



# Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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## BABASAHEB DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR, BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Prem Kumar Chumber  
Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism at the historic public ceremony in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. The decision to embrace Buddhism

by Dr. Ambedkar was not a sudden attempt. It took him more than two decades (from Yeola Conference, October 13, 1935, where he took the vow that 'even though I am a Hindu born, I will not die a Hindu', to the historic Nagpur conversion ceremony, October 14, 1956, the day he embraced Buddhism with thousands of his followers) to translate his vow for conversion into reality. He decided to embrace Buddhism after thoroughly exhausting all possible ways of reforming Hinduism from within and exploring the possibility of conversion to Christianity, Sikhism, and Islam for overcoming the oppressive structures of Brahminical social order (BSO) in India. Converting to Buddhism, in fact, was a unique and meticulously calculated move. It was a unique move in the sense that though there have been many instances of individual conversions to Buddhism, the real credit for systematically organizing collective conversion to Buddhism on a mass scale in India, beyond doubt, goes to Dr. Ambedkar. The historic conversion ceremony at Nagpur assumed further importance with the publication of The Buddha and his Dhamma shortly after the demise of Babasaheb on December 6, 1956.



Dr. Ambedkar discovered in conversion to Buddhism the most desired and reliable way of overcoming the centuries-old system of social exclusion. According to Babasaheb, the central thesis of the Buddhist philosophy revolves around two major problems: the first problem was that there was suffering in the world and the second was how to remove this suffering and make mankind happy. Since caste and caste based social exclusion dehumanizes the Dalits, Babasaheb underlined the urgency of caste annihilation. It is in this context that conversion to Buddhism becomes meaningful. Another aspect that underlines the importance of conversion to Buddhism encourages strategic alliance between the non-Brahminical/Shudras/Bahujan Samaj/artisans and the Dalit/Ati Shudras sections of the Indian society and calls for their united front against the oppressive and hegemonic structures of Brahminical social order. Forging unity among the victims of the 'Varna order' in turn aimed at reclaiming India

on the basis of the neo-Buddhist identity. The very fact that Dr. Ambedkar founded three political parties (the Independent Labour Party, All India Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India), and the leading role that he played in drafting the Constitution of independent India, vindicated his active involvement in the polity and society of the country even after denouncing Hinduism publicly in 1935 and later on embracing Buddhism in 1956.

Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar used to emphasize on the application of scientific approach to solve the question of caste and social exclusion. His movement also became very popular in Punjab. He visited Punjab thrice. It was during his last visit in October 27-29, 1951 that he spoke at length to his people in Punjab about his approach and ways of Dalit empowerment. He delivered speeches at Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala and also addressed the students of D.A.V. College Jalandhar. Though the people of Punjab were well impressed by his great movement but they could not follow him so closely in relation to conversion to Buddhism. Late D. C. Ahir, a renowned Ambedkarite Buddhist and world reputed scholar of Buddhism, was of

the opinion that due to deep faith of Scheduled Castes population of Punjab, especially of the Doaba region, in the teachings and spirituality of Saheb Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, Buddhism could not become so popular in this state. Another possible reason behind the deep popularity of the teachings of Saheb Shri Guru Ravidass in Punjab could be the concerted efforts of Babu Mangu Ram Murgowalia and the mass appeal of his famous Ad Dharm movement.

On this historic Diksha day, the Ambedkar International Centre, built on 13 acres of land in Accokeek city of Maryland, is unveiling 19 feet statue of Dr. Ambedkar, on its premises, on October 14 2023. This statue was sculpted by the same renowned artist and sculptor, Ram Sutar, who also built the statue of Sardar Patel installed in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. "This is the largest statue of Babasaheb outside India and has been installed as a part of the Ambedkar Memorial being constructed at this center," said the AIC."

It is expected that a large number of representatives of the Ambedkarite movement and his followers will be attending the event from across the USA and other parts of the world." This memorial will serve, said the organizers of AIC, to spread Babasaheb's messages and teachings and showcase a symbol of equality and human rights.

Ambedkar Times forum congratulates all on this historic day.

## California governor vetoes Bill that banned caste discrimination



Source Courtesy

**Sacramento (California)-** California Governor Gavin Newsom on Saturday (October 7, 2023) vetoed a bill passed recently by the state legislature to explicitly ban caste discrimination, citing existing laws that already prohibit ancestry discrimination, which made the bill "unnecessary."

Had Newsom signed the bill officially called Senate Bill 403 or SB-403, California would have become the first ever US state to explicitly ban caste discrimination.

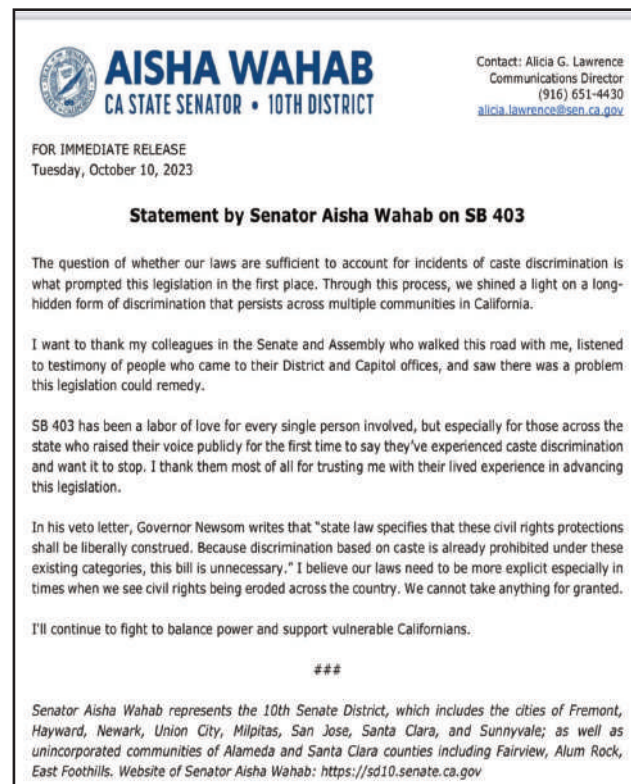
Newsom's veto is a big set-back for activists who had been advocating for legislation. US discrimination laws ban ancestry discrimination though they don't mention casteism.

The bill was introduced and authored by Democratic state Senator Aisha Wahab, an Afghan American, in March. An earlier version of it passed state Senate before undergoing revisions.

The revised version, which listed caste under "ancestry" and not as a separate category, was passed by California's state Assembly in late August and by the state Senate in early September with a near unanimous vote.

The bill defined caste as "an individual's perceived position in a system of social stratification on the basis of inherited status." "Because discrimination based on caste is already prohibited under these existing categories, this bill is unnecessary." Newsom said on the website of the governor's office. "For this reason, I cannot sign this "bill".

(Courtesy: Indian Express)



Source Courtesy

# Gov. Newsom put concerns of caste-privileged communities over civil rights

## Why is caste discrimination any more acceptable than targeting sexual orientation or gender identity?

When Sen. Strom Thurmond and other Southern Democrats set out to defeat the landmark civil rights legislation of the 1960s, they argued that there was no need to take any measures to counter racism in the United States, since, in Thurmond's words, "there are already ample laws on the statute books."

"In order to bestow preferential rights on a favored few," the South Carolinian said, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 "would sacrifice the Constitutional rights of every citizen, and would concentrate in the national government arbitrary powers, unchained by laws, to

been dropped from the complaint, but the caste discrimination case against CISCO continues.

Central to the CISCO case is the company's refusal to act on the employee's complaint, stating that caste discrimination is not illegal in California. SB 403 was an effort to address this serious gap. By formally adding "caste" to the list of protected classes under California's civil rights statutes (which now include race, color, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex, pregnancy, religion, disability, age, military or veteran status and marital status), it was hoped that com-

to vet complaints before legal action is taken on behalf of alleged victims. The case against CISCO was the first caste discrimination allegation the CRD had taken up; they didn't get everything right, but lessons from that case will only strengthen CRD's ability to fairly pursue future cases — which will continue to arise, despite (or because of) the governor's veto.

Had SB 403 existed at CISCO when its employee complained of caste discrimination, the case would have most likely been resolved within the company itself. Employers, in response to the law, would have been encouraged by SB 403 to put in place

reality that all Hindus must acknowledge and work together to annihilate, knowing that it is perfectly possible to practice Hinduism while combating caste discrimination. Gov.

Newsom has missed an opportunity to support these simple facts. Instead he has lifted up the irrational fears and speculations of a highly privileged community over the needs of caste-op-



Raju Rajagopal



suppress the liberty of all." He further charged that it would restrict employers in hiring and firing and give government bureaucrats the power "to decide what is discrimination."

Similar arguments were made by Governor Gavin Newsom of California on Saturday (Oct. 7), as he vetoed a bill known as SB 403 that would have banned caste discrimination in education, housing and employment throughout California.

Passed with overwhelming support in the state's Assembly in early September after being introduced by freshman Senator Aisha Wahab in February,

SB 403 was a response to the testimonies of hundreds of Silicon Valley workers of South Asian backgrounds, who say they have experienced discrimination on account of their "low caste" status.

The case of one such worker, in fact, had drawn the attention of the California Civil Rights Department, which filed a lawsuit in 2020 against the tech giant CISCO and two of its former employees, who were accused of identifying the worker as a Dalit (the preferred term for communities derogatorily referred to historically as "untouchables"). The scurrilous implication of being "outed" in this way is to suggest that a worker is a beneficiary of India's affirmative action programs for Dalits and therefore less competent.

The two employees have since

panies could not legally ignore caste bias.

But despite the compromise in language, Newsom vetoed the bill on a weekend as the world's attention was called to the Mideast.

It is abundantly clear that he succumbed to political pressure from the same Hindu nationalists who demanded caste be stricken from the bill. The governor's explanation for his action is remarkably close to the position of these groups, led by the Hindu American Foundation.

These opponents of the bill had been indulging in rank fear-mongering about the proposed law, spreading preposterous allegations in WhatsApp groups that SB 403 was an attack on Hinduism itself and would make Hindus, especially women, fearful of displaying their "Hinduness" in public.

Left to themselves, many Hindu Americans would support SB 403 or at worst be agnostic. But caste-oppressed communities are now in a state of shock. Saying caste discrimination is already covered under California's civil rights laws contradicts their experience and merely rubs salt into their wounds.

Besides the insult to these Americans, Newsom has glossed over three important considerations.

First, California's legal system isn't as capricious and arbitrary as HAF would have us believe. The Civil Rights Department has an elaborate process

appropriate policies and training programs on caste, as some are already doing.

The HAF's protests, and the governor's veto, however, will have a chilling effect, discouraging other employers from addressing caste at all or implementing caste discrimination policies.

Second, Newsom has canceled the deterrent effect SB 403 would have had on caste discrimination before it occurs, as well as its legal effect in ensuring Dalits would not need to worry about being "outed" at work and would be granted the self-confidence to be themselves at the workplace.

Finally, in its separate lawsuit against the CRD, HAF made the extraordinary claim that by defining caste as a Hindu ideology, "the (CRD) would actually require the very discrimination that it seeks to ban," and "employers might arguably be required to accommodate an employee's request not to work with someone the employee believes to be of the 'wrong' caste." The court dismissed that claim as "both highly speculative and seemingly implausible."

The court added that HAF, by trying to distance Hinduism from caste while arguing that SB 403 would selectively target Hindus, was contradicting itself. The defeat of SB 403, I'm afraid, will only tempt HAF to continue to push these untenable positions.

Caste discrimination is a sad

pressed communities, who will continue to face biases because of who they are.

But the fight is not over by any means. Those who demanded that caste be added as a distinct protected category in not only California's but also the nation's civil rights laws will, if anything, be strengthened in championing the vision of SB 403. We, the people who stand for justice for all, are the majority.

In the meantime, the least that the governor can do is to issue a letter formalizing his claim that caste discrimination is already covered under existing laws and require all employers to implement policies and training programs to deal with caste discrimination complaints. The fight for SB 403 has been a remarkable journey, with a Muslim woman having the courage to introduce the bill and a diverse coalition of communities coming together to fight for it. We need such solidarity across our differences to win justice for any of our communities. The deep bonds we have all built through the fight in Seattle and now California will serve us well, indeed will be our lifeline, in the struggles ahead.

(Raju Rajagopal is a co-founder of *Hindus for Human Rights* and a member of *America Against Caste Discrimination*. The views expressed in this commentary do not necessarily reflect those of *Religion News Service*.)

Source Courtesy:

<https://religionnews.com/2023/10/09/gov-newsom-put-concerns-of-caste-privileged-communities-over-civil-rights/>

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of FABO UK held on 1st October 2023 at the Ambedkar Hall, Southall

The meeting commenced with serving food to the invitees, followed by Buddhist prayer offering refuge to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The President, Ms. Santosh Dass MBE (SD), welcomed the attendees and chaired the meeting. The session started with a review of activities from the past years. SD provided an update on the activities and events from the previous years. She highlighted that this meeting marks the first one post the COVID-19 pandemic, occurring after a gap of several years. Given its significance, there was a plan to review FABO UK's and the member organisations of the Federation's activities.

During the meeting, SD informed the attendees about the Public Inquiry in 2019 into the museum status of 10 King Henry's Road, London. Where Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar lived whilst studying at the London School of Economics and Gray's Inn. SD shared details about the Inquiry, legal representation and witnesses on each side. Our representation included a planning expert Jamie Sullivan, Professor Dr William Gould, SD, and third-party witnesses from the public. The discussion brought to light substantial pre-inquiry preparations, culminating in transforming the property into a museum.

SD explained the acquisition, renovation and conversion of a property at No. 10 King Henry Road into an Ambedkar memorial and provided historical context. She highlighted FABO's instrumental role in the public inquiry, helping to secure approval from Camden Council, and cited the organisation's provision of witnesses and critical support. It was also brought to notice that C Gautam (CG) helped dig out the relevant material to establish Dr Ambedkar's connection with the house.

SD also provided an update on the ongoing deliberations on the campaign to outlaw caste discrimination in the UK. In addition, she provided an update on the government's position in response to the 2017 public consultation on caste legislation. The movement advocating for legislation against caste discrimination reaffirmed its commitment and welcomed the progress made on the issue in the USA, Canada and Australia.

It was also shared that one of FABO's significant achievements is the creation of the Ambedkar Room at Gray's Inn and installing a new portrait in the room. The initiative began in 2014 when discussions were initiated with Gray's Inn to establish a memorial. They agreed to refurbish a room and call it the Ambedkar Room with

FABO offering a generous donation of twenty thousand pounds towards the refurbishment. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, the project was delayed, when work recommenced Gray's Inn agreed to pay all the costs and FABO's proposed financial contribution was waived.

Gray's Inn suggested they install an existing portrait of Babasaheb, donated by the Government of India in 2016, in the new Ambedkar Room.

foreword for Ambassador (Rt) Ramesh Chander's upcoming book titled "Some Random Thoughts on Babasaheb Ambedkar and his legacy - The Bits and Pieces." AK mentioned being interviewed by Dr. Gaurav Pathania, a professor from the USA, who was accompanied by Sat Pal Muman, for an upcoming book. Dr Pathania (who has recently played the role of Dr Ambedkar in a new film 'Origin') is actively collaborating with Mr Muman in

Ramesh Chander. Ram Pal Rahi initiated an education program for students, conducting competitions on Bahujan icons, and has distributed one crore of Rupees as prize money to successful students so far.

Kanu Parmar suggested that Ambedkarites should adhere to Babasaheb's Buddhism in line with Buddha and his Dhamma, highlighting the importance of aligning with the original principles rather than incorporating various rituals

and ceremonies. The topic of Empowerment of Dalits, initially proposed by Partap Tambe and Balram Sampla, was added to the agenda for discussion. AK informed that whenever MPs or political leaders visit the Ambedkar Museum, FABO UK present memorandums, advocating for establishing Ambedkar scholarships at institutions like the LSE to empower the community.

Santosh Dass and Arun Kumar announced they had decided to step down as President and General Secretary of FABOUK after fully packed 10 years (completed in

September 2023).

**The new executive body for the term 2023-25** was elected under Election Commissioner Devinder Chander. The attendees extended a warm welcome to the newly elected office bearers: President: Mr Ram Pal Rahi, Vice-President: JajdishGaware, General Secretary: Pankaj Shamkunwar, Joint Secretary: C. Gautam, Treasurer: S. L. Gindha, International Coordinators: H. L. Virdee and Dr Pradeep Jagtap.

**Executive Members:** Santosh Dass MBE, Arun Kumar, KanuParmar, Ravi Gautam, Satpal Paul, JaswantSunda, HansrajSampla, BakshiBirdi, MilindKaul, NareshMehmi, DhampatRattu, H.C. Mehmi, ChamanLal, Ms ShalakaAhire, CharanajitChumber, DevinderChander, Daulata Bali, Gurdevinder Kumar, Mehar Chand Jassal, Mulk Chand, Rahul Gindha, NishaGindha, Deesh Jassal.

The meeting ended with an expression of a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation from Ram Pal Rahi, newly elected President, to long-serving Santosh Dass and General Secretary Arun Kumar.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Pankaj Shamkunwar, newly elected General Secretary, and he announced the next Executive Committee meeting would be held in the last week of December 2023.

*Report-*  
*Pankaj Shamkunwar*  
*General Secretary*  
*Federation of Ambedkarite and*  
*Buddhist Organisations UK*



SD advocated for a new portrait. Subsequently, a new portrait was commissioned by FABO from a UK-based artist David Newens and FABO members contributed towards the costs. The Ambedkar Room and the portrait were officially inaugurated on 30 June 2021 by Ali Malek QC (now KC) Master Treasurer of Gray's Inn, in the presence of numerous FABO members, Lord David Alton, Dr Ambedkar's great-grandson - Sujat Ambedkar, and the artist David Newens. An event commemorating the centenary of Dr. Ambedkar's being called to the bar was also organized by FABO UK on 28 June 2022, gaining considerable interest from the public.

FABO UK remains dedicated to commemorating Babasaheb's birth anniversary and other events significant to his life. SD, in her roles as Chair of the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance UK (ACDA) and President of FABO, actively advocates for caste legislation across various platforms. Furthermore, S D highlighted the book 'Ambedkar in London,' (2022) she co-edited co-authored included a chapter on the history of the Ambedkar movement in the UK, a chapter on the Ambedkar Museum, and Dr Ambedkar's time at Gray's Inn, and the London School of Economics. Arun Kumar (AK), General Secretary FABO UK contributed a chapter on the Ambedkar Movement in the UK to this historical record.

AK shared that he recently had an interview with Mooknayak, discussing the activities of FABO UK. Additionally, he has authored the

this project.

In a separate update, C. Gautam (CG) elaborated on the challenges and difficulties experienced during the global pandemic crisis. Additionally, he shed light on the struggles encountered and the issues inherent in the mission's operations. He also revealed his personal efforts in addressing these challenges, a side not openly shared with everyone.

Ram Pal Rahi (RPR), Vice President FABO provided an update on his and the FABO office bearers' participation in diverse events and activities conducted over the past four years. These included significant events such as Buddha Jayanti and Sangh Daana in May, the Diksha Day meeting at Ambedkar Museum in October, Parinirvaan Day at India House on 6th December, the Republic Day Celebration at Guild Hall on 26th January, and Kathina celebration at Ambedkar Hall in Southall. Additionally, we were involved in Ambedkar Jayanti at India House, the Centenary celebration of Ambedkar being called to the Bar in 1922 at Gray's Inn, and Sanvidhan Day at Ambedkar Museum on 26th November.

Regarding the Ambedkar statue project, several members directly donated to the Ambedkar International Center in Washington, D.C., USA. Harbans Lal Virdee (HLV) shared details about a function organized at Ambedkar Bhavan, Jalandhar, where, on behalf of FABO, he presented the book "Ambedkar in London" to the late Lahori Ram Balley and Ambassador

# UNPUBLISHED PREFACE THE BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA

Source Courtesy: Columbia University  
www.columbia.edu

April 6, 1956

[Text provided by Eleanor Zelliot,  
as prepared by Vasant Moon]

question is always asked to me: how I happen[ed] to take such [a] high degree of education. Another question is being asked: why I am inclined towards Buddhism. These questions are asked because I was born in a community known in India as the "Untouchables." This preface is not the place for answering the first question. But this preface may be the place for answering the second question.

The direct answer to this question is that I regard the Buddha's Dhamma to be the best. No religion can be compared to it. If a modern man who knows science must have a religion, the only religion he can have is the Religion of the Buddha. This conviction has grown in me after thirty-five years of close study of all religions.

How I was led to study Buddhism is another story. It may be interesting for the reader to know. This is how it happened.

My father was a military officer, but at the same time a very religious person. He brought me up under a strict discipline. From my early age I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi, though his father was Ramanandi. As such, he did not believe in Murti Puja (Idol Worship), and yet he performed Ganapati Puja--of course for our sake, but I did not like it. He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house to hear the Katha. This went on for a long number of years.

The year I passed the English Fourth Standard Examination, my community people wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a public meeting to congratulate me. Compared to the state of education in other communities, this was hardly an occasion for celebration. But it was felt by the organisers that I was the first boy in my community to reach this stage; they thought that I had reached a great height. They went to my father to ask for his permission. My father flatly refused, saying that such a thing would inflate the boy's head; after all, he has only passed an examination and done nothing more. Those who wanted to celebrate the event were greatly disappointed. They, however, did not give way. They went to Dada Keluskar, a personal friend of my father, and asked him to intervene. He agreed. After a little argumentation, my father yielded, and the meeting was held. Dada Keluskar presided. He was a literary person of his time. At the end of his address he gave me as a gift a copy of his book on the life of the Buddha, which he had written for the Baroda Sayajirao Oriental Series. I read the book with great interest, and was greatly impressed and moved by it.

I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist lit-

erature. After this, I was determined to ask my father this question. One day I did. I asked my father why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and repeated the stories of the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "You must not ask such silly questions. You are only boys; you must do as you are told." My father was a Roman Patri-



arch, and exercised most extensive Patria Pretestas over his children. I alone could take a little liberty with him, and that was because my mother had died in my childhood, leaving me to the care of my auntie.

So after some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had evidently prepared himself for a reply. He said, "The reason why I ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana is this: we belong to the Untouchables, and you are likely to develop an inferiority complex, which is natural. The value of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana lies in removing this inferiority complex. See Drona and Karna--they were small men, but to what heights they rose! Look at Valmiki--he was a Koli, but he became the author of [the] Ramayana. It is for removing this inferiority complex that I

ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana."

I could see that there was some force in my father's argument. But I was not satisfied. I told my father that I did not like any of the figures in [the] Mahabharata. I said, "I do not like Bhishma and Drona, nor Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did quite the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. His life is nothing but a series of frauds. Equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine

was the only religion which a society awakened by science could accept, and without which it would perish. I also pointed out that for the modern world Buddhism was the only religion which it must have to save itself. That Buddhism makes [a] slow advance is due to the fact that its literature is so vast that no one can read the whole of it. That it has no such thing as a bible, as the Christians have, is its greatest handicap. On the publication of this article, I received many calls, written and oral, to write such a book. It is in response to these calls that I have undertaken the task.

To disarm all criticism I would like to make it clear that I claim no originality for the book. It is a compilation and assembly plant. The material has been gathered from various books. I would particularly like to mention Ashvaghosha's Buddhavita [= Buddhacharita], whose poetry no one can excel. In the narrative of certain events I have even borrowed his language.

The only originality that I can claim in [=is] the order of presentation of the topics, in which I have tried to introduce simplicity and clarity. There are certain matters which give headache[s] to the student of Buddhism. I have dealt with them in the Introduction.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to those who have been helpful to me. I am very grateful to Mr. Nanak Chand Rattua of Village Sakrulli and Mr. Parkash Chand of Village Nangal Khurd in the district of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) for the burden they have taken upon themselves to type out the manuscript. They have done it several times. Shri Nanak Chand Rattu took special pains and put in very hard labour in accomplishing this great task. He did the whole work of typing etc. very willingly and without caring for his health and [=or] any sort of remuneration. Both Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Mr. Parkash Chand did their job as a token of their greatest love and affection towards me. Their labours can hardly be repaid. I am very much grateful to them.

When I took up the task of composing the book I was ill, and [I] am still ill. During these five years there were many ups and downs in my health. At some stages my condition had become so critical that doctors talked of me as a dying flame. The successful rekindling of this dying flame is due to the medical skill of my wife and Dr. Malvankar.

They alone have helped me to complete the work. I am also thankful to Mr. M. B. Chitnis, who took [a] special interest in correcting [the] proof and to go [=in going] through the whole book.

I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism. The other books are: (i) Buddha and Karl Marx; and (ii) Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.

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6-4-56

his conduct in the Sarupnakha [= Shurpanakha] episode [and] in the Vali Sugriva episode, and his beastly behaviour towards Sita." My father was silent, and made no reply. He knew that there was a revolt.

This is how I turned to the Buddha, with the help of the book given to me by Dada Keluskar. It was not with an empty mind that I went to the Buddha at that early age.

I had a background, and in reading the Buddhist Lore I could always compare and contrast. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and His Dhamma.

The urge to write this book has a different origin. In 1951 the Editor of the Mahabodhi Society's Journal of Calcutta asked me to write an article for the Vaishak Number. In that article I argued that the Buddha's Religion

# Lessons from the devastating floods in Sikkim

As of October 7, 18 people have died and 98 people, including 22 army personnel, are still missing due to flash floods in the Teesta river after an outburst of Lhonak glacial lake in North Sikkim on October 4. Due to flooding in Teesta River, the villages and towns along the banks of the river have suffered a lot. Hundreds of houses, many roads and bridges have been washed away. Two dams (No. 3 and 5) on the Teesta River have been heavily damaged. Lake Lhonak is formed by melting glaciers. The massive flood in the Teesta river is mainly caused by the sequence of three events. A cloud burst caused heavy rains, Lhonak glacial lake gave way and resultant flow of water breached the Chungthang dam which caters to the largest hydropower project in the state.

The first floors of the houses in some towns and villages situated on the banks of the Teesta river were submerged in water and at some places the houses were buried under mud and silt. A camp of soldiers was also set up on the bank of the river due to which they were also swept away by the strong current of the river. Dead bodies of some jawans were found in the downstream areas of the river. Sikkim is a small hilly state and it is also situated in the Himalayas. Sikkim is among those 13 Himalayan states for which the centre has requested the Supreme Court to direct these states to assess their carrying capacity and proposed setting up of an expert panel to evaluate the action plans submitted by each of them after the July and August disasters in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Although efforts have been made to repair or rebuild the damaged infrastructure to recover from the flood disaster in Sikkim, whether the state could have been spared from the disaster here is something to be examined. The hydroelectric project on the Teesta River, which was damaged on October 4, 2023, had many doubts even before its commissioning in 2017. Way back in 2005 Environment Ministry's steering committee for carrying capacity of Teesta Basin noted that "sediment carried and deposited by glaciers, temporarily forming glacial lakes and debris cones, are a potential source of hazard in North Sikkim." The committee that approved the construction of the project in 2006 had also warned that the project falls in an area of glacial lakes which is highly sensi-

tive. A 2020 report by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority also raised suspicions of an outburst of Lhonak Lake. In this report it was mentioned that there are 300 glacial lakes in the Sikkim Himalayan region and out of these ten have been identified as vulnerable to outburst anytime, Lhonak lake being one of them. The lake was under government observation for many years. Apart from this, according to a report by the Forest and Environment Department of Sikkim, the area of Lhonak Lake has increased significantly during the last five decades. The size of the southern part of the lake has increased by 2.5 times since 1989.



According to a 2013 report by ISRO, there was a 42 per cent chance of the Lhonak lake outbursting, and the report mentioned that an outburst of the lake is likely to release 19 million cubic meters of water downstream as the glacier above the lake is melting rapidly. During the period from 1962 to 2008, the glacier has shrunk by 1.9 to 2.0 meters and will shrink by another 11 meters over the next 11 years. A study published in Science Direct in 2021 had warned of a catastrophe in Sikkim, which is the home of hundreds of glacial lakes that are prone to outburst. Local activists in Sikkim have for long also been warned of the adverse environmental implications of the hydropower projects.

As the result of lake outbursting, the Teesta river flooding in Sikkim has caused most of the damage in the inhabited areas around the banks of Teesta river. According to a study published in journal Nature, from 1985 to 2015, people living in river basins suffered more from floods. 31 per cent of Sikkim's population lives in the river basins. The military camp which was washed away in the flood is also located on the floodplain of the river.

If the Sikkim government had taken timely measures, such a big tragedy might not have happened. Big stones, gravel and sand brought by gla-

ciers do not form a flat and solid surface because they all have different shapes. Despite geologists and environmental experts repeatedly alerting the government, the state government did not pay attention to it. Both the dam on the Teesta River and the city of Josimath are built on debris brought by glaciers, putting the lives and property of the people of Sikkim and Josimath at risk.

Earth's average temperature is rising rapidly. All the months from January to September in 2023 had above average temperatures. The rapid increase in temperature will cause glaciers to melt faster and the number of glacial lakes to increase as well as fill them with more water, which may further increase the possibility of lake bursting and flooding in the future. The 2013 floods in Uttarakhand were caused by the melting of the Chorabari glacier and the breaching of the Chorabari lake. The February 2021 flood in Uttarakhand's Chamoli was also caused by melting glaciers. A 1.5 degree rise in average global temperature is also expected to melt half of the world's glaciers by the end of this century. Mountainous regions of 12 countries in Asia, including India, Pakistan, China, and Nepal, are at high risk due to melting glaciers.

Sikkim is situated in the Himalayan mountain range due to which landslides occur frequently. According to a report by the Geological Survey of India, 3,377 mountains in Sikkim are in landslide zones where no construction should take place.

In 2023, after heavy rains in various countries of the world, including India, the dams broke and released water which is beyond the capacity of the dams, causing floods in the states and cities located in the downward areas of the river basins. The states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and some others were affected by floods during the months of July-August due to heavy rains in the hilly areas of India. The city of Derna in Libya has had to pay a very heavy price in the form of life and property due to the collapse of two dams. In 2004, the Central Electricity Authority planned to set up 162 projects for power generation, of which 10 were to be built in Sikkim, the number of these projects has increased over time. Now, as per National Hydropower Development Corporation, several hydropower projects are in various stages of devel-

opment in Sikkim and West Bengal on the Teesta River. Of these, 9 have been commissioned, work on 15 is going on and 28 are in the pipeline. Teesta river is one of the most dammed rivers in the country. According to a research study on hydel projects in Sikkim published in a journal of the World Water Council, more than half of Sikkim State's hydropower projects are in North Sikkim, which is now the most flood-affected region.

Very large dams with huge storage capacity produce more hydroelectricity, but after heavy rains when the water in the dam exceeds its carrying capacity, the dam's floodgates are opened which results in flooding the plains and they cause huge destruction. The governments should also take utmost care to repair the dams on time. Thousands of people have been killed and displaced due to lack of timely maintenance of dams in Libya. Due to the collapse of a part of the dam (number 3) on the Teesta river, there has been a terrible disaster in many districts of Sikkim. Dams should never be constructed on unstable and environmentally sensitive areas. Many factors have to be taken into consideration while constructing a dam. First of all, the opinion of geologists should be taken about the geological structure of the land and mountains in the area where the dam is to be constructed. It is also important to consider the water carrying capacity of the area. Apart from this, the dams should be small, i.e. with less water storage capacity so that there is no loss of people in case of flood.

Big dams like Bhakra Dam in Punjab and Sardar Sarovar dam in Gujarat should not be constructed. Economic development plans in the hilly areas should be formed and executed keeping in mind the increasing temperature of the earth. Along with dams, buildings, roads, and houses should not be constructed in the hilly areas as well as along water bodies (river basins, springs, lakes etc.) and in landslide areas. The state and central governments should plan on priority the different schemes for economic development in the hilly areas as the hilly areas are more sensitive than the plains.



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# Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram: Heralding Enlightened Democracy

The formation of Bahujan Samaj Party on 14th April, 1984 on the 93rd birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, the tallest of social revolutionaries India has ever produced, with Kanshi Ram at the helm of affairs, changed the body politics of the country infusing hitherto unconventional and somewhat unbelievable grammar of politics, with fresh idioms and terminology. The very selection of the venue for the occasion, the famous Boat Club at iconic India Gate, just in front of the Parliament and President House, the power house of India, speaks volume of the ambition and aspiration this social colossal was carrying and aiming at. It was so far, by all standard, the most substantial, meticulously articulated and well thought out intervention by the caste victims in India to redeem India democracy from the clutches of caste hegemony focusing on the strategy of empowering the most oppressed segments of India society namely the Bahujan Samaj consisting of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes along with religiously converted minorities from these oppressed groups. Bereft of power, prosperity and prestige for quite a long, this political experiment was unique and unparalleled for a giant community that has been for long languishing in slumber. **'Our ultimate aim is to rule India'** thunders Kanshi Ram who became phenomenon of far-reaching consequences within no times. His socio, cultural, economic and intellectual initiatives firmly established him as the **political genius, the cold-blooded calculator, the enigmatic maverick, rootless negotiator, the progressive pragmatist, the rational humanist and the enlightened democrat** providing social legitimacy in the form of blood and flesh to the skeleton of political democracy hegemonized by the brahminical elected tyranny. By the end of 1990s he became the real game changer of India politics representing the democratic upsurge their assertion and ascendancy of the Indian mass to Indian power center. He is credited as the harbinger of setting in the process circulation of elite replacing the ruling castes from power corridors, the requisite precondition for successful working and survival of the democracy as propounded by Babasaheb.

Hailing from Punjab and coming from the community of politically thickest subjugated and indifferent lot; the untouchables, Kanshi Ram was able to put to fire the imagination of the gullible untouchables who have suddenly visualized an objective for their purposelessness wondering of a modern object on which Gandhian, Marxian or rightist brahmanics have a perpetual ownership right. The untouchables, one of the most recalcitrant of the caste victims were first and fast to own the historical responsibility of bringing justice to the

masses and legitimacy to the democracy that was highly content deficit. Soon a secret was unearthed by the educated elites and the intelligentsia that the call given by Kanshi Ram to capture the political power was nothing new and Ambedkar had already advised Dalits to write on their walls that 'they have to be the governing community of this country one day.' But Ambedkar literature largely remained inaccessible even to the educated ones, not to mention of the uneducated mass struggling to survive in hostile socio-economic condi-



tions under acute political subordination. But the uneducated ones within no time proved themselves to be the great learners and quickly capture the zest of the matter unmistakably. The rural masses of Dalits, with no food in their belly began to queue up serpentine behind the Elephant, the election symbol of BSP which was used by Dr. Ambedkar also for political mobilization and consolidation. These supporters had great hunger in their eyes for self-respect and dignity as they were sleeping for long.

With emphasis on **'own ideology, own leadership and own organization'** Kanshi Ram was able to instill the vigor, vitality, enthusiasm, dynamism and requisite self-confidence in the community. The ever-enthusiastic new political recruits taking great moral postures on contemporary political issues, started confronting the most powerful ones i.e., VP Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. These symbolic fights were great moral boosters with unique mobilization strategies, the much-needed initiation was performed, and the neediest lot started learning and using the political means for their liberation with the permanent agenda of social transformation and economic emancipation.

Having resigned his government service from Explosive Research and Development Laboratory (ERDL) Poonain 1964 at the age of thirty, Kanshi Ram took twenty years to develop non political roots for his full-

fledged political action establishing Backwards And Minority Employees Community Federation (BAMCEF) a non-religious non-agitational and non-reactionary national campaign working as brain bank, talent bank and money bank rooted on the principle of pay back to the society by the educated employees sharing their time, talent and treasure, the Buddhist Research Centre (BRC), the intellectual and research wing, Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS4) as agitational wing and finally Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984.

Through these organization initiatives and various national campaigns i.e., Jati Todo Samaj Jodo movement, Kanshi Ram known earlier as K.R. Ramdasi, revived the **Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation Movement** started by Jotiba Phule in 1848, re-establishing its historical continuity that was briefly broken after Babasaheb Demise on 6th December 1956. As an epitome of absolute determination and unflinching dedication with exemplary sacrifice he left with his family and his engagement in 1964, and resolved to dedicate his entire life to the Phule Ambedkarite Mission having no individual attachment, property and family and remained true to his vows till his last breath on 9th October 2006.

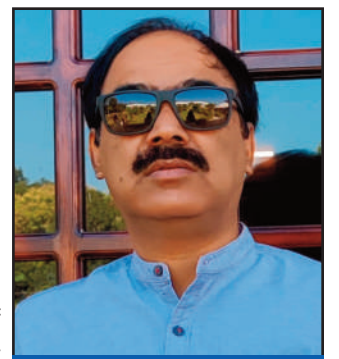
As a master strategist and master organizer, Kanshi Ram used 'Mammoth Rally' as confidence building mechanism in the community which is sparsely scattered, resource less and heavily dependent on dominant castes for his day today survival at micro level in obscure primitive village setting. Being part of those millions or more who attended these rallies provided the lonely diffident villager a great feeling of belongingness and superior strength that there are so many like him and he is not alone. It was a great empowering strategy executed with meticulous perfection and alacrity. Also, Kanshi Ram dissuaded local cadres not to contest PRI elections lest they confront the dominant power at the village level

and with n weapons of confrontation i.e., education, wealth, arms and as a corollary the local organizations may run the risk of demoralization. Also, these elections at the panchayat or local levels were used as ploy to demoralize the most powerful untouchable community by propping up political stooges from numerically insignificant untouchables group bringing the evil design of Poona Pact to the village level. In the initial years of the BSP, Kanshi Ram at the beginning of his address, used to advise 'political others, the opponent Manuwadis' to leave the rally ground for they might not like some of his observations and more so as he is interested in self-respect movement building a Bahujan Samaj with its own strength and support and therefore there is no need for outsiders' support.

It was a plain thinking and even plainer talking. Some of the people did leave the meetings and he used to complete his address for hours together audience mesmerized with pin drop silence and absolute concentration. It impacted greatly, the historically excluded community that was used to everyday abuse and humiliation, scolded and booted out from every possible position and premises of prominence. They were witnessing nothing sort of miracle happening in front of their naked eyes, at least one of them is so powerful and mighty that he can command the commanders, he can ask them to leave the hall. As a practice so far only, they were asked to leave or not to enter but now the reverse process has started, now they can make and expect better and larger thing to happen. It worked as a great moral booster in the on-going psychological warfare, as at the ground and material level conditions were otherwise utterly hostile. It was another master stroke with which Kanshiram prepared his cadre of highest conviction, unflinching commitment and stunning courage as the transformative human agency, the agent of change and civilizational development.

The political seeds of emancipation and empowerment started getting right manure, light and water. The journey for reclaiming fullest humane personality began in the right earnest discarding the politics of dependency and demoralization by the Dalits. Kanshi Ram emerged as the symbol of articulation, assertion and emancipation for historically despised humanity. The politics of north India was never to remain the same. The Dalit declared their arrival as conscious, capable, catalyst of change

(Contd. on next page)



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# Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram: Heralding Enlightened Democracy

(Continue from page 6)  
and transformation of Indian politics and consequently socio-cultural structures with democratic élan. Next two decades witnessed intense politicization of gullible masses that was determined to change, 'Vote Hamara Raj Tumahra Nahi Chalega to Vote Se Lenge CM PM, Aarakshan Se SP DM'.

By awakening the masses and inducing them for meaningful involvement in the democratic process, Kanshi Ram was able to convince the gullible Dalit, backwards and con-

verted religious minorities whom he collectively called as Bahujans that the political power has great transformative potential and a great felicitator for destroying socio economic inequality and structures of dominance and brahminical hegemony. The right to vote is the most precious possession of the Bahujan Samaj and they must exercise it with utmost efficiency to bring the desired political change in the socio-economicsystem. As other resources i.e., education, wealth and power are not in their favor the Bahujans must realize the sig-

nificance of vote and their numerical preponderance so decisive in majority driven democratic system.

The very name 'Bahujan Samaj Party' of the organization was a marvel of socio-cultural philosophy and political stewardship. The idea of Bahujan explains the origin, status and objective of the party. Not only the idea of Bahujan signifies philosophy, perspective and Programme but positively set the agenda for the mission as it is widely called, in the form of 'Jati Todo Samaj Jodo'. Graded inequality with vertical and hostile castes as warring factions have remained the backbone of brahmanical supremacy as the Bahujan Samaj was divided into more than 6000 sub-groups. Kanshi Ram called them as caste victims and on the basis of collective victimhood started mobilizing them providing alternative notions of identity, history and culture of India extensively using Gautam Buddha, Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj Periyar, Narayna Guru, Ambedkar, Mangu Ram Mugowalia and many more social revolutionaries who fought for change and self-respect of the Bahujan Samaj as his references. In contrast to the brahmanical traditions of keeping the masses in dark and utter ignorance, this mobilization was primarily aimed at enabling, empowering and enlightening the Bahujans and specially the most needy and desirous of change and transformation in its initial years.

Kanshi Ram made a feverish pitch to be an honest claimant to represent the constituency of both Chaudhry Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram and up to some extent Abdulla Bukhari. It was nothing less than a political coup in India subcontinent and brought caste and its related debate to the central stage and changed the agenda for India politics for good. The Bahujans were unleashed from the great political slumber and hibernation and they being there for centuries together, have enormous appetite for reclaiming their lost glory positions. The great democratic principal of power to the people starting taking its toll on the hegemonic

castes status quoits and the participation and representation started assuming substantial proportions. By 1996 within twelve years of its inception BSP was able to achieve national party status forming four-time government in the largest state of India Uttar Pradesh. BSP has the national presence and have won Lok Sabha and Vidhana Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana and Karnataka. Kanshi Ram's substantial contribution can be gauged from the fact that the Lok Sabha accounting for less than ten OBC members in early 80's has become democratically representative to the tune of 200 members coming from this huge group constituting half of the India population. The masses who are masters of democracy started having sense of ownership and belongingness to the political democracy which was otherwise barren from the point of their emancipation from all wants, empowerment through strategic resource redistributing i.e., power, prestige and prosperity and enlightenment making becoming transformative agency of one person one value, everyone is to be counted as one, no one is to be counted for more than one. The great masses of India specially the caste victims, scattered on the margins of social cultural and religious hegemony, were able to visualize themselves as the enlightened citizens beyond the clutches of caste, class and patriarchy, striving and fending for themselves. Having carved out an independent path of self-respect and self-righteousness for the Bahujan Samaj, Kanshi Ram was able to instill the philosophy of 'be your own guide and master' discarding all dependencies and rightfully reclaiming the usurped human personality. The time of idea for which Kanshi Ram struggled hard all through his life, has come alive and is flourishing substantially by transforming Ignorant Democracy into an Enlightened Democracy.



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<b>2:00 PM</b> <i>Statue Unveiling Ribbon Cutting Ceremony</i>	<b>2:15 PM</b> <i>Speeches by Guests of Honor</i>	<b>6:00 PM</b> <i>Dinner, Cultural Activities,</i>

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## Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

**Special Session on Suspending the Gas Tax**  
Governor Newsom is directing California to make an early switch to a



less expensive winter blend of gasoline to help bring down the cost of fuel. While I appreciate this effort to help drivers, I believe there is much more to do to make gas more affordable. In the short term we can suspend the gas tax to provide immediate relief at the pump. I recently signed on to a letter that calls for the Governor to convene a Special Session of the Legislature to suspend the gas tax. You can urge him to do so here.  
Today the average cost of gas

in California is just eleven cents away from \$6.00 per gallon, which is the highest in the nation and \$2.13 more per gallon than the national average.

**Assembly Internship Program**  
My district office is currently welcoming interns for our fall internship program. We have openings Monday through Friday between 9am and 5pm, and can be flexible at finding



time slots that work best. If you know a student who is interested in a career in public service or is looking for professional experience please have them email their resume to Assemblymember.Hoover@assembly.ca.gov.

**Rosemont Community Celebration**  
I had a wonderful time this

past weekend at the 14th annual Rosemont Community Celebration. There was lots of free food, music, kids activities, and information booths. I enjoyed talking with constituents about the issues facing our community and how my office can help them nav-



igate state agencies.  
My team also had a booth at the annual Citrus Heights Sunday Funday, which is always a great time.

**"Best of Carmichael" Award Winners**  
I would like to give a big congratulations to all of the 2023 "Best of Carmichael" award winners. The

Carmichael Chamber of Commerce event was a wonderful celebration honoring the best businesses, non-profits, youth programs, and more. It's great to see the community come together to showcase all the



Assemblyman Hoover



wonderful people who make Carmichael a fantastic place to live and do business.

# Babu Kanshi Ram – A Tribute

With the death of Babu Kanshi Ram on October 9, 2006, a wide political vacuum was created in the dalit politics of the country, second time after the parinirvan (death) of Babasaheb Ambedkar on December 6, 1956. The vacuum is still wide open and it appears that the situation would persist for years to come as no dalit leader is in sight that can fill the gap, unfortunately. I wrote in my blogs about Babu Kanshi Ram and his legacy many a times earlier too. I thought of writing and remembering the tall leader, Babu Kanshi Ram, rightly called Bahujan Nayak, Manyawar and Saheb, on his death anniversary as I find a lot of relevance and need of his views and thoughts in the fast changing socio-political scenario of India that is Bharat.

Babu Kanshi Ram was not only an excellent organizer and political strategist but also a visionary leader. He founded All India Backwards (SC/ST/OBC) and Minorities Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF), Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS-4) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which culminated in a political force to reckon with in the coming years. His political protégé, Kumari Mayawati; popularly called 'Behnji' became the CM of UP for four times. During his life time, Kanshi Ram became a much sought after political personality in political circles and corridors of power not only in several states of India but also in New Delhi. Babu Kanshi Ram's untimely death in October, 2006 halted the 'Caravan' of Babasaheb Ambedkar

very skillfully steered by Babu Kanshi Ram. Kumari Mayawati and his followers could not hold the flag and failed their iconic leader and the dalit masses. It is a matter of great regret. Perhaps Babu Kanshi Ram has had an



inkling of the things to come after his death. One of my fellow BootanMandians and a friend, Prem Shant in Jalandhar was close to Babu Kanshi Ram and Babu ji used to stay with them quite often while in Jalandhar. He told me an interesting and relevant anecdote. Once at a political rally in Jalandhar, on

arrival of Kanshi Ram, the crowd resorted to, as usual, in sloganeering 'Kanshi Ram ji Sanghrash Karo; Hum Tumhare Sath Hain' Kanshi Rsm whispered in a lighter vein "Han Tushin Kuch Na Kariyo Sab Kuch Kanshi Ram Hi Kare".

Just to register the potency of Babu Kanshi Ram's thought and mission, I will come to the current political scenario later in the narration. Let me mention about an anecdote which I read in one of books on the dalit icons, President K.R. Narayanan and Babu Kanshi Ram. One day, Babu Kanshi Ram went to Rashtrapati Bhawan to call on President K.R. Narayanan.

After the meeting, setting aside all protocols, President came to see off Babu ji to one of the outer doors in spite of Kanshi Ram's pleas that he should maintain the laid down protocol norms and let him go. President in his elements said in great humility that there would be many Presidents in the future

but there may not be another Kanshi Ram in the years to come in the near future. India is India because of such great leaders.

Now I come to the current scenario. Some time ago, I wrote as to how the various political dispensations like BJP and even RSS and also Congress Party and numerous regional outfits were keen to own and appropriate Kanshi Ram and his legacy for political gains. Democracy has its own mechanism of leveling the playing field. Kanshi Ram has again surfaced on the political landscape in the wake of forthcoming state and national elections. Rahul Gandhi has supported the caste census in the ongoing slugfest on the issue. He said that he would tend to agree with the dictum of Babu Kanshi Ram "Jis Ki Jitni Ginti Bhari; Utni Uski Hisedari". Here lies the importance and relevance of Kanshi Ram. I only hope, in the interest of the country, yet another wish of the Bahujan Nayak "Vote Hamara Raj Tumhara; Nahin Chalega Nahin Chalega", is fulfilled and India becomes 'Secular, Socialist, Democratic Republic' in reality. The sooner the better.

I leave it here as my humble tribute the great leader, Manyawar Kanshi Ram on his death anniversary.



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