



Invited Editorial Article

Shaheed Bhagat Singh: A Great Revolutionary and an Erudite Philosopher

Shaheed Bhagat Singh occupies central place in the Indian freedom movement. His name reached every nook and corner of the country after he and his associates, all young revolutionaries of the Hindustan Socialist Revolutionary Association (HSRA), avenged the death of Lala Lajpat Rai by murdering JP Saunders, ASP Lahore, on December 17, 1928. This dare devil act of killing an IP British officer of the rank of ASP, threw a daunting challenge before them. The spontaneously emerged circumstances forced them to choose between two possible options: to turn underground or oppose the British administration in a direct and open revolt. After deep thoughts, HSRA decided to adopt the latter. The strategy was prepared to give actual shape to direct and open fight by making use of British jails, police stations and courts as revolutionary platforms to widely disseminate the message of peace, freedom, and egalitarian social and political order, chiselled during long discussion among the members of the HSRA. And for this herculean task, it was decided – though with initial reservations on the part of Chandra Shekhar Azad and of course with heavy heart – that Bhagat Singh, one of the most intelligent young revolutionaries of HSRA, will lead the fight.

The decision to launch an open and direct front could partly be due to the thoughts related with the long self-exile of Sardar Ajit Singh for his involvement in 1907 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' movement and partly for the longer ramifications of the adoption of violent methods for building an egalitarian social set-up and democratic governing order. Bhagat Singh and his associates might have decided to opt for the open fight after their action on December 17, 1928, to further shun violence on the one hand, and to minimize the implied losses of the struggle to keep oneself away from one's own people during the underground period or in exile as was in the case of his revolutionary uncle Sardar Ajit Singh. It was well thought-out strategy which speaks volumes of the political maturity of the young revolutionaries, their deep intellect and love for non-violent democratic means. It was in this context that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev in their martyrdom defeated the so-called British administration that used to boast of its passion for liberal values and natural justice.

The direct fight began on April 8, 1928. The beginning was made by dropping of two mild bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly Hall at Delhi 'to make the deaf hear'

of the staggered sufferings of the subjugated. It was well-planned and deeply thought about non-violent action of its kind under the British rule in India. After the blast, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt did not leave the hall as decided beforehand. They kept on raising slogans: 'Inquilab Zindabad' and 'Down with Imperialism'. These two slogans, as cogently argued by Chaman Lal, represented the immanent change in the Indian revolutionary thought appeared as 'a sign of the growth of consciousness to a higher level in revolutionary movement of the country ("Revolutionary Legacy of Bhagat Singh, *Economic & Political Weekly*, September 15, 2017, 3712). He continued, 'the catalyst of this change was none



other than Bhagat Singh, who by now, through his experience of the revolutionary movement and from a systematic study of the world revolutionary movement the world over, particularly from his study of the Soviet experience, had reached the conclusion that it is not just enough to 'free the mother India from the chains of foreign slavery', it was much more important to understand the whole system of enslaving and exploiting other nations, i.e., the system of imperialism and then to understand the mechanism of smashing it." (Lal 2017: 3712).

Bhagat Singh started reading and critically analysing national and international unfolding of economic and political events at the very young

age of under 15; and the period of about four months from December 17, 1928 (murder of JP Saunders) to April 8, 1929 (dropping of bombs at Central Legislative Assembly) constitutes the most fertile phase in his revolutionary voyage. He also wrote extensively during this period under pseudonym Vidrohi in *Kirti* and *Balwant* in *Pratap* published from Kanpur. 'Achhut da Sawal', 'Mazhab atey Sadi Azadi de Jang', 'Dharm-Var Fassad atey Uhhna de Ellajh', 'Anarchism ke hai' and 'History of Anarchism' are among his various thought provoking articles carried in *Kirti*. These seminal articles clearly establish him not only as an accomplished scholar of great insights but also an erudite philosopher who cap-

tured the complex nature of British imperialism and the insidious role played by the entrenched social and religious structures of communalism and untouchability at grassroots of Indian society.

The city of Kanpur played a major role in shaping the revolutionary as well as intellectual life of Bhagat Singh. It was there, he came in contact with Batukeshwar Dutt, Ajay Ghosh, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma and Jaidev Kapoor. He was introduced in Kanpur to the then emerging centre of revolutionaries within whose intellectual company and passion for the liberation of Bharat Mata, Bhagat Singh took refuge to save himself from the filial responsibility towards his family and to prepare for

the large responsibility of liberating India from the clutches of the British Empire as well as to establish people's democracy where women, Dalits, workers and peasant would have

equal rights. He was introduced to the Kanpur circle by his teacher, Jai Chander Vidyalkar of National College of Lahore. It was at Kanpur that he also joined the underground revolutionary organisation, Hindustan Republican Association founded by Sachinder Nath Sanyal who he earlier met at Lahore. Lahore, like Calcutta and Kanpur, was also an equally well-known centre of political thinking and revolutionary activities. Bhagat Singh home at Lahore was frequently visited by the revolutionaries of the Ghadar movement. Before the annexation of Punjab in 1849, Lahore was the capital of Sikh Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. And before that it remained a seat of various vassals/subedars of the Delhi Sultanate and Moghul Darbar for a long time. It also provided fertile socio-political space to sow the seeds of Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj. During his early years of life, Bhagat Singh came under the influence of religious practices of Arya Samaj as were observed in his family. It was at Lahore that Giani Ditt Singh of Singh Sabha used to engage Swami Dayanad Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj movement, in scriptural debates about complex issues of spiritual philosophy. Bhagat Singh developed companionship with Sukhdev and Bhagwati Charan Vohra at Lahore. Bhagwati Charan Vohra sacrificed his life on the banks of Ravi in Lahore while preparing bombs for the release of Bhagat Singh and his associates from the jail. Thus Lahore and Kanpur contain vital clues to understand Bhagat Singh, his revolutionary activities and intellectual growth.

Yet another equally significant, rather more strenuous, phase during which Shaheed Bhagat Singh established himself as an incisive philosopher and became a household name falls between April 8, 1929 and March 23, 1931. After the pronouncement of life imprisonment in the Delhi bomb case, which began on May 7, 1929 and ended on June 12, (Contd. on page 2)



Prof. (Dr.) Ronki Ram

Dean (Faculty of Arts)
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair
Professor of Political Science,
Panjab University Chandigarh - 14 (India)
E-mail: ronkiram@yahoo.co.in
Mob: +91-9878682160
Visiting Professor (Faculty of Arts,
Business & Social Sciences) University of
Wolverhampton (UK)

"Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" forum pay its floral tribute on the martyrdom day of our great revolutionaries – Shaheed-E-Azam Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev - who sacrificed their precious lives for the liberation of our mother land on March 23, 1931. Let us come together to follow their philosophy of nonviolence, egalitarianism and communal brotherhood in letter and spirit.

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

Shaheed Bhagat Singh: A Great Revolutionary and an Erudite Philosopher

(Continue from page 1)

1929, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were shifted to Lahore and Mianwali jails respectively for the trial of Lahore conspiracy case. During his incarceration in Lahore, Bhagat Singh, along with his other jailed revolutionary associates, underwent long hunger strikes for almost five months one after the other. It was also during this slightly less than two years of period of incarceration, Bhagat Singh wrote many letters to his family, friends, and officials of the jail and courts. 'Why I am an Atheist', 'Jail Notebook', 'Letter in the name of Young Activists' were among the few brilliant texts penned by him in the jail at Lahore where he finally embraced martyrdom along with his co-prisoner revolutionaries Rajguru and Sukhdev.

Bhagat Singh, as mentioned above, had already become a house-hold name throughout the country for his leading roles in the Lahore Conspiracy case and later the Central Legislative Assembly Bomb case, and his extraordinary brilliant writings. His popularity can be gauged from two editorial dedi-

cated to his martyrdom by two leading contemporary thinkers: Periyar E.V. Ramasami in his Tamil Weekly *Kudi Arasu* on March 29, 1931 and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his *Janata* newspaper on April 13, 1931, entitled "Three Victims". In Punjab the news of the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev spread like a wild fire. Despite all the efforts of the British administration, thousands of people, mesmerised by his egalitarian vision for the independent India and the rare courage with which he confronted ruthless oppression during his incarcerations, reached the banks of Sutlej during the night of March 23, 1923 and performed the last rites of the remains of their beloved heroes with soulful gratitude and unspeakable emotions. After his martyrdom, people of Punjab in general and rest of the country in India made Bhagat Singh an integral part of their folk. A large number of prose, poetry, novels and academic research articles and books highlighting varied dimensions of his life, mission and philosophy are a living testimony to his being a great revolutionary and an

erudite philosopher. Among the latest international peer reviewed published research papers mentioned can be made of: Kama Maclean, "The History of a Legend: Accounting for Popular Histories of Revolutionary Nationalism in India," *Modern Asian Studies*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 16 February 2012; and Neeti Nair, "Bhagat Singh as 'Satyagrahi': The Limits to Non-violence in Late Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 01 May 2009. Chris Moffat's *India's Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and the Promise of Bhagat Singh*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019 is one of the recently seminal books on Bhagat Singh and his philosophy and praxis.

In 2018, Delhi Government established a Bhagat Singh Archives and Resource Centre. With its rich collection of books, rare documents, journals, and archival material, including the socialist revolutionary jail records, this centre has evolved into the first of its kind Bhagat Singh Archives and Resource Centre in the country.

The sole spirit behind this great endeavour is Chaman Lal, a retired academic from Jawaharlal Nehru University and former member of Senate and Dean (Languages Faculty) of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

He has been continuously researching on the life, struggle and writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh for the last many decades, and has collected from India, Pakistan and many other countries lots of literature and rare references in that regard. Currently, an advisor at the centre, Chaman Lal is said to have donated 2000 books on Bhagat Singh in various Indian languages (Mohammad Ibrar, "Know All About Bhagat Singh Struggle in His Very Own Corner," Times of India, "March 23, 2021).

Such efforts will certainly help us to understand the context and the contributions of our great revolutionaries who sacrificed their precious lives for the freedom of the mother land and left behind a rich treasure of their experiences and meticulously articulated philosophical narratives.



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Fentanyl – One Pill Can Kill

Rachael King (On left in photo above) was a manager at the Noodles Restaurant in Folsom and was a proud recipient of the September 2018 Sacramento County Food Safety Award of Excellence. Four months later she died after taking a pill that unbeknown to her was laced with Fentanyl.

It's difficult to share this with you and I want you to know that I talked about it with Rachael's parents who allowed me to share some of her story. Rachael was a valedictorian and an aspiring chef with dreams and a bright future. She was the only daughter, and her death was a devastating blow to her parents, brother and all who loved her. Her parents have tried to advocate for justice and have been an inspiration behind important programs emerging as the increase in Fentanyl deaths cannot be ignored. I am dedicating this newsletter to Rachael. I believe she would want to warn others about "Fentanyl - One Pill Can Kill."

Do you remember "Every 15 Minutes" or "Arrive Alive Drive Sober?" For those who don't know, they are reality-based programs designed to challenge teenage students and parents to think before driving drunk. I recently attended a similar program at Folsom High School that was hosted by Arrive Alive California, Inc. Their program is called "Fentanyl - One Pill Can Kill." I was a proud champion of this program which was funded by Sacramento County's ARPA in response to the growing drug problem in our region. During their program I heard personal testimonies from parents, shocking statistics, and an ambulance professional shared that if someone overdoses and you call 911, the health professionals do not report your drug activities. They talked about the symptoms. If the person is unconscious, small pupils, shallow breathing, vomiting,

inability to speak, faint heartbeat, limp arms and legs, or discolored lips or fingernails, call 911.

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that comes in many prescription forms. It is similar to morphine, but I am told it is up to 100 times more potent. It is typically used to treat severe or chronic pain for people who are physically tolerant to other opioids. Since 2020 the use



of opioids, especially Fentanyl, has grown exponentially. In the past three years, according to Sacramento District Attorney Thien Ho, there have been 360 Fentanyl poisoning deaths in Sacramento County. That is more than gun-related homicides, he said.

For those who want justice, it is challenging. In general, most Fentanyl deaths are listed as accidental overdoses. They accepted the pill from a friend or paid a dealer for a street drug, not realizing it was laced with Fentanyl. The pills look just like prescription pills. At the crime scene, people may say that the person was fine when they went to bed and there was no indication of a problem, but for law enforcement to pursue a murder investigation they would need to show intent to kill or reckless disregard or indifference to human life.

Further, if the case report lists accidental death, then the case follow-up is under that assumption, and it is not technically a murder investigation. This has been a heartbreaking disappointment for family members who are screaming for justice and want to prevent the future loss of innocent lives.

I recently met with Sacramento D.A. Thien Ho to discuss the

justice dilemma. He expressed the seriousness of this matter and shared that he has a four-part plan. Then he told me about how cases are built piece by piece, and he is establishing processes to set the stage for documenting a case on record. Then we talked about the difference between implied malice and express malice. Implied malice refers to a person's intention to cause grievous bodily harm. Express malice murders include killings where the person intended to cause death. In contrast, implied malice includes killings that occurred while a person was committing a felony or when deaths resulted from an action that displayed a depraved indifference.

District Attorney Ho's plan includes a "Watson Warning" which is given to defendants who are found guilty of selling Fentanyl. If they sell Fentanyl again and cause injury or death, they can be charged with a much more serious crime - including murder. He is calling for Regional Response Teams. Sacramento is working with other County's (Riverside,



Sue Frost

San Bernardino, San Diego, Placer) to learn about how they are building out their response. He is partnering with our Sheriff and other agencies to create Fentanyl Response Teams. There will be a protocol in place to retrieve phones to look at texting and collect evidence. A drug task force would trace dealer connections and when a dealer is associated with several deaths it is possible to begin to build a case on record that shows reckless disregard. Other Partnerships with the U.S. Attorney General and the Eastern District will be pursuing more legal solutions and finally the Education Programs such as the Fentanyl - One Pill Can Kill is a program that is targeting youth in schools to help them understand, "FENTANYL - ONE PILL CAN KILL!"

We cannot bring Rachael back, but her life was a precious gift to our world and it mattered. If you have pain of any kind, buyer beware... One Fentanyl Pill Can Kill. Other drugs and even marijuana vaping have been laced with Fentanyl and killed innocent people! The best advice when considering recreational street drugs is "Just Say NO!"

Thank you for reading - and as always, if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@saccounty.net. Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murieta.

India Economic Trade Organisation (IETO) organised a function in New Delhi to celebrate UN International Day of Happiness



India Economic Trade Organisation (IETO) organised a function in New Delhi to celebrate UN International Day of Happiness. 19.3.2023. Apart from Ambassadors of foreign diplomatic missions in Delhi, other distinguished guests included

Ambassador V. B. Soni, the celebrated motivational speaker Shiv Khera, former DG of Police Gujarat, and ACP Delhi. Dr. Asif Iqbal, the brain behind IETO, welcomed the gathering.

Ambassador Soni mentioned



that as per the Happiness Index survey 2023, Finland has been ranked as the happiest nation for a few years. The top ten position includes mostly the Scandinavian nations. The U.S. occupies 16th position, with U.K. (18) and

France (20) following in that order.

Bhutan has the honour of being at the top, among the Global South countries. Sadly India figures at No. 136 out of 146 countries surveyed, worse than even some of its neighbours!

Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Governor's Homeless Plan

On Thursday the Governor announced his plan to provide 1,200 tiny homes statewide, including 350 for the Sacramento region. I provided interviews for multiple TV stations

people the treatment that they need.

I also believe we will not see progress until we get serious about accountability. That's why I have proposed an audit of all homelessness spending in California. We have spent

traditional public school system. Specifically, this bill would reduce barriers for low income students seeking to attend a school outside of their neighborhood district. The bill will be heard this Wednesday, March



cutting event. Opening up a new business in California is difficult, and I applaud the bravery and incredible sense of entrepreneurship of those who go down this path. I would like to congratulate them on this wonderful occasion, and I wish them the best of luck with their business.

Sacramento Press Club Panel

I had a great time recently participating on the Sacramento Press Club's "Meet the Rookies" panel, where I was joined by a bipartisan group of other Assembly members and Senators to discuss our experiences so far in the legislature.

The Sacramento Press Club is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to supporting the next generation of journalists through scholarships for college students.

and newspapers across the state explaining why I think more needs to be done.

We have 115,000 unsheltered homeless individuals in our state. While housing and shelter are important, we need to do more to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that keep people in the cycle of homelessness. Our current approach fails to prioritize getting

\$20 billion taxpayer dollars on homelessness since 2018, and our homeless population grew 77% statewide during that same period of time. Our approach is not working and an audit is needed to show us how we can do better.

School Choice Bill in Committee Next Week

I have authored AB 237 to give families more choice within the

22 in the Assembly Education Committee.

I am a strong proponent of providing options for parents when it comes to their child's education, and I look forward to encouraging bipartisan support for this sensible reform.

New Business Ribbon Cutting

This week my team gave a certificate to ISI Elite Training in Folsom for their business opening ribbon

Assemblyman Hoover Announces Tanya Kravchuk as the 7th Assembly District's Woman of the Year for 2023

SACRAMENTO - As part of the California State Assembly's annual celebration of Women's History Month, Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) recognized Tanya Kravchuk as the 7th Assembly District's Woman of the Year for 2023.

"I am thrilled to announce Tanya Kravchuk as the 2023 Woman of the Year in the 7th Assembly District," said Assemblyman Hoover. "She is a dedicated member of our community helping Ukrainian refugees through her work with Ukrainian American House and serving our students as a Board Member in the San Juan Unified School District. I am proud of the work Tanya continues to do to provide for the families in my district and across

Sacramento County."

Tanya has devoted most of her career to serving children in both a volunteer and professional capacity. She has volunteered for Robert's Family Development Center, Boys and Girls Club, Volunteers of America, and The Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento where she later worked for nearly a decade. In 2022, she was elected to serve on the San Juan Unified School Board.

Born in Ukraine, Tanya moved to the U.S. when she was five years old. She attended elementary school in the Sacramento City Unified School District and later Sylvan and Mesa Verde in the San Juan Unified School District when her

family moved to Citrus Heights.

Tanya holds a bachelor's degree in Communications from California State University Sacramento. Early in her career, she worked in marketing at Farmers Insurance and in public affairs at Intel Corporation. She then transitioned to non-profit work as the Resource Development Manager at PEACE for Families and later the Director of Development & Communication at the Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento focusing on our communities most vulnerable—abused and neglected children.

Tanya also worked with schools, local businesses, and governments during the 2020 Census to secure support for an accurate

count. Through this role, she became involved with

Ukrainian American House, a nonprofit defending the rights and meeting the needs of individuals who willingly or forcibly immigrated to California. Since the war in Ukraine began in 2022, Tanya has been helping transition refugees to a self-sufficient life in the United States.

Josh Hoover represents Assembly District 7, which includes the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, and Rancho Cordova and the unincorporated communities of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Foothill Farms, Gold River, Mather, McClellan Park, North Highlands, Orangethorpe, and Rosemont.

Sahib Kanshi Ram and Dalit Emancipation

Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:

www.ambedkartimes.com & www.deshdoaba.com

Sahib Kanshi Ram devoted his life for the eradication of caste from the domestic structures of Indian socio-religious realm. The sole aim his life-long struggle was to facilitate the Bahujan Samaj to acquire power through the medium of ballot. He was a firm believer in the nonviolent power of democracy that he inherited from the teachings of Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar. A chance reading of one of the numerous valuable writings of Dr. Ambedkar transformed his vision and he did not only prefer to live unmarried but also renounced his family life once for all. After he plunged into social struggle for the acquisition of political power for his people he did not look back at all toward his home in village Khauspur in



which deny them their bare minimum human rights. He ingrained among his people that the political power is the only key to Dalit emancipation and empowerment in the real sense of the term.

Sahib Kanshi Ram Ji was an innovative thinker and a charismatic mass leader who coined new political vocabulary for the mobilization of

Rupnagar district of Punjab. He did all this for helping his people to stand on their own feet to get rid of centuries' old slavery and blind faith in the chaturvarna system of social hierarchy, down-trodden. The slogans he chiseled adroitly caught the imagination of all and sundry throughout the length and breadth of India. He told his people unless and until they formed their own social and political organizations, no upper caste political party will allow them to come to rule India. And he was confident that given the 85 percent strength of Bahujan, if the latter joined hands no one in the world can stop them reach Delhi. His untiring efforts and firm faith in his people brought success though in some parts of the country. But as far as awareness among the Bahujan is concerned his was a great success.

Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba weekly newspapers remember to Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji on his 89th birth anniversary and solemnly resolve to continue struggling following into his footsteps.

Seminar on National Education Policy, 2020

Babasaheb Ambedkar College at Bootan Mandi in Jalandhar

Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Government Co-education College at Bootan Mandi, my native place, in Jalandhar hosted a One-day Seminar on a topical subject - National Education Policy, 2020 and Institutional Preparedness on March 18, 2023. It fell on me to be Chief Guest at the inaugural function of the Seminar. I accepted the invitation with pleasure and with a sense of belonging. The College, named after the greatest son of India, Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar, was established after a long struggle by the residents of Bootan Mandi and other stake holders and I was also one of them working on the back-stage. I am grateful to Principal Dr. Chander Kanta and Convener of the Seminar, Dr. Harblas Heera for providing me yet another opportunity to participate in the Event to discuss and deliberate an important issue of concern and interest to the country and the society at large.

It was a well organized and graciously hosted function with Dr. Nilesh Arora, Director of USB at Chandigarh University as the Guest of Honour and the Key Note Speaker, Dean of Commerce and Business Studies at DAV University of Jalandhar, Dr. Gitika Nagarath, Principal Dr. Chander Kanta, the Host and her associate, Dr. Harblas Heera on the High Table with me, a non-academic humble citizen, as the Chief Guest. The audience comprised; the core of the faculty of the host College along with special invitees from the academic and intellectual circles in and around Jalandhar and the young students of the College. The Conference Room was full to capacity, a pleasant and satisfying visual. Principal Dr. Chander Kanta in her welcome remarks talked about the College, still in its infancy, and that it was a matter of satisfaction that in a short span of time the College has registered itself as a good upcoming educational institute in the area and was on track. She added that it will be their duty to see that we make the College a 'Centre of Excellence' in due course with

a view to justify the College, named after the Indian icon, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Dr. Nilesh Arora's Key Note address was not only thought provoking but also educative and motivational. Commenting on the NEP, 2020, Dr. Arora said that the new policy has taken care of the much needed inputs to give impetus to 'employability' and pragmatic deployment of human resources. He also added that it was good that our policy makers have realized, of late, that 'learning' and 'degree' were two different things. He also appreciated the norms of 'equity and

pare the younger generations to understand and attain the cardinal goals of -Equality, Justice, Liberty and Fraternity - so beautifully enshrined in our constitution by our forefathers headed by Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The interactive aspect of the session was all the more interesting in which the attentive and discerning audience comprising both of young students and well placed academics and intellectuals participated. The Speaking Notes for my remarks may be seen in my Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/>

that is Bharat sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge super power" I wish the new policy shows us the way and lead us to the cherished goal of making India a "Vishav Guru". We are on rails, it seems. All said and done, I



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940



inclusiveness' underlined in the new education policy. In my brief remarks, I said that it was a matter of gratification that the purpose of my coming as a 'learner and a student' was fully met with the thought provoking and full of knowledge lecture of Dr. Nilesh Arora and presentations of the hosts of the Seminar, Dr. Chander Kanta and Dr. Harblas Heera who very ably conducted the session as the 'Master of Ceremonies'. Underlining the motto - Educate, Encourage and Enlighten - of new NEP, I said that it was good to note that the new policy has duly recognized the much needed input 'equity and sustainability' in the educational framework. I concluded with a word of caution that the GOI and the Educational Administrator must allay the fears of 'alleged high jacking the policy by some vested interests with sectarian agenda' expressed in some quarters and added that the NEP should be a tool to pre-

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The brochure of the One-day National Seminar has rightly mentioned the purpose of the exercise and I quote, "The seminar has been conceptualized to outline the vision of the new education policy in India. The policy recognizes and identifies faculty as the heart of the learning process and will empower the teachers of India by bringing out various reforms for their recruitment, professional development, service conditions etc." The wide range of 'Discussion Themes' listed for the brainstorming technical sessions of the Seminar would certainly provide fuel to the process of learning. The NEP, 2020 has rightly stipulated, "The NEP envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India

close this piece with yet another quote from the brochure of the Seminar which lists the agenda and vision of Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar Government Co-educational College, "The long term mission of this institution is to achieve and sustain excellence in teaching and enriching local as well as national communities. Being equipped with the facilities and quality staff, the college imparts high standard of education with affordable fee structures". I take this opportunity to wish the College all success in the years to come. Our success in making this institution a 'Centre of Excellence' will be a befitting tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar. My earlier write ups on the College may be accessed in my blogs and here I link the last one of December 18, 2021:

<http://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/2021/12/ambedkar-government-college-bootan.html>

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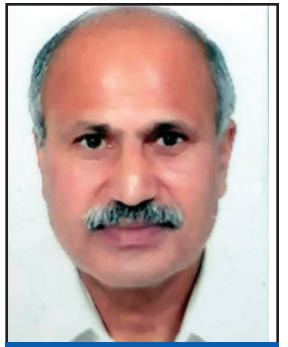


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The roots and remedy of the Caste system



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(Additional Secretary,
Govt. of India)

A message titled 'गुलामी और पतन का कारण' (The cause of slavery and degradation) attributed to Dr. Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar is in circulation on social media evoking multiple response and reaction these days. The detailed message is: "The Mahabharata says that a Shudra cannot become a king. Gita says that the Shudras should serve as slaves to the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Vaishya. The Ramayana says that if a Shudra gets enlightenment, he should be awarded death penalty. The Veda says that the place of a Shudra is under the feet of the upper three Varnas because he is born from the feet of the Brahma. The Puranas say that the Shudras are born to be slaves only. The Ramcharitamanas says that it is the *Dharma* or Righteousness to give corporal beating to a Shudra. Despite all this a tolerant Shudra continues to have unflinching faith in these *Granthas* – Scriptures containing violence. Trust me, only this is this is the cause of your (Shudras') slavery and degradation" (Dr. Ambedkar).

I have yet to come across this quotation or statement of Babasaheb in this form in his voluminous Writings and Speeches. But the essence of the message is contained in his writings which he produced after an extensive and intensive research and study of the Hindu Scriptures for fifteen years. He wrote copiously on the philosophy of Hinduism, Hindu Social Order, Hindu Scriptures, Riddles of Hinduism and genesis of the Caste system and its impact on the society and the country. One needs to go through intently and dispassionately not only his Writings but the whole gamut of Hindu Scriptures from the Vedas to Puranas to know what they really contain and convey particularly regarding the Caste system. The quest, therefore, must begin with the Vedas as they are considered to be the most ancient and the source of other Hindu Scriptures.

Vedas

The origin of Caste system is traced to the theory of *Chaturvarnya* contained in the nineteenth *Sukta* or hymn known as *Purusha Sukta* of the Tenth Mandala or Chapter of the Rig Veda (10.90.1-16). The unique and extraordinary *Purusha Sukta* says that the Creator of the universe and all the creatures including classes of men is the thousands-headed, thousand-seyed and thousands-footed *Purusha* who is the universe itself but overpasses it by ten fingers.

The Richas or verses of the Rig, Sam, Yajur and the Atharva Veda appeared from Him. The Brahmins originated from his mouth, Kshatriyas from arms, Vaishyas from thighs and Shudras from his feet. The moon appeared from his mind, sun from his eyes, air from ears, fire from mouth, space from navel, heavenly bodies from head, earth from his feet and directions from the ears. The same version of the *Purusha Sukta* of Rig Veda is replicated in chapter 31 of the Yajurveda with 6 additional verses. In its additional explanation of the origin of

the four Varnas, White Yajurveda says that the Prajapati (Lord of Creatures) produced the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras by lauding the God in different ways (14.28, 29). In one of the explanations of the Taittiriya Samhita of the Black Yajurveda, the Brahmins are said to have been born from the mouth, Rajanya (kshatriyas) from the breast and arms, Vaishyas from the middle and Shudras from the feet of the *Prajapati*. Apart from replicating the Purusha Sukta theory of the Rig Veda, the Atharva Veda (Kaanda or Chapter 19.6), also has other explanations. It says that Brahmin was the first born (from Brahma) with ten heads and ten feet (4.6. 1).

Another explanation says Rajanya (Kshatriya) was born from



Vratya - Vagrant, Mendicant (15.8.1). In one of the multiple explanations contained in the Satpatha Brahmana, it says that the Brahma was formerly this (universe), one only. It energetically created from itself Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. Taittiriya Brahmana says that the Brahmin caste was sprung from the gods; the Shudras from the Asuras. At another place it says that the Shudra was sprung from the non-existence. Dr. Ambedkar says that the ancient Brahmins were evidently conscious of the fact that the origin of the four classes was an unusual and uncommon social phenomenon and that the place of the Shudra in it was very unnatural and that this called for some explanation. The variety of explanations given above and in other texts is simply bewildering (BAWS, Vol.7, pp. 21, 22, 37-41). The intelligent readers can know and understand what is what of these explanations.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, prima facie these verses do no more than explain how the four classes, namely, the Brahmins or priests, Kshatriyas or soldiers, Vaishyas or traders, and Shudras or menials, arose from the body of the Creator. These verses are treated as containing a mandatory injunction from the Creator to the effect that Society must be constituted on the basis of these classes. They are not mere cosmogony, but contain a divine injunction prescribing a particular form of the constitution of society known as *Chaturvarnya* - parent of the Caste

system as an ideal of the Indo-Aryan society. This ideal of *Chaturvarnya* was the mould in which the life of the Indo-Aryan community in its early or liquid state was cast. It is this mould, which gave the Indo-Aryan community its peculiar shape and structure. The reverence, which the Indo-Aryan Society had for this ideal mould of *Chaturvarnya*, is not only beyond question, but it is also beyond description. Its influence on the Indo-Aryan society has been profound and indelible. The Social Order prescribed by the Vedas has never been questioned by anyone except Buddha. Even Buddha was not able to shake it for the simple reason that both after the fall of Buddhism and even during the period of Buddhism there were enough law-givers, who made it their

Sukta is, therefore, criminal in intent and anti-social in its results. For, it aims to perpetuate an illegal gain obtained by one class and unjust wrong inflicted upon another (BAWS, Vol.7, pp.27, 31, 32).

According to Babasaheb, the idea behind the doctrine of *Chaturvarnya* seems to be to discover a formula which will solve the problem of fixing the functions of the four classes and fixing their gradation after a preconceived plan. The *Brahmin* is equated to the mouth of the Creator. Mouth being the noblest part of the anatomy, the Brahmin becomes the noblest of the four classes. As he is the noblest in the scale, he is given the noblest function, that of custodian of knowledge and learning. Arms being next below the mouth, consequently the *Kshatriya* is given an order of precedence next below the *Brahmin* and is given a function which is second only to knowledge, namely, fighting. The *Vaishya* is equated to the thighs of the Creator, and is given an order of precedence next below the *Kshatriya* and is assigned a function of industry and trade which in name and fame ranked in ancient times below that of a warrior. The *Shudra* is equated to the feet of the Creator. The feet form the lowest and the most ignoble part of the human frame. Accordingly, the *Shudra* is placed last in the Social Order and is given the filthiest function of serving the rest as a menial. As the mouth cannot perform the functions of the feet, and the arms of the thighs, therefore, the classes equated with limbs shall remain confined to their fixed functions. It means perpetuating inequity on the ground that whatever is once settled is settled for all times. The principle underlying the *Purusha Sukta* is, therefore, criminal in intent and anti-social in its results. For, it aims to perpetuate an illegal gain obtained by one class and an unjust wrong inflicted upon another (BAWS, Vol.7, pp. 32, 33).

Origin and authorship of the Vedas

There is hardly any Hindu who does not regard the Vedas as the most sacred Book of his religion. It would be relevant and important to know the origin and other contents of the Vedas not only for the curious but for the benefit of common people. The theory of the origin of the Vedas has been propounded in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Rig Veda itself (10.90.1-16). It says that the three Vedas namely, Rig, Sama and Yaju came into being out of the mystic sacrifice of the *Purusha* – a mystical being. Yajur Veda says that the Rig, Yaju, Sam and Atharva Vedas appeared from the Virat (Gigantic or colossal) Yagyapuru (31.7). Atharva Veda also

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repeats the *Rig* and *Yajur Veda* in the same vein (19.6.13). In addition it says that the *Rig* verses and *Yajus* sprang from Time (19.54). At another place it says that the primeval sage and the *Rig*, *Sam* and *Yaju* and *Athrava Veda* sprang from *Skambha* - fulcrum, support (19.6.14). In another explanation, it says that the *Vedas* appeared from Indra. *Satpatha Brahmana* explains the origin of the *Vedas* (i) from the *Prajapati*, (ii) from *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (air) and *Surya* (sun), (iii) from the water, (iv) from the Mind-Ocean. As per *Taittiriya Brahmana* the *Vedas* came (i) from the *Prajapati*, (ii) from the *Vach* (Speech) and (iii) from the beard of *Prajapati*. The explanation offered in the *Chhandogya Upanishada* is the same as that given in the *Satpatha Brahmana* i.e. the *Rig Veda* originated from *Agni*, *Yajus* from *Vayu* and *Sam* from the Sun. The *Brahad Aranyak Upanishada* has two explanations. In one place, it says the *Vedas* are the breathings of the great Being (*Brahma*). In another place it says the *Prajapati* created the *Vedas* through *Vach* (speech). *Manu Smriti* attributes origin of the *Vedas* to *Brahma* and *Prajapati*. Thus, eleven different explanations regarding origin of the *Vedas* are found in these texts: (1) as originating from the mystical sacrifice of *Purusha*; (2) as originating from the *Virat Yagyapurusha*; (3) as cut or scraped off from *Skambha*, as being his hair and mouth; (4) as springing from *Indra*; (5) as produced from *Time*; (6) as produced from *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya*; (7) as springing from *Prajapati* and the *Waters*; (8) as being the breath of *Brahma*; (9) as being dug by the gods out of mindocean; (10) as being the hair of *Prajapati's* beard and (11) as being the offspring of *Vacha* or sound, word or speech (*BAWS*, Vol. 4, pp. 19-22). It is up to the readers to exercise their intellect to make their own conclusions as to the credibility of these explanations regarding origin and authorship of the *Vedas*.

Contents of the Vedas

One comes across multiple views on the contents of the *Vedas*. According to the sage *Charvaka*, "... The *Agnihotra* and other sacrifices are only useful as means of livelihood; for the *Veda* is tainted by three faults of untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology; then again the impostors who call themselves *Vaidic* pundits are mutually destructive, as the authority of the *Jnan-Kanda* (enlightenment) is overthrown by those who maintain the authority of the *Karma-Kanda* (sacrifices etc. rituals) and those who maintain the theory of the *Jnan-Kanda* reject that of the *Karma-Kanda*; and lastly, the three *Vedas* themselves are only the incoherent rhapsodies (ecstatic expression of feelings) of knaves." Sage *Brihaspati* says, "*Vedas* and *karm-kanda* are but means of livelihood for those who have neither manliness nor sense... There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world; nor do the actions of the four castes, orders

etc. produce any real effect... The *Agnihotras*, the three *Vedas* etc. were made as the livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and manliness; if a beast slain in the *Jyotistoma* rite will itself go to heaven; why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father? When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again? All these ceremonies are for the dead, there is no other fruit anywhere. The three authors of the *Vedas* were buffoons, knaves and demons..." According to Prof. *Muir*: "...In these songs (*Vedas*) the *Aryan* sages celebrated the praises of their ancestral gods, and besought of them all the blessings which men in general desired - health, wealth, long life, cattle, offspring, victory over the enemies, forgiveness of sins, and in some cases also celestial facility." There is enough evidence to prove that there is no ethical or spiritual value in the *Vedas*. As to the morality there is hardly any discussion about it in the *Rig Veda*. On the other hand there are good many obscene passages to be found in the *Vedas*. The dialogue between *Yama* and *Yami*, brother and sister, in which *Yami* proposes to *Yama*, and the gods and goddesses indulging in drinking *Som-rasa* (intoxicating drink) and merry making, are some of the instances. There are hymns or prayers offering *Som-rasa* (an intoxicating drink) to gods seeking grant of prayers for wealth, offspring, decimation of enemies and victory in war et al. The *Atharva - Veda* is nothing but a collection of sorcery, black magic and medicine. The *Rig Veda* also not altogether free from it. There are good many obscene passages to be found in the *Rig - Veda* and *Yajur - Veda*. The curious may go through the texts themselves for detailed. (*BAWS*, Vol. 4, pp. 36-52)

Upanishadas

Though there is no fixed number of the *Upanishadas*, it is generally believed to be 108. A list of these *Upanishadas* is given in the *Muktik Upanishada*. The publication from *Adyar Library Madras* carries a list of 179 *Upanishadas*. The number is 223 as per *Gujrati Printing Press Bombay* (*Shriram Sharma and Bhagwati Devi Sharma, Brahmvrchas, Shanti Kunj, Haridwar, 1997, pp. 12,13*). This is not the final list.

The *Brihadaranyak Upanishada* says that only the *Brahma* in the form of *Purusha* (*Prajapati*) alone was pre-existing in the primordial state who divided itself into male and female two parts. They assumed the form of male and female of each animal as husband and wife, and procreated man and the animal world down up to an ant level. It is the *Purusha* who created gods and the four *Varnas* - *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and the *Shudra* in hierarchical order with *Brahmin* at the top and *Shudra* at the bottom, with their respective duties as priest, warrior, traders and the menials to serve the upper three *Varnas*. The earth is also said to be the *Shudra* as it serves all. Though

every human being is endowed with the intellect to know the Creator and its creation, and attain enlightenment and stature of the Creator, but the gods do not want men (*Shudras*) to become enlightened, because in that eventuality none would be left to serve them like the cattle do (108 *Upanishadas, Brahmvrchas, Shanti Kunja, Haridwar, Gyankhand 1997, 1.4. 11-15, pp. 251-257*).

Nrisinh Poorvatapinee Upanishada says Women and *Shudras* are not entitled to listen to the *Mantras* or chants (sermons) of the *Yajur-Veda, Gayatri* and *Pranava*. Even if they happen to hear and know these sermons, they are degraded after death. The *Acharyas* (priest/preacher), therefore, should exercise caution so that these ineligible people do not hear the *Mantras* or else they would also fall into degradation after death like the *Shudras* and women (108, *Upanishadas, Brahmvrchas, Shanti Kunja, Haridwar, Sadhnakhanda 1998, 1.7*).

Vajrasoochik Upanishada has an entirely different and contradictory to *Purusha Sukta* explanation of the origin of the *Brahmins*. It says that no one can claim to be a *Brahmin* by birth or by caste. There are instances galore that many a great sages were of low origin and born from different creatures. Sage *Shringi* was born from a doe; sage *Kaushika* from grass; sage *Jambooka* from *Jambuka* tree (tree called *Jamuna* bearing purple plums); *Valmiki* from termite mound; *Ved Vyasa* from a fisherwoman, *Gautama* from the back or hinder of a rabbit; *Vasishtha* from a mermaid or prostitute named *Urvashi* and the sage *Agastya* from an earthen pot (*kumbha*). Anyone can become a *Brahmin*. The one who is enlightened, philosopher, equanimous, of steadfast wisdom, rational, beyond duality of soul, free from vices like desires, materialistic attachments, vanity, greed, avarice, sorrows, fascination and illusion is a *Brahmin* (108, *Upanishadas, Brahmvrchas, Shanti Kunja, Haridwar, Brahmvidya Khand, pp.271, 272*).

Swasamvedya Upanishada says that it is well established unanimous view that where *Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra* or *Ishwara* go, dogs, donkeys, cats and other *Krimis* (worms, maggots) also go there; dogs, donkeys, cats and other *Krimis* (worms, maggots) are neither high, middle or low. The *Tattvagyanis* (Enlightened or philosophers) do not find difference between *Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra* or *Ishwara* and dogs, donkeys, cats and other worms or maggots from pure consciousness point of view. The ignorant selfish people claim themselves to be intellectuals and enlightened, and mislead the laity in the name of gods and goddesses and their worships and other religious practices such as devotion to the *Gurus*, pilgrimage centers (108 *Upanishadas, Brahmvrchas, Shanti Kunja, Haridwar, Brahmvidya Khand, pp.339-341*).

Smritis

The *Smritis* or the *Law Books* of the *Hindus* comprise both of the religious and secular part of the society. These books contain the Canon of *Hindu Law* which is vast in its compass and treats of such subjects as religion, law, government, civic rights and duties of the different classes in society, penances for the sins and punishment for offences. The number of *Smritis* which is said to be originally twenty has ever been on the increase. *Mitramistra* refers to 57 *Smritis*, *Nilkanta* to 97, *Kamalkar* to 131 and *Mr. Kane* a great authority on the *Smriti* literature has computed their number to be 128. The *Smriti* literature is bigger than any other class of religious literature regarded as sacred by the *Hindus* (*BAWS, Vol. 4, p. 55, Vol. 3, p. 323*).

The *Manu Smriti* is the most important of all, the spirit of which pervades in rest of the *Smritis*. It is claimed to be divine in its origin and revealed to man by him to whom it was revealed by the *Swayambhu* i.e. the *Self-Creator* itself. It reiterates the theory of origin of the *Varnas* as contained in the *Purusha Sukta* of *Rig* and other *Vedas*. It says that the *Brahma* created *Brahmins* from his mouth, *Kshatryias* from the arms, *Vaishyas* from the thighs and the *Shudras* from the feet to expand the worlds (*Manu Smriti* (MS), I.31). He divided himself into male and female two parts, and created a *Virat Purusha* (Grand person) from the female. The *Grand Purusha* then created *Manu* who further created ten *Prajapatis*. The *Prajapatis* further created gods, sages, demons, animals and birds, reptiles, worms, plants, planets and stars etc. (MS, I.32-41). He created duties or functions or role of the four *Varnas* for protection of the *Srishti* (universe). To study and teach (*Vedas*); to perform *Yajnas* or sacrifices and get them performed; to give and accept *Dana* or gifts were the duties fixed for the *Brahmins*. To secure the people; to give gifts to the *Brahmins*; to hold *Yajnas* to be performed by the *Brahmins* and to study (*Vedas* as taught by the *Brahmins*) were the duties fixed for the *Kshatryias*. The *Vaishya* was assigned the duty of cattle rearing; agriculture; trading; giving of *Dana*; studying; lending money on interest. The *Shudra* was assigned only one duty of meekly serving the upper three *Varnas* (MS, I. 87-91). Being the first born from *Brahma's* mouth, and being the possessor of the *Veda*, the *Brahmin* is by right the lord of this whole world (*Bhudeva*) and its entire wealth which is meant for him only. He is the biggest, greatest, wisest, most excellent and the virtuous of all, and protector of *Dharma* (duties of all). All the people subsist with his blessings (MS, I.93-101 and X.3). He is declared to be the creator of the world, the punisher, the teacher, and hence a benefactor of all created beings. He is authorized to kill not only the king but to engage in a general massacre of men if they sought to do injury to his power and

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position. No man should say anything unpropitious nor use any harsh words against Brahmin. A ten year old Brahmin boy should be treated as father by an hundred years old Kshatriya (MS, XI. 31, 32, 35; XI. 261 and I.135). A king should bestow all sorts of jewels on the Brahmin for the performance of sacrifices (MS, XI.4). Power of a Brahmin is greater than the power of the king; by his own power alone he can punish his enemies and those who injure him. Warning the kings against displeasing the Brahmins, Manu says that though fallen unto the deepest distress, the king should not provoke Brahmins to anger because they could instantly destroy him together with his army and vehicles (MS, IX. 313).

The laws of Manu relating to the Status of the Shudras make a very important and interesting reading as they have molded the psychology of the Hindus and determined their attitude towards the Shudras who form at all times the most numerous part of Hindu society. Manu asks the householders of the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya class not to dwell in a country where the rulers are Shudras (MS, IV.61). He enacts that a Brahmin who has neither studied nor performed any other act required by the Vedas may at the king's pleasure, interpret the law to him i.e. act as the Judge, but never a Shudra (MS, VIII. 20). The Kingdom of that monarch who looks on while a Shudra settles the law will sink low like a cow in a morass (MS, VIII. 21). To a person who is privileged to study the Vedas, Manu ordains that he must never read the Vedas in the presence of the Shudras (MS, IV. 99). He prescribes that he who instructs Shudra pupils and he whose teacher is a Shudra shall become disqualified for being invited to Shradha (MS, III. 156). Dr. Ambedkar says Manu's successor went much beyond him in the cruelty of their punishment of the Shudra for studying the Veda. For instance Katyayana lays down that if a Shudra overheard the Veda or ventured to utter a word of the Veda the King shall cut his tongue in twain and put hot molten lead in his ears (BAWS, Vol. 3, p.311). As to property, Manu ordains that no superfluous collection of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he has power to make it. A servile man, a Shudra, who has amassed riches becomes proud, and by his insolence or neglect gives pain to Brahmins (MS, X. 129). Manu declares that a Brahmin as the lord of all may seize the wealth of a Shudra without hesitation because a Shudra is not entitled to possess personal wealth (MS, VIII. 417). Not only is the

property of a Shudra liable to conscription but the labor of the Shudra is also declared to be liable to conscription. Manu declares that a Brahmin may compel a Shudra to do servile work; for he is created by the Creator to be the slave of a Brahmin (MS, VIII. 413). Manu requires a Shu-

dra to be servile in his speech. A Shudra, who insults a twice-born man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out. If he mentions the names and castes of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust red hot into his mouth. If a Shudra arrogantly presumes to preach religion to Brahmins the King shall have poured burning oil in his mouth and ears (MS, VIII. 270 – 272). He prescribes that a Shudra who has an intercourse with a guarded woman of the higher caste, should be put to death and his property confiscated. If it is the unguarded woman, he should be deprived of his offending organ – genitals, but others committing the same offence should be let off with a minor penalty. A Brahmin should never be awarded the death penalty even if he is guilty of committing the entire sins - heinous crimes. There is no sin or crime so heinous on earth as the killing of a Brahmin. Therefore, the king should never entertain even a thought of killing a Brahmin (MS, VIII. 374-382). Manu does not allow the Shudra the comfort of having a high sounding name. He enacts that the first part of a Brahmin's name shall denote something auspicious; a Kshatriya's power; a Vaishya's wealth but a Shudra's something contemptible. The second part of a Brahmin's name shall be a word implying happiness; of a Kshatriya's a word implying protection; of a Vaishya's a term expressive of thriving and of a Shudra's an expression denoting service (MS, II.31, 32). The service of Brahmins alone is declared to be an excellent occupation for a Shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit. A Shudra must be given the remnants of their food; tattered clothes, lowest quality grains and other condemned household items such as furniture etc. (X. 121-125). Dr. Ambedkar says Manu's object was to make the Shudra not merely a servile but an altogether contemptible person. Manu insists that a Shudra shall be servile, unfit for office, without education, without property and he must be a contemptible person. His person and property shall always be liable to be conscripted (BAWS, Vol. 3, p. 311, 312).

Holding that the Shudra was born to be servile, Manu made his laws accordingly so as to compel him to remain servile. At the outset of his Code, Manu asserts emphatically and without blushing that the Lord prescribed to the Shudra one occupation only to serve meekly the other three Varnas/castes. Dr. Ambedkar says that there is no code of laws more infamous regarding social rights than the Laws of Manu. Any instance from anywhere of social injustice must pale before it. The lower classes of Hindus have been completely disabled for direct action on account of the wretched system of *Chaturvarnya*. There cannot be a more degrading system of social organization than the *Chaturvarnya* which dead-

ens, paralyses and cripples the people from helpful activity. The period of defeat and darkness in the country is the period when *Chaturvarnya* flourished to the damnation of the greater part of the people of the country (BAWS, Vol. 1, p. 63). Manu Smriti contains the philosophy of the Hinduism which is the gospel of the superman called Brahmin and it teaches that what is right for the superman is the only thing which is called morally right and morally good. It is superman's heaven and common man's damnation. The Smritis contain in all its wild and luxuriant growth the doctrine of Caste, the doctrine of superiority of the Brahmins, and their rights and privileges, the doctrine of subordination of the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas and the doctrine of the degradation of the Shudras. Such being the philosophy of the Smritis, the Brahmins were directly interested in investing the Smritis with the authority which was claimed for the Vedas and in which they ultimately succeeded to their advantage but to the ruination of the whole country. The parallel to this philosophy of Hinduism is to be found in Nietzsche - the German philosopher. Nietzsche's thought is Hitler in action and Nietzsche was the foremost pioneer of the Nazi accession to power. Nietzsche himself has declared that in his philosophy he is only following the scheme of Manu (BAWS, Vol. 3, pp. 72-76, 78, 80). It is not possible to give here complete detail of the inhuman laws enacted and enforced by Manu and other Hindu law givers against the Shudras. The interested may like to go through the texts themselves for their further knowledge.

Ramayana

The same ideals of *Chaturvaranya* as contained in the Vedas and Smritis are reiterated and cemented in the Valmikiya Ramayana. It is laid down in the Ramayana that Manu and other propounders of *Dharma* (religion/faith) took unanimous decision to establish the *Chaturvarnya* system in Treta Yuga where Brahmins and Kshatriyas engaged themselves in pursuits of special knowledge and excellence, Vaishyas and Shudras were assigned the role of serving them.

Shudras were ordained to serve all the three Varnas above them in the hierarchy. They were not entitled to the right of learning and other spiritual and religious pursuits in the three Yugas – *Satya, Treta and Dwapara*. Any violation of these divine injunctions on the part of Shudras would invite capital punishment. It further says that lowly born will be inclined to perform penance in the Kaliyuga (Valmikiya Ramayana, Gita Press Gorakhpur, Part II, 1996, Uttarkanda, Sarga (chapter) 74.12-28). At another place, the Ramayana says that the four Varnas are the offspring of Manu, the daughter of Daksha and the wife of Kashyapa. 'Brahmins were born from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the breast, Vaishyas from the thighs

and the Shudras from the feet', so says the Veda (BAWS, Vol.4, p.243).

The episode of killing a Shudra named Shambooka by Rama for the offence of his undertaking *Tapasya* or austerities for attaining godhood against the scriptural dictates, speaks loudly of the caste system being strictly observed, propagated and protected in Rama's reign (Rama Rajya). The story goes that there were no premature deaths in Rama's kingdom. It happened, however, that a young son of an elderly Brahmin died a premature death. The bereaved father attributed the death to some sin being committed in the kingdom for which Rama was responsible for his failure to check such a sin or crime. He threatened to sit on hunger strike at the palace of Rama unless his son was brought to life. Rama thereupon consulted his council of eight learned Rishis led by Vasishtha. Narada amongst them told Rama that some Shudra among his subjects must have been performing *Tapasya* (austerities), and thereby going against the *Chaturvarnya Dharma*, for such austerities could be performed by the twice-born alone, while the duty of the Shudras was only to serve the twice born. Arming himself, Rama mounted his Pushpak Vimana (aeroplane) and scoured the countryside for the culprit. At last, in a wild region far away to the South he espied a man practicing rigorous austerities by hanging himself upside down. Rama introduced himself to the man and enquired of him of his caste and the purpose of such hard austerities. The man informed that he was a Shudra by the name of Shambooka practicing austerities with the aim of going to heaven in his own earthly person to achieve godhood. Hearing the word 'Shudra' Rama instantly took sparkling sword out of its sheath and beheaded Shambooka. And lo and behold! That very moment the dead Brahmin boy in distant Ayodhya began to breathe again. The Gods such as Agni, Vayu and Indra lauded and applauded the act of Rama and rained flowers on the king at his feat of protecting the *Chaturvarnya Dharma* by killing and preventing a Shudra from gaining admission to their celestial abode through the power of the *Tapasya* which he had no right to perform. They also appeared before Rama and congratulated him on his deed. (Valmikiya Ramayana ibid Uttarkanda, Sargas 73, 74. 28-33, 75, 76 and BAWS, Vol. 4, pp. 331-332). As Ramcharitamanas of Tulsi Das written in the sixteenth century does not fall in the category of Hindu Scriptures though it is very popular as Ramayana with the Hindus particularly in North India, it has not been the subject of research by Dr. Ambedkar. Nonetheless, it does say that it is justified to give corporal punishment or beating to the Shudra and woman like the drum, cattle and uncivilized person (Ramcharitamanas, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1996, Sundarkaanda, (Contd. on next page)

The roots and remedy of the Caste system

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58.3, p.663).

Mahabharata

Mahabharata carries multiple explanations besides the theory of Purusha Sukta of the Vedas regarding origin of the Chaturvarnya. It says that the Brahma created the Brahmins and the Prajapatis like Marichi etc. in the primeval stage. It was followed by the creation of gods, Vedas, righteousness, truth, demons and other creatures. Thereafter Brahma created the four Varnas i.e. Brahmins of white, Kshatriyas of red, Vaishyas of yellow and the Shudras of black color. The whole world was of only Brahmin Varna in the beginning. But due to different functions of the people four Varnas came into existence. The Shudra abandons the Vedas and good conduct; remains attached to eating and doing all sorts of jobs, and remains filthy or unclean both from inside and outside (Shantiparva of Mahabharata part V, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 8th edition 1998, Mokshdharmaparva, chapter 189, pp. 4902, 4903). In another explanation in the Mahabharata, Vivasvat (sun) was born to Kashyapa son of Marichi and his wife Dakshayani, daughter of Prajapati Daksha. To Vivasvat was born the mighty and righteous son Manu and renowned Yama Vaivasvata. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and other men sprang from this Manu (BAWS, Vol.4, pp.243, 244).

In chapter 60 of Rajdharam Anushasanparva, it is said that the Brahmins are the gods of gods, and they only have created the other three Varnas. Functions of the four Varnas have been prescribed in chapter 60 of Rajdharam Anushasanparva of Shantiparva. The functions are almost similar to those prescribed in the Vedas and Smritis. It says that the Shudra has been created by the Prajapati only to serve the other three Varnas. He can derive great happiness by only serving the three Varnas. He should not accumulate any wealth as he becomes source of great sin and power to enslave the people of higher Varnas. The master of the Shudra has a right over the wealth if any of the Shudra. He should be given used umbrellas, rags, turban and shoes etc. These items become the property of the Shudra (Shantiparva of Mahabharata part V, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 8th edition 1998, Rajdharam Anushasanparva, chapter 60.9-47, pp. 4579-4581). The duties of the four Varnas have been reiterated at many places in the Mahabharata. The crux is that whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahmins by right of primogeniture. Describing the benefits of observing the prescribed duties by the four Varnas in the Udyogparva, Vidur says that if the Shudra satisfies Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas by serving them justly, he enjoys the heavenly bliss after death. Vidura further clarifies that he being a Shudra born to the Shudra mother, is not entitled to perform the duties of the Brahmins. (Mahabharata ibid,

Part 3, Udyogparva, 40.25-28 and 41.5, pp. 2171, 2172).

Geeta

The Geeta is not an exception to the Vedas and Smritis regarding *Chaturvarnya system*. Lord Krishna says: "I myself have created the arrangement of the four Varnas – castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras) consistently with the differences in their qualities and occupations or actions" (Geeta, 4.13). He ordains that everyone must stick to his own prescribed occupation/duty (Dharma), and die in that occupation itself though the occupation of others may be far better and superior. The undertaking of others' occupation should be considered as dreadful – sinful (Geeta, 3.35). He further says: "...The respective duties of the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (tradesmen) and the Shudras (menials) have been individually fixed with reference to the qualities arising from their inherent prakriti or nature. Serving the other Varnas is the inherently natural duty of the Shudras. One must stick to the prescribed inherent duty irrespective of its nature" (Geeta, 18. 41-44, 47, 48). It is further ordained that the educated should not unsettle the faith of the uneducated who have become attached to their occupation. He himself should perform the occupation of his Varna and make others perform theirs accordingly (Geeta, 3, 26, 29). According to Dr. Ambedkar, Krishna does not want the people to undertake the work of reform. He asks them to leave the task to him as he says: "Whenever Righteousness declines and Unrighteousness becomes powerful, then I myself take birth in different Yugas to protect and establish the Righteousness (Geeta, 4. 7, 8)." (BAWS, Vol.3, pp. 127,128). Lord Krishna further declares that the Shudras, Vaishyas and women are born from the womb of sin -Paap Yoni (Gita, 9.32). (Bhisham-parva, Mahabharata, Part 3, Geeta Press Gorakhpur, 7th edition, 1998, pp. 2620, 2626, 2688, 2797, 2800, 2801). Dr. Ambedkar says that Gita is Manu in a nutshell. Those who run away from Manu Smriti and want to take refuge in the Geeta either do not know Geeta or are prepared to omit from their consideration that soul of Geeta which makes it akin to Manu Smriti. There is no difference in the essence whether one takes the Vedas, or the Smritis or the Bhagwat Geeta. All of them are woven on the same pattern, the same thread runs through them and they are really parts of the same fabric (BAWS, Vol.3, pp. 80, 81).

Puranas

The number of Puranas is generally said to be 18, and their origin attributed to sage Vyasa. Subsequently, the number went up to 36 with the addition of 18 sub-Puranas. It has further gone up to 72 as per introduction to the Skandh Purana (Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1995). The date of the Puranas ranges between 100 A.D. and 18th Century A.D. as there

is mention of foreigners called Yavanas (Greeks), Mlechhas (Muslims and others) etc. and Hindu, Muslim and other historical personalities such as Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Jai Chand, Qutubuddin, Padmini, Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Salim, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah, and Britishers in Kalikata (Calcutta) etc. in the Bhavishya Purana (Bhavishya Purana, Pt. 2, edited by Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya, Nav Jyoti Press, Mathura, 1998 edition). It shows that this Purana was written in the 18th century when the Britishers established their control in Calcutta as it covers the historical events of the country up to that period. There has been wide range of scope and subjects of the Puranas which has been undergoing additions from time to time. There has been change in the authorship from Vyasa to Sutas (Non-Brahmins) and from Sutas to Brahmins (BAWS, Vol. 3, pp. 254-257). As regards the origin of the Varna system, most of the Puranas reiterate the Purusha Sukta theory of the Vedas i.e. Brahmins born from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs and the Shudras from the feet of Brahma (Skandha Purana, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1995, p.494; Padama Purana, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1997, p.10; Bhagwat Purana, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1998, p.148; Vishnu Purana, Bhagwat Purana, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 1998, p.20).

In the Harivamsa Purana also there are two theories of origin of the four Varnas. It upholds the version of Vishnu Purana in the first theory. In the other theory, it says Vishnu sprang from Brahma. He absorbed himself in contemplation and became the Prajapati Daksha, and formed numerous creatures. The Brahmins were formed from an imperishable (*akshara*-immortal) element; the Kshatriyas from a perishable (*kshara*-mortal) element; the Vaishyas from alteration; and the Shudras from a modification of smoke. Produced from extinction, the Shudras are destitute of rites prescribed in the Vedas. Hence they are not entitled to be admitted to the purificatory ceremonies, nor does sacred science belong to them. Just as the cloud of smoke which rises from the fire on the friction of the fuel, and is dissipated, is of no service in the sacrificial rite, so too the Shudras wandering over the earth, are altogether useless for purposes of sacrifice, owing to their birth, their mode of life devoid of purity and their want of the observances prescribed in the Veda (BAWS, Vol. 4, pp. 247-249).

The survey shows that there is no uniformity or consistency in the explanations offered regarding origin of the Varna-Caste system. According to Dr. Ambedkar, these explanations are like effusions of the imbeciles (BAWS, Vol. 4, pp. 249, 250). They show how hard the Brahmins tried to defend the irrational and unnatural Varna system which is the parent of anti-human, anti-society and anti-nation pernicious Caste system. They

were not able to give a consistent, uniform, unimpeachable, convincing and rational explanation of the wretched system of which they have been such strong protagonists. The Vedas, Smritis and the Bhagwat Geeta all are woven on the same pattern; they are woven on the same pattern; and they are parts of the same fabric. The Geeta defends war, *Chaturvarnya* system and the Karma Marg of the performance of the observances, such as Yajnas (Karma Kaand) etc. as a way to salvation. It says that the *Chaturvarnya* (root of the monstrous caste system) is created by God and therefore sacrosanct. It offers a philosophic basis to the theory of *Chaturvarnya* by linking it to the theory of innate, inborn qualities in men (BAWS, Vol. 3, pp. 80, 81, 360-362). The Arya Samajists – social reformists claim that their idea of *Chaturvarnya* is based on worth and not on birth. Babasaheb says that the Chaturvarnya with its old labels is utterly repellent. The names, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra are associated with a definite and fixed notion in the mind of every Hindu. That notion is of a hierarchy based on birth. So long as these names continue, Hindus will continue to think of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra as hierarchical divisions of high and low, based on birth, and act accordingly. Therefore, the Hindus must be made to unlearn all this. To allow the *Chaturvarnya* based on worth to be designated by such stinking labels of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra indicative of social divisions based on birth, is a snare (BAWS, Vol.1, pp.58, 59). The so called Hindu sacred literature is almost entirely the creation of the Brahmins the whole object of which is to sustain the superiority and privileges of the Brahmins as against the non-Brahmins. What goes by the name of Sacred Books contains fabrications which are **political in their motive, partisan in their composition and fraudulent in content**. It is the doctrines contained in these books which are responsible for the decline and fall of their country and the society (BAWS, Vol. 7, pp. 14-16).

Babasaheb says that there is no Hindu consciousness of kind. The consciousness that exists is the consciousness of the Caste which prevents common activity. It prevents the fellow feeling and the social cement of fraternal bonding of the Sikhs and the Mohammedans. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation. Babasaheb, therefore, wonders: "Have not Hindus committed treason against their country in the interest of their Caste?" It is the caste system which needs to be annihilated to see the country progress and grow as one nation of one people. But the wall built around Caste is impregnable and thematerial, of which it is built, contains none of the combustible stuff of reason and morality. Add to this the fact that inside this wall stands the

(Contd. on next page)

Open letter

**To: Dr. MS Uppal, Vice Chancellor
SGRD Institute for Medical Sciences and Research Center, Amritsar (Punjab) India**

Subject: Dr. Pamposh

The untimely death of Dr. Pamposh has sent a shock wave across the globe.

The reported or alleged reasons that the death is related to caste oppression are even more shocking to hear. Whatever the reasons may have been, India has lost one of the brightest students with a potential for making significant contributions to the field of medical sciences. We extend our condolences to the family, as well as to Dr. Pamposh's peers and professors, some of them who may also be grieving and responding to the grief, however they can.

We appreciate the death of Dr. Pamposh is under review, and we are hoping timely justice will be delivered.

Caste in social and professional settings is continuing to be experienced. Rohith Vemula's untimely death in 2016 raised many questions. Now seven years later, Dr. Pamposh's death has once again brought many questions to the forefront.

These incidents suggest a need to take further proactive measures, not only reactive ones.

We urge the SGRD Institute for Medical Sciences and Research Center in Amritsar, and other institutions, to strengthen proactive measures. One of these measures could be providing mandatory training on prevention of harassment and bullying.

In April 2023, we will be hosting a symposium (www.ase2023.ca) and one of the topics under discussion will be, "Caste in academic settings in Canada and other jurisdictions." We believe these discussions and dialogues will strengthen transparency and enhance safe place for people to study, work, and socialize in globally. Hosting discussions on such and other topics could also be another action your institution may consider.

Regards,

**Jai Birdi, Co-Chair for ASE2023
General Secretary
Chetna Association of Canada**

**Param Kainth, Co-Chair ASE2023
Vice President
Ambedkarite International Coordination Society**



Jai Birdi



Param Kainth



The roots and remedy of the Caste system

(Continue from page 9)

army of Brahmins, who form the intellectual class; who are the natural leaders of the Hindus; who are there not as mere mercenary soldiers but as an army fighting for its homeland. That is why it would take ages before a breach is made in the Caste system. But whether the doing of the deed takes time or whether it can be done quickly, the reformists must not forget that if they wish to bring about a breach in the system then they have got to apply the dynamite to the Vedas and the Shastras, which deny any part to reason and morality. They must destroy the Religion of the Shrutis and the Smritis. This apart, the real remedy for breaking caste is inter-marriage. Fusion of blood alone can create the feeling of being kith and kin, and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount the

separatist feeling of being aliens created by Caste will not vanish. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of Caste (BAWS, Vol.1, pp. 50-51, 55, 57, 67, 74, 75).

Religion to Dr. Ambedkar means the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which the men live a moral order. Man is the centre of divine order called Religion. The Hindu Religion, as contained in the Vedas and the Smritis, is nothing but a mass of sacrificial, social, political and sanitary rules and regulations, all mixed up. Religion, in the sense of spiritual principles, truly universal, applicable to all races, to all countries, to all times, is not to be found in them, and if it is, it does not form the governing part of a Hindu's life. But the worst evil of this code of ordinances is that the

laws it contains are iniquitous and made perpetual in that they are prescribed to be the same for all generations. Such a religion must be destroyed and there is nothing irreligious in working for its destruction. This Religion is nothing but really Law. Babasaheb says that the reformists must take the stand that Buddha and Guru Nanak took. They must not only discard the Shastras, they must deny their authority as did Buddha and Nanak. Their religion must be given a new doctrinal basis that will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, in short, with Democracy. This means a complete change in the fundamental notions of life; it means a complete change in outlook and in attitude towards men and things. It means new life. But a new life can enter only in a new body. The old must cease to be op-

erative before the new can begin to enliven and to pulsate. This is what he meant when he said that the authority of the Shastras must be discarded and the religion of the Shastras destroyed (BAWS, Vol. 3, p.6, Vol.1, pp.69, 75-78). The iniquitous, irrational, anti-human and pernicious Hindu Caste system is like a monstrous giant tree bereft of leaves, flowers, fruits and shade but laden with thorns. It is up to the people particularly the conscientious and true intelligentsia to take a call whether to water or uproot the tree which has been and continues to be the bane of the society, country and the people, and plant and nurture the flower and fruit bearing shady tree of equality, liberty, fraternity, justice and prosperity – true democracy for the smooth progress and growth of the society, country and the people.

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]

A 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 Ramandi. 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.

B. R. Ambedkar
26 Alipur Road, Delhi
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



D. C. Ahir

The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

When in 1915 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was giving final touches to his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University in New York, a Punjabi youth, who had gone to America a few years earlier, was involved in a dangerous mission of smuggling guns from California to the Punjab for inciting mutiny in India. This Punjabi youth later became famous as Babu Mangu Ram, the founder of the Ad Dharm Movement. Mangu Ram was born in a small village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 14 January, 1886 in an untouchable family; his father was a leather merchant. As by then the doors of education had been opened to all by the British rulers, Mangu Ram was sent to the school in the nearby village, Mahilpur, but the treatment meted out to him by the Hindu teacher was far from human. Like Bhim Rao in Satara, Mangu Ram too was made to sit outside the classroom. Not only that, even the teacher would not teach him directly; he was invariably given lesson through a Muslim student. Somehow, Mangu Ram passed his middle examination and joined high school at Bajwara, a nearby town. Here too. He was subjected to the same humiliation, and was made to sit outside the classroom. One day, it rained so heavily that in spite of taking shelter under a tree, Mangu Ram was completely drenched. And when the snow-balls, accompanied by high velocity winds, fell like missiles on him, he was unable to bear it any longer. So, he ran to take shelter inside the classroom. As soon as he had entered the room, the teacher saw him, and instead of showing any sympathy, he started beating him with a stick for having come inside. Weeping and crying, Mangoo Ram went out, and somehow reached his home.

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the tats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again". Fearing another beating, Mangoo Ram hastened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

With his education coming to an abrupt end, Mangu Ram became unemployed, and bit frustrated too. In 1909, he, along with some other young men from the village, went to California, U.S.A. in order to earn some money by working in the Peach Orchards of Fresno and elsewhere in the San Joaquin valley of central California. Instead of earning money, he, however, became involved in the activities of the Ghadar Party, an international network of militant Punjabi

nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British as Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in absentia, and sentenced to death for taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites. Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake,



however, the ship reached Singapore. Unfortunately for Mangu Ram, here he was recognized by some traitor Indians who had earlier worked for the Ghadar Party. They informed the Police. By now, for running away from Batavia, death warrants had been issued by the British Government to be executed wherever any one of them was found. Accordingly, the Singapore Police began preparing for his execution. Then a miracle happened. Just half an hour before his execution, a gentleman named Barde, whom Mangu Ram had never seen or met, came, caught him by the arm, took him out of the Thana, and putting him on the same ship in which Mangu Ram had come, he asked the Captain of the ship to sail for Manila. By the time the Police swung into action, the ship had crossed the Singapore Port Limits. Having failed to intercept the ship, the police caught hold of some drunkard; executed him to cover up their lapse, and announced that Mangu Ram had been executed. This news was later published in the Indian Newspapers.

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during this period he had no contact with his family as no letters could be written

for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower. The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangoo Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar Party had broadened his outlook, and sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his



ideas, Babu Mangu Ram convened a Conference at his village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur on 11-12 June, 1926. Addressing the largely attended Conference, Babu Mangu Ram proclaimed that the Untouchables constituted a separate Qaum, a religious community like the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and those they were the original inhabitants of this country. Hence, the movement was named as Ad Dharm; and its leaders devised distinctive costume, bright red turbans and shashes; coined a new sacred mantra or symbol, "So-hang" and exhorted the people to call themselves as Ad Dharmis.

The primary object of the Ad Dharm was to give the untouchables an alternative religion. Its another object was to reform the society from within. As social movement, the Ad Dharm exhorted the people to abstain from immoral practices; to lead a life of purity and piety; to discard the use of alcohol, drugs, give education to boys and girls, and to treat all men and women equal in the society. On the whole, the movement was aimed at giving the untouchables a sense of pride and dignity as members of the Ad Dharm.

The headquarters of Ad

Dharm Mandal were established in Jalandhar city from where the movement was organized in a systematic manner, and the devoted missionaries spread the message far and wide in the Punjab, and even beyond. Since the Mandal had accepted Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji as its spiritual leader, the movement became primarily popular amongst the Chamars, and they readily adopted the nomenclature of Ad Dharmi.

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion. Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiat (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding, the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, if forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever. The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis. This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Jueregensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

Courtesy: Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab by D. C. Ahir