necessary training in the use of these weapons. This is the way the demoralizing and dehumanizing lamb-and-wolf relationship can be put an end to. In the absence of such measure, one-way traffic butchery of innocent men and women, young and old, is bound to continue. The odds are really heavy: on the one hand are empty-handed and deprived people, and on the other are gangs of hardened and notorious criminals armed to the teeth with all kinds of dangerous weapons, aided and abetted by big guns. Ignoring this burning issue is not only unjust and unwise but also full of potential dangers as it shall boomerang one day.

How long these shameful atrocities against Harijans would be allowed to continue? It needs a strong and stern hand to put down such nefarious incidents. But when and from where the strong and

stern hand would come and go into action? In the face of the situation with which the Harijans find themselves confronted, they should take a decisive and solemn vow to guard and save the honor and lives of their womenfolk as well as their own. Such a course always demands sacrifices. They should therefore be prepared to undergo all the unavoidable sufferings if the untold sacrifices already made be not sufficient.

What appears in the press is only the tip of the iceberg. Countless cases of this type do not come to the notice of the public, and many do not even see the light of the day. Also quite a large number of such cases reported to the police are either not registered or not investigated. These atrocities are committed not because the scheduled castes are poor but because of caste arrogance and prejudices. Here is a society of human beings where the law of the jungle reigns supreme. Even beasts are less savage than these human beings.

Who would dare, and for how long, to continue clinging to such a society? It will be just appropriate to refer here to the question of conversions. Of late, there have been reports of conversions of scheduled caste people to Islam and Christianity. Some Muslim organizations and Christian missionaries are alleged to have been luring the scheduled castes to embrace their religion. This has perturbed the Hindus. They have therefore called upon the Centre (Central government) to check the inflow of foreign money allegedly being used for the conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity. Some have gone to the extent of demanding expulsion of the Christian missionaries from the country. The Hindu leaders have also demanded that the Centre (Central government) should enact a law to ensure religious freedom, especially for members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Hindus seem to have woken up from their traditional slumber upon learning of the latest conversions to Islam of about six hundred persons in the village of Meenakshipuram in Tirunelveli of Tamil Nadu state in February 1981. Three hundred Harijans of village Kurayoor have also opted for Islam. So far, eight thousand conversions have taken place there. The process is fast spreading to other parts of the country also. The real facts are that long years of harassment, humiliation, and civil disabilities have led to mass conversions of Harijans to Islam. According to the regional director of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the murder of two members of Thevar community in the village was followed by largescale harassment of Harijans by the police abetted by the Thevars. Several innocent Harijans were picked up by the police for interrogation in an attempt to trace the culprits. Meenakshipuram is a hamlet inhabited by 945 Harijans. Economically, they are better off than the Thevars in nearby Panbazhi. There are two doctors and an engineer among the Harijans. The Thevars, though socially, educationally, and economically backward, exercise their traditional caste supremacy. They did not view kindly to the growing prosperity of the Harijans who had taken advantage of the facilities given by the Congress government. Sometime ago, the Harijans set up a tea shop in the hamlet. The Thevars objected to it and brought about its closure. A barber who opened a saloon in the hamlet left following physical threats. As the harassment reached the breaking point, a Harijan working as local fund auditor at Shri Villiputtur went to the South Indian Islamic Society at Tirunelveli with a proposal for mass conversions. Conversion took place on February 19, 1981. Then 558 out of 945 Harijans embraced Islam. Thus it will be seen that there was neither any allurements nor coercion for these conversions. They were compelled by the Hindus to take this extreme step. What wrong have these people done? They had been under constant fear of being exposed to harassment, humiliation, and physical violence at the hands of Hindus so long as they clung to the Hindu society,

and therefore, they took recourse to conversion as the effective remedy for putting an end to their limitless woes and sufferings. It is for the Hindus themselves to set their own house in order instead of raising hue and cry as it will be of no avail so long as the cursed caste system continues to dominate them. They can ignore this fact only at their own peril. The attitude of the Hindus is really strange. Their unnecessary hue and cry only exposes their own weakness and frustration; when it is a question of conversions, they get panicky. But why do they not show the same amount of concern when all sorts of atrocities are committed on their victims? Others might be offering some kind of allurements, but what have these Hindus to offer? Only perpetuation of social injustice, oppression, humiliation, and exploitation! That is why they want to seek the protection of law in the matter of religion. There would be no conversions if the Harijans find a place of equality, honor and dignity in the Hindu society. And this is precisely what the Hindus are incapable of offering. They want to keep their victims in their fold not by doing justice to them but by preventing conversions with the danda (it literally means stick but in this context fear) of law. This is wholly irrational, and nothing can be achieved by these ill-conceived, hollow methods. The root cause of all these ills is the caste demon. It is a system of social and economic segregation, a system of graded inequality, of gradation and degradation, and of gigantic cold-blooded repression. In the circumstances in which the scheduled castes find themselves, there should be no objection to conversions if such a step promotes the solution of the problem. Only a few conversions may not be of much consequence. But the counterargument is that it would be unwise to wait for all to go. "It is impracticable," they assert. They think there is no other better course open for a self-respecting person. Like Dr. Ambedkar, who took a grim vow, "I shall not die a Hindu," any person is bound to feel suffocated in this casteist society. It is well known that quite a large number of scheduled caste persons have already embraced Buddhism, following in the footsteps of their great leader Dr. Ambedkar. Not a few have also gone over to Islam and Christianity. How many Musalmans and Christians living in this country have come from foreign lands? They were all Hindus except a few. Have a look at Kashmir and Kerala to name only two states. Who were the Musalmans who have now their homeland in Pakistan and Bangladesh? The vociferous Hindus should know that the exit to other faiths cannot be stemmed unless they set their own house in order. In the Hindu social system, there is a wide outlet but no inlet. Banish caste, and you will see not only no further outgoings, but many coming back to their parent fold. But the big question is whether the Hindus are capable of doing so? Instead of atoning for the past sins, the Hindus have turned against the Harijans, and thus they are being alienated further. And still they want conversions to be banned and arrested. On the face of them, these are wrong methods and false expectations. Hindus go about humming and chanting merrily Iqbal's verse: "kuchh baat hai ki hasti mitati nahin hamari."

(There is surely some cogent reason why even centuries of hostile circumstances have failed to exterminate us). But this was said of pre-independence days as a matter of prudence and of India as a whole. It was good and relevant so long as the country was under the alien rule.

To adapt and make it relevant to the real state of affairs so far as the Hindus are concerned the verse should read, "kuchh baat hai ki hasti hai mit rahi hamari." (There is surely some cogent reason why we are being exterminated). This adapted version of the verse of the great poet will provide the Hindus ample food for thought in place of undeserved pride and false complacency.
