



Ambedkar Times Weekly

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Guru Nanak and his Vision of Egalitarian Social Order

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

After Tathagath Lord Buddha, it was Baba Guru Nanak who raised a thundering voice against the oppressive social system of caste divisions and untouchability. His engaging approach and consistent efforts for the establishment of egalitarian society both through teachings and practice distinguished him from his predecessors and contemporaries of the Prema-Bhakti path of famous North Indian Bhakti Movement (Great Revolutionary Movement), which is known for its emphasis on equality of all persons irrespective of their caste, sex and creed before the almighty God. Baba Nanak was for social and gender equality in both the realms of spirituality (Parlok) and terrestrial world (lok). He stood with the lowest of the low. He reiterated that if one was desirous of the grace of God, he had to take care of the lowest of the low. In order to institute the principle of social equality in the sharply divided Hindu caste society, he founded the tradition of common community kitchen (langar) which needs to be financed out of the hard earned living by sharing its fruits. Kirat Karo, Naam Japo, Vand Shakko was the trilogy for the success of his social revolution. However, this trilogy of spiritual path needs to be understood in conjunction with the another postulate of the egalitarian social structure of Sikhism meticulously nurtured by Guru Nanak. Sharing the fruits of one's hard earned labor was to be practiced across caste boundaries of the given Hindu society based as it was on the divisive Varna order. Baba Nanak advocated decimation of all such oppressive caste based social boundaries. The inclusion of the Bani of different spiritual personalities cutting across caste lines vindicates the egalitarian intent of Sikhism. Had Baba Nanak been alive today, he would not have approved of the emergence of Gurdwaras on caste/community lines. Similarly, for the establishment of a true egalitarian society, Guru Nanak laid emphasis for the emancipation and empowerment of the women who were denied equal rights. While highlighting the various merits of women, Baba Nanak said why to condemn them who give birth to princess. He travelled far and wide to comprehend as well as enlighten the ignorant about their duties towards themselves, society and spiritual world. We need to sincerely adopt his teachings in our routine daily life and social dealings to give shape to the society which he envisioned and truly practiced in his earthly life time. Are we genuinely living the way he exhorted us to live? Let us do introspection within ourselves on the auspicious occasion of Parkash Purab of Guru Nanak Dev and resolve to follow his teachings in word and spirit.

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PUNJABI AMERICAN HERITAGE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM IN YUBA CITY, CA



Dr Narinder Singh Bajwa, Yuba City, California

November brought the first welcome showers of blessed rain to Sacramento valley, And in Yuba city, the little Punjab blossomed into myriad colors: except it was not flowers but multicolored turbans and many-hued dresses of Punjabis that brought the profusion of rainbows. Close to 200000 Punjabis, mostly sikhs but of all faiths came to celebrate Guru Gaddi Diwas da, to learn about the teachings of Gurus enshrined in the Guru Granth sahib, the holy scripture, living Guru of sikhs.



In this spirit of learning ,Punjabi American Heritage Society organized its annual symposium. It was held at Sikh Community Center at Yuba city. Standing room crowd enjoyed the offerings of knowledge, history and wisdom. Mrs Hardeep Singh introduced the speakers.

Dr Gurpreet Singh Dhugga spoke on MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH: PRINCIPLED LEADER, SHREWD POLITICIAN AND ETHICAL HUMANITARIAN. He highlighted the wisdom and acumen of the founder of Sikh Raj (1801-1839). To educate his subjects, he provided 5000 copies of a course book on fundamentals of Farsi and basic arithmetic to village headmen. They were instructed to pass these on to five people in the village who would then pass these on to five more. In his secular reign temples, mosques and gurdwaras were built for hindus, muslims and sikhs. His court had hindu prime minister and finance minister; and muslim foreign minister. He avoided religious bigotry and prejudice. On military front he modernized his army to Western standards, employed western generals and let battles from the front earning the title : Lion of Punjab. Due to his projected strength the British did not dare invade Punjab while he was alive.

Next, Dr Louis Fenech, world renowned scholar and professor of sikh history at University of Northern Iowa spoke about Guru Gobind Singh. His topic: Between Miri and Piri, The Just World Order According To Guru Gobind Singh.

Dr Fenech stated that Guru Gobind Singh based his life on Guru Nanak's teachings: "Realization of truth is higher than all else. Higher still is Truthful Living. "Guru Gobind Singh forged Khalsa Panth, abolishing caste system and fought Mughal tyranny always keeping principles of spiritual living in mind. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather Guru Hargobind Singh, the

10th Guru created a spiritually and politically balanced leadership. Sant Sipahi (Saint Soldier) concept was further promoted. Dr Fenech quoted from Dasam Granth, Bacchitar Natak and Zafarnama. He was amazing in his depth of knowledge and his passion and respect for the Gurus teachings.

A question and answer session followed chaired by the speakers and included Dr Rupinder Singh Brar, cardiologist and author of several books. Dr Jasbir Singh Kang, physician-writer and community leader conducted the proceedings with grace and charm.

On display were works of art from the archives of Punjab Digital Library. The amazing work done by the library was acknowledged by the speakers. Mrs Gurpreet Kaur spoke on the excellent work done by PDL and also spoke regarding the Silent Auction of Art work. Jasdeep Singh Mann, also of PDL gave a parents perspective and next years Intern program at PDL. Finally-Jagsher Singh Mann spoke from perspective of intern at PDL. To learn more about this remarkable library go to www.punjabdigilib.org search Punjab digital library on Google.

Media coverage was kindly provided by: Ambedkar Times (English) and Desh Doaba (Punjabi), Chardikala TV, Punjabi Radio USA, Punjabi Virasat

For more information on symposium :check on You Tube : LIVE THE SIKH EMPIRE Punjabi Virasat USA

Brief biography of speakers:

Dr Louis E Fenech: Professor of Sikh History, University of Northern Iowa. Authored: The Cherished Five in Sikh History; The Sikh Zafar-namah of Guru Gobind Singh: A Discursive Blade in The Heart of Mughal Empire; The Darbar of Sikh Gurus: the court of God in the world of men: Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition : Playing the Game of Love; Co-author of The Historical Dictionary of Sikhism and The Oxford Handbook Of Sikh Studies. Dr Gurpreet Singh Dhugga : Physician; Chief medical Director, Spherical medical group; Author of novel "Chali Din" and book "Health Guide". Dr Rupinder Singh Brar: Cardiologist, writer and historian. Authored : The Japji of Guru Nanak (Smithsonian, 2019); Along came a warrior (Sanbun Publishers, 2022); An Empire Speaks (to be published Roli Publishers, 2024).

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Historicity of Chamar Women's Contribution in the Ambedkarite Movement: Part -9

Kamal Parkhe

Kamal Sayajirao Gaikwad (Parkhe) (after marriage Sudha Jogdand) was born into a Chamar community of Maharashtra. As her father Sayajirao Gaikwad remarried, she had to live with her mother and brother in her maternal uncle's village. Her mother's father, the Waghmare family of Udgir, was very distinguished; He influenced the society. Kamal Parkhe says about her grandfather, "Mother's family was happy and rich. Mai (Mother) had five brothers and three sisters. My grandfather was so handsome that when he walked, his shoes would make such a sound. My grandfather was tall. He had a moustache. There were buffaloes, cows, and goats in the house. Grandmother used to boil milk in a pit; Grandfather used to go to work in the factory." This shows that Kamal Parkhe's grandfather and grandmother were working in factories and both of them were paid in cash so the family situation was financially viable. The last steps of Kamal Parkhe can be seen in Udgir, her grandparents' village. Grandpa's rich family suddenly started to go down the path of poverty. So Kamal's mother used to work at

Deshmukh's house cutting and watering trees.

Near the church near her grandmother's house in Udgir. There was a school called CPS In this school, she did her education up to the fourth standard. Kamal Sayajirao was the only name known to her mother at the time she was enrolled in school; Kamal's mother was not even aware of what a surname is and that it is to be given to children when sending them to school, someone teacher gave the surname Kamal Sayajirao Parkhe, while the surname of both her brothers is written as Waghmare i.e. the surname of mother's parental. The last name Jumble remained like this till Class IX. Her full name was Sayaji Ramchandra Gaikwad. The name Kamal Parkhe and after marriage Sudha Jogdand. She worked in the movement in her early life. The evidence of her hard work is seen in both the names Kamal Parkhe and SudhaJogdand, and certain types of rites are observed while in school on duty. In her autobiography, she writes "I went to seventh grade. There was a Khadi store near the house. There was a ground next to it. Rashtra Seva Dal's teachers and girls used to come there. The principal of Udayagiri College was N.Y. Dole sir and his daughter Vasundhara Dole used to teach us Sane Gurujis teaching used to teach us a lot about our country, 'Sadaiv SainikaUthana', 'Rashtra KoUcha Uthana AbHamara kavya Hai', used to teach us songs. We used to see only India in front of us." The values of social service and country service are seen to be ingrained in Kamal Parkhe from school. Later, she did an A.N.M. nursing course. She loved serving patients. So she did her sister's job with all her heart. In 1972-73 two years of training were completed and in 1974-75 she was admitted to Shivaji College Udgir.

About the social situation at that time, she says, "During this period casteism was very much suppressed. All my elder brother's friends were Marathas and

blacksmiths. One day my brother and his friends from Shivaji College were going to Shewale, Shelke etc. and got into an argument with another group. In the argument, an upper caste boy my brother took out the knife and ran away. My brother's hand got stitches soon. We went to the government hospital. But then, the children from the Buddhist, Matang and some Muslim communities gathered. It is very important for us to get organized," she said. After this incident, Kamal Parkhe and his mother and brother are seen to be very active in the movement. About her participation in the movement, she says that recently there was an announcement to rename the university (demand that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar should be given to Marathwada University). At that time, the huts of the poor were set on fire at night. No one paid attention to the poor. Communal riots were going on everywhere. Injustice was happening to the poor. "At that time Raja Dhale, Gangadhar Gade, J.V. Pawar, Avinash Mahatekar, and Bhai Sangare all started Dalit Panther in Udgir. Prakash Waghmare was the head of Dalit Panther's Udgir city branch. My elder brother was Prakash Waghmare. President of Udgirtaluk was VinayakBalande. Bharat Dubey, many young students such as Nivrti Hande, S.S. Gholke, and

Bapurao Jalkotkar started the Dalit Panthers Aghadi K. S. parkhe the secretary, Kumari Gupta, were the leaders of Dalit Panthers, Udgir. Dalit panther branches were opened in many places like Nalgir, Jabkot, Ekurka, Bhalki, Ahmedpur etc. I, KS Parkhe, my brother lived in 'Nai Abadi Sanmitra Society'." Kamal Parkhe's mother Malanbai Waghmare and Brother Prakash Waghmare are also active and important in the Dalit Panther movement in Marathwada. At the same time, Kamal Parkhe performed important responsibilities in Dalit Panther Mahila Aghadi and she worked in all important fronts like meetings, rallies, marches etc. at various places.

Kamal Parkhe was very active in this movement, the Waghmare family had a vision to transcend caste and look at everyone as a human being. Kamal Parkhe's mother Malanbai Waghmare was active in this movement and an attempt was made to kill her by poisoning her tea; then she was admitted to Aslyagai Hospital. Later Kamal Parkhe and his mother Movement activists took to Prof. Shripati Kisanrao Jogdand's house; Jogdand's mother and aunt were at home then; a tea was held. After a few days, Jogdand sir and his colleague friend Shinde sir were among the workers of Panther. Kamal Parkhe was asked for marriage and the matter was put before Kamal's mother and brother. Kamal did not want to get married, so she took the attitude of 'I don't want to get married, I want to do social work'. Everyone explained to them that one can do social service even after getting married. Her grandfather Shankarao Waghmare said, "Bai, after a few days the caste is destroyed, a boy should not be an addict; should be of good mind, there is no problem if we give a girl." Therefore, Malanbai Waghmare agreed for this marriage. Kamal with Prof. S. K. Jogdand was at-

tached. Shankarao Waghmare, an elderly Chamar man, was also very progressive of his views on caste changes. Dalit Panthers activists attended the wedding in large numbers. While working in the movement only on an ideological basis. On the evening of May 24, 1975, a Chamar girl was married to a Buddhist professor in a Buddhist manner in the village of Khibaban on the evening of the full moon; but after the inter-caste marriage, Kamal Parkhe also suffered the same problem as the in-laws do to other girls. That trouble is natural. Because boys and girls get married on an ideological basis by breaking caste restrictions. That respect does not necessarily change the perspective of other members of the family. Therefore, after inter-caste marriage, the son and daughter who take a revolutionary decision by breaking the caste suffer. Men and women who think beyond the caste and accept the idea of equality to look at the entire human group are actually very important milestones on the path of enlightenment.

The battle of ideas that we fight outside while working in social movements is very important to follow in personal life. Many people put on a progressive face when they go out into society; but in personal life, they are seen living a traditional life. Kamal Parkhe and her husband Prof. S. K. Jogdand are exceptions to this rule. She has lived her entire life so far following revolutionary ideas. Not only this, but keeping a one-year-old baby at home, she surrounded Atal Bihari and staged a Rasta Roko protest. She says that in 1977 when Morarji Desai was the Prime Minister of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar met him and demanded that the Buddhists be given reservation. Then Morarji Desai said, "Whoever asked you to become a Buddhist, take reservation as a Harijan." Then Bhaiyasaheb Ambedkar said, "My father told me to become a Buddhist." When this came to the newspaper; then marches and encirclement started at various places. "Around that time, Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to Ambajogai. He was the foreign minister in Morarji's government. His program was held in Ambajogai's jogeshwari College Auditorium. Dalit Youth Aghadi people went to Chanai Road and protested Rasta Roko. At that time, my baby was one year old; my mother-in-law was with Rajaibai. Gave the baby and we Dalit Youth Aghadi gathered together to protest Atal Bihari Vajpayee with black flags went to Jogshwari College; they stopped us with a stick; but they went to the stage and told them, 'Buddhism is not from outside.' The next day in BBC London, there was a news that Mrs Sudha Jogdand stopped Atalji's car. Even motherhood could not stop Kamal Parkhe who was active in the movement and social field. Even when the baby is only one year old, keeping him at home, Kamal Parkhe comes down to the streets and the movement is seen. At the same time,



the fight was going on to give concessions to the Buddhists; It can be seen how Kamal Parkhe methodically challenged even the leaders at the national level to work at the local level in that fight.

Along with this, she performed Buddha worship and other activities in the colony. In her memoirs, she says, "Every Thursday at four o'clock in the colony, I used to take Buddhavandana. I used to tell the meaning of 'Panchsheel' to the children; I used to feed them. In Ambajogai, many people like Dhanche Sir, Kamble Sir, and Kale Sir used to do Dhamma work together. At that time Meerabai Ambedkar was running the organization. I declared to have accepted the Buddhist Dhamma. At this time the president of the Buddhist Mahasabha was present. At the same time the Upasika Dhamma training camp was held from May 26 to June 5, 2005, at Yashwantrao College, Ambajogai. Upasika Dhamma Training Camp was held at Yashwantrao Chavan College Ambajogai from 10th May to 19th May 2008". It is seen that she took initiation of Buddha Dhamma and did various camps. She took voluntary retirement in 2008. After that, she was elected as Taluka Mahila President of Ambajogai of Buddhist Mahasabha in 2008. In 2009, a hall with all facilities for passengers was constructed at Kushinagar. She has two daughters and one son. They are at the pinnacle of success in their lives.

Kamal Parkhe is from Udgir. After marriage, she came to Ambajogai. Today she is known as Sudha Jogdand. She has been doing social work since childhood. Before marriage, she worked as a Dalit panther with her mother and after marriage, her husband Prof. S. K. Jogdand in Dalit Youth Aghadi in Ambajogai. She initially trained as A. N. M. After that she studied as a staff nurse and also served as a nurse in Ambajogai Medical College; Later took voluntary retirement. Studied the Buddha Dhamma and also spread the Dhamma. Due to inter-caste marriage, they faced many struggles even after marriage; but she never left the revolutionary thoughts and truth. Today her age is 71 years and she continues on the path of Buddha Dhamma.

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The Path of Enlightenment: How Guru Nanak's Legacy Guides Us Today

The modern world is divided on the basis of different ethnicities, religions, castes, classes, etc. Disputes over caste, religion, culture, language, and territory seem to be the main source of animosity and hatred among people today. There don't seem to be any peaceful places on earth. Every country has some degree of uncertainty, insecurity, and turmoil. Almost similar circumstances can be observed practically everywhere in the world now, just as the people were subjected to religious hypocrisy, superficial cultural traditions, economic exploitation, political coercion, and religious intolerance during the time of Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century. People are facing a variety of complex issues as a result of social injustice, economic inequalities, ethnic conflicts, ideological disputes, cultural strife, and mutual enmity. Presently we are being forced to follow a path where the future of the entire world is uncertain and bleak, as evidenced by the decline in moral values, the economic challenges caused by unsustainable development, the inability to resolve bilateral issues peacefully, the rise in political instability, and the growing tendency towards violence. In today's world, where there is a lot of lust, anger, and ego, man is constantly searching for inner peace and pleasure while being surrounded by hostility and conflicts with others. Degradation of the environment, rising rates of crimes against women, labor exploitation, ongoing economic instability, threats to international



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peace, and rising levels of frustration among the common people all indicate that, despite man's material advancements, he is still afraid, arrogant, nervous, and disappointed on the inside. Presently, in addition to religious intolerance, majoritarianism, and religious fanaticism, people are also succumbing to the mad race for material possessions as a result of consumerism. Practically we are far from Guru Nanak's path of meditation, patience, gratitude, and contentment. Even after the passage of 555 years, we still have not tried to understand the inclusive vision of Guru Nanak. It is essential that we should comprehend Guru Nanak's divine message to face the contemporary challenges. We must realize that the eternal teachings of Guru Nanak instill in us the value of mutual peace and the respect for

difference of opinion. Guru Nanak also taught us to be tolerant of socio-cultural and religious diversities. He had envisioned the Sikh way of life, which emphasizes a life based on liberty, equality, fraternity, humility, service, and spirituality. His divine message called for people to live in harmony. Guru Nanak denounced discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, or creed and advocated for equality for everyone. He strongly advocated for human dignity and severely spoke out against the caste system. Unfortunately the existence of caste-based Gurdwaras and crematoriums in Punjab at present is a clear proof that we have not embraced Guru Nanak's ideas of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Mankind. His central doctrine of Ik Onkar, or the Oneness of God, emphasizes the inter-connectedness of all people, a message that is much needed in a present-day world where racial, religious, and national divisions pose a serious threat to international stability, security and peace. His teachings emphasize dismantling obstacles and differences between people in order to foster a sense of belongingness that values peace and respect for one another.

Guru Nanak's socio-religious teachings served as the cornerstone of Sikhism, pointing Sikhs in the direction of a compassionate, purposeful, and meaningful life. The teachings of Guru Nanak are extremely relevant today because they provide eternal ideas on how to live a life of integrity, compassion, and peace in a world that is becoming more complicated and divided. Guru Nanak believed that as nature is a divine creation, it is the ethical duty of human beings to coexist peacefully with it. In light of ecological degradation and climate change, this method of environmental stewardship is particularly pertinent today, calling on individuals to take on the role of stewards of the planet and embrace sustainable behaviors. Guru Nanak also urged masses to respond empathetically and generously in response to the growing economic disparities by sharing resources and helping those in need. Guru Nanak's call to put inner growth and contentment ahead of material wealth because commercialization and materialism are primarily to blame for the general public's growing dissatisfaction and impatience. His vision of

social equality is exceptionally relevant today, inspiring movements against discrimination, inequality, and social injustice while urging societies to value each person's inherent worth.

The teachings of Guru Nanak offer a foundation for a peaceful, purposeful and meaningful life. His teachings are a universal manual for creating a kind, just, and peaceful world. People from all backgrounds and generations may create a society that is more resilient, just, and interdependent by adhering to his values of humility, kindness, and unity. Guru Nanak's teachings remain significant and relevant today because he placed a high value on universal concepts like compassion, equality, and social justice. His teachings encourage interfaith and intercultural harmony, which is especially crucial in the multicultural and interconnected world of today. Moreover, his emphasis on the importance of labor, moral conduct, and helping others resonates with people from a variety of backgrounds.

People are inspired by his teachings to strive for a more just allocation of resources and income. His focus on achieving satisfaction and inner peace can help people manage stress, anxiety, and sadness. Mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for all religions were encouraged by Guru Nanak. In a society when religious conflict and bigotry are commonplace, his message of unity in variety is crucial. His emphasis on social solidarity and the importance of selfless service resonates with the ongoing struggle for social justice and equality in many countries. The international community finds a ray of hope in Guru Nanak's teachings. In light of the current situation, his message of equality, love, and compassion for all people is incredibly pertinent and significant. We should work to build a more equitable, sustainable and fair society to ensure a promising future for all by emulating his teachings on love, compassion, and service.

We often allow our innate tendency towards self-interest to take



precedence over the importance of other people and the greater good. In order to avoid becoming sidetracked from spiritual development and compassion, we should endeavor to live up to Guru Nanak's teachings. By practicing meditation, developing compassion, and serving others without expecting anything in return, we can move closer to realizing Guru Nanak's vision of a just and peaceful world. In fact it's our tragedy that, although we bow before the image of Guru Nanak, we do not apply his teachings to our everyday lives. We cannot deny that our society would have been different if we had actually followed Guru Nanak's teachings in letter and spirit. Taking into account the current circumstances, it is easy to say that Sikh religious institutions and Sikh political leaders as a whole have miserably failed to adequately spread Guru Nanak's divine message. As a result of all of this, the world was unable to comprehend Guru Nanak's eternal teachings. Future generations may be motivated to oppose gender stereotypes and promote gender equality by his emphasis on women's empowerment. Future generations can create a better world founded on the values of love, compassion, and service to humanity by comprehending and putting his teachings into practice. His teachings remain a beacon of hope, showing the path to a brighter future. His emphasis on universal values like equality, compassion, and social justice relates strongly with contemporary issues.



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Goodie Takhar, PhD

Inter-active Career Counseling at Government Schools in Rural Jalandhar

It is said the fragrance of good things spread around automatically. I experienced this instantly. On invitation, I met and spoke to the young students of Ryan International School on November 6 at an Inter-active Session and wrote about this pleasant experience in my blog which may be accessed at:

<https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/2024/11/interactive-session-with-young-students.html>

On November 7, I got an unexpected call from one of my acquaintances, Asha Rani, a Lecturer at Government Girls Senior Secondary School of the Village Sarinh in Nakodar (Jalandhar). She wanted to come and meet me with regard to an important educational activity. I agreed to receive her. I was surprised to listen from her that she was hosting an Inter-active Mass Career Counseling for the three

building in the lush green environment. The premises were neat and clean. It was gratifying to note. The School In-charge, Prof. Kanwaljit Singh (in the absence of regular Principal) received us in his modest office. He said while we take tea, the students from other Schools would come and join their host counterparts. I found him slightly ill at ease and rightly so. He was truthful in sharing the real reason for his discomfort. He told that the nominated official to over-see such activities in the DC's office in Jalandhar had telephoned to say that they would come and join the Counseling Session in the afternoon and directed the School to arrange attendance of 300 students. Obviously, it made no sense. It seemed that they were not interested in the purpose of the Counseling Session meant for the advantage of students but in making a good report on paper

ducted by the Coordinator of the Career Counseling chapter of the School, Asha Rani and Teacher- In-charge, Prof Kanwaljit Singh without any fan-fair and without any monetary inputs made by the so called 'Educational Administrators' sitting in their cozy offices. All of a sudden, many aspects of our much neglected 'Educational Edifice', cross-crossed my mind particularly with regard to the rural governmental schools which generally hosted students belonging the weaker sections of the society. It would only be good, if this question troubled all of us.

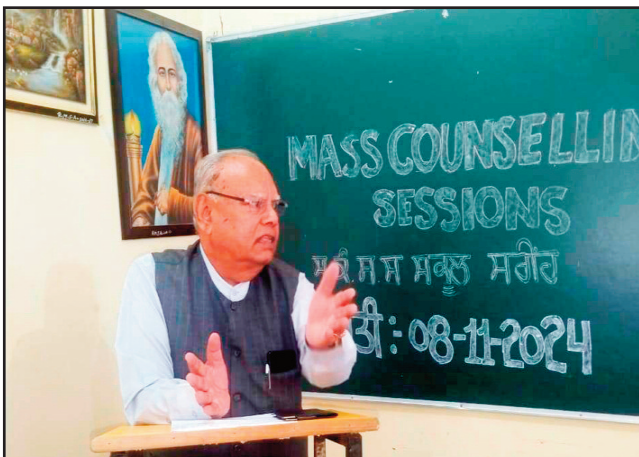
Giving my humble social background, I briefed the young audience about my chequered diplomatic career. I tried to make them at ease by saying that I was there not to lecture them but to talk to them informally as one of them. I said that there was no need

conducted by the State Service Commissions and the Civil Services Examination conducted by the UPSC for recruitment to coveted careers in IAS, IFS, IPS and other Allied Services. I specially mentioned about the Commissioned and Gazetted positions in the Armed Forces and Para-Military and Security Forces under the banner of CDS, NDA etc. I was under the impression that most of the things were going over their heads but subsequent inter-action with the young audience turned to be satisfying.

During my inter-action both



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Government Senior Secondary Schools for the young students of 10 + 2 of the area on November 8, the next day and invited me to the School Event as a lead Speaker. There was hardly any time and I tended to politely decline the invitation. Asha and her husband Sandeep felt dejected but while, appreciating my constraints, said that it was not their fault but that of the chaotic system and added that they had received the formal permission to hold the Mass Career Counseling Session from Chandigarh only today and if they don't avail of the opportunity, the students would suffer without any fault on their side. Not standing on ceremonies, I accepted and agreed to join them for the benefit of students.

Asha Rani picked me up and drove to the School at Sarinh in the morning of November 8 passing through the village roads, partly potholed and partly newly resurfaced. I may say that Sarinh is a kind of 'Model Village' in the area. The School, with more than 125 students (Girls), is located and situated in a fairly good

for their bosses and make picnic with some of their collaborators from various educational groups and other concerned offices as usual. Prof. Kanwaljit Singh informed them that the Guest Speaker, Ambassador Ramesh Chander, that is me, was already on the way and they would start the Counseling Session at around 12 noon and requested them to come accordingly, if possible otherwise they can come in the afternoon and do their work. Our informal chit-chat was an eye opener for me with regard to the state of affairs of our educational set and its functioning. Frankly, I was surprised to get this disturbing information. I may write about this to the concerned authorities appropriately, in due course.

Coming to the Mass Counseling Session, I can say with a sense of satisfaction that in spite of the fact that it was arranged in a hurry yet it was a well-arranged event with an attentive audience of about 50 young participants from the three government schools in the rural area. I was all the more happy to see that it was con-

to talk big and in a lighter vein quoted a famous saying about diplomats, "a diplomat thinks twice before saying nothing" and as such would not say much. Before coming to the crux of Career aspects, I advised the young boys and girls in their formative years that the first Mantra to succeed in life was 'Get Organized' both at home and in school – listen to your teachers and parents with a sense of belonging and the second was to 'Be Aware' of what was happening around. I added that follow the dictum "Take care of small things and big things will take of you." – read newspapers and listen to news, read and write beyond the bookish syllabus. I gave an over-view of the career choices and said that to my mind, the first consideration should be to get ready and trained to earn 'bread and butter' with dignity. The other things would follow. Starting from the supportive services of Clerks, Data Assistants, Police, Agniveers etc. conducted by Staff Selection Commissions after doing 10 + 2, I briefly touched the State Services like PCS and Allied Services

with the students and the teachers, I felt that non-availability of Science, Medical, Engineering, IT streams and the socio-economic background of the majority of the students in the rural schools was a matter of concern and worry not only to the students and parents but also to the teachers which might become a cause of 'Inferiority Complex' among the students. While appreciating their concern and thinking in this regard, I tried to down-play the issue and added that the job opportunities were wide open to the young school or college Graduates with the subjects in the Humanities (Arts). What would matter and be counted at the end will be 'Hard Work' which would fructify into realizing the dreams and fulfilling the aspirations.

I concluded with a Urdu couplet of Allama Iqbal to wish the young boys and girls all the very best in the years to come:

- Mere allah! burai se bachanamujhko nekjo rah ho us rah pechalanamujhko
- Lab peatihaidua ban ketamannameri zindagishamakisurat ho KHudayameri!

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