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EDUCATION, SELF-RESPECT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Prem Kumar Chumber Editor-in-Chief:

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weeklies Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar used to lay special emphasis on the agency of education for the emancipation and empowerment of downtrodden. So much so that he coined a emancipatory slogan with education at the beginning of the Bhim mantra "Educate, Agitate, Organize." What Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was/continues to be and what he had been able to achieve in his life-long mission of Dalit Empowerment is all due to his world reputed stature based on his brilliant academic achievements which still are hard to match not only in comparison to his own people but also with his counterparts among the so-called upper castes across the length and breadth of the country. Again, it was his world towering record of academic excellence combined with his life long commitment towards the annihilation of caste from the soil of Indian social setup that brought him in the forefront of the queues of the most celebrated personalities of our time.

Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar was of the firm view that the first lesson to march on the road of social transformation could be to learn how to inculcate the quality of self-respect among the socially excluded millions of our countrymen contemptuously called Untouchables. The quality of self-respect in turn relies on the faculty of critical knowledge based on sound education meant for self-illumination and overall awareness of ones surroundings. Education in ancient and medieval Hindu society was restricted to those who were born in the upper three higher Varna. Fourth Varna of Shudras and the fifth/Avarna of Ati-Shudras were denied the facility of education because of their low birth. The denial of education had also led to lack of self-respect among the lower-castes that further transformed them into docile servants of those who monopolized the power structures of the society. Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar wanted to overcome this vicious circle of degradation based on the shrewdly designed system of denial of education to the downtrodden.

Education leads to self-respect that further in a logical sequence of the emancipatory mantra of "Educate, Agitate, Organize" creates the conditions for the realization of the higher goal of social justice. That is what 'Educate' is meant for in the slogan. It means to be aware of ones life conditions and the overall surrounding social set-up. Such a versatile knowledge will stir self-introspection within and creates an urge for an organization of the like-minded fellow beings to transform the unequal social structure into an egalitarian order.

Courtesy: www.ambedkartimes.com

Renaissance of Punjabi Music, and future of Punjabiat

usic, art and culture are some of the best means a cultural and spiritual Μ recipes for building human connections, beyond languages and regions. Languages and cultures have evolved over many centuries and have their distinct flavors, which enrich human experience. It is a dynamic process, and cultures evolve and grow over time.

Recently many young Punjabi artists have been making headlines in the world of arts and music. This has played a very significant role in reconnecting the youth to their roots by breaking many tragic and artificial barriers that were built over last century by some misguided elites, who chose to disconnect themselves from their mother tongue, culture and roots.

These elites along with some overzealous politicians and communal leaders tried to artificially synthesize language and cultural practices, relegating

identity which is inclusive of all religions and identities.

Some people complain of poor lyrics in some Punjabi pop songs, but they are missing the bigger picture of renaissance and the power of sounds and beats to connect masses across nations and continents This is positive trend



to counter the one and half

century of prejudice against Punjabi language, which has been divisive and discriminatory. Punjab is very rich culturally due to its location; it is nestled between the Indian subcontinent and Middle East Asia. It has absorbed many different cultures over



formation of state based Punjabi language.

Punjabi to the margins. But the new age artists are embracing their mother tongue and culture. Their laudable artistic expressions are a manifestation of their deep pride in their ethos. By embracing their roots, they are propelling their language and culture to the forefront, marking a resurgence of interest in Punjabi culture and traditions.

मास्टर तारा सिंह MASTER TARA SINGH

Stamp issued to honor, Master Tara

Singh, Akali leader, he first raised the

demand for Punjabi Suba in 1948.

HIT INDIA

Punjabi Artist Diljit Singh Dosanjh made headlines in America by becoming the first Punjabi to be on the most prestigious American show and by performing at the very popular Coachella Music Festival in Southern California. Singer and rapper Sidhu Mose Wala, who was unfortunately killed in 2022, made headlines all over the world for his unique rendition style and for voicing the peculiar socio-political issues concerning Punjab.

Guru Randhawa, a famous singer from East Punjab, India, has lauded Lahore (Capital of West Punjab) in his songs and on the other side of the border, a Pakistani Coke Studio Blockbuster song has mentioned Ludhiana and Chandigarh (in East Punjab) in the lyrics, connecting Punjabis beyond borders by invoking pride in Punjabi ethos. Punjabi lyricist and singer Satinder Sartaj, is fluent in Punjabi and Persian, and his poetry and songs resonate in both East and West Punjabi, popularly known as Charda Punjab in India and Lehenda Punjab in Pakistan.

A Punjabi song "Ve tu Luang te main Laichi" has received over 1.5 billion views on YouTube, which signifies that non Punjabis, too, are connecting with Punjabi music like never before.

This new trend has presented a new narrative of Punjabiat across borders. Punjabiat

centuries. Known for its bravery and hardworking people who chose to remain in 'ChardiKala', high spirits, despite facing so many invasions and genocides over centuries.

Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati

(Founder of Arya Samaj)

(February 12, 1824 - October 30, 1883)

Founder of Arya Samaj,

Dayanand Saraswati

Tragic past:

When British left Indian Subcontinent in 1947, two regions (states) of India were painfully divided based on religion which mainly included Punjab on western side and Bengal on East Side of India. Bengalis on both sides of border despite the tragic partition kept the same language and script alive. Pakistanis tried to impose Urdu language on them, but the Bengalis rebelled and created a new country, Bangladesh in 1971. On the other hand, many Punjabis disowned their heritage and further divided the language and script along parochial lines. This led to the downfall of Punjabi language due to lack of apathy by its elite and urban speakers and those in positions of power. Though the Punjabi language is the tenth most spoken language in the world, spoken by over 100 million people. It is the language (mother tongue) spoken by most people in Punjab region also known as land of five rivers, in South Asia.

Punjabi Language has many dialects and is widely spoken in West Punjab, Pakistan and East Punjab in India as well. Punjabi is also spoken as a second language in many others states in Northern India including Jammu region, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, upper Rajasthan, Terri region and Delhi, which is capital of India.

Due to large Punjabi diaspora in western countries, now many Punjabis in diaspora are making (Contd. on next page)

Renaissance of Punjabi Music, and future of Punjabiat

2

(Continue from page 1) serious efforts to preserve and propagate the language in different parts of world. Punjabi did not get same recognition as other regional languages in India and Pakistan due to some historical blunders by communal and elite urban leaders who were disconnected with rural masses, as discussed below.

Background of denial of Punjabi:

Punjab was last region of Indian subcontinent to be absorbed into the British empire, almost a century after the rest of the Indian subcontinent had been colonized by the British. Before annexation, Punjab was an independent country and was ruled by a



Mrs Maryam Nawaj Sharif, current chief minister of Pakistan Punjab, she recently declared that teaching of Punjabi will introduced in school.

very pragmatic and powerful leader Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Though he was a Sikh, and his government was called Sarkar-E-Khalsa, he was very inclusive and respected people of all faiths. Punjabiat flourished during his rule. Though the official work of his court was conducted in Persian language, vast majority of the people spoke Punjabi during his reign regardless of religion. Punjabi formed a common bond amongst people of diverse backgrounds. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs enjoyed very amicable relationships. Writers and poets from all diverse backgrounds contributed to the growth of Punjabi literature. Many historians have called this a glorious era of harmony in the Punjab. Sikhs and Hindus had very strong relationships and intermarriages were common phenomena.

Muslims were equally loyal to the empire and were the majority community of the kingdom. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, British were able to gradually create divisions amongst Punjabis and ruling elite and took over the reins of Punjab in 1849 after two major wars with the army of Punjab. Later, British brought most of their administrative staff from previously Mughal ruled Central and Eastern parts of British India. Most of these people were fluent in Urdu and since it is written in Arabic script, which is like the Persian script, they replaced Persian with Urdu for administrative work.

As Muslims formed the majority in Punjab, many Muslim urban elites and communal leaders readily accepted Urdu, since it has same script as their holy scriptures. The second largest group were Punjabi Hindus and the educated elite amongst them felt that Urdu was a foreign language for them due to its Arabic script. At same time there was a reformist Hindu movement which was going in parts of India at that time known as the Arya Samaj. This movement started in 1880s in Gujrat region, and it strongly promoted the Hindi language and Devanagari script for Hindus of India to create unity and larger Hindu identity.

the Punjab region and evolved over many centuries; it was formalized by the second Sikh Guru Angad Dev in the 16th century. Interestingly, the majority of Punjabi Hindus spoke Punjabi at homes, but when asked about their language of choice, some of them chose Hindi as their preferred language. So, when the British started to formalize the education system in the Punjab region, the language of instruction became a very problematic issue for them, and it eventually laid the seeds for the division of Punjab due to lack of unifying factors of language and script. It caused a very painful communal divide amongst the common people because of the choices of the urban elite and communal leaders.

tion. Nearly half of Sikh population got homeless and significant numbers lost lives. Sikhs who had played a major role in India's freedom against British Colonial rule, were expecting fairer deal from the leaders of Independent India and took the utmost risks to stand with independent India.

Formation of new States in Independent India and role of Languages:

British India was organized by British to suit their administrative needs rather than cultural or geographical sensitivities. Historically, India was rarely one political entity but rather a mixer of many independent states, languages and customs. Indian National Congress had promised to reorganize British India after independence based



Picture from Police entry into Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) complex in July 1955 to arrest the activists of Punjabi Suba

Interesting, though the movement started in the Gujrat region, the people of Gujarat never gave up on their mother tongue, Gujarati, but many upper class and influential Hindus of Punjab readily accepted Hindi as their language at the expense of their mother tongue Punjabi.

Urban Punjabi Arya Samaj leaders disowned the Punjabi language and labeled it as the language of uneducated or some inaccurately called it a dialect of the Hindi language. It must be mentioned here that according to some scholars, Punjabi language predates or is as old as Hindi. Though both languages have a shared history. Bhagat Singh, a national hero of India's National Movement from colonial rule, also advocated in his published article for Punjabis to accept Devanagari script for National integration since his family had Arya Samaji roots and he was a leftist thinker (for clarification it is not meant to minimize his contribution and some readers may find these observations to be controversial so the link to his original article is attached below for your reference).

Due to the subservient status that Punjabi had to face, some Sikh leaders felt very marginalized. Sikhs were in smaller numbers compared to other religious groups despite being in power before the British took over Punjab. Sikhs kept teaching Punjabi in Gurmukhi script in village schools and Gurdwaras. Though a Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib is written in many Indian languages, but the script used is called Gurmukhi.

Gurmukhi script is native to

Punjab was partitioned along communal lines in 1947 when Indian Congress leaders got the transfer of power from the British on August 15, 1947. Only Punjab and Bengal states were divided, and both paid very heavy price and millions of lives were lost in the mayhem, and massive destruction of property took place due to communal violence, propelled by poorly managed migration of millions of people.

All communities suffered but Sikhs faced the worst brunt of it due to its smaller population and above all because of being very visible due to their distinct appearance. Sikh community leaders did not consent to the partition of Punjab like Muslim League and Indian National Congress party. Prior to partition, Indian Congress leaders had given promises to Sikhs leaders that they should join Hindus in India and that Sikhs will be given an area in India where they would enjoy freedom. Muslims leaders also made overture to Sikhs to stay with Pakistan and assured them special status. If Sikhs had decided to stay in Pakistan, then Pakistan borders would have reached Delhi. Sikhs leaders had third option to agitate for separate nation from British. Even though less in numbers, Sikhs were more influential due to their large presence in the Army and because of the powerful Sikh Princely states in Punjab. But Sikh leaders decided to join India due to the promises made by Indian National Congress leaders like Nehru, Gandhi and Patel and due to the assurance that India was a Secular Republic. They paid very heavy prices during the partition and mass migra-

Diljit S Dosanj, Punjabi singer who took

Punjabi music and films to international level.

on linguistic identities and boundaries. After independence, India was

After independence, India was reorganized, and many new states were carved on linguistic basis. Many new states were created like Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra, Kerala and Gujarat. But when Punjabis asked for Punjabi speaking state, it was denied by Federal government led by the then Prime Minister Nehru. He once stated that he won't allow it and it could only happen on his dead body. Punjabi Arya Samaji leaders started strong campaigning against the Punjabi language and started a tirade of false propaganda against it being a dialect of the Hindi or a language of no significance. Often the information was falsified during census at the behest of some of these leaders and many newspapers owned by Arya Samaj activists such as Punjab Kesri and Partap, started smear campaigns against their own mother tongue. Though Hindus in other states took pride in their native mother languages, as mentioned above, most of the Southern Indian sates don't speak Hindi as their first language. To be fair to Punjabi Hindus many Hindus especially from rural areas did support Punjabi language and even the most celebrated Poet of Punjabi in the last century was Shiv Kumar Batalvi with his roots in rural Punjabi Brahmin family. Many fair-minded Hindus supported the struggle for Punjabi speaking state but the Arya Samaji lobby was very powerful political force which was opposed to Puniabi.

This led to Punjabi language being marginalized and becoming the (Contd. on next page)

Renaissance of Punjabi Music, and future of Punjabiat

3

(Continue from page 2)

de facto language of Sikhs only, since educated and urban Muslims already had adopted Urdu in Punjab region in Pakistan. Akali Party, a political party, which was founded in 1920 to represent people of Punjab especially Sikh aspirations, was in forefront for demanding Punjabi Speaking state within new Indian Union. Unfortunately, it was labeled as separatist and communal demand and raising a slogan in favor of Punjabi state was considered legal offense and act of sedition. Many thousands of peaceful protesters were sent to jails. Many activists were killed during police forced entry to Darbar Sahib popularly known as Golden Temple Complex in 1955 to arrest the Punjabi language protagonists. This peaceful struggle continued, and Indian Punjab state was eventually artificially divided again in 1966 into Punjabi speaking Punjab and Hindi Speaking Haryana and mountainous parts of Punjab were merged with Himachal Pradesh. Capital of joint Punjab, Chandigarh was made Union territory and many other Puniabi speaking areas including control of water resources and dams were kept out of the Punjabi state. This created many complications. Congress ruled federal government kept interfering in new Punjabi state matters. To weaken the regional party, Akali Dal in Punjab many obstacles were created which are out of scope for this discussion here and eventually led to tragic events of 1984. With formation of smaller Punjabi State, Punjabi was finally declared as official State language despite ongoing opposition from some Arya Samaj activists and communal elements. DAV educational system owned by Arva Samajis in Punjabi state even initially resisted affiliation with Guru Nanak Dev University and avoided giving due place to promotion of Punjabi language in their institutions. Even the modern Puniabi state evolved into bilingual state due to above mentioned issues. Hindi is taught in all schools in addition to English. In Pakistani Punjab (West Punjab), Punjabi language is not taught in schools but recently Chief Minister (head of the state) announced that teaching of Punjabi will be added to school curriculum in near future. In Pakistan, Punjabi is written in Shanmukhi script (it is similarto Persian script) and Gurmukhi script is primarily used in India to write Punjabi. Some people also use Devanagari and Roman alphabets. Since Gurmukhi has more words and vowels, it is easier to pronounce many words more accurately in Gurmukhi as written than other scripts. Some Linguistic experts find this to be more suitable for correct pronunciation of Punjabi language words.

Punjabi music and role of Diaspora:

Most of the recording companies in India were owned by non-Punjabi in post-independence era and technology was limited and expensive so very few quality Punjabi songs were recorded or available for masses. Often Punjabi songs were frowned on and were called rustic. Bollywood Hindi songs were very popular and primarily played on Government owned Radio stations and TV Channels. The breakthrough in this trend came from diaspora Punjabi singers especially from UK. In 1970s tape recordings became easily available and many Punjabi singers like Harcharan Singh Chani and A S Kang came up with their own local bands and songs with strong beats. This trend was followed by many other artists and when Malkiat Singh from UK came up with TotakTotakTotian album it was an instant hit all over the world and even in Bollywood. By late 1980's CDs became readily available, and many Punjabi singers became major stars. By early 1990s due to privatization of the music channels in India, channels started playing songs of Punjabi beat artists and gradually Punjabi songs became mainstream in India and even Bollywood started the trend of having Puniabi songs in movies. Soon Canadian Punjabi singers like Jazzy Bains and others joined the band wagon.

Punjabi Dances:

Punjab region has many dances including Bhangra, Gidda, Malawi Gidda, Chummer, Sami, Luddi, Kikli, Sikh Gatka Martial Arts, Sufi and spiritual dancing. These were rarely promoted in Bollywood until these dances were popularized by diaspora. Now Bhangra has become mainstream in many festivals, party scenes around the world and now even readily acceptable in Bollywood. **Bollywood movies:**

There had been numerous Bollywood actors, writers, directors, musicians and poets who originated from Punjab and led the development of Bollywood film industry in Mumbai but unfortunately many of them never made any serious efforts to work on Punjabi movies. Some songs which were copied from Punjabi folk songs and beats with Hindi words were frequently used very successfully till recently. Authentic songs were missing until last decades.

Most Punjabi movies were of low budget and often meant for less educated and rural audiences. About two decades ago Puniabi artists from Canada took a serious lead on making better quality movies lead by Harbhajan S Mann and with guidance from Manmohan Singh. The financial success of the "Jee Ayana Nu movie" took a lead and many film makers jumped forward and now Punjabi movie industry is well established and playing big role in bringing all Punjabis together, including Pakistani audiences and North Indian ones. Bollywood often shows Pakistan as a villain state but Punjabi movie industry and movies like Lahoria and Angrez focused on shared heritage and building bridges contrary to Bollywood which focuses more on political differences with Pakistan. This led to expansion of audiences for Indian Punjabi movies in Pakistan and younger generations got exposed to the shared heritage. Recently released Punjabi movie Jat and Juliet 3 broke all the audience records in the West Punjab (Pakistan) theaters.

Solutions:

Despite disagreements over the script, the spoken Punjabi language has survived against many odds and challenges. Modern technology offers many solutions to transcribe the spoken language into different scripts. Other major solution is to use internet to have all the major Punjabi books and literature available in audiobooks. This will help all Punjabis to connect with its rich literature despite the barriers of lack of knowledge of different scripts. YouTube and social media have played significant role in cross border renaissance of music and films and same tools can be used for sharing other forms of literature and historv.

Conclusion:

Punjabi Diaspora played a significant role in the success and reinvention of the arts and music of Punjab and hopefully will bring more unity and rebuilding of global Punjabiat. Also sharing the different shades and colors and above all by building relationships withother cultures and people of the world. All cultures are unique andbeautiful, and no one deserves to be subjected to denial of its roots and suppressed. No one should be forced to disown their mother tongue irrespective of being poor or rich. Mom (mother tongue) cannot be replaced by aunts, though they also need respect. Reinventing of shared Punjabi heritage has potential to bring two nuclear armed rivals (India and Pakistan) closer and further the alliance and trade potentials. This will also strengthen the bonds between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and all other communities in the region and across borders.

Submitted by Jasbir S Kang,

Founding member, Punjabi American Heritage Society, Yuba City, California. A non-profit organization established in1993.

reference article:

https://www.marxists.org/archive/bhagatsingh/1923/x01/x01.htm



gress alliance. The Left parties too ex-

Bharat Bandh affects life in Bihar, Jharkhand, tribal belts

New Delhi/Patna- The daylong nationwide strike called by some Dalit and Adivasi groups against the Supreme Court's verdict on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes affected normal life in Bihar and Jharkhand as well as tribal areas of various states.

Police baton-charged and used water cannons on protesters in several districts of Bihar, including Patna, Dharbhanga and Begusarai, to remove rail and road blockades, while in Jharkhand and Odisha public transport services were partially affected. The response was tepid in other parts of the country even as several INDIA bloc parties as well as other non-BJP outfits extended their support to the bandh.

The Chhattisgarh unit of the Congress said the government should consider the "legitimate demands" of the protesters sympathetically. However, BJP's prominent tribal leader Faggan Singh Kulaste accused the opposition of politicising the Supreme Court's ruling on the issue. Twenty-one organisations across the country had called for the Bharat Bandh against the apex court's order, which they said

Public buses stayed off roads and schools remained closed in Jhark-



would harm the basic principles of reservation.

hand where the call for the bandh was transport backed by the state's ruling JMM-Con-affected.

tended their support to the strike. Protesters burnt tyres and put up blockades at various places in Ranchi. Rail and road communications were partially affected in Odisha. The call for the strike evoked a mixed response in Chhattisgarh, barring its tribal-dominated areas. The strike had some impact in Gujarat's tribal belts as well. It had little impact on normal life in Uttar Pradesh as shops were open and it was business as usual in large parts of the state amid tight security arrangements. The opposition BSP and SP extended their support to the bandh. BSP workers held a demonstration near Hazratganj, briefly affecting the traffic flow. The Bhim Army held protests in pockets of western Uttar Pradesh where it has a sizeable presence. Other northern states, including Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana, remained largely unaffected, barring a few places where markets remained closed and public transport services were partially

Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Agriculture Tour

This month, as part of the California Problem Solvers Caucus, I had the opportunity to visit several key agricultural sites across Northern California. The caucus, founded in 2021, is a bipartisan group of legislators from both the Assembly and Senate committed to reaching across the aisle to address pressing issues facing our state. In the past, we've worked together on initiatives like the suspension of the gas tax and securing funding for California's fire surveillance system.

Our tour began with a visit to Blue Diamond Growers in Sacramento, where we learned about the cooperative's operations and their significant impact on California's agricultural industry. We then visited a dairy farm in Galt to discuss sustainability initiatives with the family farmers and see the dairy digester they use to trap greenhouse gasses and convert it to energy. The day concluded at St. Amant Winery in Lodi, where we engaged with local winemakers to better understand the challenges facing our winegrape growers. These visits, alongside my colleagues from both sides of the aisle. are crucial for understanding the issues that directly impact our agricultural community and for informing my work at the Capitol.

Assembly Fellowship

Program Ceremony

This week I had the privilege of honoring Sara Marshall, who has been working in my capitol office as part of the 2024 California State Assembly Fellowship Program. Sara has been an amazing addition to my team, and has been the lead legislative staffer on a number of my bills, including one bill that has already been signed into law, and one that is still working its way through the legislative process. She was also featured as a guest on my podcast earlier in the year.

The Assembly Fellowship Program was founded in 1957, and is one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious fellowship programs. The program offers aspiring public servants of all ages, backgrounds and experiences the unique opportunity to directly participate in the legislative process and help shape public policy. Assembly fellows serve as full time legislative staff in the office of an Assembly Member working in a dynamic legislative environment.

If you, or anyone you know is interested in applying for the program, click here for the application details.

New Podcast Episode

In this week's episode of the Point of Order Podcast I was joined by Assemblyman Heath Flora to discuss a number of topics including the best moments in the 2024 Olympic Games, Southwest's announcement to abandon open seating, a State Senator's decision to switch parties, a new federal audit on California's homelessness dollars, the Legislature's organized retail theft bills, the impact of Chevron leaving the state, and Governor Newsom's comments on LA County's lack of effort on homeless encampments.

Sacramento State Roundtable Discussion

I recently had the opportunity to join key stakeholders and leaders from Sacramento State, SMUD, and the Greater Sacramento Economic Council to discuss an exciting new initiative that could establish Sacramento as a leader in clean energy and innovation. The roundtable focused on plans to build a first-of-its-kind energy, power, and innovation hub in the western United States on Sacramento State's 25-acre shovel-ready site. This site, approved by the California State University system, is strategically located within a disadvantaged community and already connected to the SMUD grid, making it an ideal location for the proposed development.

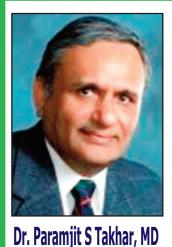
During the discussion, we explored potential pathways for securing local, state, and federal funding to accelerate the project's timeline. With a master plan f e a t u r i n g 7 5 0 , 0 0 0 square feet of space for manufacturing, office, and mixeduse development, this hub could



drive significant economic growth while advancing clean energy goals for our region. I emphasized the importance of collaboration among public and private partners to realize this vision and ensure long-term economic vitality for Sacramento and beyond.

Grand Opening at Victory Christian School

Team Hoover joined Victory Christian Schools (VCS) in Carmichael for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the grand opening of their new building. This new expansion will allow them to open a transitional kindergarten program this year and continue serving their growing population of students in the area. It is always exciting to see educational opportunities flourish for our students. I hope you will join me in celebrating the expansion of VCS and its service to the community.



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