Ambedkar Times

NEW BEGINNING IN A NEW YEAR

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-In-Chief: Ambedkar Times

We live in a time that can be called modern/post-modern. All the ‘isms’ of hope, advancement and prosperity have lost their sheen in the contemporary world. If somehow, we still find an ‘ism’ floating somewhere around us that is of Neo-Liberalism, All ‘isms’ were formed at different intervals of the long history of mankind civilization.

What runs common in all the ‘isms’ is the emancipation of humanity from scarcity of resources and development of enough infrastructures for providing the basic necessities of mankind. Fabianism, Socialism, Liberalism, Capitalism, Communism all failed to keep the promise! Now Neo-liberalism is darting the shots. It hardly bothers about what is called equality and fraternity. It only aimed at ‘sterling’ liberty, which aimed at pursuing profit without fear of consequences for the fellow travelers. It defines wealth in terms of possessions and friendship in terms of capacity to further its interests.

But how this ultra-modern ‘ism’ will serve the cause of humanity is a common concern for all of us. Twenty first century is fast approaching its first 20 year shortly. Nano-technology, cyber-networking and finance-capital have been the hallmark of our contemporary times. We know that what we achieved in terms of science, technology and mastery over the nature in the last fifty years is beyond comparison with what we gained over the centuries. But one thing which we resolved not to forget is that what we have achieved over the centuries is not only to be measured in terms of technological advancements but also morality, liberty, equality, fraternity and humanity.

If we have survived over all these centuries, it is not only due to strides in technological advancements but also human values. Let us begin our New Year with a resolve that the blind pursuit for profit should not leave behind human values - the savior of mankind!

COMMISSIONER LAHORI RAM’S SEVENTH BARSII

“Time is not measured by the years that you live but by the deeds that you do and the joy that you give.”

On January 31, 2016 the Ram Family hosted a religious function celebrating the life of Late Commissioner Lahori Ram. The Ram family hosted an Akhand Path at the Shri Guru Raviddas Temple in Pittsburg, CA. The function commerorated the Seventh Anniversary of the passing of Mr. Lahori Ram. Over 1000 friends, family and well-wishers attended the memorial. People travelled from all over the United States to attend the function. Many people traveled internationally to pay homage to their dear friend and give support to the family to continue the annual memorial to keep Mr. Ram’s memory alive.

Many dignitaries attended on Sunday and praised the work Mr. Ram accomplished in his lifetime. The elected officials included: Congresswoman Mark DeSaulnier from the 11th Congressional District, Mayor of the city of Pittsburg Ben Johnson, City Council of PittsburgMerl Craft, and from the Indian Consulate Vice Consul VenkataRamana.

Kirtan was performed by Shri Guru Raviddas Temple Pittsburg head priest Prakash Singh, Om Pal Singh’s Jatha, Baljit Singh’s Jatha, Famous Singer from India Ranjit Kaur, and Asha Sharma.

Most of the local Bay Area Sikh Temples sent their representatives to attend the memorial. Committee members from Fremont, Yuba City, Sacramento, Rio Linda, Fresno, Bakersfield, San Jose, Hayward, Modesto, Livington and El Sobrante were all present.

Congressman Mark DeSaulnier spoke about Mr. Lahori Ram’s contribution to the American political system. He said we need more Indian Americans to be active in US politics. He said he will include the Memorial Program in the permanent US Congressional record in Washington D.C.

Mayor Ben Johnson praised Mr. Lahori Ram for his dedication, efforts, and involvement in the American and Indian political system. He stressed that Mr. Ram was a role model and inspiration to many which earned him the title of “Indian Trailblazer in California Politics.”

Mayor Johnson presented the Ram Family with Certificate of Recognition from California State Senator, District 7, Steven Glazer. The certificate highlighted the accomplishments and legacy of Mr. Ram.

City Council Merl Craft remembered how she used to teach at the old Pittsburg City gym, which is now the new Temple in Pittsburg. She was amazed of how the building was transformed into such a beautiful Temple. Mrs. Craft said the Temple was an asset to the city of Pittsburg. Vice Consul VenkataRamana said although he never got a chance to meet Mr. Ram he has heard nothing but remarkable stories of him. He praised Mr. and Mrs. Ram for raising such beautiful children. He said that many people have lots of money but only a few people will be remembered forever like Mr. Ram.

Asha Sharma said that Mr. Lahori Ram was a shining star that can never be replaced. Karmdeep Singh Bains from Yuba City attended that Mr. Ram’s contributions will never be forgotten and will live on forever. Dashwinder Pal spoke about Lahori Ram’s sacrifice in establishing the Pittsburg Temple.

He said that without the Ram Family’s contribution the Temple would not be in existence. Mrs. Gina Bhatia, Kashmir Bhatia, Dashvinder Paul, Prem Kumar Chumber (Editor-In-Chief of Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba) and Dr. Harmesh Kumar also commended the Ram Family and declared his candidacy for State Assembly.

Jagdev, Ajia Paul and Jagdish Kaur Ram thanked everyone for helping out in the three-day service and especially thanked the community and elected officials for their encouragement and support. They appreciated the great things said about their Father and hope to continue the work their Father started.
COMMISSIONER LAHORI RAM’S SEVENTH BARSIS
Prem Kumar Chumber presented books "Kaum Da Sitara Shaheed Babu Harmam Singh Sahri" to the Commissioner Lahori Ram Family & Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (California)
Rohith Chakravarthi Vemula, a research scholar of University of Hyderabad (UoH), committed suicide on January 17, 2016 in the room of his friend in the hostel of the university by hanging himself from the ceiling fan with the blue banner of Ambedkar Students Association (ASA), a student outfit which has been fighting for Dalit rights on the campus.

The suicide was committed after 15 days of his expulsion along with four other fellow researchers from the UoH. On the Nalla Baaqi Hai protest on the campus, the ABVP unit of the campus, the other four banned student bodies including ASA, was largely a Telugu-based organisation. Rohith took over. He scrapped the eradication of the students including the Rohith Vemula, the one who committed suicide and also apologised to him for the same in his suicide note, says that "the biggest thing that Rohith brought to the ASA was the dignity. Till he joined, the ASA was largely a Telugu-based organisation. Rohith took us to a new level." His command over English and to use appropriate words for sharply hitting at the target is fondly recalled by ASA member Za- meer. The scientist within Rohith remained with him till his last breath. He never accepted things as they were and always raised his fell while in meetings. "He would never take anybody’s words. He had to be convinced," says Shekhar. However as far as social setup of Indian society is concerned, Rohith was more comfortable with the analysis of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar recalled Sunkanna Velpula. His sharp intellect, brilliant articulation and unflinching resolve for the emancipation and empowerment of Dalits made him one of the most influential leaders of his generation.

Telling a long narrative of sad Dalit life, Rohith lamented that "the biggest thing that Rohith did was to make the Dalits stand tall in the face all social oppression. Despite the social segregation. His suicide note is a testament to a life which stands tall in the face of emancipation and empowerment.

I loved science, stars, nature – but then I loved people without knowing that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs coloured. Our originality valid for the down trodden excluded from the mainstream in the name of varna and social segregation. His suicide note is a fact a manifesto of dreaded Dalit life, which stands tall in the face all social oppression. Despite the plethora of social exclusion and oppression, Dalit life is full of aspirations and look forward to an egalitarian world where everyone will get his due in a dignified way.

The life of Rohith Vemula was full of vision, hope and love. He personified a true human being who wanted that mankind on this earth planet realize its true potentials un hindered by caste hurdles. His man was man of mind not of an identity. He loved science, stars, nature – but then I loved people without knowing that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs coloured. Our originality valid for the down trodden excluded from the mainstream in the name of varna and social segregation. His suicide note is a fact a manifesto of dreaded Dalit life, which stands tall in the face all social oppression. Despite the plethora of social exclusion and oppression, Dalit life is full of aspirations and look forward to an egalitarian world where everyone will get his due in a dignified way.

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