Punjab has the highest proportion of Dalits (29 percent, Census of India 2001) in India and this whopping numerical presence has further increased with the inclusion of Mochi and Rai Sikh/Mahatam castes into Scheduled Castes category in the state. Despite having the highest proportion of Dalit percentage in the country, Dalits in Punjab, however, are extensively deprived of agricultural land. Among them less than 5 percent (Census of India) are cultivators. They shared only 4.82 percent of the number of operational holdings and 2.34 percent of the total area under cultivation (1991 Census). Consequently, their landlessness rendered a large number of them into agricultural labourers and made them subservient to the landowning caste. They prefer to improve their social status through highlighting their number of professions, which were traditionally considered to be the mainstay of the business and artisan casts. This has led to a sharp decline in the number of Dalit landless agricultural workers in Punjab whose strength has come down from 24 percent in 1991 to 16 percent in 2001. However, the dissociation of Dalits from the menial and agricultural work in Punjab and their relatively better economic conditions have probably failed to get them entry into the local structure of power, almost totally monopolized by the so-called dominant/upper castes. This is what forced them to look for alternative ways of social mobility and empowerment.

The story of Dalit identity, emancipation, empowerment and mobility is quite different in Punjab from that of the rest of India. There happened to be two main models of social mobility available to the socially excluded sections of the Indian society. These two models are: Conversion and Sanskritisation. Conversion and Sanskritisation aim at seeking Dalit emancipation by crossing over to something new/external that would facilitate them to quit their centuries-old entrenched subordination [Ram 2012: 639]. But as far as Punjab is concerned, Dalits seem to have avoided this two fold way of social mobility for the reasons best known to them. They prefer to improve their social status through highlighting their caste identity.

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WE the PEOPLE of INDIA

The text of the Preamble of the Indian constitution reads:

"WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY, of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

to promote among them all FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, DO HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION:"

The Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. The January 26 became the Republic Day of India. Let us look back with some sense of introspection and consider whether we have lived up to the lofty ideals of the Preamble of the constitution of the Republic India. It is a mixed bag, to my mind, of good and bad.

The Good - we are prevailing democracy in the world. The words "Socialist and Secular" were added to the preamble were added on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee later sometime in the early 70s. It could be anybody's guess or opinion whether we are socialist and secular? The redeeming factor is that the constitution is working. If, somehow, polarization of political forces on the basis of ideology and pro- or con-social transformation, Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar used to emphasize that Indian parliamentary democracy ought to survive it has to introduce social democracy into its grassroots. Political equality has to be matched with social and economic equality. It is political equality buttressed with social and economic equality that can pave the way for real social justice ultimately leading to the genuine Dalit empowerment from below up rather than top down based on patronage and sympathy. For that purpose, we need a grassroots social transformation and Dalit empowerment to become reality one needs to give a serious thought to what Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Babu Kanshi Ram used to emphasize on the practical devise of master key.

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-in-Chief

ATTORNEY ASHWANI BHAKHRI'S MOTHER MRS. KALAWANTI BHAKHRI NO MORE

Mrs. Bhakhri. She had long and blessed life. She survived by three sons, 11 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

A prayer meeting will be held on this Sunday, February 10, 2013, at Sunnyvale Hindu Temple, 450 Persian Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94089, from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. According to the Bhakhri family, the prayer service is expected to be attended by family, friends, relatives and official dignitaries. Among others who have confirmed to attend on this Sunday are Congressman Mike Honda, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Senior State Senator, Leeland Yee, Senator Jerry Hill, Betty Yee, member of the California Board of Equalization, Former Speaker Pro Tempore, Fiona Ma, Kevin Mullin (D-San Mateo), Member California Legislative Assembly, Don Horsely, Supervisor of San Mateo County, Steve Wagstaffe, District Attorney of San Mateo County, Gina Papan, Mayor of City of Millbrae, Ash Kalra, Councilmember of City of San Jose, Pradeep Gupta, Councilmember of the City of South San Francisco, David Canapa, Councilmember of the City of Daly City, & Kansen Chu, Councilmember of the City of San Jose. Your presence on the occasion will be highly appreciated by the Bhakhri family.
Dalit identity is the primary of the material (land) and political factors over the principle of purity and pollution dichotomy. Punjab is primarily an agrarian state. Social status in Punjab is basically measured in terms of possession of land. In Punjab, land is basically under the absolute control of the dominant caste i.e. Jat Sikh [Ibid: 656]. Therefore, Jat Sikh considered themselves at the top of caste hierarchy in Punjab, particularly in Sikhism. Since Purify-Pollution is not the criterion of social exclusion in Punjab, there is no Dalit identity and they prefer to improve their situation and gain empowerment in the Doaba region of Punjab. So if someone embraces some vocabulary. The author alarmed that one can write about the complex aspects of life and society through Dalit oppression: synthesis and reaction) and a detailed bibliography based on scattered but rich Punjabi sources.

The first chapter explores the long journey of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment in Punjab. The chapter opens with the history of how Dalits in Punjab, specifically the birth of Dalitism. Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith, in gurumukhi script. Punjabi language, culture and literature eventually developed through the gurumukhi script. Today, the domain of Punjabi language is shrinking and the shift to the dothi vocabulary of other languages than making use of original Punjabi vocabulary. The author alums that by doing so we would not only weaken our mother tongue vocabulary but also dwarf our culture. The book is arranged in eight chapters in addition to a detailed prologue, foreword, introduction, conclusion (Dalit oppression: synthesis and reaction) and a detailed bibliography based on scattered but rich Punjabi sources.

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Dalits of Punjab not only respect Guru Ravidass but also adhere to neo-Buddhism that concentrated on rational thinking and the equality of human beings that they should construct their distinct political identity.

Ambedkar was highly respected among the Dalits in Punjab. Dalits of Punjab not only respect Guru Ravidass but also adhere to neo-Buddhism that concentrated on rational thinking and the equality of human beings that they should construct their distinct political identity. The Guru Ravidass mission. The Dalit identity in the state. The growing numbers of Ravidass Deras and taking the edge of the new socio-cultural Dalit movement. The Sants of Derasakh Ballan are leading the movement of Ravidass Deras. Deras Ballan, also known as Dera Sant Sarwan Dass, is playing a vital role in the construction of Dalit identity. Since, Sant Sarwan Dass is providing multifarious facilities (schools, hospitals etc.), religious places, power, language, culture and worldview. He organized middle class of Dalits Bahujan Samaj at a platform. i.e. Backward and Minority Communities Employees’ Federation (BAMCEF).

Systematic organizational structure of BAMCEF provide the new Dalit identity that organised Dalits around political programmes. The sole purpose of this identity is to make Dalits as the holders of political power. The next two stages of Bahujan Samaj’s political programmes which play a vital role in construction of Dalit identity are: Dalit Soshit Sangrach Syaksadana (DSS) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). This was for the first time when Dalits realized to capture real political power through caste line. BSP through its caste card is providing different meaning to Dalit identity. It is also providing a new alternative to young Dalits of rural and urban Punjab. The roots of Dalit identity are on political alternative or capture of political power. Its utilization deployed to gain recognition as Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment.

Ravidass Deras are the major socio-religious institutions that hold the command of the Dalit identity in the state. Ravidass Deras are dedicated to the teachings of Guru Ravidass. Ravidass Deras distinguish distinct Dalit identity through different religious traditions, customs, slogans, prayer, festivals, hymns, dress etc. It revolved around the Bani and teachings of Guru Ravidass. In the rural Punjab, particularly among Chamar community, new socio-cultural movements are silently growing its influence. The numbers of Dera followers are increasing day by day due to their adoption of Ambedkarism and Guru Ravidass and that of Dr. Ambedkar. The credit of blending the philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass goes to Dera Sachkhand Ballan. Ravidass Deras do not only exist in Punjab but also in abroad. The movement offered some relief from caste system and creation of a separate new lower caste for the lower castes among Sikhs.

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mently criticized the evil of caste system both theoretically and practically. The author further discussed that the period from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh was known as ‘golden period of Sikhism’. During this period Sikh panth was free from caste system at all. This was the period when Shudras joined the Sikhism and played an important role in the emerging egalitarian Sikh identity. Not even a single example of rural Gurus to the misals was found during that period. Subsequently, caste system emerged into Sikh panth: first, due to its close relationship with Hinduism. Second, it entered into Sikh panth with the adoption of the cultural patron of Jat community. During the second half of 19th century Singh Sabha movement was launched to reform the Sikh panth. Though the movement offered some relief from casteism but it failed to eliminate caste system from Sikh panth. Caste hierarchy in Sikh panth, however, is different from that of Hindu religion. Among the Sikhs, the lower castes were recognized as superior. The lower castes in Sikh panth are largely categorized into two groups; Chamar and Chhuras. The Chamar Sikhs also known as Ramdassia Sikh and Khalsa Brader. The Chhuras Sikhs are known as Makhadi and Rangetra. The Chhuras Sikhs are the only ones who have actually re-“azadi di jang (religion and war of freedom), Firkhu fasadh ate uhana da ellalla ( communal violence and the destruction of self)” in the fourth chapter. 

Dr. Ambedkar for Dalit emancipa-

tion. Therefore, he called himself atheist. As contrary to Congress, he did not prefer only political independence but also wanted to resolve the social and economic problems of Dalits, labourers, artisans and farmers. He criti-

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Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg is celebrating the 636th Birthday Anniversary of our revered Lord SATGURU RAVIDASS MAHARAJ JI on Sunday, March 3, 2013 at the temple as per program noted below:

ARAMBH SHRI AKHAND PATH March 1st, 2013 (FRIDAY) 9:00 AM
BHOG SHRI AKHAND PATH March 3rd, 2013 (SUNDAY) 9:00 AM
KIRTAN DIWAN AFTER BHOG CEREMONY UNTIL 2:00 PM

Representatives of all Sabhas, Prominent Kirtani Jathas of Giani Harjinder Singh Rasia - Head Granthi of Shri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg, Giani Baldev Singh and Giani Manjlt Singh from Yuba City, Religious artists, distinguished Speakers and community leaders well versed with life and teachings of Satguru will embellish this Kirtan Diwan.

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony will be held on March 2nd 2013 (SATURDAY) at 3:30 PM
The Sangat of Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha will perform Langer, Path and Parshad Sewa for this program.

The entire Sangat is cordially invited to participate in this celebration with family and friends and receive the benign blessings of Guru Ravidass. He devoted his entire life against inequity based on caste and class. Satguru Ravidass Ji was a great religious and social reformer dedicated his whole life for the welfare of the humanity. May Guru Ravidass Ji bless the SANGAT.

The committee and SANGAT are remodeling the 2nd building of the Gurughar. We need your help and support. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated.

Managing Committee:

SHRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA PITTSBURG (CA)

For doing any SEWA or information, please call Gurughar at (925) 439-2355.

SEWADARS:

Chairman: Moti Baru
President: Salinder Singh Bhatia
General Secretary: Resham Singh
Treasurer: Gyan Suman
महावीर टेम्पल ने है मों मी गुरु वैदिकम से 636 हें पूर्वम पिग्दे चीमंग बुधन-संय सुभाष

महावीर मुन्नल वैदिकम है।

Gyan Suman and Ramesh Suman

महावीर टेम्पल ने है मों मी गुरु वैदिकम से 636 हें पूर्वम पिग्दे चीमंग बुधन-संय द्वारकींग्र

भविष्य हर सूत्र्यां ग्रे रवरे ढुंढे भारतमा “वैदिकम ग्राम” रिजिटेंड हें भविष्य हर "वैदिकम ग्राम” है।

महावीर टेम्पल ने रिजिटेंड हें भविष्य हर "वैदिकम ग्राम” है।

विकेट वृष्ण प्रियां
ममु क मण मीनांड ने है मुरी गुरु बदिसाम नी हे 636 दें शून्म दिगं दीखं लख-लख दुखीआं
मराठ माय सेलिट नी हे मूळ गुरु रविशंक नी दे 636ें प्रवास लिंगूरे सीभंं संध-संध्य लघुपाटींचं

मूळ गुरु रविशंक नी

मूळ गुरु रविशंक नी
Dalits about bureaucrats and Ram’s memory alive.

Their dear friend and give sup-

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The epilogue includes vari-

The rising

Dalits about bureaucrats and feudalas which he said were also

rightful rights and spiritual leader that was

the beginning of an understanding

he left India, stayed briefly in Manila, and

arrived in Seattle, WA in 1931. A

year later, he was paying his way

through the University of California at Berkeley by working in an Oregon lumber mill during summer vacations.

While America entered World War I, he left the U.S. Army.

one of the few East Indians to do so at the time. He was honorably discharged in 1918 and in 1920 applied for U.S. citizenship from the state of Oregon. Since several applicants from India had thus far been granted U.S. citizenship, he too was approved by the district court. However a naturalization examiner appealed this court’s decision and the rest is history.

On February 10, 1923, in United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind, the US Supreme Court ruled that one must be white in order to qualify for citizenship and that “Hindus” are “aliens ineligible to citizenship.”

What is less well known is that Bhagat Singh Thind remained in the U.S., complet-

his Ph.D., and delivered lectures in metaphysics all across the nation. Relying on

his lessons on Sikh philosophy, he enriched his teaching with references to the scriptures of several religions and the work of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. He cam-

paigned actively for the inde-

pendence of India from the British Empire. The mission helped Indian students in any way he could. In 1931, he married Vivian Davies and they had a son, David, to whom several of his 15 books were dedicated.

“You must never be limited by external

or, if you be in a church, then go to church. It is your right to question,

challenge, and investigate.”

Ironically, Dr. Thind applied for and received U.S. citizenship through a law

granting citizenship to World War I veter-

ans in 1936, 18 years after he started the process, and within a few years of being turned down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

(Source: adapted from PBS Roots in the Sand)

Dalits about bureaucrats and feudals which he said were also responsible of their slavery. He argued that it is through aware-

ness that Dalits could achieve their emancipation from caste.

The eighth chapter deals with the question of Dalit emancipa-

tion in Punjabi Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry, as pointed by the author is not only related to the Dalits, but also criticized the perpetra-
tors of Dalit atrocities. It chal-

lenges, writes the author, the political and religious authority which supports Dalit oppression. The oppression of Dalits was first time challenged in the radical poetry of the Bhakti movement of medieval period. Subsequently, the leaders of Adi movements of 1920s also used poetry as a medi-

um to criticize Dalit subjugation, documents the author with a number of examples. It is an

excellent achievement of the book that it elaborates minutely how the poetry of Babu Mangi Ram, Gurdas Ram Alam, Gurch Dass Nidhark and Chanan Lal Manak clearly draw the pictures of Dalit life, oppression and empower-

ment. This chapter also talked in detail about the Dalit poetry that was written during the Ambedkarite and Lahori Ram

Punjabi. The opinion of the author, Dalit thinkers observe the Dalit identity and emancipation in Dalit poetry from two perspec-
tives: small stories and social critic-

icism. Dalit poetry criticizes all types of socio-cultural, religious and political conditions which preserve the social hierarchy based on oppressive four-fold Varna categories. Dalit poetry, said the author, represents the labourers, farmers, poorer, untouchables, cobblers, wavers as

its hero who were earlier ignored. The author further states that at present, Dalit poetry addresses the Dalit struggle from both caste and class perspectives. But to receive relief from caste system it lays stress on Ambedkarite and medieval Sants’ philosophy than Marxist. Dalit poetry, writes the author, has been in the process of inventing counter-culture in against the mainstream culture of social domination and all perva-

sive hegemony.

The epilogue includes vari-

ous interviews of the author which were published at differ-

ent intervals in various local/ver-

nacular newspapers and maga-

zines. These interviews help in understanding the complex issues of Dalit identity, emanci-

pation and empowerment. It provides us deep understanding of the author on the issues like

Dalit identity, education, litera-

ture, their social, economic and political position in the pre and post liberalization, privatization and globalization period.

On the whole, this book is another good attempt by the author to analytically explore in Punjabi language the complex theme of Dalit identity, emanci-

pation and empowerment. The book provides a compact and rich account of the rise of Dalit consciousness, identity and assertion in Punjab. Based on ethnographic and archival meth-

ods, this analytical volume in Punjabi is a welcome addition to the growing critical Dalit litera-

ture and politics of Punjab. The publisher too deserves commen-

dation for bringing out the book in an impressive form and wrapped up in an artistic cover with a reasonable price tag. It is a

must read for lay, academic, political and media persons.

Department of Political Science

Punjabi University, Chandigarh

singhaurinder33@gmail.com

Ref: Mochi and Rai Singh/Mahatam were added in the list of Scheduled Castes by the Constitution Scheduled Castes Amendment Act 2005 (Act No. 25) and 2007 (Act No. 31 of 2007) respectively. With the inclusion of these two castes the numbers of SCs have reached up to 39 castes


Posted on www.ambedkartimes.com (January 12, 2013)
Silence over Dalit Rape Victims

Are They Not the Daughters of India?

Delhi saw an unprecedented public outrage over the recent cruel gang rape and vicious attack on the 23 year old girl. This incident brought out many people to protest against this heinous crime. This brutal attack must be strongly condemned and perpetrators must be severely punished so that no body dare to commit such a crime in future.

Judging the public anger, it appears that no such incident had happened before Delhi rape case. What happened in Delhi is not an exception. Many more cases are hushed up regularly or are not reported. The National Crime Records Bureau records reveal that during 2011 India witnessed 228,650 crimes against women, 2,206 of them rape and 35,055 of kidnapping and abduction and majority of them were belonging to Dalit communities. Most of the crimes against Dalit women go unnoticed. In the most horrific cases of sex abuse, Dalit women have not only been raped, but mutilated, burned, paraded naked through villages, and even forced to eat human faeces.

Either the people are ignorant or just turn their blind eye to such incidents. Nobody from the so called civil society took notice of those crimes. In spite of all these incidents. Nobody from the so called civil society took notice of those crimes. In spite of all these.

India’s middle class wears such glasses from where they can only see the crimes committed against the upper castes. Their heart throbs only for their own clan. Women folk from the Dalit communities mean nothing to them. Society must feel guilty and act against atrocities against women irrespective of their caste or class.

Double standards of the upper middle class raise many questions which need answers. Shenali Waduge raises a very valid question, “While rape in any form is a serious crime, why should Dalit women be so brutally punished by all nations what needs to be answered is what makes the recent gang rape by 6 men of a 23 year old on a bus in Delhi any different from the gang rape of a 16 year old Dalit women by 8 men who having taken photos of the crime had circulated it amongst the village leading to her father committing suicide out of shame?”(1) This Dalit girl was raped in September 2012 and Shenali questions why there were no mass protests, no media attention for her or calls to arrest the perpetrators but the recent rape has turned into a mass protest all over India? Can somebody from the civil society answer these questions?

Similarly where were all Indians when Khairlarnji massacre occurred in 2006 when a Dalit family was lynched in Maharashtra? In Khairlarnji, on 29 September 2006, 44-year-old Surekha Bhotmange and her daughter Priyanka Bhotmange were stripped, paraded naked, and raped repeatedly. Surekha’s sons Roshan and Sudhir were slaughtered. The entire village was involved. The Bhotmanges were Dalits. The Bhotmanges have been forgotten. After all, two Dalits are murdered every day in India. (2) The Indian media didn’t even bother to cover this incident until Dalits in Nagpur came on streets to protest. Unfortunately all India was sleeping as if the Dalit women were not the ‘daughters of India’.

Dalit rape victims in Ajmer district in Rajasthan are waiting for justice for the last seven years. There are 68 reported cases of rape in the district since 2006 but only one accused has been convicted in 2007. Just in the months of September and October, 2012 around 19 Dalit women were raped in Haryana. An 18 year old Dalit girl in Badshapur village in Patiala committed suicide on December 26, six weeks after being raped by three men as she couldn’t tolerate humiliation and tormenting by police and culprits anymore. Her mother stated that when she went to complain to the police they humiliated the girl with lewd questions. On 5th January, a 16-year-old Dalit girl was abducted, raped and forced to eat some poisonous pesticide by an upper-caste man and dumped outside her house in a village in Faridkot district in Punjab.

The tale of sexual abuse doesn’t end here. In an article in Counter-currents, Cynthia Stephen quotes a Dalit girl from a village in Tamil Nadu as saying “There is no girl in our lane who has not been coerced or raped by the dominant caste men when they go to the fields to fetch water or for work.”(3) Men from the dominant castes threaten the Dalits with dire consequences if they dare complain to the police. Sexual violence against Dalit women is a systemic way of enforcing status quo of the Dalits. Rape is often used as a tool for political and social subjugation of Dalit women. Rural areas are full of such incidents. Vast majority of crimes against Dalit women are not reported owing to fear of social exclusion and threats to personal safety and security. Every village in India has such tales to narrate.

Instead the leaders such as RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat give us lessons on Indian culture and advocates that gang rapes and sexual abuses happen only in urban areas as a result of Western influence and not in rural areas. If this Hindu ideologue tries to preach us about ancient Hindu culture, he must feel ashamed of Davadda system in South India where girls as young as 6 year old become “brides of gods” and are raped by men of higher castes in temples. Young women are also later forced into prostitution through this system. Violent atrocities occur regularly in the names of tradition and religion. When are we going to get rid of hypocrisy? Other holy man blamed girl for the rape as she didn’t beg enough for mercy. Women are placed on the pedestals and are worshiped daily. On the other hand, the same women are treated as toys to play with and discarded when they are not needed. There is a plenty of evidence in Hindu scriptures where women’s low status is justified. The verses from the scriptures are still recited where castes, drums and women are considered worthy of beating.

That is why Dr. Ambedkar publicly burnt down Manusmriti, a manifestation of inequality and cruelty towards women, and condemned other scriptures which contain humiliating strictures against women. Women don’t want the status of goddesses but need equal treatment and respect. The problem lies clearly in the names of tradition and religion. Why are we going to get rid of hypocrisy? Other holy man blamed girl for the rape as she didn’t beg enough for mercy. Women are placed on the pedestals and are worshiped daily. On the other hand, the same women are treated as toys to play with and discarded when they are not needed. There is a plenty of evidence in Hindu scriptures where women’s low status is justified. The verses from the scriptures are still recited where castes, drums and women are considered worthy of beating.

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"W will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction or else those who suffer inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously built." These are the words which Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar spoke on 25th November 1949 while addressing the Constitution Assembly after completing the Indian Constitution piloted by him which he presented to the President of India Dr. Rajindra Prasad on 26th January 1950 in the presence of Pandit Jawaher Lal Nehru and other prominent leaders.

In my view, these words were more directed towards the sufferers of inequality i.e. downtrodden and unprivileged of India rather than administrators of it. Baba Sahib extremely worked hard to frame the constitution and get it passed with its preamble:

PREAMBLE Social, economic, and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, and worship; EQUITY of status and opportunity and to promote among them all; FRATERNITY assuming the dignity of the individual;

Interalia he included the Fundamental Rights, such as Equality before law (ART 14); Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or the place of birth (ART 14); Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (ART 16); Abolition of untouchability (ART 17); Protection of traffic in human beings and forced labor (BEGAR) (ART 23); Remedies for enforcement of fundamental rights (ART 32, 226); by the judiciary i.e. the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts of States. Besides this, the directive principles of state policy under which states shall endeavor to secure social order for promotion of welfare of the people were also provided. These principles specially include an adequate means of livelihood to all citizens, men or women, equally (ART 39); Rights to work, to education, and public assistance in certain cases (ART 41). Lives of workers for workers (ART 43); and promotion of educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward sections (ART 46).

This all would show that all these provisions have been made especially to confer, to protect, and safeguard the basic rights upon and for the S.C.s. and S.T.s. who had been hitherto deprived of them for centuries under the Manu’s Laws contained in the Manu Simiriti due to which these communities became downtrodden, unprivileged and unapproachable. So that such castes, tribes may not be ignored, their list was drawn up, later on, by the President of India in consultation with Governors of the States and made a part of the Constitution as directed by it under articles 341 and 342. To further insure the amelioration of these classes, a particular section has been added as part XVI to the constitution under the caption, special provisions relating to certain classes under which seats shall be reserved in the house of people and legislative assemblies of the states in proportion of their population in the states, for S.S. and STs. (ART 336).

Reservation of S.C.s. and S.T.s in the services and posts has been provided under article 335 in connection with the affairs of the Union and the States.

To watchdog and safeguard the interests of the S.C.s. and S.T.s., a National Commission (ART 338) consisting Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and three other members has been provided.

Considering the concerted effort accomplished by versatile genius put in by Baba Sahib in framing the constitution and unique leadership of the down trodden, Mr. Sharad Pawar the former chief minister of Maharashtra, paid his heartiest tribute to Baba Sahib in his Foreword of Ambedkar’s Writings. In the following words; in Baba Sahib Ambedkar, we have not only a crusader against the caste system, a valient fighter for the cause of the down trodden in India but also an elder statesmen and national leader whose untiring struggle for the Constitution of India will be cherished forever by posterity. In fact, his fight for human rights and as an emancipator of all those enslaved in the world gave him international recognition of a liberator of humanity from injustic, social and economic. Pt. Pandit Jawaher Lal Nehru, the then prime minister of India paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Ambedkar while moving a condoleance resol- lution in the parliament as follows, "Dr. Ambedkar was a sym bol of revolt against all oppressive feelings of the Hindu socie- ty.” (Foreword to Dr. Ambedkar’s writings and speeches)

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To keep his solemn vow, Baba Sahib embraced Buddhism and took,”Diksha on Dusehra Day in 1956. Before his death on 6th December 1956. Baba Sahib adopted Buddhism because it is the most secular and scientific religion in which there is no caste and class prejudice but equality, fraternity, love, and affection.” The former prime minister Indira Gandhi also said, “The life of Dr. Ambedkar gives a lesson to us that most of evils in our society can be elimi nated by domestic reforms as introduced by this great leader.”

In framing new constitution, Baba Sahib was undoubtedly a larger than life persona. This is established from further words of Sharad Pawar,”Dr. Ambedkar incorporated the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the Constitution of free India, it is a living tribute to his juristic genius and social conscience that over the years, the high courts and supreme court have shaped the law to serve the social ends of governmental efforts to improve the lot of the poor.”

In pursuance of edicts, of the constitution, certain laws have been enacted and certain ordinances/directions have been promulgated for the upliftment and welfare of the S.C.s. and STs but little has been achieved so far. Protection of Civil Rights Act 1950 and S.C.s and S.T.s. (Protection of Atrocities) 1989 have been passed but despite this the offences to attract these provisions are still being permitted in Indian societis. Very few cases are register ed, tried, or result into convic tion due to general prejudice. Reservation in culture and the appointments proportionate to the population of these caste or classes have been notified but their quotas have not been fully filled up. There is a great backlog, though there is no dearth of qual i fied candidates among the S.C.s and STs for appointment on such posts. There is no reservation in private sector. Now the state trad ing is also being squeezed to be picked up by private firms and agencies. This will further limit the appointment scope of the S.C.s and STs. candidates on key posts.

The reservation in legisla tion of course is fully implement ed by the MLAs and M Ps belonging to the S.C.s and STs doing nothing tangible to better the fate of the castes or tribes whom they are supposed to represent, because they occupy the reserved seats for and on their behalf on reserved quotas. They are elected on the tickets of national or regional parties of non- S.S.s, and non STs, finan cially supported by the millionaires and as such they never raise any point about the state or the parliament as the welfare of the S.T.s. and S.C.s. to whom they are expected to rep resent. They are after filling their own coffers with money by indulging in corruption. They are in a way running with the hares and hunting with the hounds. Ours to be elected members do not form a strong independent party to press for the fulfilment of the demands of our people on account of whom they contest the reserved seats. They do not gain the political power which is most needed in the words of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar as expressed by him in the following lines:Political power is the most precious thing in the life of humanity it is a controlling power in the community especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the communi ty is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its position” (in Pakistan or Partition of India)

According to Baba Sahib, “lost rights are never regained by begging and appeals to con- sensuse of usurpers. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that we can win strength, confi dence and recognition.” He has asked us, “write down on the walls of your houses that you were Dassas (slaves) of yesterday but want to be Rulers of tomorrow.” During more than 6 decades from the adoption of indian constitution there has not been any meaningful progress in the abysmal plight of S.C.s and STs. Also untouchability has been abolished by the constitution it still exists in some parts of India. Yet it exists in the mind of caste hindus and non S.C.s, who feel ill at ease in the matters of reservation in the appointments and the posts. There is lack of education among the S.C.s. and STs. due to poverty and unemployment. The schemes of their welfare are not fully implement ed. The funds earmarked and given the disposal of the states by the central govt. for the purpose are either misappropriated or not utilized. Very few candidates among the S.C.s and S.T.s. constitute labor class but suffer from unemployment. The higher education and medical facilities have become out of their reach being most expensive. Still these people have not blown up the structure of politi cal democracy as prophesied by Baba Saheb. This is because they have not united under one banner. Their population in all the states is not less than 25% of the total population. In Punjab it has risen up to 32%. In case they all get together and form a compact unit like Sikhs in Punjab and BSJ in U.P and make alliance with some regional or national parties, they can have balance of power in their hands to form the govt, of their choice and rule as contemplated by Baba Saheb. Let a better sense prevail upon the S.C.s. STs. and their leaders to recollect Baba Saheb’s philos opy and attain political power. Let them shed off fatalist notion of being challenged and the communities become downtrodden at the hands of Hindus due to their mythical previ ous deeds. They should learn the universal truth, "The fault does not lie with our stars but with us that we are underlings” in the words of Shakespeare. According to Baba Saheb, “The political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community, especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its position”.
I congratulate Ambedkar Times Group and the followers of Ad-Dharam movement on the commemoration of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia’s 127th Birth Anniversary which falls on January 14th, 2013. On this historic day I feel an imperative urge inside to vent my impressions about the legacy of this great leader who was a freedom fighter and founder of glorious Ad-Dharam movement which gave the Dalit community in Punjab, a distinct and a separate identity to live a life of respect and dignity like other communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. To understand Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia’s vision to achieve his goal we have to evaluate the role played by him in totality for the upliftment of the Dalit community as a whole. Some of the glimpses of his struggle and sacrifices which speak for themselves are shared as under:

Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia, as he was affectionately called by his followers, was born on January 14th, 1886 in village Muggowal (Near Mahilpur), District Hoshiarpur, Punjab, India. He had acquired a very good grasp of the social inequalities, inherently built in India’s social hierarchy as codified by Manu’s Smritis and Chatuvartana.

TRAVEL TO USA AND ROLE IN GADHAR MOVEMENT: - After completing his school education he helped his father for a while in promoting his family business in tanned leather. In 1909 he was persuaded and encouraged by his father, Mr. Harmam Dass to go to USA at the young age of 23. After working for a few years in Agricultural farms in Fresno and adjoining areas of California he came in contact with the Gadhar movement established in San Francisco to support the liberation of India from British colonialism. During his years in USA Mangu Ram developed a new insight and a revolutionary spirit of liberation and dignity. At the instance of Lala Hardyal and Sahib Singh Bhalra, the senior leaders of the Gadhar movement, he undertook a very dangerous mission of shipping weapons to India in support of the liberation movement. He along with his other companions was captured by the British but he managed to escape under very difficult conditions.

After a sojourn of almost 16 years abroad Mangu Ram Muggowalia arrived back in Punjab in 1925 and found that the lower sections of society still had to live under carping humiliations and slave-like conditions at the hands of the upper caste people. This made Mangu Ram Muggowalia realize that that liberation from British colonialism would not serve the real purpose until the downtrodden are not freed from the shackles of social injustice, prejudice and discrimination.

BIRTH OF AD-DHARM MANDAL WITH A DISTINCT IDENTITY: - Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia’s agenda was very candid and clear that we were the original inhabitants (Ad Dharmi/Mulnivasis) but with the invasion of India by Aryans, our culture and civilization, which once thrived, was completely erased and obliterated from the pages of ancient history of India and was rewritten as per the dictates of Manusmriti. This led to the birth of a new and a vigorous movement which appealed to the conscience of the lower sections of society and started to spread and flourish in the entire province of pre-partition Punjab. In 1931 census, Ad-Dharam was recognized as a separate religion and led to many electoral alliances and victories in the legislative Assembly of Punjab making Babu Mangu Ram a house-hold name in Punjab.

In fact, the Ad-Dharam movement launched by Babu Mangu Ram had carved out such a deep impact on the minds of the people, especially in the Doaba region of Punjab, that some of our ancestors from Punjab who migrated and settled in Fiji Islands in the early 1930’s, established their first Guru Ravidass temple outside India, under the name of Ad-Association of Punjab, in Nasino Suva, which still stands as a living example of its past history.

ROLE OF ARYA SAMAJ - Before the foundation of Ad-Dharm Mandal under the leadership of Babu Mangu Ram the other leaders in the Ad-Dharam movement were associated with the Arya Samaj which wanted to make some reforms in Hindu social order, but only by staying within the fold of their Vedic philosophy. There were conversions from untouchables to Islam and Christianity and it ultimately posed many difficulties for the Ad-Dharam movement in maintaining its distinct religious entity.

MANGU RAM’S SUPPORT FOR BABA SAHEB: - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who had assumed the dynamic leadership of the entire Dalit community at the national level, was strongly supported by Babu Mangu Ram at a very critical phase of Baba Sahib’s leadership during the Round Table conferences and at the time when coercive pressures were used by Mahatma Gandhi and his supporters for signing the Poona Pact Agreement in 1932, to avoid separate electorates for untouchables awarded by the British Government. Baba Saheb’s approach to liberate the untouchables by building an egalitarian social order at the national level which he believed was not possible within the fold of Hinduism. In the words of Baba Saheb “The basis of my politics lies in the proposition that the untouchables are not a sub division or sub section of Hindus and they are separate and distinct element in the national life of India”.

Internal dissensions between the Congress and Muslim league leadership in the wake of the division of India into two nations, appeared to have led to some distractions in the progressive and prolific growth of the Ad-Dharam movement, but its objective and spirit which were born out of the fundamental truth of ancient history of India, remained alive. The caravan, which halted for some time due to various factors of history will be moving forward with a renewed vigour and zeal.

My PERSONAL VIEWS AND COMMENTS: - In the year 1963 I visited village Mugowal to attend the marriage ceremony of my brother-in law in the family of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia and had a chance to meet him and talk to him for many hours on the historic role of his mission in the 1920’s. Before that I had also met Baba Saheb many times in Delhi in 1955-56 and thus I had personal grasp and knowledge of their missions. Baba Sahib’s mission as well as Babu Mangu Ram’s for the emancipation of the suppressed humanity in India were the same, but varia-tions in their approach and organizational structures, perhaps, became one the characteristic reasons why they could not be presented together from the same platform.

Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia’s life is an inspiring example of what a man can achieve by his indomitable courage, perseverance and great self-denial, even under the most depressing conditions. He was bestowed with the charisma for social transformation. Prof: Mark Juergensmeyer who has written a very exhaustive assessment of Babu Mangu Ram’s mission in his book “Religious Rebels In the Punjab” and interviewed him many times at his village, states “He was a restless, ambitious man, socially sensitive and politically astute.”

I also appreciate AmbedkarTimes.com, its regular contributors and readers for the efforts to revive and reinvigorate the mission of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia in North America. AmbedkarTimes.com’s editor Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber is also appreciated for providing copies of Babu Mangu Ram’s photos to Guru Ravidass Sabhas in the United States of America.

In the end I will resistate to say that a Nation can be united only by erasing all artificial barriers and divisions created by so called upper strata of society and the onus of responsibility to discard the very structure of this social malady of caste system, lies with them. I again congratulate you all on Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia’s 127th Birth Anniversary on January 14th, 2013.

Thanks.

O. P. Bailey
General Secretary
Supreme Council, Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas, USA