



Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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VOL- 14 ISSUE- 34 November 2, 2022 California (USA) www.ambedkartimes.com www.deshdoaba.com

Guru Nanak and his Vision of Egalitarian Social Order



Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-In-Chief: Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba

After Tathagath Lord Buddha, it was Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji who raised a thundering voice against the oppressive social system of caste divisions and untouchability. His engaging approach and consistent efforts for the establishment of egalitarian society both through teachings and practice distinguished him from his predecessors and contemporaries of the Prema-Bhakti path of famous North Indian Bhakti Movement (Great Revolutionary Movement of Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Kabir Sahib Ji and Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj), which is known for its emphasis on equality of all persons irrespective of their caste, sex and creed before the almighty God. Baba Nanak was for social and gender equality in both the realms of spirituality (Parlok) and terrestrial world (lok). He stood with so-called the lowest of the low. He reiterated that if one was desirous of the grace of God, he had to take care of the lowest of the low. In order to institute the principle of social equality in the sharply divided Hindu caste society, he founded the tradition of common community kitchen (langar) which needs to be financed out of the hard earned living by sharing its fruits. KiratKaro, NaamJapo, Vand Shakko was the trilogy for the success of his social revolution.

However, this trilogy of spiritual path needs to be understood in conjunction with the postulate of the egalitarian social structure of Sikhism meticulously nurtured by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Sharing the fruits of one's hard earned labor was to be practiced across caste boundaries of the given Hindu society based as it was on the divisive Varna order. Satguru Nanak Dev Ji advocated decimation of all such oppressive caste based social boundaries. The inclusion of the Bani of different spiritual personalities cutting across caste lines vindicates the egalitarian intent of Sikhism. Had Baba Nanak been alive today, he would not have approved of the emergence of Gurdwaras on caste / community lines. Similarly, for the establishment of a true egalitarian society, Guru Nanak Dev Ji laid emphasis for the emancipation and empowerment of the women who were denied equal rights. While highlighting the various merits of women, Guru Nanak Dev Ji said why to condemn them who give birth to princess. He travelled far and wide to comprehend as well as enlighten the ignorants about their duties towards themselves, society and spiritual world. We need to sincerely adopt his teachings in our routine daily life and social dealings to give shape to the society which he envisioned and truly practiced in his earthly life time. Are we genuinely living the way he exhorted us to live? Let us do introspection within ourselves on the auspicious occasion of 553rd Gurburab of Dhan Dhan Satguru Guru Nanak Dev Ji and resolve to follow his teachings in word and spirit.

MAHARISHI VALMIK BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED IN VALLEJO (CALIFORNIA)

Maharishi Valmik Community of Bay Area (Vallejo, California) celebrated Maharishi Valmik Birth Anniversary in Vallejo on October 23rd (Sunday) with dedicated spirit and enthusiasm. We congratulate Mr. Kewal Sidhu, the convener of this religious gathering and other members of Maharishi Valmik Community of Bay Area, Vallejo for conducting the successful celebrations with a delicious community meal (Langar).

Mr. O. P. Balley, Founder Member of Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (California), Dr. Harmesh Kumar, a renowned psychologist and a prominent member of the community and Mr. P. K. Chumber, Editor-

in-Chief: Ambedkar Times (English) and Desh Doaba (Punjabi) Weeklies, were the main speakers who shared their views with the attending Sangat about the immortal contributions of Maharishi Valmik Ji, as the original Author of the great Epic "Ramayana" in Sanskrit Salokas.

On behalf of the Valmiki Sabha the above noted speakers were honored with Siropas also. Melodious singing by local children and young artists: Amarjit Lalli, Bhupinder Bhinda. Kadiyal and Simran and more also added to the grace of the occasion:

Mr. Chumber also emphasized on the imperative

need and importance of the immortal legacies of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Gadri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's Ad-Dharam Mandal (Punjab). We should all study and adhere to Babasaheb's mission available through his voluminous writings and we all should acquire and keep his invaluable literature as our precious possession for knowledge and guidance.

Maharishi Valmik, through his meditation (Tapasya), was blessed with divine benedictions of "Almighty" and made history by raising the status of womanhood in society by protecting mother "Sita" and training her two newly born sons with all the state-crafts (Luv and Kush) during her most difficult phase of life, while in exile.

Maharishi Valmik treated "Rama" as a prince and a king (Raja) and not "Lord / Bhagwan" in his literary master-piece "Ramayana" written thousands of years before it was rewritten by Sant Tulsji Dass Ji in Hindi.

We also appreciate Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber for his sustained efforts in providing full coverage to the sublime success of the entire event.

Sewadar: O.P. Balley
Founder Member

Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA)



Religious Refiguration of Social Transformation: Drawing Lessons from the Teachings of Guru Nanak

From the very beginning of the appearance of human beings on the earth planet, religion kept on accompanying them. In fact, it remained perennial manifestation of the hopes, inchoate ideas, fears, phobias, aspirations, visions, socio-cultural norms, mores, ethos and emerging moral paradigms. Religion assigns meanings to abstract cultural worldviews in the mode of deciphering oblique social symbols and pagan marks. Cultural differences and social demarcations are often identified through the distinct mental cartographies of religious boundaries. Intensive pursuit of cultural studies within the relatively late emergence of the discipline of anthropology in the broader domain of Social Sciences could become possible perhaps due to the rich presence of varied tangible and intangible religious traditions across civilizations and continents around the globe. Religion and culture are interrelated and born of thought, which is what Clifford Geertz called "conduct and is to be morally judged as such". Thought like another social act is culturally and traditionally made available in nicely packed tedious religious foils. Since thinking is directly related to 'social' as opposed to 'personal', it materializes itself in the tangible framework of religious norms and ethos among others. In the realm of human community, 'personal' is invariably interchanges with 'social'.

The very existence of human beings is 'social'. It is within the 'social' of human beings that their 'personal' assumes distinct shape within its larger social self; and 'the presentation of self in everyday life,' to borrow the famous phrase of Erving Goffman, becomes 'less of an individual matter; less a personal project, more a collective, even a political, one'. And that collective/political 'social' reveals itself more vividly in the form of what contestably called 'religion'. Cultural anthropology seeks the explication of the socially hidden phenomena in the garb of religion while picking up its cultural threads on the surface of religious beliefs. It is in this critical context that the 'religious' metamorphoses into 'cultural'. Cultural and religious become too complex to get separated from each other in a neatly dividing framework. If culture is passage to both the 'personal' and 'social' of human beings, religion is the storehouse of that 'culture'.

Apart from this above mentioned highly productive functional agency of religion, it also plays an indomitable role of deep social transformation while building meta counter-public narratives through questioning as well as demolishing the given anti-social and anti-individual structures of discrimination, domination, oppression and marginalization. If religion was deployed to create hope and attain meaningful socially egalitarian existence, it was not spared at all from being used to promote partisan

and vested interests. Religious wars at different intervals are the most relevant case in point. Moreover, the given adamant structural mechanisms of well-established religious orders often give rise to new religious visions to respond to subdued human concerns buried under the dead weight of empty structure of once meaningful religions and the teachings of their heavenly founders. Religions are born of social contentions in a given society rooted in its internal and external environs and give rise to further social conflicts.

Each religion has its own long



life story from the initial stages of digging foundational channels to the finishing touches on its formal structural settings in the tangible form of sanctum sanctorum as pilgrimage centers with highly guarded sacred texts surrounded by never-ending ceremonies, rituals and prayers. Every religion took long time to reach its formally crystallized structure and often had to face untold difficulties on its thorny way. Religion had to assume varied forms to impact its followers as well as adversaries during its long torturous journey. It invariably began with an appearance of a great personality what Muhammad Iqbal called Marade-Kamil who exposed the world to a new way for leading a meaningful life in an egalitarian sphere of social interaction with humble deeds and selfless conduct. Called a Guru, Prophet or Son of God, the precursors in any of these nomenclatures dedicated their entire life towards the betterment of social conditions around and building good deeds within the hearts of humanity. Structures (temples, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, deras, ashram, rituals, rites, ceremonies, traditions, hukamnamas etc.) were laid down and traditions formulated to be meticulously followed by their descendants and followers.

What part of this long journey of concretisation of a religious order is more important - initial life teaching of the founder or the structural paraphernalia that evolved in the due course of its institutional rise up - is a difficult question to answer. Here enters incompatibility between the teachings of the precursors and the later on added structural paraphernalia allegedly built around their life stories and post thinking about them among their followers.

My immediate concern in this paper is to contextualize the teachings of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism,

the youngest religion in the world, within his time and its relevance for a meaningful social existence. Guru Nanak was born at a time when the long Delhi Sultanate period (1206-1526) was coming to an end and the emerging Mughal dynasty (1526-1857) was taking its roots in turbulent Hindustan under the reign of Babur (1526-1530). It was a time when the country had already been ruled over for almost more than 500 years after the demise of Hindu Shahi (879-1026) that was able to established its hold on the most turbulent regions of Afghanistan after defeating the rulers of Turk Shahi (665-850). The period before the Delhi Sultanate was equally turbulent wherein Turkish invasions to capture power from various pockets of different Hindu dynasties was a routine affair. Hindu Shahi dynasties in Kabul valley and Gandhara, and Brahmin dynastic rule of last Hindu Raja Dahir of Sindh were replaced by Turkish origin Islamic rule after repeated attacks. Hindu rule in Sindh was brought to an end by the killing of Raja Dahir with the sword of Muhammad bin Qasim who sent his severed head along with his two daughters to Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, governor of Basra of the Umayyad Caliphate in 712. In fact, the period from the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim on Sindh (712) to the establishment of the Mughal Dynasty in 1526 constitutes the most turbulent long phase of fight between the then fast expanding Islamic religion and the dwindling graph of the once well-established Hindu religion along with other equally respected religions of Buddhism and Jainism as is evident from the times of Gupta Empire (from the mid-to-late 3rd century CE to 543 CE). The common people of the region were the immediate victims of the ferocious atrocities perpetrated by the agency

and forces of the expansion of Islam. There were unending conspiracies being played within the corridors of Islamic ruling families, which were continuously engaged in savage internecine warfare among

themselves and the heat of their fights further afflicted the innocent people who were forced to lead a sub-human life. It was against such a long turbulent phase that Guru Nanak appeared on the scene what the theologian Bhai Gurdas aptly described in the following poetic words: The true Guru, Nanak, was then born The fog and mist evaporated And light shone on the earth.

As the rising Sun dispels the dark and outshines the Stars As flee the herd of deer when the lion roars

Without pause, without turning back for assurance

(So fled evil from the world) (as translated in Khushwant Singh, A History of Sikhs Vol. 1) .

Before and during the life span of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) there was no dearth of religious interventions to grapple with varied social, cultural and political evils of the time, but what makes Guru Nanak and his non-anthropomorphic God based approach different was an intense ability of his soul appeal to influence the followers of both Islam and Hindu religions and his valiant stand in favour of the downtrodden. The merit of his unique approach lies in his achievement to keep himself beyond and above the misconceptions of both Hinduism and Islam, on the one hand, and offering an alternative way of an egalitarian living based on inclusive social vision and rationalistic spiritual pursuits. However, as far as his social vision is concerned it needs to be contextualized more in his spiritual understanding of the ultimate truth and to get oneself immersed within it than in his contemporary social milieu. There is no doubt about his deep and all embracing knowledge of the varied dimensions of the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of life that he lived through. In his comprehensive compositions, he meticulously mentioned varied political offices, social ranks based on Hindu varna order, Muslim socio-religious nomenclatures and occupational segments. The 'social' for him was ephemeral and transitory. In fact, Guru Nanak termed it as false. That is why he did not weigh the merits and demerits of the followers of Hindu and Islam in a comparative equation from a judgemental point of view. He was equally critical of both

(Contd.. on next Page)



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the mullas and pandits from a larger perspective of the most tenable goal of salvation in the realm of truth.

For Guru Nanak it was not easy to question the surging Islamic influence under its cruel political force buttressed by the supplementary ecclesiastically organised institutional (shariat) set-up headed by Shaikhs, Pirs, Mullas and Qazis. With his meticulously articulated bani (spiritual poetry), Guru Nanak was not only able to prevail upon his detractors from a distance but showed them the true path by them. He convinced the Shaikhs at Mecca that God did not live in a particular direction on earth; indeed every direction was His abode. He conveyed his message to the rulers and the ruled in such a wonderful way that all of them found him speaking from a level though different from their convictions and religious conventions but with an appeal to their very being within. It was the reason that while in Baghdad when Guru Nanak was conveyed in a symbolic manner that there was no more place left for any other person in the congregation of religious persons at a dwelling, he calmly placed some petals of a flower on a bowl full of milk without making it spill out thus making them realise the exclusionary nature of their behaviour. Similarly at home during his visit to Hardwar he proved the pilgrims who were bathing in the Hindu holy river Ganga and praying for the well beings of the departed souls of their ancestors by offering water to the Sun at a distance of "49.1/2 crore kos" that if the water offered by him failed to reach his agricultural field in Kartarpur which was only 250 kos away, how come yours would reach at such a long and high up distance.

Guru Nanak was adept in the ways of conveying his message across the religions and regions at a time when populace had long before resigned to fate in the face of tyrant rulers who simply relied upon brute force. How the Gaznavid and Ghorids oppressed the people of Hindustan during their repeated raids raised hairs even today after hearing about such atrocities. Guru Nanak had the courage and audacity to rise up to the challenge posed by Babur and his associates, and minced no words calling spade a spade. In his intrepid Babur bani, he called the Kings lions and their officers dogs who

troubled the people unprovoked in their leisure time. He travelled far and wide within the country and beyond in the four directions and indulged in dialogues with all sorts of people he met during his historic four odysseys. During his travels abroad, he visited Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan Iran/Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Hindustan had very close trade and cultural interactions with these areas in its neighbouring states in the Asian continent. Moreover, after the long reign of Delhi Sultanate and the formative years of Mughal rule, foreign lands of Baghdad and Mecca ceased to be so remote at least in terms of cultural and religious contexts. Guru Nanak's prophetic visit at these places and his enchanting teachings therein proved to the local people that Hindustan was no longer the land of infidels that had to be conquered and enslaved. On the contrary, Guru Nanak proved them that spiritual knowledge is not only the fiefdom of Islam and Hinduism. It resided in every corner of the planet wherever the humanity was respected and the downtrodden were taken care of.

He was able to win over his detractors through love, empathy and compassion. He convinced them with his reason based argumentation to locate where resided the reality. Whosoever had come into his contact got motivated and convinced about the eternal truth wrapped in the sacred words of his spiritual poetry. He spoke and conversed in the language of the common people - Punjabi. He addressed almost all sections of the society in the medieval Punjab and took special note of the socially excluded sections of the society and women. He was, as underlined above, spoke for the emancipation and empowerment of the socially excluded people and women while invoking the moral and ethical principles relating to the all pervasive existence of the attribute-less God in each and every particle in the cosmos. Since God himself pervade in everyone and everywhere, no one should be victimized in the name of caste, gender and creed. In His eyes, all carry equal weight. Since lowest of the low (Nichan under Nich Jati) and women were denied equal rights and subjected to all sorts of humiliations and were made to suffer in ignominy, Guru Nanak placed special emphasis on these two most vulnerables and historical op-

pressed sections of the society. He reiterated in his spiritual poetry that why to condemn women without whom this worldly life was impossible to imagine.

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੇ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ
ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ
ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨੁ
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ
ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੇ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੁਖਿ
ਸਦਾ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਭਾਗਾ ਰਤੀ ਚਾਰਿ
ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਤਿਤੁ ਸਚੈ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ

Similarly while raising his bold voice against the oppressive living conditions of the lower classes, Baba Nanak exhorted that those who care for the lowest of the low receive the grace of God.

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤੁ, ਨੀਚੀ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ, ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ
ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ
ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ
ਬਖਸੀਸ

In an unjust society sharply divided into low and high castes segments, the grace of lord could not be invoked. Guru Nanak's tirade against social injustice and his life long commitment towards building an egalitarian society free from caste and gender divisions manly attracted downtrodden (victims of caste and gender divisions) towards his newly emerging faith that culminated into a well-structured religious order at the pious hands of Tenth Master also called Dasma Nanak - Guru Gobind Singh.

Though Sikh religion took 160 years to get its accomplished shape after the exhibit of Baba Nanak, some of its basic features which nurtured by him continued to shape the moral and ethical conduct of its follower even today. After the conclusion of his odysseys, Guru Nanak finally settled at Kartarpur Sahib, a new habitat that he founded after the completion of the first course of his odysseys.

A sarover (water pond) and khooh (well) were dug at Kartarpur Sahib. It was at these two water bodies that Baba Nanak started the tradition of taking an early bath to be followed by recitation of the holy shabds (hymns) of Japji Sahib, one of his most adored spiritual compositions, before taking up daily routine work. The purpose behind founding the tradition of taking bath in early morning within the precincts of Kartarpur Sahib and to meditate on the

name of one God was perhaps to discard the age old tradition of making long voyages to far off holy rivers/places for ablutions. That traditions is preserved even today by Guru Nanak naamleevansangat (followers of the Baba Nanak faith). The followers of Nanak prefer to take bath on auspicious days of Gurburavs (anniversaries of Gurus), punia (full moon night) and sangrand (the first day of every month) in the name of Waheguru at their respective nearby Gurdwaras.

The presence of sarovers in almost all Gurdwaras, especially the historic ones, is a case in point of the continuation of the tradition set by Baba Nanak at Kartarpur for arranging bathing facilities within the living precinct of his followers. Its legacy can be seen in the early morning holy procession for the prakash (to begin the recitation of the celestial bani) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Darbar Sahib/ Golden Temple Amritsar. Tenth Nanak, Guru Govind Singh, also refuted the tradition of going on pilgrimage for ablutions by emphasizing that if one takes bath at holy places upto the seventh sea, he loses this world and also the next one (Twaprasad Swaiye).

Another equally consistent Sikh tradition laid down by Baba Nanak is kirat karo, band shakoo, Nam Japoo (earn with one's hand, share the fruits of hard earned labour with other and meditate on name of attribute less one God). However, this ethical trilogy of spiritual path of Sikh faith needs to be understood in conjunction with another postulate of it-egalitarian social structure meticulously nurtured by Guru Nanak. Sharing the fruits of one's hard earned labour was to be practiced across caste boundaries within the given Hindu society based as it was on the divisive varna order. Baba Nanak advocated decimation of all such oppressive caste and gender based social boundaries. The inclusion of the bani of different spiritual personalities cutting across caste lines vindicates the egalitarian intent of Sikhism. Had Baba Nabak been alive today, he would not have approved of the emergence of varied Gurdwaras based on caste/community lines.

(Published in Ambedkar Times
November 20, 2019)



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Goodie Takhar, PhD

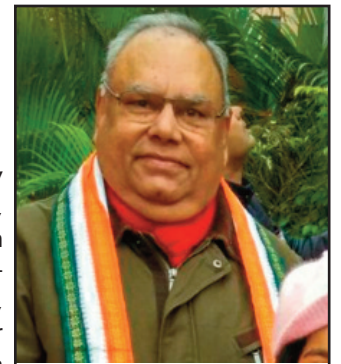
PM of Great Britain Rishi Sunak - A wonder of democracy

Rishi Sunak, having roots in undivided India, has become PM of Great Britain in a dramatic but democratic way. It is a matter of pride for the Indian sub-continent; more so for India because of historical and also contemporary reasons. Rishi Sunak has scripted history. Rishi's grandfather Ram Dass belonged to Gujranwala (now in Pakistan) and migrated to Kenya (East Africa) in mid 1930s for greener pastures and his wife Suhag Rani to Delhi along with her mother-in-law before joining her husband in Kenya. In the wake of growing animosity against Indians in East Africa in mid 1960s, grandparents of Rishi shifted to the UK. Rishi Sunak,

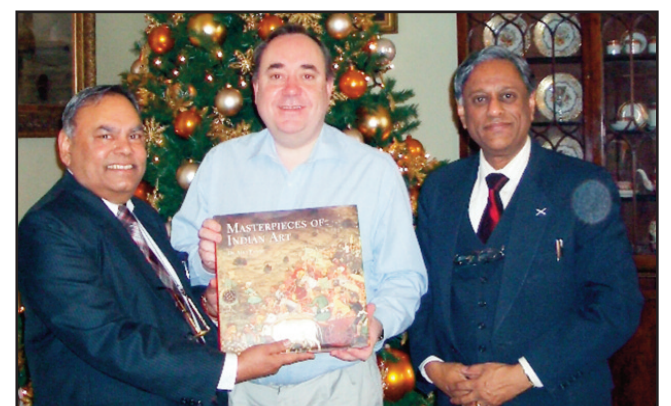
tional morality of the UK and its political players. The Indian leader, Shashi Tharoor has rightly said, 'If this does happen I think all of us will have to acknowledge that the Brits have done something very rare in the world to place a member of a visible minority in the most powerful office' He added in a tweet, "As we Indians celebrate the ascent of @RishiSunak, let us honestly ask; can it happen here." Anyway, there is no point in taking this further but the fact remains; we are to learn from the 'mother of democracy' that is Great Britain as a secular, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and a religiously diverse country that is Bharat.

Indian diaspora is one of the richest minorities in many developed countries, lobbying for favourable terms regarding India's interests out of their love for their country of origin. For example, US have around 4.2 million people of Indian origin and they are the most educated and richest minority. According to the World Bank, the estimated U.S. 87 billion dollar in official remittances was received in India in 2021, which is the world's largest such flow and amounted to nearly 15% of all such global transfers. People of Indian origin started migrating overseas in large numbers in the 19th century. This migration was driven by the economic

Yule, Henry C o t t s , William Wedderburn, Mother Teresa among others. We extended them wholehearted welcome and rightly so. But, of late, let us be truthful; there have been some unhealthy abrasions too which gave way to short sightedness and narrow-minded thinking. We feel, and rightly so, proud of Rishis and



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42, is the son of Yashveer, born in Kenya, and Usha, born in Tanzania, a doctor and pharmacist duo. Rishi was born Southampton in 1980. The Indian bonds of Rishi were further strengthened when he married Akshata, daughter of legendary professional and businessman, N.R. Narayana Murthi of Infosys, a giant IT company. The Tribune, quoting an analyst, reported on October 26, "In a departure from other British politicians, Sunak has a different take on ties with India, a nation with whom his connection is both "distant" and "close". "Distant because his grandfather had moved to Africa from the Indian subcontinent several decades ago. And close as his wife has proudly held on to her Indian citizenship,"

Rishi is a highly educated and professional in financial and economic matters from the elite Universities of the UK and also fully credited with necessary work experience in renowned financial companies as an investment banker. Besides a dedicated political and public functionary under the wings of the Conservative Party, Rishi and his wife Akshata are among the richest in the UK. Rishi Sunak started his political career a Conservative MP from Richmond in Yorkshire and from the ranks rose to become Chancellor of Exchequer in the government of PM Boris Johnson. An ambitious man, Rishi was suddenly catapulted to the centre stage, first as an opponent candidate against PM Liz Truss just a few weeks ago and now as the first British-Asian unanimously elected PM of the UK, the youngest PM of the UK in 210 years. It is an historical event, indeed. Rishi Sunak has made history, a moment of pride for India. It could become possible only because of liberal democracy and political and constitu-



Not that it is for the first time that a person of Indian origin has reached the top in a foreign land. Rishi Sunak has hit the sweet spot as the UK's Prime Minister at a crucial time and joined the big league. Currently, at least nine persons of Indian origin are either heads of state or heads of government in the world. Politicians of Indian-origin taking power are not unusual in a wide swath of developing countries such as Suriname, Singapore, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Malaysia, Fiji and Seychelles. But with the addition of Sunak, politicians of Indian-origin are now heading governments simultaneously in developed countries too such as Portugal, Singapore and now the UK. Large countries like US, Canada and others have several Indians, who have ascended to top leadership positions in the government, inter alia include; Kamala Devi Harris being current Vice President of the United States or the former first Indian origin Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar. According to the Ministry of External Affairs report, there are more than 3 crore NRIs and OCIs residing outside India with around 200+ Indian origin people already serving in their most significant capacity in 15 countries.

compulsions of the colonial powers. Initially, Indians spread to African, Southeast Asia, Fiji and the Caribbean in response to the enormous demand for cheap labour arising immediately after the abolition of slavery in 1833-1834 by the British and then migrated in the midst of the 20th century in search of better life and livelihood to countries like US, UK and others. Wherever they went for earning their bread and butter while doing their job and duty; people of Indian origin abroad have made a mark not only in politics of their respective countries but also excelled and adorned the high positions in economy, diplomacy, bureaucracy, journalism, cultural and civic life and have added value to the society in the pursuit of the lofty dictum of "Vasudhaiva Katumbkam". It is a matter of great satisfaction and pride.

In the contemporary history, before our independence, many foreigners from diverse walk of life came to India and made it their home and 'karambhoomi' and also made a indelible contribution to our freedom struggle and social life - to name a few; Annie Besant, C.F. Andrews, Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn), S. Stroke, Sister Nivedita, Mira Alphonse (The Mother), Alfred Webb, George

Kamalas But we could not accommodate Sonia Gandhi. It is a matter of regret and will remain so in the years to come. I would tend to agree with P. Chidambaram who commented and said, "First Kamala Harris and now Rishi Sunak, the people of the USA and the UK have embraced the non-majority citizens of their countries and elected them to high offices in governments. I think there is a lesson to learn by India and the parties that practice majoritarianism."

As regards, India-UK relations, it will be an on-going matter. Rishi Sunak, for that matter any other leader of Indian origin in the UK or other countries, will stand, watch and safe-guard interests of the UK and we need to be ready to deal with him to promote our own interests. This is the functional reality for interaction among the comity of nations. The emotional and spiritual bonds, Rishi Sunak being a professed devout Hindu, would remain and should be nurtured to mutual advantage. PM Narendra Modi has congratulated Rishi Sunak and wished to work with him to further strengthen India-UK historic relations. He tweeted, "Warmest congratulations @RishiSunak! As you become UK PM, I look forward to working closely together on global issues, and implementing Roadmap 2030. Special Diwali wishes to the 'living bridge' of UK Indians, as we transform our historic ties into a modern partnership," India remained under the colonial rule of Great Britain for 200 years and now a son of Indian ancestry will rule over Great Britain. The things have come full circle. Rishi Sunak's elevation to the coveted position of PM of the UK is no less than 'a wonder of democracy'. We are proud of Rishi Sunak and wish him all the best in the days to come.



Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor. District 4



Sue Frost

Complete High Speed Rail Failure

As I come to the close of my sixth year on the Board of Supervisors, I have seen many issues fall and rise in terms of importance for the residents of Sacramento County. For example, homelessness went from an issue that I barely ever received a phone call about when I first entered office, and transformed into one of the biggest issues on most people's minds. But one issue has remained troubling to Sacramento County residents since the day I entered office



until now, and that is the deplorable condition of Sacramento County roads.

I fully sympathize with these concerns because I am also upset. My house backs up to Madison avenue, and every single day that I leave my home I am driving on road conditions that are frankly embarrassing. And due to this, one of the primary questions I receive from people when I speak in my community meetings is "why can't you fix the roads in the County?" I wish it were that simple, because if it were I would have done it years ago. So I want to take this opportunity to explain why it's not so simple, and what we can do to change things.

What many people do not understand is that the vast majority of funds that are spent on local roads are from the state and federal government. Not only that, but many of these funds are competitive dollars, meaning we are only going to win those funds for major projects that have nothing to do with resurfacing, like the road widening happening right now on Hazel Avenue. So even if I wanted to prioritize local road resurfacings, the money Sacramento County could divert towards roads would be insignificantly small compared to what the state and federal government have the ability to do.

The problem Sacramento County is experiencing with our roads is not localized to just our county or even region. This is a problem afflicting the entire State of California, as of last count our state had over \$47.3 billion in road maintenance that has been postponed due to not having enough money for our roads, highways, and bridges (also called de-

ferred maintenance). This enormous deferred maintenance bill would feel more understandable if California was broke, but at the same time we have this bill we are spending outrageous amounts of money on California High-Speed Rail (CAHSR), which in my opinion is only a fraction as important as having reliable roads. CAHSR has the potential to benefit a small fraction of the population, specifically those that would use it to commute. Meanwhile, roads are used by everyone, including passengers, freight, fire service, police service, etc. To top it off, the train doesn't even come close to Sacramento County, as the furthest north it goes is San Francisco.

When voters approved CAHSR in 2008, it was supposed to cost \$34 billion and be completed by 2020 connecting San Francisco to Los Angeles. Four years ago this price tag had risen to \$79 billion, earlier this year the 2022 draft business plan estimated it would cost \$105 billion, and just three month later the "final plan" raised the estimate to \$113 billion. And not only do these costs continue to rise, but there is still no certainty the complete project will ever get built. Just the Merced to Bakersfield section of the project (which is supposedly the "easiest" section to build) has an earliest competition date of 2029, but this is a date that just keeps getting extended, as four years ago that date was 2024.

Even if we let CAHSR continue to build the central valley line and we abandoned CAHSR after that, we would save enough money to pay for every cent of deferred maintenance for all roads, highways, and bridges in California. The California Legislature and the Governor have the capacity to fix our roads, they just need to change their priorities and focus on what California needs the most.

Round 4 of Microbusiness Grant Program Now Open

Sacramento County is launching the fourth round of grant funding for mi-



crobusiness owners who may have missed an opportunity to apply for a

\$2,500 grant in a previous round. Applications for the Sacramento County Microbusiness Grant Program will be accepted from Oct. 10 to Dec. 20, 2022.

The Grant Program is funded by the State of California's Office of the Small Business Advocate and administered by Sacramento County to assist microbusinesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Microbusinesses can receive grants of \$2,500 that do not need to be repaid. To qualify, microbusiness must receive less than \$50,000 in gross revenue annually and has fewer than five full-time employees. An eligible business must also have been in operation by the end of 2019.

Additional information on the Grant Program's complete eligibility requirements, application, frequently asked questions and assistance is available on the Sac4Micro website.

Come to the Animal Care Faire!

The community is invited to attend the Roy C. Marcum Animal Care Faire at Sacramento County Bradshaw Animal Shelter on Satur-



day, Nov. 5, 2022, from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. The free-admission event is a community celebration of animal rescue and welfare in honor of fallen Animal Control Officer Roy C. Marcum. Children of all ages, as well as dogs on a leash, are welcome.

The shelter's dog park will be renamed the "Roy Marcum Bark Park" during a dedication ceremony at 11 a.m. led by Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli. Other festivities for the day include a marketplace of more than 50 local vendors, police K9

demonstrations, food trucks, adoptable pets from Bradshaw Animal Shelter and local rescues, and a raffle.

Ten years ago, the Marcum family lost a husband and father and Sacra-

mento County lost an exemplary officer and member of our community," said Annette Bedsworth, Director of Bradshaw Animal Shelter. "This event will honor his memory in the way Officer Marcum would have wanted: by bringing people together to share their love of companion animals."

Animal Control Officer Roy C. Marcum was killed in the line of duty on Nov. 28, 2012. He served the Sacramento community as an animal control officer for 14 years.

2022-23 Watershed Grant

Sacramento is home to beautiful rivers and creeks, and it is our responsibility to keep these valuable resources free of pollution. Do you have a project idea that can help with this mission? The Sacramento County Department of Water Resources (DWR) is here to help you!

DWR is looking to partner with community organizations and schools by supporting projects that protect, restore or enhance local waterways within the unincorporated urban areas of Sacramento County. Eligible recipients could receive up to \$2,500 for their project.

DWR has offered this grant opportunity for more than 20 years and is honored to partner with schools, non-profits and community organizations in unincorporated areas to improve and protect our communities and environment.

Past projects include trash clean-up events, creating nature-friendly landscapes, field trips to learn about Sacramento's watershed, and developing outreach materials to educate the community about pollution prevention.

The deadline to apply is October 21, 2022. Those who are interested should apply as soon as possible! The application process is simple so applicants can easily submit their project proposals. Download the 2022-23 Watershed Grant and apply. In this packet, you will find detailed requirements and commonly asked questions about the educational grant opportunity.



REMEMBERING AD DHARM

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-In-Chief:

Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba

Caste system based on the four-fold division of the Hindu society into Brahmin, Kashtriya, Vaishya and Shudra and the fifth avarna category of Ati-Shudras has led to serious denial of Human rights of the Scheduled Castes people variously nomenclatured as pan-chamas, achhuts, dheds, pariahs, Harijans and Dalits. These large number of avarna people who were condemned to live in segregated localities in the periphery of villages throughout India without having any rights on the natural resources and the local structures of power. They were forced to perform 'begar' hard manual labor without any remuneration. If the men folk had to work in the agricultural farms of the landlords, their women folk were pushed into an equally hard work of cleaning the cowsheds of the landlords. Scheduled Castes were not allowed to possess land, weapons, valuable metals and milch cattle. They were only allowed to keep the beasts of burden to assist them in performing the hard manual labor without any payments in return.

Tathagat Gautam Buddha raised a revolutionary voice against this cruel system of extreme denial of human rights based on low birth. He welcomed the Ati-

Shudras into his Sanghas and treated them equal without any prejudice whatsoever. After a long gap and with the ad-

1909 and became one of the pioneers of the Gadhar Movement. It was at this mammoth Ad Dharm conference where

then British rulers to empower the Depressed Classes (at that time the term Scheduled Castes was not coined nor the

term Harijan had come) while declaring their separate religion of Ad Dharm at par with other mainstream religions of the region. Consequently the British government declared Ad Dharm as a separate religion of the Dalits in Punjab 1931. About 5 lacs Ad Dharmis recorded themselves under this new religion category in the Census of 1931. Under the able and strong leadership of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, the Ad Dharm movement turned party contested the 1937 Punjab Province Assembly Elections and won seven out of eight seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes. When Ambedkar movement for the annihilation of caste took roots in India, it was the solid groundwork prepared by the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab

which helped raise a strong support structure for Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar who visited Punjab thrice during his life.

The forum of Ambedkartimes.com takes immense pleasure and proud to congratulate all its readers, contributors and supporters on the auspicious occasion of the anniversary of the first mammoth conference of the Ad Dharm movement held at village Mugowal near Mahilpur in District Hoshiarpur (Punjab) India on 11-12 June 1926.



BABASAHEB DR. AMBEDKAR
14 April, 1891 - 6 December, 1956

SAHIB KANSHI RAM
15 March, 1934 - 9 October, 2006

BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA
14 January, 1886 - 22 April, 1980

vent of Sikh faith in Punjab, once again a serious attempt was made to remove the deadly caste boundaries from the Hindu society while spreading the message of unity of mankind. It was in Punjab, the sacred land of Gurus and Pirs that on June 11-12, 1926 the first mammoth annual function of the Ad Dharm movement was organized in the native village of Ghadri Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, the founder of the Ad Dharm in Punjab in 1925 after his return from USA where he reached in

he publicly announced the launch of tirade against the pernicious system of untouchability and the restoration of the lost glory of the indigenous people of Bharat.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia exhorted his people to get organized and say definitive no to caste discrimination and social segregation. He called upon his people to live with self-respect and dignity and started the movement for equal rights of the Dalits. He approached the



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Governor or Chief Minister of Punjab: Who is justified from Legal Perspective?

Controversy Regarding the Appointment of Vice Chancellor of the Punjab Agriculture University!

Gurbani says 'ਵਿਚਾਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਪਰਉਪ-ਕਾਰੀ' '(Contemplate and reflect upon knowledge, and you will become a benefactor to others, but these days the controversy regarding the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of the Punjab Agriculture University has created a very unfortunate and disheartening situation in the education sector. Both Governor and Chief Minister can be said to be equally responsible for it. When such important Constitutional position holders have advisors with little legal knowledge, it is natural for such a phenomenon to occur. Here, we will explore whether the Governor or the Chief Minister is right or wrong from the legal point of view regarding the appointment of Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana.

In fact, the main reason for this controversy can be said to be lack of deep or accurate knowledge of different types of Universities in India and the legal provisions about them. Based on the process of University formation or incorporation in India, there are four types of universities. The first is 'Central University', established by an 'Act' or Law passed by the Parliament of India. The second is the 'State University', which is established by passing an 'Act' by the Legislature of a State. The third is a 'Deemed University', which is declared by the Central Government on the advice of the University Grants Commission. The fourth type of University is called 'Private University', which is established by an 'Act' passed by the State Legislature, but is promoted by a trust, company or society.

The primary reason for the 'opinion' made by the Governor of Punjab about the Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agriculture University is that he is considering this University as a 'State University'. The proof of this is that in the Press Conference held at Raj Bhavan, Chandigarh, regarding the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University and the Press Note issued, it was projected as 'State University' which is a completely wrong notion. It is true that when the Punjab Agricultural University was established in 1961, it was a 'State University,' as it was established by the Punjab Legislative Assembly, passing 'the Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1961' (Act No. 32 of 1961). Here, it is very important to know that what is today's University, i.e. the Punjab Agricultural University, it was established in 1970 by the Parliament of India by passing 'The Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1970 (Act No: 16 of 1970)'. The fact is that after the formation of Haryana, the Legislative Assemblies of Punjab and Haryana passed resolutions as per Article 252 (1) of the Constitution of India, recommending the Government of India to establish two independent Universities in place of the initially established Punjab Agricultural University, due to which the Parliament of India by passing the 'The Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act' in 1970, and it created the 'Haryana Agricultural

University' for Haryana and the 'Punjab Agricultural University' for Punjab. Here, it is also important to know that the initially established Punjab Agriculture University was dissolved under Section 3 of this 1970 Act. According to Section 45 (1) of the Act of 1970, the 'Punjab Agriculture University Act, 1961' was also repealed.

It is clear from examining the above legal provisions that what Punjab Agriculture University Ludhiana is today, it is not a 'State University' but a 'Central University' created by the Central Act, and it is not legally correct to call or understand it as a 'State University'. What has been said by the Governor of Punjab about the 'powers and duties' of the Chancellor of the Universities established by the State Legislature or the State Government is correct, because according to the 'Act' of the various State Universities in Punjab, the powers and duties of the Chancellor are the same. But the position, powers and duties of the Governor of Punjab Chancellor of the Punjab Agriculture University, created by the 'Central Act' are entirely different because of the provisions of 'the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1970 and having its own Act and Statutes. It is true that the Governor of Punjab has been made the Chancellor of the University under Section 12 (1) of the Act of 1970, but at the same time under Section 12 (2) the Chancellor is designated 'the Head' of the University and due to his position, if he is present, he will preside over the Convocation of the University.' Another important fact is that according to Section 12(3), 'the Chancellor shall have such other powers as are specified in this Act or as may be prescribed'. So without specified or prescribed powers under the Act, he cannot assume or there cannot be any other power with him.

If we look at the Acts of the 'State Universities' established in Punjab, for example, the Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar Act, 1969 or the Punjabi University Patiala Act, 1961, it is significant to note that in Section 9 of both these Acts, it is only written that, 'the Governor of Punjab will be the Chancellor of the University.' Therefore, like the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1970, no Act or prescribed powers limit has been imposed on him. If the provisions of 'the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1970' is carefully read, examined, interpreted and understood, it becomes clear that the responsibility of all the work of the Punjab Agricultural University has been given to the 'University Board'. The Board is constituted as per Section 13 of the Act and the 'Powers and Duties' of the Board are enumerated in Section 14 of the Act. According to this section 14 (J), the Board approves the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of the University. The Vice-Chancellor is appointed as per Section 15 of the Act read with Statutes 2(2). Section 15 (1) clearly states that 'The Vice-Chancellor shall be a whole-time officer of the University and shall be

appointed by the Board.' Another provision has been made here that if the members of the Board are not 'unanimous' about the appointment of the Vice Chancellor, then the Vice Chancellor will be appointed by the 'Chancellor'. Since no such situation has arisen regarding the appointment of the present Vice-Chancellor, the Governor has no legal basis to interfere in it.

Finally, when we look at the Press Note issued by the Governor, it is very disappointing to see, how the facts have been either unknowingly or deliberately twisted by the Governor's office. When it is written in the Press Note itself that according to Section 13(11) of the Act of 1970 the Governor is the 'Honorary Chairman' of the 'University Board' and the Vice-Chancellor is the 'Working Chairman', under which Section of the Act it is claimed that he, being the 'Chairman' (actually Honorary Chairman?) had to be informed by the Punjab Government about the entire process. He is not even a member of the Board. The Vice Chancellor chairs the meeting of the Board, as he is the senior most member of the Board. After him, the name of Chief Secretary of Punjab has been numbered, due to which he chairs the meeting in the absence of Vice Chancellor.

The University Grant Commission Regulations, 2018, which are mentioned in the Press Note, it must be noted that not only the Vice-Chancellor of the University, but also the appointment of teaching and other staff are mentioned in detail. That is why these are applicable to all types of Universities. But an important fact which is written in the Press Note at number 3, is necessarily readable. It is written here that 'as per 7 of the Regulation there shall be a Search Cum Selection Committee for the selection of the post Vice-Chancellor: One member of the Search Committee shall be appointed by the Chairman of the UGC... Here the truth is hidden from the facts. The truth is that as per Regulation 7 (3) (ii) UGC Chairman will appoint a member only for the Selection Committee of Vice Chancellor of 'State, Private and Deemed University' and not of Central University, as the term Central University is not mentioned here. Punjab Agriculture University being Central University, therefore, what has been said about the nominee of the Chairman of UGC does not apply here.

What has been said in the next paragraph of the Press Note shows how efficient the legal experts in the Punjab Governor's office are. According to this paragraph, UGC Regulations are 'Subordinate Legislation', as per Article 254 of the Constitution of India, they 'shall supersede any Act made by the State.' To prove their point, they have mentioned the case of *Gambhisdan K. Gandhi Vs. State of Gujrat* and Supreme Court decision of 11 October 2022, *State of West Bengal vs. Anindya Sunder Das*, according to which if there are conflicting provisions in the Central Law and the State

Law, then according to Article 254 of the Constitution, the Central Law will prevail over the State Law due to the 'Principle/Rule of Repugnancy.' It is correct that when



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there is a conflict between the Central and State laws, the Central law will prevail. But the thing to be seen is whether these Rule of Repugnancy or court decisions are applicable regarding the appointment of Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agriculture University. As I have already mentioned that the Punjab Agricultural University is not a State University established by the State Law but is established by 'the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural Universities Act, 1970' passed by the Parliament of India, therefore, the arguments based on above quoted decisions or Rule of Repugnancy by the Governor's office is absolutely incorrect and legally untenable. Since the Act of 1970 is a 'Central Act' which can be termed as a 'Special Law' and the University Grants Commission Act or Regulations mentioned as 'Subordinate Legislation' are also 'Central Act' which can be termed as 'General Law', therefore, there is no question of conflict between Central and State laws. While according to the legal proposition and Court decisions, 'Special law' prevails over 'General law'.

From examining all the above legal aspects, it is clear that the appointment of the Vice Chancellor of the Punjab Agriculture University made unanimously by the 'University Board', is legally valid and the Governor-Chancellor or the Chief Minister has no role in it.

In the beginning, I said that both parties are responsible for this controversy. Now, it can be clearly said that neither the Governor was clear about this University status of its being a 'Central University', nor was the Chief Minister clear in his reply as he did not mention the above said law provisions of 1970 Act, relating to the University.

This controversy should be and can be stopped only on proper knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the provisions relating to the Punjab Agriculture University enshrined in 'the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Act, 1970'. This will be an important and praiseworthy contribution in the prosperity of Punjab and agricultural field of India.

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November 11-12-13, 2022

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's "Parkash Utsav"

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਆ ਮਿਟੀ ਧੁੰਧੁ ਜਗਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਆ।
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Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Parkash Utsav will be celebrated at Gurughar on November 13, 2022. Akhand path will start on Friday 11/11/22, at 10:00 AM and will conclude with Bhog ceremony on Sunday morning 11/13/2022. Late Pt. Kewal Krishan Sudhir and Nirmal Devi Sudhir's son Varinder Kumar Sudhir with his wife Renu Bala Sudhir, sons Puneet Sudhir and Ankush Sudhir, will host the Akhand Path and Langar Sewa. Sudhir family is requesting Sangat to come and get Guru Sahib's blessings. May Baba ji keep Sudhir Family in Chardi Kala.

1st Parbhat Pheri will be at 6:00 am on
Saturday November 12, 2022

Hoisting of NISHAN SAHIB

(Nishan Sahib Sewa)

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony will be held on November 12 (Saturday) at 11:00 AM. Bhai Hardial Singh Banga and Bibi Kulwant Banga will be doing the Nishan Sahib Chola Sewa. The entire Sangat and the Managing Committee is thankful to Banga family for their Sewa of getting new hydraulic Nishan Sahib installed. May Waheguru bless the dedicated Banga family for their cherished desires.

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