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Invited Editorial Article on the occasion of Installation of Photo of

Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia at Ghadar Memorial Hall, San Francisco (CA)

Remembering Ghadari Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia

On July 24, 2022, the Consulate General of India, San Francisco (CA), organized Ghadar Mela at the Ghadar Memorial Hall, 5 Wood Street San Francisco (CA). The Ghadar Mela was dedicated to the historic Ghadar (revolt) movement and fond memories of the valiant Ghadari Babas who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their motherland. The historic Ghadar movement, primarily led by Punjabi immigrants in North America, was the only freedom movement of its kind founded in the early twentieth century thousands miles away from the mother land. The democratic political system of the United States of America and its overall culture of liberty, equality and social justice inspired the Indian immigrants to stand up for the liberation of their mother land from the subjugation of the British Empire. They got themselves organized into what came to be known as Ghadar Lehar in 1913 and launched the struggle for the liberation of their motherland. Speaking on the occasion the Ghadar Mela, Dr. T. V. Nagendra Prasad, the Consul General of India San Francisco (CA), underlined the irreplaceable contributions and sacrifices made by the Ghadari Babas and their prodigious visualization of the independence, harmony and prosperity of the mother land.

The installation of the photo of Ghadari Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia (Jan. 14, 1886-April 22, 1980) in the Ghadar Memorial Hall 5 Wood Street San Francisco (CA) along with other Ghadari Babas happened to be the most praiseworthy segment of the great occasion of the Ghadari Mela. Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia (henceforth Baba Mangu Ram) was one of five Ghadari Babas who undertook on themselves the colossal mission of smuggling weapons from North America to India on SS Maverick Ship for the revolt against the British Raj. Mark Juergensmeyer, a world reputed American Sociologist and Scholar of Global Studies and Religious Studies, who did a pioneer path breaking study on Baba Mangu Ram, was of the opinion: "Very

nice! It is an opportunity and long overdue recognition of the important role of Baba Mangu Ram in the Ghadar movement, and I'm glad that he is receiving this belated recognition" (Based on personal communication with the author). Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief of Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba Weeklies (English & Punjabi respectively) has been pursuing for the inclusion of picture of Baba Mangu Ram among his

observing the pervasiveness of the age-old social evil of untouchability, Baba Mangu Ram decided to dedicate the rest of his life for the emancipation and empowerment of his so-called low-caste people. In his own words: "While living abroad I had forgotten about the hierarchy of high and low, and untouchability; and under this delusion returned home in December 1925. The same disease from which I had escaped started tormenting me

Ronki Ram*

before the subjugated India could reclaim its lost political freedom.

It was the only movement of its kind in the north-western region of the country that aimed at securing a respectable place for the Scheduled Castes through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration, and political assertion, rather than seeking patronage from above.

Comprising all the lower castes people of the state, the Ad Dharm built its headquarter named 'Ad Dharm Mandal' in Jalandhar. Seth Kishan Das of Bootan Mandi - leather business center in the vicinity of the British military cantonment at Jalandhar - provided major financial support to this movement of the lower castes people of Punjab. Baba Mangu Ram literally took the movement to the doorsteps of the Untouchables in the region and soon emerged as a cult figure of the Dalits in Punjab. Like the Satyashodak Samaj movement in Maharashtra, the Ad Dharm soon became a household name among the SCs of Punjab. It was for the first time in the forgotten history of the lower castes people of Punjab that a golden opportunity knocked at

their doors to get them united on their own common and distinct platform under the leadership of their fellow-travelers to fight for the most sought after goal of dignified life and to assert their claims for their long overdue shares in the local structures of power. In the wake of the limited democratic political process in 1919, unleashed by the British Government for the institutionalization of the electoral system, every community was busy in organizing its respective members into well-organized socio-political forces (political parties/organizations). The US returned young man and meticulously chiseled in the superb companionship of the proud Ghadarite Babas, Baba Mangu Ram also successfully gathered many of his fellow community members to build their separate social and political organization at par with that of the other upper caste communities like Hindu Mahasabha of the Hindus, Muslim League of the Muslims, and Singh Sabhas of the Sikhs. This limited election-based legislature-forming-process had also led to the formation of similar Adi-movements in other parts of the country like

(Contd. on next page)



fellow Babas in Ghadar Memorial Hall at San Francisco CA for the last many years almost at all possible quarters. Earlier, his brother and journalist C. L. Chumber published a detailed souvenir on the life and movement of Baba Mangu Ram in 1980s and wrote extensively about his life and activities in the monthly bi-lingual magazine Kaumi Udarian that he published for a couple of years.

Baba Mangu Ram was among the pioneers of the Ghadar Movement, who reached the USA in 1909. He worked in the agricultural farms at different places before getting actively associated with formation of the Ghadar movement. He was captured on board SS Maverick along with his other accomplices while taking weapons to India and sentenced to death. Somehow, destiny saved him and he spent many years incognito before he finally returned to his native village Mugowal in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab after spending 16 years abroad. To his utter surprise, he found no change at all after so many years in the social circumstances of his fellow low-caste beings, who were leading a miserable life of social exclusion. After

again. I wrote about all this to my leader Lala Hardyal Ji, saying that until and unless this disease is cured, Hindustan could not be liberated. Hence, in accordance with his orders, a programme was formulated in 1926 for the awakening and upliftment of the Achhut qaum (untouchable community) of India" (Kaumi Udarian, C.L. Chumber, ed, Jalandhar, vol. 1, no. 2, January 1986, pp. 23-24). This led him to organise his fellow community inmates into what famously came to known as Ad Dharm movement in Punjab. He founded this movement within a year after reaching his native village in 1925. Like his predecessor Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra, Baba Mangu Ram also faced stiff opposition from the so-called upper/dominant castes of Punjab in his fierce struggle against the oppressive

structures of dominations including the Untouchability - the most sinister one among them. Following into the footsteps of his revolutionary Ghadarite leadership, he resolved to fight against caste-based social evil of Untouchability and to put in its place the much- desired social freedom

Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia at Ghadar Memorial Hall, San Francisco (CA)

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Adi-Andhras, Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Karnataka in South India and Adi-Hindus in the Uttar Pradesh province of North India. Though these different Adi-movements emerged almost at the same time in different regions of the country, there is no evidence to prove that they were instrumental in the rise of one and another. Each Adi-movement was influenced by the then prevailing situations in its own specific context in the given state.

Baba Mangu Ram is to Punjab what Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is to Maharashtra. If Maharashtra Dalit movement owes its origin to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Punjab Dalit movement is indebted, in almost similar manners, to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia. If Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, the famous English-born American political activist, theorist, philosopher and revolutionary of the nineteenth century, Baba Mangu Ram learnt his lessons of equality and freedom from the democratic land and liberal society of the United States of America wherein he came into contact, during his sojourn, with the revolutionary freedom fighters, popularly known as Ghadari Babas, of the historic Ghadar Lehar, which further cemented his resolve to fight for the dignified life by liberating India from the clutches of the British Empire and to establish in its place democratic and egalitarian home rule with equality and freedom for all irrespective of caste, class, creed, language, gender and regional differentiations. Like this nineteenth century social revolutionary thinker of the so-called lower caste in Maharashtra, Baba Mangu Ram – one of the lowest castes people in Punjab - established first school of its kind in his native village of Mugowal for the children of the socially excluded sections of the society what later on came to be designated as Scheduled Castes (SCs) under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936, which contained a list (or schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces.

Baba Mangu Ram formed the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab among others to fight for land rights of his people who were denied land ownership rights in the state under the Land Alienation Act of 1900, which prohibited all the lowest castes along with other non-agriculture castes to own agricultural land. Moreover, under the local customary law, popularly known as 'rayit-nammas', the so-called Untouchable peoples were even denied the ownership rights on the residential plot of their houses and were also not allowed to build concrete houses. They were only permitted to build mud/thatched houses and in return were supposed to perform some begar (forced labour without wages) in the agriculture farms of the legal owners of the land underneath their residential plots. Another important task towards the material empowerment of the lower castes that this versatile leader of the Ad Dharm movement included in

its mandate was the official provision of education and government employment for the SCs.

Apart from the material upliftment of the SCs, what made Ad Dharm the most politically noticeable and powerful movement of its time was the farsightedness of its visionary leader in setting the goal of bringing the divergent lower caste communities under a single flag and to transform all of them into a distinct single Quam at



par with other separate Quams of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians etc. This was the most crucial political move on the part of Babu Mangu Ram, the master strategist, who intervened at an appropriate time of the critically emerging scenarios in the background of limited direct election to be held in the state. He pressed for a separate religion for the lower castes of Punjab to be recorded in the 1931 Census, who in his opinion were neither Hindus, Sikhs, Muhammadans nor Christians. The lower castes, reiterated Baba Mangu Ram, were the original inhabitants - Moolnivasis (aboriginal people) of this nation. The alien Aryan invaders, he continued further, deprived them of their kingdom, looted them to the finish and finally enslaved them. In the poster announcing the first annual meeting of the Ad Dharm movement, Baba Mangu Ram, along with Swami Shudranand and Babu Thakur Chand, devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the Moolnivasis at the hands of the caste Hindus. He also made an appeal to the Moolnivasis to come together to chalk out a programme for their liberation and upliftment. Addressing them as brothers, he said: "We are the real inhabitants of this country and our religion is Ad Dharm. Hindu Quam came from out-

side to deprive us of our country and enslave us. At one time we reigned over 'Hind'. We are the progeny of kings, Hindus came down from Iran to Hind and destroyed our Quam. They deprived us of our property and rendered us nomadic. They razed our forts and houses, and destroyed our history. We are seven crores in numbers and are registered as Hindus in this country. Liberate the Adi race by separating these seven crores. ... Our seven crore

number enjoy no share at all. We reposed faith in Hindus and thus suffered a lot. Hindus turned out to be callous. Centuries ago, Hindus suppressed us; sever all ties with them. What justice can we expect from those who are the butchers of the Adi race. The time has come; be cautious, now the Government listens to appeals. With the support of a sympathetic Government, come together to save the race. Send members to the Councils so that our Quam is strengthened again. British rule should remain forever. Make prayer before God. Except for this Government,

no one is sympathetic towards us. Never consider ourselves as Hindus at all; remember that our religion is Ad Dharm" (Kaumi Udarian, C.L. Chumber, ed, Jalandhar, vol. 1, no. 2, January 1986, pp. 21-22).

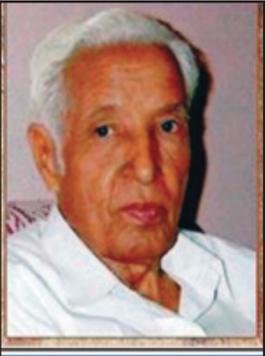
The leaders of Ad Dharm thus chose to restore dignity and freedom to the untouchables by detaching them completely from Hinduism and consolidating them into their own ancient religion (Ad Dharm). The long domination by the Aryans, they alleged, made them oblivious of their native religion. In fact, the task of reviving their ancient religion was not an easy one for the Moolnivasis who had forgotten their Gurus and other religious symbols during their long period of persecution under the rule of the outsiders. They had been condemned as impure and declared unfit to have their own theology. In order to establish their hegemony and legitimacy over the enslaved Moolnivasis of Bharat, the Aryan invaders eventually metamorphosed themselves into upper castes of the first three Varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) of their imposed fourfold social order of the Chatur-Varnavastha. The natives of the conquered land were pushed into the fourth Varna of Shudras - consisting of artisan castes and still other further re-

duced into lowest of the low castes, contemptuously dubbed as Untouchable peoples.

Baba Mangu Ram strongly put forth the demand of a separate religion for his low caste peoples in order to forge them together into a distinct Quam. To revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing a new religion for the native lower castes people. Babu Mangu Ram's claim that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enormous psychological impact on them. It provided a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity. The British Government granted them, as demanded, distinct status of a separate religion - Ad Dharm. The Ad Dharm was based on the teachings and inspiration from the spiritual figures of North India Bhakti movement, particularly Guru Ravidass, Bhagwan Valmik, Sant Kabir and Sant Namdev. In fact, the leaders of the Ad Dharm movement placed the spiritual figure of Guru Ravidass in the centre of their discourse around which the entire socio-political and spiritual paraphernalia of the movement and the separate Dalit religion of Ad Dharm was woven. In this way, Baba Mangu Ram played a dominant role in chiseling the distinct markers of the distinct Dalit identity in Punjab. He restored them their lost heroes, Gurus, rich cultural heritage and brought forth an urge to become rulers themselves.

During the Census of 1931, around half a million SCs in Punjab returned themselves as followers of their newly recognized religion - Ad Dharm. Thenceforth, the followers of Ad Dharm used to take pride in being addressed as Ad Dharmis. Another equally great achievement of the Ad Dharm movement was that it swept the Punjab Provincial assembly elections in 1937 & 1946, which made it an equally important stakeholder in the Punjab legislature, perhaps for the first time in the history of the lower castes in the colonial India. Moreover, Baba Mangu Ram and the Ad Dharm movement provided a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of the mission of Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar in Punjab. During Dr. Ambedkar's struggle for the separate electoral status for the Depressed Classes at the London Round Table conferences, Baba Mangu Ram supported him by sending many telegrams in his favour in a tie with Mahatma Gandhi over the question of the leadership of the Depressed Classes in India. True to the spirit of the Ghadari Babas, Baba Mangu Ram founded the Ad Dharm movement to generate social and political consciousness among the lowest of the low to help them rise against the centuries old discriminatory caste system and to establish an egalitarian socio-political order free from discriminatory social structures of class, caste, race, creed, gender, and language.

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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

BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA - A PROFILE

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia combined in his personage the qualities of a fierce revolutionary, a staunch patriot, a devoted crusader against social evils and above all a true humanitarian through. Born among the lowliest of the low, he crossed all social barriers dauntlessly and suffered all sorts of indignities of life and made his way to reach the pinnacle of greatness.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia represents a rare example among the revolutionaries Ghadarite philosophy. In those dark days, it was rare for an untouchable to understand the essence of revolution against imperialism. But he rose to the occasion and proved his mettle. He joined the Ghadar Party when he went to California (U.S.A.) in 1909 A.D. as its active member. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, it appears desired an establishment of society which must be based on Equality. And he saw one being fought for by the Ghadarites as they had abolished all social distinctions among themselves first which, perhaps, is not the practice with the modern community or who profess change of the sort. As Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia spoke of the Ghadar Party, "It was a new society, we were all treated as equals".

As a Ghadarite, he took part in the organizational activities at first but in 1915 A.D. an occasion came when he volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites in a dangerous mission involving smuggled weapons shipped from California to the Punjab. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was chosen by the leader of the Ghadar Party at that time. Mr. Sohan Singh Bhakna, the Secretary of Ghadar Party, whom Babu M.R. Mugowalia remembered as "Godha" sent the five to Los Angeles, where they boarded an intermediary boat, after depositing all of their personal identifications with "Godha", for the rest of the journey's saga. Mangu Ram would be known by a pseudonym, "Nizamuddin".

Putting his life into danger and travelling through Secorro Islands and halting at Mexico, Caladonia Islands, Manila, Singapore and again to Manila where he stayed for sometime and finally to India where he reached in 1925 A.D.

It is after 1925, that his career as a crusader against untouchability and casteism began. As he travelled from Ceylon to Punjab through Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Sitara, Nagpur and Delhi, he observed the condition of the untouchables on route and was dismayed to see these people being treated so badly. In Madurai, when Babu Mangu Ram visited the Meenakshi Temple, he was told to be careful not to touch Achhut (Untouchables) since they assumed by his dress that he was of a decent caste. By the time Babu M.R. Mugowalia had reached the Punjab, he was convinced that there was need for social change.

Babu M.R. Mugowalia wrote to the Ghadar Party headquarters in

San Francisco about the difficult conditions of the Untouchables in India. He wrote them that their freedom was more important to him than Indian freedom. According to Babu Mugowalia, leaders of the Ghadar Party then disengaged him to work with Scheduled Castes (Untouchables), and wrote him that they would support him in his tasks. Thus, in a new context, the old revolutionary from Fresno continued the Ghadar spirit. This clearly shows that even Ghadarites had realized the need to awaken these slaves of Indian Society - the then Untouchables.

When he started his task of social reform i.e. establishing schools for untouchables poors, he began to

look for an alternative which may provide a lever for the unity of the untouchable poors and then to demonstrate through that alternative the political presence of the untouchables in the politics of Punjab of those days. It must be remembered that Punjab was already witnessing political upheaval and each class was trying to reap at political harvesting. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with other conscious men from his class, then founded on June 11-12, 1926 A.D. at his village Mugowal Ad-Dharma as the alternative.

Ad-Dharma's main aim was to create a feeling of identity among the untouchable class which numbered at that time about one fourth of the entire population of India. Babu M.R. Mugowalia and the early leaders of the Ad-Dharma perceived their first task to be the creation of a new religion. In their initial meetings, even before they developed an organisational structure, they labored over a basic ideological theme upon which they could build a system of religious ideas and symbols. Its central motive was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a quaum, a distinct religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and that the quaum had existed from time immemorial. It was a myth of power addressed to the people without power. It was intended to communicate the sense of strength that Babu M.R. Mugowalia felt belonged to his caste fellows by right. As he explained, "The untouchables have their powers: communal pride (qaumiat), religion (mazhab), and organisation (mazlis)". The hope was that these powers could be fostered and splintered

through force of ideology.

Ad-Dharma was almost Babu M.R. Mugowalia's show. It inspired the lowliest of the low to fight for equality, economic, social and political in a converted way. The Ad-Dharma, under the dynamic leadership of a true revolutionary like Babu Mugowalia, was an aggressive and autonomous movement or compared to similar movements that took birth in other parts of the country. Within a short span of time, it jolted the 'haves-not' through its rallies, publications, deputations and demonstrations to demand new government policies or to protest upper caste discriminations. The most influential political action of the movement that



can be listed as one of its great achievements, was to get Scheduled Castes registered as a followers of new religion. In 1931 A.D. census, almost half a million of them registered as "Ad-Dharmi" rather than Hindus or Muslim or Sikh. Mr. Mark Juergensmeyer writes as, "Later in the 1930, their political influence turned towards electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with the Congress. It was the logical consequence of the political awakening created among them by Ad-Dharma Movement in Punjab, whose undisputable leader was Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

Thus through several means, then, the Ad-Dharmi presented to its followers a vision of a world which both confirmed and transformed the rude experience of untouchables. And in doing so it implied that a different sort of world was coming into being, for the separate identity so defined signaled hope for a society in which social groups carried no inherent mark of judgment and in which the benefits of progress could be shared by all.

Cultural and humanistic aspects of the personality of Babu M.R. Mugowalia were even more glaring. As a humanist his vision of the world was near to rationalist view of the universe (we can even say materialistic as well though in rudimentary form), he believed in the inherent equality of all human-beings; he was against all sorts of exploitations of man against man; and he earnestly devoted his bodily energy and financial resources in founding a new society based upon the gospel of equality. His ideas about the universe and equality of all men are echoed in

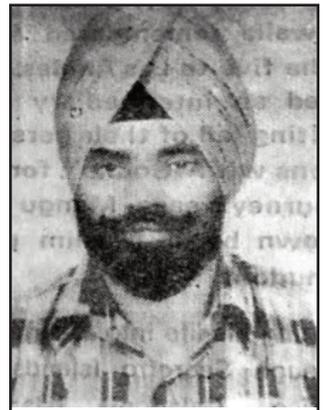
the Ad-Dharma Mandali (1926-1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played a big role. It reads as follows:

"Nature (Qudrat Ka Mela) created human beings from original source (Adi) at the time that it created all beings in the earth. The knowledge of moral behaviour (karm-dharm) was also given to them at that time by Nature. Nature made humans superior to animals, but among humans all were equal.

In the beginning, when Nature created human beings, there was no discrimination. There were no differences and no quarrels. In particular, there were no such concepts as high or low caste. God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony. Everyone believed in one dharma which Nature had given then through intellect and knowledge". Babu M.R. Mugowalia did not mean by the word 'God' as something supernatural beings who is said to have created the world and since then regulating it as is believed in theology. Mark Juergensmeyer makes it quite clear in his work, Religion As Social Vision, thus: "Occasionally there is mention of God in a more formal sense". "God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony". And Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia made a practice of using the name Adi-Purkh for the divine - literally "the originator", or the "Original Being". All these designations, although they are theistic terms, are impersonal in intent.

He, all his life, stood like a rock against social evils such as untouchability, caste-system, women slavery, exploitation etc. His life in cultural side symbolized with the creation of new social virtues such as women's rights, the value of education, abstinence from alcohol and drugs - which were 'nothing less than a new concept of moral order'. Thus Babu M.R. Mugowalia, a Ghadarite revolutionary, social crusader, political activist and strategist and as a humanitarian fought for the establishment of an ideal society till he breathed last. The noble way of commemorating celebrating the 99th Birth Anniversary (for that matter every birth anniversary) of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - who desired his movement to coincide with Ambedkarite Movement to give the movement of depressed classes a country-wide stature, is to emulate him. Therefore, let us resolve to emulate the great Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - patriot, social revolutionary, a successful strategist and, above all, a humanist.

Courtesy: Souvenir Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia 99th Birth Anniversary published by MR. C. L. Chumber



Prof. G.S. BALL (Late)
M.A., M.Phil.
President, Ambedkar Mission Society, Punjab (Regd)

BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA

A SYMBOL OF PATRIOTISM AND CRUSADER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the history of his struggle for India's freedom from British rulers and unrelenting efforts for social justice during the first half of the 20th century the contributions of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, though overshadowed for a while by unruly elements of society, have come back with a renewed spirit of a glittering empowerment.

As the mortal frame of human body is subject to extinction sooner or later, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia departed from this world on April 22nd, 1980 and the following few lines, on the occasion of his 40th death Anniversary, are just a humble tribute to his remarkable legacy as a true patriot with an eternal quest for equality and social justice.

Victim of discrimination in his youth:-

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, born in a untouchable family in Muggowal, a small village, in Hoshiarpur District of Panjab (India) on 14th January, 1886, had to face all the odds and difficulties so inherently built in a society dominated by Brahminical Samaj. In spite of being a brilliant student he was hardly able to go upto high school education.

Migration to USA:- Babu Mangu Ram's father who owned a flourishing business in leather trade managed to send him to U.S.A where he arrived in 1909 to better his prospects in life. In U.S.A he became an active member of the Ghadar movement to fight for India's freedom from the British rule for which he even risked his life when captured on coming back to India with a shipment of weapons for use by Ghadarites in India. He luckily escaped with the help of some German supporters and



O.P. Balley (General Secretary)
Supreme Council
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA

remained in hiding for many years.

Return to india:- On coming back to India in 1925 he was shocked to find social discrimination worse than slavery which agitated his mind to lay the foundation of Ad-Dharm Mandal in 1926. The movement was so strong that he became an indisputable leader of the untouchables in Northern India from Delhi to Peshawar, winning seven seats out of eight in the provincial legislature.

The following are some of the salient and indelible features of his lasting legacy for future generations: The most prominent contribution of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's mission and foundation is that he was

able to establish a distinct identity for the Ad-Dharmi Community, separate from Hindu Hierarchy by claiming to be the original inhabitants of India before the invasion of Aryans from Easter Europe and Central Asia. Ad-DharmMandal was one of the most successful movements for Dalit Mobilization and empowerment with a separate identity.

Revelations of Professor Mark Juergensmeyer:- Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer, now a renowned Professor in Santa Barbara University and an eminent scholar of international fame was the first international scholar who met Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia personally in India more about fifty years ago and made an extensive study on him as revealed in his book "RELIGIOUS REBELS IN PANJAB" "The Ad-Dharm Challenge to Caste".

Staunch Supporter of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar:- Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Ambedkar with his sup-

port and telegrams during his crusade in Round Table conferences in London, reiterating Dr. Ambedkar as the sole representative of the down-trodden to participate in the deliberations for award of separate electorates for the depressed classes and rebuffing the claims of Gandhi Ji that untouchables were a part of the Hindu Community. He even started a counter fast unto death against Mr.

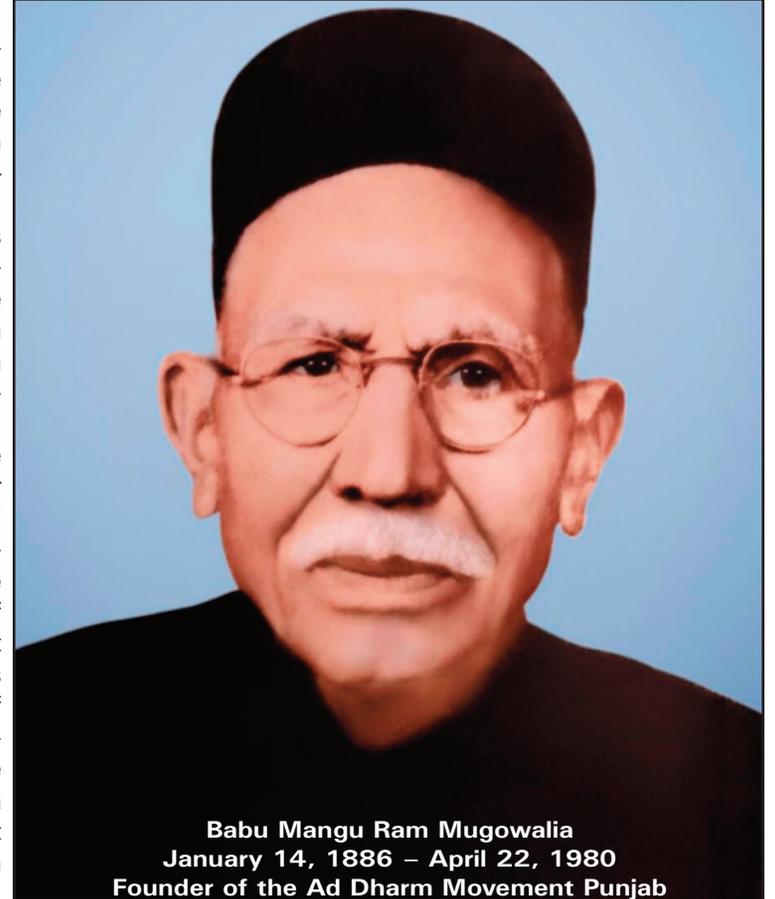
Mr. Gandhi's which ended in the signing of Poona- Pact in 1932.

Desh Doaba & Ambedkar Times: the two weekly publications in circulation among the Indian diaspora all over the world have played a very prominent role in reviving the legacy of this forgotten hero to be remembered by the modern youth and future generations.

A special souvenir issued in 1985 by late Mr. C.L. Chumber, Editor "Kaumi Udarian" (National Flights) Jalandhar depicted a remarkable resuscitation of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's accomplishments of life.

Let us commemorate the 40th death Anniversary of this true patriot and a valiant fighter for human rights, denied to the down trodden for centuries.

Lessons from Coronavirus:- As we all know Coronavirus pandemic has impacted the whole world bringing it to a screeching halt. It knows



Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia
January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980
Founder of the Ad Dharm Movement Punjab

no social, religious or caste boundaries, baffling the global scientific and medical community in finding a vaccine to stop it from spreading further. Dr. Ronki Ram, Dean Faculty of Arts & Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Professor of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh and a prolific writer has dealt with this subject in a very methodical and an analytical form in his recent article published in Ambedkar Times, challenging the man-made social exclusions as meaningless. We should face this common and invisible foe with feelings of unity and fraternity with no consideration of any kind of exclusiveness.

Let us conclude with deep condolences and sympathies for the families all over the world for irreparable loss of their loved ones to this mass and indiscriminate killer.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and Ad Dharm School of Dalit Awakening

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-In-Chief:

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was one of founding members of the Ghadar movement, which aimed at building an egalitarian society and polity after liberating India from the British Raj. He participated in the weapon smuggling mission of the movement. He was arrested and awarded capital punishment, but was saved from the death sentence by chance. The news of his supposed death reached his village. According to the tradition of his community, his widow named Piari married his elder brother. After his return to India in

1925, he remarried and had four sons from his second wife, named Bishno.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia did not find any change in the life of his fellow villagers in Punjab after spending 16 years abroad. The social malady of untouchability had continued to torment the Scheduled Castes people. He wanted to overcome the social oppression that his people were undergoing for centuries. While living in USA, he realized what it meant to be equal, free and lead a dignified life. He made his mind to devote his life towards the awakening and uplift of the Scheduled Caste people.

He thought that the most vi-

able way to bring social and political consciousness among his people was to establish schools for the Achhuts. Settling in his native village, Muggowal, he founded a school for the lower caste children in the village. The school was temporarily housed in the garden of Risaldar Dhanpat Rai, a landlord of village Muggowal.

Later on Lambardar Beeru Ram Sangha, another landlord of village Muggowal donated half an acre of land to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to build the school.

The school had five teachers including Babu Mangu Ram ji. One of the teachers was a Muslim, Walhi Mohammad, and another was

a Brahmin.

Now-a-days, the school land has been declared as Shamlat (common land) and no remnants of the school building exist except the old dilapidated structure of its well.

It was in this historic school founded by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji that the first mammoth meeting of the Ad Dharm movement was held on June 11-12, 1926.

Excerpted with thanks from Dr. Ronki Ram's article entitled "Untouchability, Dalit Consciousness, and the Ad Dharm Movement in Punjab," Contributions to Indian Sociology, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004, pp. 323-49].

Babu Mangu Ran Mugowalia and Ad Dharma Movement



(Late) Ishwar Das Pawar
District & Sessions Judge (Retd.)

While recalling the significance of the role of the Ad-Dharma movement launched by Babu Mangu Ram of Muggowal in the year 1926, for espousing the cause of the untouchables of the pre-partition Punjab, we must remind ourselves of the circumstances prevailing in those times. For, since then tremendous changes have taken place in the social, political and administrative fields, and not many of the present times may have a precise idea of the harrowing conditions and environments in which our people found themselves.

Till about the mid-twenties there was social and political awakening among the untouchables. People had been fed on the deceptive and demoralizing Brahminical philosophy that the untouchable were born as such not by any coincidence but because of their accumulated bad deeds committed in the past lives. As a consequence, they were disintitiled to get education, to own and possess property, to take to professions and avocations of their own liking and choice and to a place of equality, honor and dignity in society. This was

the divine dispensation. It was dinned into their ears day in and day out that this was not due either to their own fault in this life or to the fault of society that they were born in the lowest and wretched castes, and therefore, they were made to suffer untold hardships and punishments under the edict of the almighty for their past sins. Out of sheer ignorance these misguided and gullible people tacitly accepted their cursed fate foisted on them by the clever sort. For their woeful sufferings they would best their foreheads in utter helplessness and say pathetically fate and destiny. It never occurred to them, and there was none to tell them, that they were being duped and cheated by the uppermost strata of society who were interested in keeping them under their feet. They could not understand why others who were leading most sinful lives before their very eyes were enjoying all comforts of life both good and bad. The good deeds of the ignorant and unsophisticated people of this life were of no consequences for them in this life; they were being stored and preserved for consideration in the life to come. It was a very cunning ruse played on the ignorant and deprived people.

There was none among the untouchables to raise the banner of revolt against the aggression, oppression, tyranny, deception and exploitation of the poor and the ignorant committed behind the face of religious philosophy. There however, appeared on the scene an inspired soul

in the person of Babu Mangu Ram of Muggowal, who came back from American after a decade's sojourn there. There he was a member of the Ghadar Party formed by the Indians living there to supplement the struggle for freedom launched by the nationalists here.

On reaching home Babu Mangu Ram founded an organization under the name- Ad-Dharma Mandal. Soon a band of enthusiastic and devoted workers gathered around him. The message brought by Babu Mangu Ram was new and inspiring. It was aimed at awakening the untouchables. The message called upon them to know and relies true selves due to the hostile influence of years. It caught the imaginations and hearts of the oppressed and down-trodden people and soon Babu Mangu Ram's name became a household word. He succeeded remarkably well in creating awareness and awakening the people. His path was beset with difficulties and he had to work against odds any trying circumstances. Financial difficulties apart, he and his co-workers were chased everywhere and hounded out of bound out of bounds of towns and villages by Hindus, and quite often they had to hold their meeting and conferences in open fields. One such incident also took place at Una.

A weekly 'Adi-Danka' in Punjabi was also started to carry the message to every nook and corner of the province. This was the beginning of the struggle for getting back the

human rights of which they had been deprived of for centuries. Wherever Babu Mangu Ram went, the people were eager to have a glimpse of their beloved leader and benefactor. He did the pioneering work to awaken the people. My own relations with him had been very close and cordial. Form my college days I had been attending meetings of the Ad-Dharma Mandal and also occasionally contributing small articles to the Adi-Danka. In the crucial days of the Round Table Conferences held in London in the early thirties for the purpose of hammering out a new political set up for our country, Babu Mangu Ram worked enthusiastically shoulder to shoulder with the greatest leader of the underdog, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was representing the untouchables of the country at the conference, to strengthen his hands in his historic struggle for securing political rights for his people on the basic for their being a separate and distinct political entity.

Babu Mangu Ram will be long remembered as the devoted pioneer in the crusade against social and political injustice.

He fought relentlessly even in the face of crippling heavy odds for the achievement of the goal. Whatever rights we have been able to look back lest we should forget our benefactors- the brave soldiers who fought our battles.

*Courtesy: Babu Mangu Ram
Mugowalia Souvenir 1985
by Mr. C. L. Chumber*



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Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students

These days Punjab Government is in the news for two wrong reasons – faulty utilization of amounts sent by the central government for post matric scholarships scheme and denial of reservation in recruitment of law officers. It is just a coincident that Punjab Government and National Commission for Schedule Caste are engaged or involved with each other in both the cases – NCSC, a statutory authority who is mandated and expected to be the watch dog of the rights of SCs headed by a Punjabi himself, Vijay Sampla and Punjab Government of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which boasts of the flag bearer of the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar with huge mandate of SC communities having 29 MLAs out of 34 re-

the applicant actually belongs (i.e. the State/UT in which permanently settled or domiciled, as per the terms of domicile decided by the State).

2.2 This is applicable to all the students who are currently beneficiaries of the scheme as well as fresh admissions.

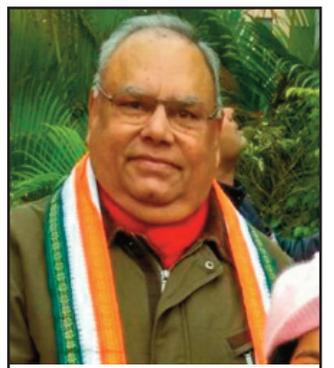
The Punjab problem- The scholarship scheme in Punjab has been marred by poor implementation and the delay in the release of the scholarship amount had become a major political issue in the last assembly elections in February, 2022. Now the new AAP Government was expected to set the matter in order but failed. NCSC has taken up the matter with Punjab Government.

The matter came up for dis-

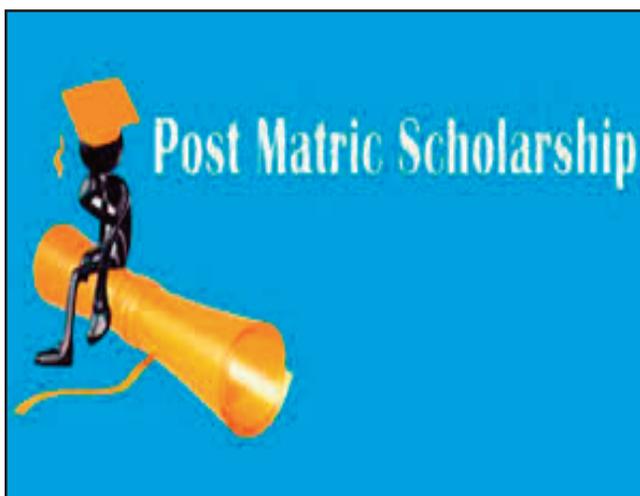
Government yet the money was not paid to the colleges. Hon'ble Governor of Punjab, Banwari Lal Purohit has also written to CM Bhagwant Mann on the issue and has asked for a report. Responding to the matter, CM Bhagwant Mann clarified and informed that he had ordered a comprehensive probe into the alleged irregularities in the Post Matric Scholarship Scheme that surfaced in the previous Congress government. The matter rests at that.

I have no information as to what is the situation of Post Matric Scholarship Scheme in other States, particularly the BJP ruled States. But it is evident that it is bad as far as Punjab is concerned. Without going into the political motivations and con-

information and data from the schools and colleges, routed through the competent Education Department authorities of the state government, should transfer, twice in a year, the due and requisite amounts in the ESCROW Account maintained for the purpose along with documentation pertaining to the scholarship. The school and colleges will claim and get



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



served seats in the Assembly. It might seem paradoxical but the problem is real which requires immediate attention and solution.

First the scholarship issue; Post Matric Scholarship scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme by the Central Government and it is implemented through State Governments and UT Administrations. The Scheme provides financial assistance to the Scheduled Caste students studying at post matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education. The amount of scholarship is 2,50,000/- per annum. Income certificate of the parents/guardian of the beneficiary student is required to be taken once only i.e. at the time of admission to courses which are continuing for more than one year. The income certificate shall be issued by the Authority as decided by the State Government.

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India has explained the Objectives and Scope of the Post Matric Scholarship for the benefit of SC Students:-
Objective

1.1 The objective of the scheme is to appreciably increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio of SC students in higher education with a focus on those from the poorest households, by providing financial assistance at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education.

Scope

2.1 These scholarships are available for studies in India only and the awardees are selected by the State Government/Union Territory to which



cussion in the last session of the Punjab Assembly and the Times of India reported on June 29, 2022, "The disbursement of post-matric scholarship for SC students amounting to Rs 1,563.77 crore is pending for three years – 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 – due to the central government withholding its share for want of utilization certificates and failure on part of Punjab government to get the scheme audited." The opposition MLAs raised the subject in the Assembly. The Governments, obviously, seems to be on back foot on the issue. Chairman of NCSC, Vijay Sampla, speaking to the media informed that NCSC had taken a suo-motu cognizance of the issue on getting complaints from students on non-payment of scholarships. He added that because these difficulties more than 2 lakh SC students were forced to drop out during the period 2017-2020. Though the Central Government had given the money, an amount of 2000 crores, to Punjab

siderations, the crux of the matter is that SC students and the poor parents are the direct sufferers of this slugfest between the governments and also the students and the colleges. The very objectives of the Scheme are defeated. Some of anti-reservation elements in the society who generally shout from the rooftops should speak out and get the scholarships to the SC students as they always tend to give the argument for education and not reservations to SCs. Why are they blissfully silent now?

SC students should not suffer that should be our approach. Some years before in 2016, I gave a solution to the problem in my open letter as an Aam Aadmi dated November 28, 2016 for consideration of the AAP leadership. I quote from the Non-paper which I submitted in this regard, "The governments, both central and of state, should open an "ESCROW Account" in one of the public sector banks. On getting the requisite

the due amounts from the concerned bank. It should be done in a time bound manner failing which the schools and colleges will be entitled to claim an interest of 10% on the amounts due. It will end the blame game. The poor students will be saved from harassment and high-handedness by the educational institutions." The problem remains. Subsequently, some months ago speaking at a meeting arranged by one of the BJP/RSS affiliated outfits in Chandigarh on the issue of Post Matric Scholarships to SC Students, in the presence of BJP leaders Avinash Chander, Rajesh Bagha and social activists like Varinder Garg and Paramjit Kainth, I reiterated the suggestion on ESCROW Account as it would save the interests of the SC students on hand and those of the educational institutes on the other. What is an Escrow Account? - An escrow is a contractual arrangement in which a third party receives and disburses money or property for the primary transacting parties, with the disbursement dependent on conditions agreed to by the transacting parties. I know full well that SC students are not interested in politics involved in the issue but in their education pursuits as stipulated in the Scope of the Scheme. Let us hope the concerned authorities sit and find out a real and effective way out rather than hankering after 'brownie point'. The second point, denial of reservation in the appointment of law officers by the Government of Punjab, also involves NCSC. NCSC advised Punjab Government to provide reservations as per the existing rules and

(Contd. on next page)

Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students

(Continue from page 7)

arrangements. In its own wisdom, said to be on the advice of Advocate General Anmol Rattan Sidhu, decided to challenge the decision and direction of NCSC in this regard in the High Court.

Whether there should be reservation for SCs or no depends on decisions and matching legislation? Let us leave it at that. But the basic question of constitutional and political morality of both the Punjab Government and its Advocate General remains not only to uphold the constitutional arrangements but also per-

sonal honesty and integrity. Both the Government and the Advocate General have miserably failed on this account. The AAP Government claims to be the flag bearers of Babasaheb Ambedkar and benefactors of SCs with 35 % share in the Punjab demography.

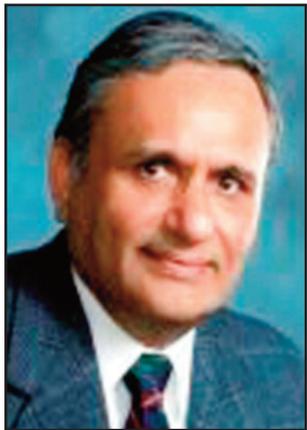
They should have sorted out the matter with NCSC and other authorities but their decision to take the matter to the court on the ground that reservation cannot be given to maintain the so called 'efficiency and merit'. It is a shameful argument bereft of any constitutional and social

norms. SCs can become judges of the Supreme Court, High Court and senior positions in lower courts without reservation but they cannot be appointed as the Law Officers of a State. Obviously, dalits are upset and are up-in-arms. Better sense prevailed and Punjab Government decided to take back its appeal in the court. Advocate General Anmol Rattan Sidhu should have been sacked unceremoniously but to save face he has been shown the door.

He has resigned because of so called 'personal reasons'. Frankly, Anmol Rattan Sidhu should be

booked under the relevant provisions including Act on atrocities against SCs as the uncalled for and irrelevant thinking of 'efficiency and merit' was willful to hurt the interests and sentiments of SCs and was clearly ultra vires to the letter and spirit of the constitution. Punjab Government should have been careful in dealing with sensitive matters. They may ignore this caution at their own peril. Reservation to SCs is no charity but a solemn pledge to raise the social standards of dalits as an 'affirmative action' stipulated in the Constitution of India.

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Reorganization of Board of Directors for 2022-2023

The term of many members of the Board of Directors of the current Managing Committee of this Sabha is due to expire in the month of August, 2022, making room for replacement with new Volunteer Sewadars.

In accordance with the provisions of the By-laws of the Sabha the reorganization of the Board of Directors will be held at Gurughar on August 28th, 2022(Sunday) after the regular weekly function.

Applications from validated new Sewadars willing to serve on the new Board of Directors duly signed by the applicant, proposer and seconder are invited from Sangat so as to reach the

Chairperson by August 21st, 2022.

Gurughar members who have not renewed their membership so far are also requested to do so by paying their annual renewal fee to the cashier immediately.

A panel of three members mentioned below who are well versed with the transitional procedure has also been constituted by the chairperson to screen the applications before final selection/election and ratification by the General body.

(1) Mr. O. P. Balley

(2) Mr. Shashi Paul (3) Mr. Balvir Mall

Kulwant Kaur Banga Chairperson, Date: July 19, 2022

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