



Ambedkar Times

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BABASAHEB DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR, POONA PACT AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar devoted his entire life for the emancipation and empowerment of the Scheduled Castes of India who for centuries were denied basic human rights. He attempted different methods to put an end to their oppressed state-of-being and gave a clarion call for annihilation of caste from the Indian society. First, he did his best to make the lowest of the low to live a dignified life by introducing reforms within Hinduism social and religious spheres. But soon, he realized that reforms within Hinduism will not be acceptable as caste sits at the center of Hindu Dharma. With caste annihilation, the whole structure of Hinduism will crumble like a house of cards and that would not be acceptable to its protagonists at all. Annihilation of caste, at the very first instance, requires doing away with the Hindu Shastras (sacred scriptures/law books), which Hinduism would never agree to comply with. Thus the other way and rather the only way open to seek casteless social order was to say good bye to Hinduism and construct a new society under a different religion for the Ex-Untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar finally left Hinduism and established a new social-religious order popularly known as Navayan-Buddhism (Buddha and His Dhamma) where no one is subjected to any social discrimination based on accretive and primordial notions of caste and creed.

In between, Dr. Ambedkar battled many struggles for the betterment of living conditions of the Scheduled Castes. Poona Pact was one of such major struggles. It was through this historic Pact that Dr. Ambedkar got voice for his people in the provincial legislative structures in the form of certain fixed number of seats. That was 1932. A lot has changed now in 2023. State in India is fast withdrawing from its responsibilities towards the people. It firmly believes that market can save them from all the hardships they face. In other words neo-liberalism is being projected as the messiah of the Scheduled Castes. In such a changed scenario downtrodden has to rethink rather critically about the nature of struggle that they have to wage for the acquisition and protection of their rights. Quite interestingly, there is also fast emerging a view-point from within the academic circles of the Scheduled Castes which says that neo-liberal market economy offers lots of opportunities to the former untouchables who no-longer face any social exclusion in the aftermath of 1991 Globalizing India. This view-point also talks about Dalit billionaires and their own chambers of commerce. What is being forgotten is that in the free market economy only those are welcome who have the capital to invest. And the capital in India used to be the prerogative of the upper castes only. Lower castes were deliberately kept out of reach of capital by all possible means under the garb of a discriminatory and hegemonic religious social order. What about the millions of lower castes who do not have requisite capital to enter into the so-called non-discriminatory market economy in India. Would they be not discriminated in this new economic order? Neo-liberalism is no more different from capitalism. We must not forget that the two main enemies of the lower castes are, as cautioned by Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Capitalism and Brahmanism. Both of them are once again busy in fashioning new permutations and calculations to keep their hold intact. Thus to face the realities of current situation in contemporary India, the teachings of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar are of utmost value as they have been ever.

SAMVIDHAN BACHAO LOKTANTRA BACHAO DESH BACHAO

(PROTECT CONSTITUTION, PROTECT DEMOCRACY, PROTECT COUNTRY)

A daylong Seminar on the subject "Samvidhan Bachao Loktantra Bachao Desh Bachao" i.e. "Protect Constitution, Protect Democracy, Protect Country" was organized by Samajik Samanata Sangathan, Punjab, under the banner of 'Bahujan Samaj Ekta Coordination Manch' - an apex body of 24 organizations of SC/ST/OBC/MI-NORITY Communities in the Community Hall of Shri Guru Ravidas Gurudwara Saheb, Phase 7, Mohali on 23 September 2023. The aim of the Seminar was to discuss the multiple burning key issues adversely affecting the country particularly the interests of the Bahujan Samaj in the light of prevailing Socio-Economic, Political and Constitutional conditions in the country, and to bring multiple outfits of these communities on one platform in order to resolve concertedly the common social, economic and constitutional issues confronting the people of these communities and the country.

Despite the inclement weather, the Seminar was largely attended and the Community hall was full to the capacity by the members of these SC/ST, OBC and Minority Communities including the Muslims and Christians, who came from all over the Punjab viz Bhatinda, Barnala, Sangrur, Nabha, Patiala, Malerkotla, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Rupar, Fatehgarh and the Tricity of Chandigarh et al. Hon'ble Justice Jitendra Chauhan (Retd.) Punjab and Haryana High Court was the Chief Guest and Hon'ble Justice Mohinder Pal, former Judge Punjab and Haryana High Court and High Court of Gujarat inaugurated the Seminar. Mr. J.R. Kundal, I.A.S (Retd) welcomed the guests and the delegates. Ambassador Mr. Ashok Kumar, I.F.S. (Retd.) was the guest of honour. In his opening remarks, Sh. Khushi Ram, I.A.S. (Retd.), State President of Samajik Samanata Sangathan, Punjab and working convener of the Bahujan Samaj Ekta Coordination Manch,

spoke on the prevailing socio-economic and constitutional conditions in the country and brought out the need for bringing together multiple organizations of the weaker sections, other backward and minority communities as a strong unified force for protection of the Constitution and achieving its ideals so laboriously built by its father Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly. Highlighting the prevailing conditions he said that despite the passage of 76 years of independence and over seven decades of the Constitution being in force, the socio-economic conditions of the backward sections particularly the SCs/STs /OBC and Minorities need much to be desired. The provisions of the Constitution for the uplift and growth of these sections have not been implemented in letter and spirit resulting in their continued miserable condition, and growing rich and poor divide. He pointed out as to how the sanctity and importance of various Constitutional institutions and the basic features of the Constitution such as secular, socialist and democratic, were being eroded to the detriment of the people and the country, and as to how there was a threat looming large over the Constitution itself owing to clamor for its change and reintroduction of retrogressive ancient laws by certain forces. The only hope for the bright present and future of the people lay in the unity of the all these communities and protection of the Constitution at every cost.

The expert speakers Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar, Additional Secretary, Government of India (Retd.), Prof. Manjit Singh, Mr. Piara Lal Garg. Mr. Omkar Nath, Deputy CAG (Retd.) and Mr.R.L. Kalsia, I.A.S.(Retd) en-

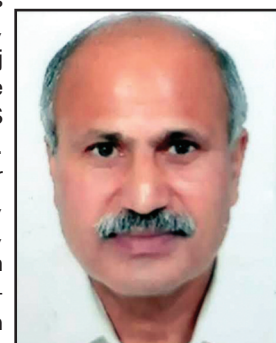
lightened the audience on different subjects emphasizing the utmost need for protecting and implementing the Constitution in letter and spirit to achieve its ideals. Giving detailed historical background and role of Babasaheb in the making of the Constitution, Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar said that the Constitution has stood the test of time in war and peace and it is not only the largest but the best Constitution which is capable of handling the present and future foreseen and unforeseen contingencies of the country. Reiterating the words of Babasaheb, he said that the best way to serve the country is to save the Constitution as a one strong unified force. Bringing home the message of Babasaheb "Education, Unity, Struggle and Sacrifice", he said emulating Babasaheb in letter and spirit was the only antidote of the problems of the people and the country. Speaking on the SC, ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, Prof. Manjit Singh stressed the need to come on

one platform to uproot the cancerous maladies of discrimination, injustice and atrocities against the people of the marginalized section. Mr. Poara Lal Garg spoke on the failure of Government and the administration to implement the scholarship scheme for the children of weaker sections and stressed on all the sections to come together on one page on the issue. Mr. R.L. Kalsia spoke on 'Reservation in educational institutions and employment in public and private establishments to the members of SC/ST/OBC and Minorities, and special component plan and release of funds proportionate to the population. Sh. Omkar Nath delved at length on the "Non-implementation of Right to Education Act in Punjab".

Hon'ble Judges brought out the instances of blatant discrimination against the members of the

SC/ST/OBC and Minority communities at various levels in the services as well as social and economic field. They pointed out that apart from the prompt and active judicial intervention, unity among these people was the effective remedy for their problems. Sh. Ramanjit Lalli of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bhawan Ludhiana, Mr. Mohammed Nazeer of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Punjab, from Malerkotla and some other office bearers of different organizations addressed the Seminar. Giving the vote of thanks, Ambassador Ashok Kumar said that an action plan based on key points emerging from the Seminar may be drawn and implemented resolutely as a way forward concrete outcome of the laudable efforts.

Er. R.L.Sandhu, Chief Engineer (Retd.) brilliantly conducted the proceedings as Master of Ceremony and Dr. Jagtar Singh IRS, Mr.Jarnail Singh I.T.O.(Retd.), Mr.Jarnail Singh PCS (Retd.) and Dr. Som Nath took care of the administrative, logistics and catering arrangements. The Samajik Samanata Sangathan (S3) Punjab was represented by its President, Ch. Khushi Ram, I.A.S. (Retd.), Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar IPoS (Retd.), Sr. Vice President, Dr. Jagtar Singh IRS (Retd.), Sr. Vice President, Er. R.L.Sandhu, Chief Engineer (Retd.), Finance Secretary, Mr.Jarnail Singh I.T.O.(Retd), General Secretary and Dr. Som Nath (Vice President). A committee to draw out an action plan will be formed to actualize the outcome of the Seminar.



Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar

Poona Pact of 1932 signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar

Today, September 24, is the anniversary of Poona Pact of 1932 signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar in Yerwada jail in then Poona (now Pune) in the wake of PM Ramsey MacDonnell's Communal Award providing for separate electorates for the depressed classes now generally called dalits or Scheduled Castes. Mahatma Gandhi opposed the Communal Award and went into 'fast unto death' in the jail. His health started deteriorating. Obviously, the whole country and the Congress Party were concerned and worried. Since the Communal Award was the net result of Dr. Ambedkar's untiring and relentless efforts particularly his articulation of the issue of political and social rights of dalits at the Round Table Conferences and other fora, the entire Indian leadership particularly the Hindus persuaded Babasaheb Ambedkar to relent in the interest of cohesiveness of Hindu society and save the life of 'adamant and stubborn' Mahatma Gandhi, a staunch Sanatani Hindu.

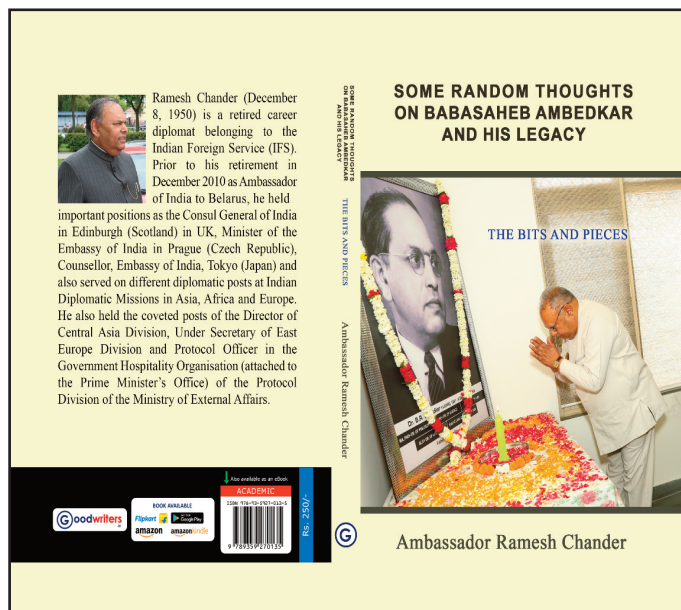
Pact of 1932 signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar a couple of times before and gave my views. The anniversary of the Pact falls on September 24. Editor Prem Chumber of the Ambedkar Times invited me to write a piece on the subject for the esteemed paper. I was a bit lethargic as much has been said and written on the subject and moreover now, it has no practical relevance and it has gone to the realm of history. An immediate provocation to say something again on Poona Pact was the video message of a staunch Ambedkarite and an intellectual living legend Lahori Ram Balley which I heard on Facebook a little while ago. I am not inclined to go to the facts and figures in this regard and would limit myself to a running commentary on the importance of Poona Pact and how it contributed in bringing the depressed classes on the political map and agenda of India in the subsequent landmark events of India Act, 1935 and finally the Constitution of India. In

The atmosphere was so vitiated with hatred that Babasaheb was condemned as anti-national and anti-Hindu. He was threatened to be killed before something untoward happened to Gandhi. The wife of Gandhi, Kasturba made appeals of mercy to Babasaheb to save the life of her husband. Hindu fundamentalists like Babu Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya among others appealed and requested Babasaheb Ambedkar to save the life of Gandhi by rejecting the separate electorates to dalits and remaining in the Hindu fold. It was a very difficult and critical preposition before the sole leader of the depressed classes. On one side, he was to abandon and forego voluntarily the gains and advantage he himself achieved at the Round Table Conferences and otherwise for the benefit of the depressed classes and on the other to prove his credentials as a nationalist and a caring leader for the overall good of the main stream of the society. There were threats to his life. Balley

ameliorate their sufferings in the Manuwadi set up. There was no option with the Gandhi camp. In the Poona Pact, Ambedkar got more facilities and enabling provisions for the depressed classes than offered in the Communal Award by the British rulers. Not only the reserved seats in the legislature but also special provisions in education and socio-economic aspects with a view to integrate dalits with the main stream of the society as equal partners. With this the much maligned concept of 'Reservation' was born which finally found enumeration in the Constitution of India of which Babasa-



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fact, in other words, it turns out to be a tribute to the sagacity and integrity of the one of the greatest sons of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar on one hand and the suspect attitude of Mahatma Gandhi in blackmailing Ambedkar to watch and protect the interests of the Hindu society at large at the cost of dalits on one hand and the treachery of the ruling elite after independence on the other by not faithfully implementing the special provisions made



Babasaheb was a visionary leader and a patriotic nationalist from the core agreed in the larger interest of the country and the society at large and signed some understandings with Mahatma Gandhi with regard to the interests of dalits. Those understandings were called "Poona Pact", having far reaching implications for the integration of the depressed and oppressed masses with the main stream of society.

My forthcoming book "Some Random Thoughts on Babasaheb Ambedkar and His Legacy – The Bits and Pieces", likely to be launched soon, carries my blog on the subject as Chapter 18 at page 93 – Analytical Commentary on Poona Pact of 1932. The Foreword of the book has been written by, General Secretary of Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations (FABO) of UK, Arun Kumar, a staunch Ambedkarite. I take this opportunity to thank Ambedkar Times Inc spearheaded by Chief Editor of the Ambedkar Times and The Desh Doaba for extending all support in publishing the book.

Chapter 18 of the forthcoming book – Some Random Thoughts on Babasaheb Ambedkar and His Legacy The Bits and Pieces Analytical Commentary on Poona Pact of 1932

I have written about Poona

for the Scheduled Castes to give practical shape to the understandings stipulated in the Poona Pact in all sincerity and solemnity. I think, that is why, later Ambedkar himself termed the Pact a "mean deal" as it could not deliver as promised and visualized both by the society and also by the polity. The Separate Electorates to the depressed Classes in line with the similar provisions for Muslims, Christians, Sikhs etc granted in the Communal Award of PM Ramsey MacDonald was the result of Ambedkar's untiring efforts and assertions at the Round Table Conferences much against the agenda and wishes of Mahatma Gandhi who wanted dalits to remain in the fold of Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi tried his best to convince the British rulers in Delhi and London to undo the Separate Electorates offered to dalits in the Communal Award but failed. He flouted his usual weapon of "fast" to exploit and compel the British rulers on one hand and also the recognized leader of depressed classes, Babasaheb Ambedkar on the other. Gandhi started his "fast unto death" in the Yerawada jail in Poona where he was detained. It was one of the cunning tactics of caste Hindus led by Gandhi to stop a separate identity of dalits and to defeat Ambedkar. The whole country was made to stand and oppose separate electorates to the depressed classes.

Sahib in his message which I mentioned before narrated a historical fact of an editorial written by Mahasha Krishan in the Urdu paper The Partap published from Lahore where he threatened that Ambedkar must be careful and considerate in taking the decision as dictated by the Hindu leaders led by Mahatma Gandhi otherwise before the final rites of the Mahatma, if he died in his "fast unto death, the funeral of Ambedkar would be held before that. One can easily gauge the gravity of the situation. Ambedkar was not only a consummate intellectual politician who not only knew the universally accepted dictum 'politics is an art of the possible' but also subscribed to the lofty ideals of compassion and morality of the Buddha. As a true nationalist and recognizing the value of Mahatma Gandhi's role as a leading light of the freedom movement and also his preference to bring about cohesiveness in the society at large instead of ushering the country into communal divide and hatred decided to cooperate and agreed to the submissions of Mahatma Gandhi and other Hindu leaders which resulted in the famous Poona Pact of 1932. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a negotiator par excellence. He tried his best and convinced the Hindu leaders to see the situation of the depressed classes in the Hindu fold and do something concrete to

he himself was the architect and pilot. The opponents of 'Reservation' for dalits are ill-informed and half educated that nobody offered the special provisions of reservation etc. on the platter out of magnanimity and compassion but were achieved with ardent and consistent efforts and sacrifices by Dr. Ambedkar and his associates and the suffering masses. The spirit of Poona Pact will remain alive under the overall impact and implementation of the Constitution of India. The only negation which comes to my mind is that by foregoing the separate electorates, dalits lost an edge in electing their true representatives in the parliament, legislatures and municipal bodies. Perhaps this is the reason by Manyawar Kanshi Ram called them "Chamchas" and some of the dalit activists opposed the Poona Pact. Let us leave it to historians to judge and give their verdict.

All said and done, I have no hesitation in saying that whatever Ambedkar Sahib did and accomplished in signing the Poona Pact was a master-stroke in the given times and circumstances under difficult and trying conditions. Babasaheb proved himself as a great and visionary leader. With this, I remember Poona Pact of 1932 the harbinger of political and social space for dalits in the map of India. I Salute to Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's led Ad Dharm Movement: A New Vision for the Emancipation and Empowerment of Historically Marginalized People of Punjab

At present Scheduled Castes in East Punjab constitute one-third of the total state population – largest in comparison to their counterparts in all other states and UTs in India. However, their share in the agriculture land in the state is lowest. Less than five percent of them are small time cultivators. Though in terms of administrative set up they are enumerated along with other caste communities in the census records of the villages in East Punjab, actually they live in segregated Dalit settlements situated in the periphery of mainstream villages. The segregated Schedule Castes' peripheries are contemptuously called *Chamarlees* in Doaba, *Thathees* in Malwa, and *Vehras* in Majha: the three distinct spatial-cultural regions of the state. Nevertheless, Scheduled Castes in East Punjab, like all other communities, are Punjabi first and their religion and caste and domiciliary location come later. Like all other integral segments of the syncretic Punjabi qaum, Scheduled Castes are too valourous and well known for their praiseworthy role during the fights of the Khalsa armies of Guru Gobind Singh against the regimes of injustice and social oppression. To live with dignity prompted them in the second half of 1920s, to organise themselves under the Ad Dharm movement (11-12 June, 1926), the maiden Dalit movement of pre-partition Punjab. The Ad Dharm movement was parallel but independent of various other contemporary Adi/Dalit movements (briefly discussed below) emerged almost at the same time in the South India.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia (January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980) was the precursor of the Ad Dharm movement. He belonged to a Dalit family of leather workers of village Mugowal indistrict Hoshiarpur. His father wanted him to educate so that he could him in his leather business by reading transactions written in English. Despite his relatively well off family background, Mangu Ram faced social exclusion, for his so-called low birth, at the school in a nearby village Bajwara. He was forced to leave the studies abruptly without completing his matriculation. Thereafter, in search of easy life, like the early emigrants from the Doaba, Mangu Ram too landed in America in 1909 and earned his livelihood while working in lumber industry and agriculture farms. That was the time when Punjabi emigrants in North America were planning to form a radical organisation for the liberation of colonial India. Eventually, Mangu Ram became an active member of the Ghadar *Lehar* (movement) founded in 1913. He was one of the five proud members of a Ghadarite group who were assigned

the herculean task of ferrying weapons to India for an armed rebellion against the British rule. But *SS Maverick*, the ship that was bought to transport weapons was caught in route and destiny took Mangu Ram into the Philippines, where he spent the next twelve years of his prime life incognito. Finally, hereached his native village in 1925, to the surprise of all, as everyone already knew the news of his alleged hanging.

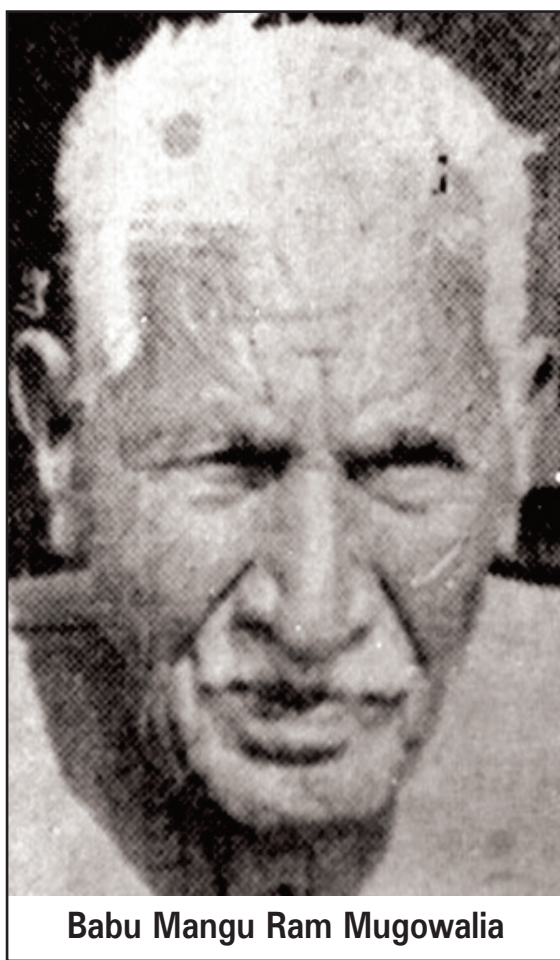
Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia is to the Punjab what Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is to Maharashtra, and just

as the Maharashtra Dalit movement owes its origin to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Punjab Dalit movement is similarly indebted 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, Babu Mangu Ram

Mugowalia learnt his lessons of equality and freedom from the proclaimed democratic and liberal values 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. This further cemented his resolve to fight for a dignified life for the masses 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.

On return to his native village, after spending 16 years abroad, Babu Mangu Ram did not find any change in the predominance of untouchability. 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 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* 1986: 23-24). Consequently, he decided to dedicate rest of his life for the emancipation and empowerment of his fellow so-called low-caste people. He established an elementary school in his native village for the lower caste



Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia

children of those self-same socially excluded sections of the society that later came to be designated 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. Following into the footsteps of his revolutionary Ghadarite leadership in the United States of America, he aspired to both fight against the caste-based social evil of untouchability and to replace it with an all-encompassing social freedom, as well as to join the fight to free the subjugated India and return to it its political freedom. Like his predecessor in Maharashtra, he faced stiff opposition from the so-called upper castes in his fierce struggle against oppressive structures of domination including untouchability – the most egregious one among them.

The Ad Dharm movement, pioneered by Mangu Ram, soon became a household name among the Dalits of the Punjab like the Satyashodak Samaj movement of Phule in Maharashtra. Seth Kishan Das of Bootan Mandi – a well-known local leather merchant – helped build its headquarter named 'Ad Dharm Mandal' in Jalandhar. Mangu Ram with his untiring efforts literally took the movement to the doorsteps of all the untouchables in the region and soon emerged as a cult figure of the Dalits. Under the flag of Ad Dharm movement, he fought for the long de-

nied land rights of the lower castes who were legally debarred along with other non-agriculture castes from owning agriculture land under the Land Alienation Act of 1900. Moreover,

under the local customary law, popularly known as 'rayit-nammas', the lower castes were also deprived of ownership rights on the residential plot of their houses in the segregated neighbourhoods. They were not allowed to build pucca houses in these separate Dalit localities. 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 their residential plots.

Another important task towards the material empowerment of the lower castes that was undertaken by the Ad Dharm movement was special legal provision of education and government employment reservation for the lower castes under the state affirmative action. Like the *Satyashodak Samaj* movement in Maharashtra, the Ad Dharm movement soon became a household name among the Dalits of Punjab. It was for the first time in the forgotten history of the lower castes in the state that a golden opportunity knocked at their doors to get them united on a common and distinct platform under the leadership of their fellow-travellers to fight for the most sought after goal of dignified life and to collectively press their long-pending claim for a share in the local structures of power.

In the wake of the limited democratic political process in 1919 prised from 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); and as a young man freshly returned from the US, and meticulously chiselled in the superb companionship of the proud Ghadarite Babas, Babu Mangu Ram able bring together many of his fellow community members to build a separate social and political organization at par with that of the upper

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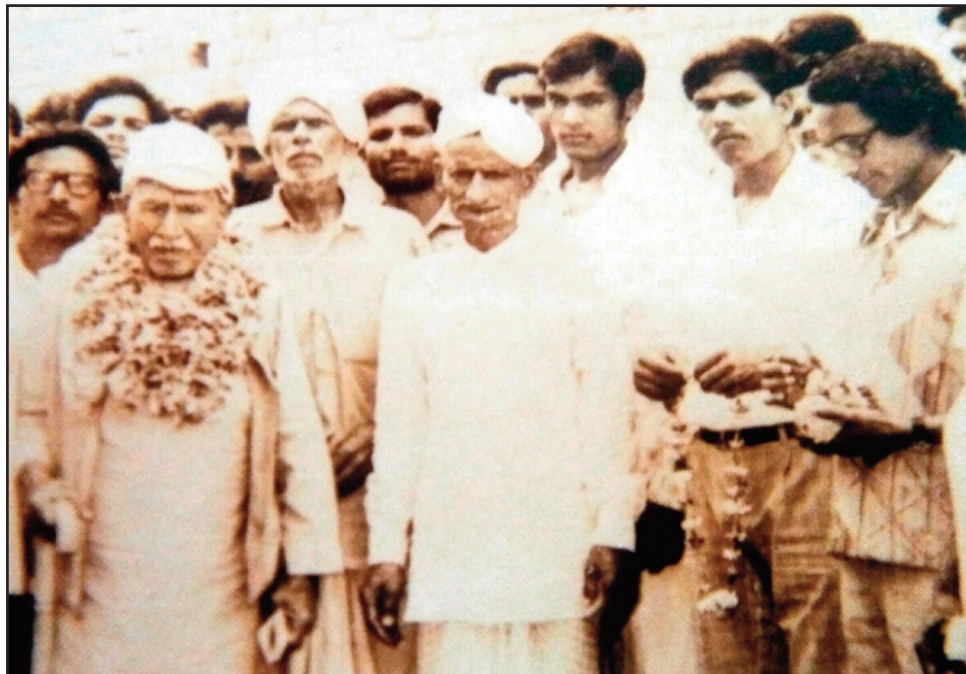
Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's led Ad Dharm Movement

(Continue from page 3)

caste communities like the Hindu Mahasabha of the Hindus, Muslim League of the Muslims and Singh Sabhas of the Sikhs. This limited election-based legislature-forming-process also led to the formation of similar Adi-movements in other parts of the country like Adi-Andhras, Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Karnataka in the South India, and Adi-Hindus in the Uttar Pradesh province of the 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.

In the posterannouncing the first annual meeting of the Ad Dharm movement, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, 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 Qaum came from outside 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 Qaum. They deprived us of our property and rendered us no madic. 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 Qaum 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



Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and members of Ad Dharm

our religion is Ad Dharm (Kaumi Udarian: 1986: 21-22).

Keen readers of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia have observed that he was conflicted on the issue of the British Raj – on the one hand he feared even greater oppression under Hindu majoritarian rule than under the British – whom he also viewed as possible partners in facilitating a more equal Indian society – but on the other hand he aspired for the dignity of national independence, which necessitated the removal of the British. This remained a recurring paradox in his political approach till the achievement of Indian independence in 1947. In the meantime, he along with other leaders of Ad Dharm movement chose to restore the lost dignity and freedom of the untouchables by detaching them completely from Hinduism and re-consolidating them into their own ancient religion (Ad Dharm). The long domination by the Aryans, they alleged, made them oblivious of their native religion.

Thus, what made the Ad Dharm movement the most politically noticeable and popular of its time was the farsightedness of its visionary leaders in setting the goal of bringing divergent lower caste communities under a single flag and to transform them into a distinct single community at par with other separate communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians etc and to become an appropriate part of the Punjabi qaum. This was the most crucial political move on the part of Babu Mangu Ram, the master strategist, who intervened at a vital moment when limited direct elections were scheduled 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 Babu 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, and finally enslaved them. In his brilliant article entitled *Achhut da Swaal* (The Question of Untouchability) published in the *Kirti* monthly of the *Kirti Kisan* party in 1929, penned under the pseudonym of Vidrohi, Shaheed Bhagat Singh supported the Ad Dharm leadership in its tirade against the caste system and for a separate religion, but at the same time also cautioned them to keep their distance from the British.

The Ad Dharm movement, under the leadership of Babu Mangu Ram, aimed at restoring the lost dignity and freedom of the untouchables by detaching them completely from Hinduism and re-consolidating into their own ancient religion (Ad Dharm). However, the task of reviving their ancient religion, in fact, was not an easy one. To revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing a new religion for the native people. *Moolnivasis*, the natives of this region, 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 successfully metamorphosed themselves into upper castes of the first three Varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) – the fourfold Hindu social order based on *Chatur-Varnavyavastha*. The natives of the conquered land were allegedly pushed into the fourth Varna of Shudras – consisting of artisan castes and still other further reduced into lowest of the low castes, contemptuously dubbed as Untouchable peoples.

The assertion by Babu Mangu Ram that Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enormous psychological impact on them. It provided a theological podium to them 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 saints of the 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 was woven. In this way, Babu Mangu Ram played a dominant role in chiseling the distinct markers of separate Dalit identity and restoring the natives their lost heroes, Gurus, and rich cultural heritage. He imbued them with the yearning to become rulers themselves.

During the Census of 1931, around half a million Scheduled Castes in Punjab returned themselves as followers of their newly recognized religion – Ad Dharm. Thenceforth, the followers of Ad Dharm took pride in being addressed as Ad Dharmis. Another equally great achievement of the Ad Dharm movement was that it swept the reserved Provincial assembly elections in Punjab in 1937 & 1946, which made it an important stakeholder in the Punjab legislature, perhaps for the first time in the history of the lower castes in the colonial India. Moreover, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia 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, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia 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. An eminent American social scientist, Mark Juergensmeyer, documented in his classic 'Religious Rebels in the Punjab: *The Ad Dharm Challenge to Caste*,' the incredible contribution made by Ad Dharm movement in generating 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 in the image of 'Beghampura' of Guru Ravidass.

Reference:

* Juergensmeyer, Mark, Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad Dharm Challenge to Caste, Delhi: Navayana, 2009.

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Samvidhan Bachao Loktantra Bachao Desh Bachao

(Save Constitution, Save Democracy, Save Country)

The Constitution of India which has been so laboriously drafted by the Committee headed by Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and clause wise debated and approved by the Constituent Assembly comprising of three hundred illuminated brains of the country in a period of two years eleven months and seventeen days is the largest in the world. The Preamble, which is soul of the Constitution, says:-

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

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

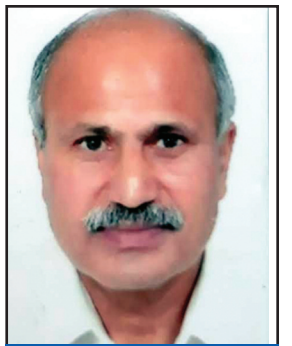
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief,

tional institutions which are pillars of the Constitution are being eroded and blatantly misused for political gains by the political dispensations. The constitutional ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity, justice and dignity of the individual seem to have gone for a six and the grim social and economic conditions have become fate of the people and the country. The anti-national pernicious caste system, deprivation, social and economic discrimination, illiteracy, unemployment, disease, bigotry, mass corruption, poverty, and ever widening rich-poor divide continue to haunt the people and mar country's progress. Most of the Fundamental Rights and directive principles of State policy are yet to see the light of the day. The fourth pillar of democ-

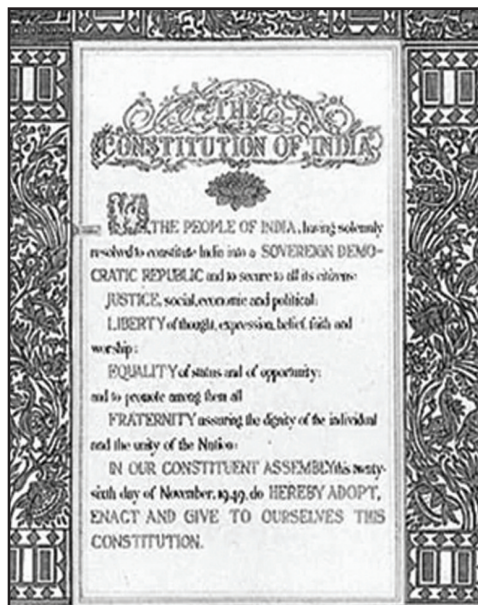
of the Constitution but also the events leading to its culmination to the present form before taking a final call.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, this land was divided into large number of independent or semi-independent principalities or states governed by absolute monarchies. It was the British who are believed to have planted the seed of people's participation in the governance that grew ultimately as a big tree called the Constitution of the Indian Republic. The British Regulating Act of 1773 was the first landmark in the constitutional development of India. It made a beginning in the system of a written Constitution for British India. It was followed by the Judicature Act of 1781, Dunda's Bill (1783), Fox India

Planting Communities etc. The government of India Act 1919, also known as Montagu Chelmsford Reforms was a landmark constitutional development. The Act set up a bicameral legislature, and an improvement was made in the franchise. It extended Separate Electorates to the Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, In-



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(Additional Secretary,
Govt. of India)



faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

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

The words 'Secular' and 'Socialist' were added in the Preamble vide 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976 though the issue was debated at length in the Constituent Assembly and settled that there was no need to add these words specifically as Dr. Ambedkar clarified that the socialist and secular concept was already contained in the Constitution. The Constitution has stood the test of time and held the country together in peace time as it is flexible and strong enough to appropriately handle any foreseen and unforeseen present and future contingency.

The slogan "Samvidhan Bachao Loktantra Bachao Desh Bachao" i.e. "Save Constitution, Save Democracy, Save Country" is ranting the air these days. A large number of people believe the Constitution to be under great threat of being substituted by retrogressive anti-human archaic ancient laws of Manu. They are of the considered view that vital constitu-

tion (Media) considered being the watchdog of Constitution and people's rights appear to have been reduced to the level of a lapdog. The democracy looks to be crying under the crushing feet of power hungry and selfish authoritarian majority. Over and above this, the chant for making the multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-religious country a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) is assuming alarming proportion. The prevailing socio-economic and political conditions show that the things have gone wrong not because the Constitution is bad but, to put it in Babasaheb's words, because those who are called to work it happen to be bad lot. The deprived sections, other backward classes and the minorities feel under constant danger of being pushed back to the dark ages of anti-human laws contained in the so called scriptures of the flag bearers of Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra. Therefore, they consider it a question of life and death to save the constitution as it addresses all their concerns and provides for their true liberation and uplift assuring individual dignity as equal citizens, and to achieve the ideal of 'one nation one people'.

Historical Background

Though the Constitution in its present form took three years to complete, it has a history of over hundred and seventy years behind its making. The people particularly those clamoring for its change are ought to know and understand not only the essence

Bill (1783) and Pitt's India Bill (1784) which helped the unification of India by making the Governor-General supreme over the Governors of the other Presidencies. It was followed by Declaratory Act (1788), Charter Act of 1793 and Act of 1813. The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the monopoly of the Company and centralized the administration of the English Company in India, and provided for the codification of laws in India. It was followed by the Charter Act of 1853 which marked the beginning of Parliamentary system in India. The outbreak of the Mutiny in India in 1857 and its suppression resulted in passing of the Government of India Act 1858. It abolished the rule of the Company and vested in the British Queen all the territories and powers of the Company. The Queen's Proclamation of November 1858 is justly called the Magna Carta of India as it guaranteed equal rights and opportunities to the Indians along with other British subjects. The Indian Council's Act 1861 made a beginning in representative institutions and legislative devolution. The Indian Council's Act of 1892 enlarged the functions of the Legislative Councils, and allowed elections to be held in India under the rules. Indian Councils Act 1909, known as Minto-Morley reforms increased the size of the Legislative Councils. It provided Special or Separate Electorates for the due representation of the Muslims, Chamber of commerce, Landlords, Zamindars, Traders Associations and the

dian Christians and Europeans. The Act was considered to be the Constitution for the purpose of running the British Government machinery in India. There was a provision for decennial review of the functioning of the Act. (V.D. Mahajan, Modern Indian History, seventh edition, pp. 247-312)

Entry of Dr. Ambedkar on the Indian political stage and his role in the Constitution making

Dr. Ambedkar appeared on the Indian political scene when Southborough Franchise Committee set up by the British Government in 1918 visited India to determine the electoral issue. The young Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a PhD from Columbia University and a professor of political economy at Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay, was called upon to give evidence before the Committee on 27th January 1919. He submitted a detailed Memorandum in the form of Statement with a supplementary Statement containing his views and recommendations on Franchise, form of Government and the Constitution. Strongly pleading for the communal representation for the untouchables, he said it was a device to ward off the evil effects of the social divisions, and it was one of the ways of dissolving them. He said that it was in the interest of all that Brahmin should not play such a preponderant part in politics as he had exerted a pernicious influence on the social life of the country. He

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recommended dispensing with the uniformity in franchise because there was unequal distribution of wealth and education among the people. The untouchables had no large property to protect from confiscation but they had their very persona confiscated. To deny them the opportunities of acquiring wealth and then to ask from them a property qualification was to add insult to injury. He demanded representation proportionate to their population in order to raise their status and stimulate their power (BAWS, Vol.1, pp. 247-276).

Simon Commission

An all British seven member Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon came to India in 1928 for the specific purpose of in-

Depressed Classes in the Bombay Presidency and safeguards for the protection of their interests. He claimed reserved seats for them if accompanied by adult suffrage, and separate electorates in the absence of adult suffrage. He stressed that the Depressed Classes must be treated a distinct independent minority, separate from the Hindu community as they needed far greater political protection than any other minority in British India for the simple reason that it was educationally very backward, economically very poor, socially enslaved and suffered from certain grave political disabilities from which no other community suffered. The Commission appended his report with its own report. Opposing the demand for separation of Karnataka and Sindh from the Bombay

strongly pleaded for Separate Electorates, special rights and safeguards for his people saying depressed by the Government, suppressed by the Hindu and disregarded by the Muslim, they were left in a most intolerable position of utter helplessness to which there was no parallel. Since the solution of their problems lay in their political empowerment, therefore, it was essentially a political problem and must be treated as such. Their political empowerment only could remove their grievance. He declared: "It is only a Government which is of the people, for the people and by the people that will make this possible. The consent of the people and not the accident of logic should be the touchstone of new Constitution." This was for the first time that someone talked of the people's

face to face meeting of the two great leaders. Gandhi, though, claimed to be a fighter against the untouchability, was not prepared to touch the Varna system though he termed Dr. Ambedkar as a patriot of sterling worth. He made it clear that he was not in favor of regarding the untouchables as a separate entity for political purposes. As they were being treated worse than cats and dogs in the Hindu society and wherein they could not get water to drink, Dr. Ambedkar, wanted them to be recognized as a distinct separate entity for political safeguards like Separate Electorates as already granted to the Muslims and the Sikhs. The meeting, therefore, ended on discordant note in a grim atmosphere sounding the beginning of a war between the two great leaders (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt.



quiring into the working of Government system under the Government of India Act 1919, and reporting as to whether and to what extent it was desirable to establish the principle of responsible Government, or to extend, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible Government then existing. The Commission came to India in 1928. Taking offence at the constitution of the Commission, the Congress and the liberals boycotted the Commission and carried out a great agitation and hostile demonstrations against it in the country resulting in police firing at some places. Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India while justifying the exclusion of Indians from the Commission, challenged the latter to produce an agreed Constitution. Resultantly, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru drafted the Constitution known as Nehru Report in 1928. It did not, however, find favor with the Indians. To co-operate with the Simon Commission the Central Government appointed a Committee for all British India and every Legislative Council constituted its Provincial Committee to work with the Simon Commission. Dr. Ambedkar was selected for the Bombay Provincial Committee on August 3, 1928. The Committee submitted its report dated May 7, 1929. Differing fundamentally with the Committee, Dr. Ambedkar submitted a separate exhaustive and bulkier than that of the Committee's report to the Commission on May 17, 1929. It covered all the constitutional issues. In addition to the separate report, he submitted separate Statements concerning the state of education of the

Presidency, the patriot in Dr. Ambedkar declared:

"The most vital need of the day is to create among the mass of the people the sense of common nationality, the feeling not that they are Indians first and Hindu, Mohammedans or Sindhis and Kanarees afterwards, but that they are Indians first and the Indians last." The report of the Simon Commission came out in May 1930. It was condemned by the Indians. Some of its recommendations were ultimately embodied in the Act of 1935 (V.D. Mahajan, Modern Indian History, seventh edition, pp. 315-323, and BAWS, Vol. 2, pp. 315-489 and Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp. 66-70, Keer, pp. 114-118).

First Round Table Conference (12 November 1930 - 19 January 1931)

The Round Table Conference was a golden opportunity for the Indians to frame the Constitution and get freedom. The Conference met on 12 November 1930 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The Congress boycotted it as its demand was to convene the Constituent Assembly for drafting the Constitution. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Rai Bahadur Srinivasan represented the forty three million Depressed Classes as large as the population of England or of France. Dr. Ambedkar was appointed a member of eight out of nine sub-committees constituted to accomplish work of the Conference (He was inducted in the ninth Committee i.e. Federal Structure Committee in the second Conference). In his bold, candid and historic speech delivered in the Conference on 20th November, he

Government. The speech was rated by the Press as one of the finest bits of oratory and the best in the whole proceedings of the Conference. A Memorandum titled "A Scheme of Political Safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes in the Future Constitution of self-governing India" drafted by Dr. Ambedkar in the form of an Act was submitted to the Minorities Sub-Committee for being included in the future constitution of India. These demands were stated to be irreducible minimum for their willing co-operation; otherwise they would not consent to any constitution for self-Government. This historical document and the contribution of Dr. Ambedkar in all the Committees came out to be the foundation stone not only of the Government of India Act 1935 but also of the Constitution of free India. The basic principles of the form of the Government and the Constitution were settled in the Conference. The Conference was adjourned on January 19, 1931 for the Second Conference (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp. 71-101; Vol. 9, pp. 41-52; Vol. 2, pp. 503-598; Keer, pp. 147-158).

Second Round Table Conference (7th September - 31st December 1931)

The second Round Table Conference was joined by the Congress Party with Gandhi as its sole representative. The main contentious and ticklish issue was the communal problem coming in the way of smooth passage to the agreed Constitution. Gandhi invited Dr. Ambedkar for a meeting before going to attend the Conference. The meeting was held at Bombay on 14th August 1931. It was the first

1, pp. 51-55).

The main work of the Second Round Table Conference was to be done in the Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee. Since Gandhi was not present in the first Round Table Conference, Dr. Ambedkar was very anxious that before Gandhi spoke he should be warned about the land of lies, so that he might know what he should say and what he should not. He managed to get first chance to speak in the plenary session on the excuse of running little temperature. In his speech of an hour and half - probably one of the largest of the speeches that he made in that country before Gandhi could speak Dr. Ambedkar exposed the whole business and let Gandhi know the prevailing condition. Opening his speech in the plenary session with the sentence "My heart is with Dr. Ambedkar but my head is not with him", Gandhi counteracted everything Dr. Ambedkar had suggested in his speech. He made a speech in the Federal Structure Committee on September 15, 1931 and claimed that as the sole representative of the Congress he was the sole representative of the Indian nation. Terming the Round Table Conference delegates as the chosen ones of the British Government and not of the nation, he made it clear that he would not support the demand for special representation to the Depressed Classes, and would resist it most strongly. Dr. Ambedkar observed that it was nothing but a declaration of war by Gandhi and the Congress against the Untouchables (BAWS, Vol.

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17, Pt.1, pp. 109-111, Vol. 17, Pt.3, pp. 327,328, Keer, pp.171-173).

On the eve of commencement of the Minorities Committee's session on September 28, 1931, an interview was fixed between Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhi at the residence of Sarojini Naidu by Gandhi's son Devdas. Gandhi did not open his mind and said that he would consent to Dr. Ambedkar's demands if others agreed. When the meeting of the Minority Committee commenced, Sir Aga Khan, Nawab of Bhopal sought the adjournment on the ground that Mahatma Gandhi was going to meet the Muslim delegates that night to resolve the communal tangle amicably. On October 1, Mahatma Gandhi asked for week's adjournment to hold informal conference of the delegates of all interests to ar-

rive at an agreed solution. But the weeklong discussions ended in fiasco. Learning that the minorities were going to support Dr. Ambedkar's demands, Gandhi resorted to intrigue. He devised a scheme to buy out the Muslims by giving to them their fourteen demands, which had already been rejected by him and the Congress. An agreement titled 'Gandhi-Muslim Pact' was also drafted in this regard. He went secretly to Sir Agha Khan with a copy of the Holy Koran in his hand and asked him to withdraw his support to Dr. Ambedkar. Sir Agha Khan refused to do so (BAWS Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp.11-113, Vol. 9, pp. 71-74, and Vol. 17, Pt. 3, p. 74).

Announcing his utter failure on 8th October 1931 to secure an agreed solution of the communal question through informal conversations, he said that the causes of failure were inherent in the composition of the Indian Delegation, and that they were almost all not the elected representatives of their parties or groups, nor were those whose presence was absolutely necessary for an agreed solution. He, therefore, moved an adjournment of the meeting sine die and proposed that the fundamentals of the Constitution be hammered in to shape as quickly as might be. Dr. Ambedkar did not give consent to his proposal. He accused Gandhi guilty of a breach of understanding according to which it was agreed the previous night that none of the delegates was to make any speech or any comment that would cause exasperation. But Gandhi started casting reflections upon the representatives of

different communities. Dr. Ambedkar said if the Depressed Classes were given a chance to elect their representatives for the Conference, he would have undoubtedly found a place in the Conference. He showed telegrams received from his people from all over the country supporting the stand taken by him. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia had led the campaign in Punjab in support of Dr. Ambedkar's stand, and caused a large number of telegrams sent to the British Prime Minister. Dr. Ambedkar said about Gandhi's conduct: "To say in public, I will agree if all others agree, and then to set out to work in private to prevent others from so agreeing by buying off those who are willing to agree, is, in our opinion, piece of conduct unbecoming of a Mahatma and to be expected only from an inveterate opponent of the De-

pressed Classes. Mr. Gandhi is not only not playing the part of a friend of the Depressed Classes, but he is not even playing the part of an honest foe". Gandhi reacted saying that he would resist the demand of untouchables with his life. Dr. Ambedkar observed that it appeared as if the main purpose of Gandhi to attend the Conference was to oppose the demand of the untouchables for Separate Electorate. Indian national press let loose a campaign of unbridled ferocity against Dr. Ambedkar for his stand taken in the Conference. He was represented as a devil, traitor, and a stooge of the British Government. The anger of some people went so high that they talked of murdering him. But nothing deterred him from his noble mission.

Finding no unanimous solution to the Minorities problem, the British Premier asked all the members of the Minorities Committee to sign a requisition authorizing him to settle the communal problem and pledge themselves to accept his decision. Gandhi signed this pledge along with other members. But Dr. Ambedkar did not sign as he believed in the justice of his demands. The Prime Minister adjourned the Conference on December 1 (BAWS, Vol.2, pp.659- 663, Vol.17, Pt. 1, pp.113-119, 124, Vol. 9, p. 70, Keer, 176,177, 183, 186-187 and Swaroop Chander Boudhh, Shere Punjab Babu Mangu Ram, pp. 67, 68).

Having been disgusted with the Round Table Conference Gandhi was the first delegate to return to India. He reached Bombay on December 28, 1931 to the black-flag wel-

come by the people of the Depressed Classes. He was arrested on January 4, 1932 on account of statement wherein he had threatened to revive his campaign of Civil Disobedience. He addressed a letter from jail on 11th March 1932 to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, reminding him of his opposition to the claim of the Untouchables. He said that his vow to resist with his life the grant of Separate Electorates to the Depressed Classes was the call of his conscience which he dared not disobey. But in his obsession against the Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes, he did not care that he was a signatory to the pledge given to the Prime minister to accept his verdict (BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 77, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, p. 137 and Keer, pp.191, 192).

Lothian Franchise Committee

26, 1932 and saw the Prime Minister, all Cabinet Ministers and every big official, and pleaded his case with heart and soul and presented to the British Cabinet twenty two typed pages representation (BAWS, Vol. 9, pp.74-75, Keer, p. 198, 202-204, BAWS, Vol.17, Pt. 1, p.131, Swaroop Chander Boudhh, Shere Punjab Babu Mangu Ram, pp. 56-58).

Announcement of the Communal Award - Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes The Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald announced his decision on the communal question on 17th August 1932 granting Separate Electorates to the Depressed Classes. According to the decision, known as the 'Communal Award', the Depressed Classes were granted 78 separate seats in the Provincial Legislatures to be filled by election from



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The Lothian Franchise Committee was appointed in December 1931 by the Prime Minister to devise a system of franchise in such a manner so that no important section of the community should lack the means of expressing its needs and opinions. It had a special task to investigate into the demands for a Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes to facilitate decision on the issue. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the members of the Committee. To the question of total population of the untouchables, the Hindu witnesses recorded false statements saying that the untouchables in their Province were infinitesimally small, and many witnesses even denied the existence of untouchables. The false statements were given because the existence of the Untouchables was detrimental to their interest. All the Depressed Classes' leaders supported the scheme of Separate Electorates. A delegation of twenty members of the Adi Dharmis led by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia in Punjab appeared before the Committee and presented a memorandum in support of their demand for Separate Electorates in a procession of about one lakh Adi Dharmi followers. The Franchise Committee finished its business on May 1, 1932 and drafted its report. Differing with the Hindu Members of the Committee, Dr. Ambedkar submitted a separate note to the Committee. His proposal that the term 'Depressed Classes' should be applied to the Untouchables was accepted and included in the report of the Committee. In the meantime, Dr. Ambedkar went to England on May

special constituencies in which only their electorally qualified members would be entitled to vote. They would also be qualified to vote in a general constituency. The Special Depressed Classes' Constituencies would come to an end after 20 years if not abolished earlier. It was made clear by the Government that it would not entertain any representation seeking modification of the award if it was not supported by all the affected parties. It was an historical victory for the Depressed Classes won by Dr. Ambedkar with his untiring efforts, dogged determination and invincible spirit. It was for the first time in the history of the land that deprived and marginalized people were empowered to elect their own representatives and the law makers. However, in a statement issued by him on 23rd August, Dr. Ambedkar said that the Award had ruthlessly scaled down their representation in the Provincial Legislatures to quite insignificant proportions creating positive grievances among his people. He made it clear that such injustice would make them averse to the acceptance of the Award (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt.1, pp. 133-136 and Vol. 9, pp. 80-82).

Gandhi's fast unto death against the Communal Award

Finding his threat having failed, Gandhi first tried to get the terms of the Award revised. Accordingly, he addressed a letter to the Prime Minister on 18th August 1932 in which he said that he was left with no option except to execute his vow to undertake a perpetual fast unto death from the noon

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of 20th September next. He said that the fast would cease only if the British Government revised its decision and withdrew the scheme of Communal Electorates for the Depressed Classes. Despite the Premier clarifying all his doubts and reminding him of his being signatory to the requisition, Gandhi decided to go ahead with his decision and conveyed his determination to carry out his threat of fast unto death in his letter of 9th September 1932 (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp. 137-141 and Vol. 9, pp. 82-87).

Gandhi's announcement threw the country into a state of consternation; not because the caste-Hindus and their leaders felt ashamed of their cruelty to the Depressed Classes, but because the life of their political hero was at stake. Dr. Ambedkar declared Gandhi's fast as a political stunt and asserted that that if Gandhi wanted to fight with his life for the interests of the Hindu Community the Depressed Classes would also be forced to fight with their lives to safeguard their interests. A furious life threatening campaign was launched against Dr. Ambedkar by the caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar said it passed his comprehension why Gandhi should stake his life on an issue which he had declared at the Round Table Conference to be one of a comparatively small importance. He said, "Mahatmas have come and Mahatmas have gone. But the untouchables have remained as untouchables." He, however, confirmed that he was prepared to consider the proposals of Gandhi believing that the Mahatma would not drive him to the necessity of making a choice between his life and the rights of his people, for he could never consent to deliver his people bound hand and foot to the Caste Hindus for generations to come (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt.1, p. 140, 143-145, 148-150 and Keer, p. 205, 206).

Gandhi begins epic fast unto death – Tuesday the 20th September 1932

Gandhi started his fast unto death on September 20, 1932 at 12 O'clock noon. A Committee of the high Caste Hindus was formed to negotiate in the matter. Dr. Ambedkar was invited for the meeting held on 20th September 1932. Speaking in the meeting, Dr. Ambedkar said: "I shall not deter from my pious duty, and betray the just and legitimate interests of my people even if you hang me on the nearest lamp-post in the street. I don't care even if a hundred Mahatmas are sacrificed. Mahatmas are not immortal creatures." He wanted Mahatma Gandhi to postpone his fast for 10-12 days to allow time to think over his proposals. But Gandhi remained adamant. In Punjab, Babu Mangu Ram went on fast unto death against Gandhi's fast (Swaroop Chander Bouddh, Shere Punjab Babu Mangu Ram, p. 68).

Poona Pact

A Committee consisting of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Barrister Jayakar, Pandit Malviya, Mathuradas Wassanji and Dr. Ambedkar was formed to evolve an agreeable scheme to save Gandhi's life. In the meantime showers of letters threatening Dr. Ambedkar's

life started pouring in. A secret plan to kill him by some youth from the touchable classes of Poona was reported in the Press. The situation became very volatile. After hectic discussions and parleys, an Agreement known as 'Poona Pact' was ultimately signed at Bombay on 24th September by Madan Mohan Malviya and other Hindu leaders on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar on behalf of the Depressed Classes. Some members signed on 25th September. In all, 41 members signed the Pact. It was agreed to grant 148 (increased to 151 subsequently) seats to the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Assemblies and 10 per cent of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the Central Assembly. A panel of four was fixed for election on the basis of Joint Electorates. However, Dr. Ambedkar remained unconvinced that the Separate Electorates for the Depressed Classes were injurious to the national interest. Gandhi broke his fast at half past five in the evening of 26 September. Babu Mangu Ram also broke his fast at the behest of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, P. 150 – 153, 165-172, 465, Keer, pp. 214, 215 and Swaroop Chander Bouddh, Shere Punjab Babu Mangu Ram, p. 69).

Though Poona Pact had given the Depressed Classes 148 (151) seats against 78 given under the Communal Award but it took away the fundamental benefits of the Award. The Award had given the untouchables two benefits; (i) a fixed quota of seats to be elected by separate electorate of the untouchables and to be filled by the persons belonging to the untouchables; (ii) double vote, one to be used through Separate Electorates and the other to be used in the General Electorates. The value of second vote as a political weapon was beyond reckoning. The voting strength of the Untouchables in each constituency was one to ten. With that voting strength free to be used in the election of the Caste Hindu candidates, the Untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General Election. Dr. Ambedkar said unequivocally that the Poona Pact was fraught with mischief. It was accepted because of the coercive fast of Mr. Gandhi and because of the assurance given at the time that the Hindus would not interfere in the elections of the Depressed Classes (BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, p. 176, 177 and Vol. 9, pp. 90-95, 98-102, Vol.1, p.432).

Third Round Table Conference (17 November to 24 December 1932)

Third Round Table Conference commenced on the 17th November 1932. Dr. Ambedkar attended the Conference, but the Congress again boycotted it. The Chief business of the Conference was to supplement the work so far accomplished at the previous sessions by filling some details and gaps left out, decide the composition of the Central Government in the light of the reports of various Committees and to issue white Paper on their recommendations. The number of delegates who attended the Conference was very small (less than fifty). A memorandum signed by eight dele-

gates including Dr. Ambedkar was submitted to the Conference asking for the removal of discriminating legislation and appealing to the Premier that there should be some small clauses incorporated in the Constitution abolishing privileges based on incident of birth, caste or religion. On completion of its work the Conference concluded on December 24, 1932 (Keer, pp. 223-225).

White Paper and Joint Committee of both the Houses of British Parliament

A White Paper containing proposals for Indian Constitutional Reforms based on the recommendations of the various Committees of the Round Table Conference was issued by the British Government towards the middle of March 1933. It was out rightly condemned and rejected by some of the prominent Indian leaders. The Government appointed Joint Committee consisting of 56 members to consider the White Paper. Seventeen members included Dr. Ambedkar were selected to represent British India, seven to represent Indian States and thirty-two were from both the Houses of the British Parliament. During the evidence recorded before the Joint Committee, Dr. Ambedkar examined and cross-examined about fifty witnesses to bring home the point on various constitutional, administrative, social and economic issues including adult suffrage, women representation, safeguards for depressed classes, Communal Award and Poona Pact etc. (BAWS, Vol.2, pp. 671-792, 742-745 and Keer, pp. 235- 241)

Government of India 1935 Act

The Joint Committee completed its work in November 1933. It supported the White Paper and appointed a small committee to draft the Constitution in the light of the discussions on the White Paper. The Government of India Act 1935 was enacted as a result of reports of three Round Table Conferences and the Joint parliamentary Committee. The first General Elections under the Act of 1935 were held in 1937. This Act was followed as the Constitution of India till the Constitution of the Republic of India came into effect on 26 January 1950 (Keer, p. 241, and V.D. Mahajan, Modern History, seventeenth edition, pp. 328-342).

Cripps Mission

The Cripps Mission was an attempt in late March 1942 by the British government to secure full Indian cooperation and support for their efforts in World War II and lay down in precise and clear terms, the steps for earlier possible realization of self-government in India. The Mission was headed by Sir Stafford Cripps, a senior leftwing politician and a minister in the War Cabinet of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, to negotiate an agreement with the nationalist leaders, speaking for the majority Indians, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, speaking for the minority Muslim population. The Government made the declaration that immediate on cessation of hostilities steps would be taken to set up in India, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India. But the Congress demanded immedi-

ate self-government in return for war support and stopped talks with Cripps. Gandhi termed the Cripps' offer of Dominion Status after the war as "post-dated cheque drawn on a crashing bank". Muslim League leader Jinnah insisted on a separate Muslim state Pakistan. Dr. Ambedkar issued a statement saying that the Depressed Classes were offered nothing; stone instead of bread. They were bound hand and foot and handed over to the caste Hindus. The proposed Constituent Assembly was nothing short of betrayal of the depressed classes as they might go unrepresented for want of fixed quota for them or if they were there, they would be in insignificant minority and their voice, therefore, would not count. He said that the Government by their proposals, therefore, had literally thrown them to the wolves. Addressing his people in Bombay on his birthday golden jubilee celebrations on 26th April 1942, he said that as they won't find place in the Constituent Assembly, their legitimate place would be their Headquarters manufacturing bombs. They could handle grenades better than many people. The proposal thus rejected by the Congress, Muslim League and the depressed classes, the Cripps mission proved a failure (V.D. Mahajan, Modern Indian History, seventeenth edition, pp. 346-350, BAWS, Vol. 9, pp. 334- 343, 376-383 and Vol. 17, Pt.3, pp. 234,235).

Cabinet Mission

General elections were held in the United Kingdom in July 1945 which brought the Labor Party to power with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. The Labor Party wanted to transfer power to the Indians as quickly as possible. Accordingly the British Government sent Cabinet Mission comprising of three Cabinet Ministers, namely Lord Pethic Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A. V. Alexander for discussions with the Indian leaders to find a solution to the problem and pave way for its independence. The delegation reached India on March 23, 1946. The outstanding feature of the political scene of India was that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad represented the Congress Party, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Nawab of Bhopal, Sir Agha Khan, the Princely India. Thus the whole of India except the Depressed Classes and the Sikhs was represented by three Muslim leaders. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar represented the Scheduled Castes and Master Tara Singh the Sikhs. The Mission interviewed Indian leaders and gave its proposals in its Statement of May 16, 1946 followed by supplementary Statement dated 25th May 1946 and additional new Statement of 16 June 1946. Apart from other recommendations, it proposed a Constituent Assembly to decide a new Constitutional Structure. There was no reference to the demands of the Scheduled Castes in the proposals. Dr. Ambedkar vowed to put up a fight to the last and made strenuous efforts to secure the Constitutional Rights of the Scheduled Castes in the proposed Constitution of India. The Cabinet Mission Report was

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partly rejected by the Congress, Muslim League and Depressed Classes. Hindu-Muslim riots took place in the country and in Calcutta particularly on an unprecedented scale. An interim Government was formed headed by the Viceroy of India initially and subsequently with Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru as its Vice-President holding the powers of Prime Minister. Nehru took office on September 2, 1946. The Muslim League also joined the Interim Government after its initial refusal (V.D. Mahajan, Modern Indian History, seventh edition, pp. 351-355 and BAWS, Vol.17, Pt.2, pp. 224, 275, 499-504, Vol.17, Pt.3, p.368).

Independence of India

In February 1947, British Prime Minister Mr. Attlee declared that the British Government would leave India before June 1948 even if no agreement was made between the Muslim League and the Congress. In March 1947, Lord Mountbatten was appointed Governor-General of India. He put forward his famous June 3 Plan in which he suggested the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. The scheme was accepted both by the Congress and the Muslim League and the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, 1947. Accordingly, two Dominions of India and Pakistan came into existence with effect from August 15, 1947 and 14 August, 1947 respectively but at the cost of colossal bloodshed and loss of human life both of the Hindus and the Muslims. The Indian Independence Act marked the ending of the British rule in India and beginning of a new chapter in the Indian and World history (V.D. Mahajan, Modern Indian History, seventh edition, pp.355, 356).

Making of the Constitution of Republic of India

Elections to the Provincial Assemblies were held in early 1946. The Congress Party won the elections with thumping majority in most of the Provinces. But the Muslim voters routed the Congress on the Muslim seats under the system of Separate Electorate. Dr. Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation was utterly routed by the Congress with the help of Communists and vast number of Caste Hindu votes under the Joint Electorate system provided in the Poona Pact. Dr. Ambedkar, the most popular leader of his people, fell prey to the Poona Pact and lost the election.

The elections for the Constituent Assembly took place in July/August 1946. In all 296 members were elected to the Constituent Assembly by the Provincial Legislatures. Congress won 208 and the Muslim League 73 seats. 93 members were the nominees of the Princely States. Since Dr. Ambedkar's Party had lost the Provincial elections and the Congress Party had shut the doors and windows of the Constituent Assembly for him, he could not enter the Constituent Assembly from Bombay. It was Mr. Jogendra Nath Mandal, a close associate of Dr. Ambedkar and a member of the Working Committee of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, who vacated his seat of Jessore

and Khulna (Bengal) General Constituency for Dr. Ambedkar, and helped him win the election with the support of Namashudras, some Harijan Congress members, Independents, Muslim League and others with thumping majority despite a strong opposition from the Congress Party (Keer, p. 378, 382, BAWS, Vol.17,Pt.2,p.229, Vol.17, Pt.3, pp. 413, 461 and Vol. 13, p.5 and Reminiscences and remembrances of Dr. Ambedkar by N.C. Rattu, p. 142).

Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly met on December 9, 1946 although it was boycotted by the Muslim League. Only 207 elected members attended the first meeting. On 13th December 1946, Prime Minister Mr. Nehru moved the Resolution regarding aims and objects of the Assembly. On December 16, 1946, Dr. M.R. Jayakar objected to the timings of the Resolution and moved an amendment seeking postponement of the passing of the Resolution until the Muslim League and Indian States representatives came into the Constituent Assembly. This irritated the Congress bosses and they heckled him as an obstructionist. But his amendment became a battle royal as there were voices for and against the amendment. Amid this tense situation Dr. Ambedkar was invited surprisingly on 17th December 1946 ahead of 20-22 speakers by the President Dr. Rajendra Prasad to express his views on the amendment. Apart from other things, he said in his landmark speech: "...when deciding the destinies of nations, dignities of people, dignities of leaders and dignities of parties ought to count for nothing. The destiny of the country ought to count for everything. It is because I feel that it would be in the interest not only of the Constituent Assembly so that it may function as one whole, so that it may have the reaction of the Muslim League before it proceeds to decision that I support the amendment..." He was frequently and loudly cheered and thunderously applauded for his logical, passionate and convincing views and appeal by the Congress members - his deadly foes. The amendment was accepted and the consideration of the Resolution was postponed to another session which was to meet in January (BAWS, Vol. 13, pp. 7, 9-14, and Keer, pp. 387-389).

The Assembly constituted An Advisory Committee consisting of 50 members including Dr. Ambedkar under the Chairmanship of Sardar Patel. It appointed various sub-Committees, and Dr. Ambedkar was appointed the member of Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Union Constitution and Flag Committee. He submitted a Memorandum to the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee in which he gave concrete shape to his constitutional ideas. The work done by Dr. Ambedkar in various Sub-Committees convinced the Congress bosses beyond doubt that the legislation and solidification of freedom would not be easy without his services.

While the Constituent Assembly was in the process of Constitution

making, the Bengal Legislative Assembly decided on 20 June 1947 to partition Bengal into East and West Bengal. Consequently the Constituency of Jessore and Khulna represented by Dr. Ambedkar was transferred to East Bengal though it had 52% Hindu and Scheduled Castes population. This technically rendered Dr. Ambedkar to be the part of Pakistan Constituent Assembly. But he decided to serve his people and resigned from the seat of East Bengal. In view of the contribution and quality of work of Dr. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly and various Committees, his services were found to be indispensable for framing of the Constitution. Therefore, the Congress Party got him re-elected and re-inducted to the Constituent Assembly in July 1947 from the Poona Constituency (BAWS, Vol.13, pp. 5, 25, 26).

A seven member Constitution Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Ambedkar was appointed on 29th August, 1947. Earlier he was inducted in the Nehru Cabinet as the first Law Minister of independent India on 3rd August. The Drafting Committee met on 30th August 1947 and set out on its epoch making task of drafting the Constitution - Supreme Law of free India. The Committee sat for total 141 days till February 13, 1948, and from 27th October, 1947 it sat day to day discussing and revising articles of the rough Draft in which Dr. Ambedkar himself conducted all the business. He worked almost singly and furiously, concentrating his hand, heart and head on the work of supreme national interest despite his deteriorating health. Fresh Draft of the Constitution as set tled by the Drafting Committee was submitted to the President of the Constituent Assembly on February 21, 1948. The Committee continued to function and deal with suggestions for amendments made from time to time. The Draft Constitution was before the public for eight months (BAWS, Vol. 13, pp.44, 1206).

Dr. Ambedkar introduced the monumental Draft Constitution as settled by the Drafting Committee to the Assembly for consideration on 4th November 1948. It contained 315 articles and 8 schedules as against 243 articles and 13 Schedules of the original Draft given to the Drafting Committee to work upon. After the consideration stage the number of articles went up to 386. Describing the Draft as a formidable document Dr. Ambedkar brought out in a grand, lucid, and elaborate speech its salient and special features, the whole of Assembly listening to him as one man. He brushed aside all criticism of the Draft which according to him was based on misconception and inadequate understanding of the articles. Speaking on the provisions for the safeguards for the minorities he said, "...I have no doubt that the Constituent Assembly has done wisely in providing such Safeguards for minorities as it has done. To diehards who have developed a kind of fanaticism against minority protection, I would like to say that minorities are an explosive force which, if it erupts, can blow up the whole fab-

ric of the State..No Constitution is perfect but the debates in the Provincial Assemblies give me courage to say that the Constitution as settled by the Drafting Committee is good enough to make in this country a start with. I feel that it is workable, it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace time and in war time. If things go wrong under the new Constitution, the reason will not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we will have to say is that man was vile." The whole Assembly was illuminated by the grand commentary given by Dr. Ambedkar on the Draft, and speaker after speaker paid glowing tributes to him for the lucid, symmetrical and brilliant exposition of the Constitution (BAWS, Vol. 13, pp.5 0-70).

The Clause wise discussion on the Draft (Second Reading) took place from 15th November 1948 to 17 October 1949. Dr. Ambedkar, as Chairman of the Drafting Committee had to explain many knotty points and niceties of law in response to the amendments proposed by the members and clarifications sought by them on various constitutional aspects of each article of the Draft Constitution. He wielded such an authority and demonstrated such an enviable wizardry on Constitutional matters that his word was considered to be final. The Vice President while chairing the proceeding of the Constituent Assembly gave a ruling on 15 November 1948 that after the reply had been given on the amendments by Dr. Ambedkar, he would not permit any further discussion (BAWS, Vol. 13, p. 327). During the year long clause wise debate on the Draft, letter and spirit of each clause and its grammar as well was discussed threadbare. Dr. Ambedkar gave clarifications, explanations and final word to the amendments moved by the members, questions raised and clarifications sought by them to the complete satisfaction of the House. The total number of amendments tabled was approximately 7,635, of which the total number of amendments actually moved in the house was 2,473.

The clause wise debate was concluded by the second week of November 1949. Third reading of the Draft Constitution commenced on 17th November 1949. On the conclusion of debate the Chief Architect revered as father of the Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar replied to the debate on his motion to pass the Constitution. In his historical speech delivered on 25th November 1949, he explained the philosophy and vision of the Constitution in lucid terms and cautioned those responsible to work it against the likely pitfalls and vulnerable areas in their path. He said that it took the period of two years, eleven months and seventeen days to produce one of the largest Constitutions in the world. In its final form, the Draft Constitution contained 395 articles and 8 Schedules. Replying to the points of criticism raised by the members he said: "However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be

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a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot",

Giving expression to some of his reflections on the future of the country, he said: "On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. If the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.

"On the 26th of January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again?... There is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater. If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, we must hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given, namely, 'not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions.' There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered life-long services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish Patriot Daniel O'Connell, 'no man can be grateful at the cost of his honor, no woman can be

grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.' This caution is far more necessary in the case of India, for in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship. The third thing we must do is not to be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well... Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. Social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life.

"...On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In Politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up. The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians—of Indians being one people... I am of opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psy-

chological sense of the word, the better for us. For then only we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realizing the goal. We have castes in India which are anti-national in the first place, because they bring about separation in social life. Secondly they are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paint. There can be no gain-saying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few and the many are not only beasts of burden, but also beasts of prey. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment; it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life. These down-trodden classes are tired of being governed; they are impatient to govern themselves. This urge for self-realization in the downtrodden classes must not be allowed to develop into a class struggle or class war. It would lead to a division of the House. That would indeed be a day of disaster. Therefore the sooner room is made for the realization of their aspiration, the better for the few, the better for the country, the better for the maintenance for its independence and the better for the continuance of its democratic structure. This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all spheres of life.

"...There is great danger of things going wrong... If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principle of Government of the people, for the people and by the people, let us resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them. That is the only way to serve the country. I know of no better". (BAWS, Vol. 13, pp. 1206-1218)

It is over seven decades that the Constitution has been guiding the destiny of the country without much of a problem. It has stood the test of

time and held the country together both in peace time and in war time. There have been some anxious moments but it sailed through safely. Being flexible and resilient it has adapted and can adapt to the needs of time fairly well as over hundred amendments suggest. But, the warning sounded by its Chief Architect against the possibility of things going wrong does not seem to have been taken with the seriousness it deserves. The marginalized and deprived sections continue to bear the brunt of deprivation, discrimination, degradation and poverty to a large extent. The majoritarianism has been showing its teeth and hero-worship seems to have become the order of the day. The ghost of dictatorship appears to be knocking at the door. The ideal of 'one nation one people' is yet to see the light of the day as the monster of caste continues to spew venom all around. The ruling dispensations seem to be tardy in recognizing the evils that lie across the path, and weak in initiative to remove them. The glaring discontent among the minorities and backward sections is almost touching the brim. It is not that the constitution is bad; it is the lack of will on the part of the ruling dispensations to implement it the way it should be. What is, therefore, needed is the willingness and resolve to implement the Constitution in letter and spirit to achieve its ideals. The clamor for changing the Constitution is a grossly misplaced idea the aim of which may be anything but not the overall interest of the people and the country as a whole. The best way to serve the country is to save the Constitution which can be done by the people particularly the united force of the SCs/STs/OBCs and the Minorities and others of open and progressive mind put together. It is the unity and unity alone of these people which can help them get power of law making and resolve their age old social and economic problems, and achieve the ideal of 'one people one nation'. That is why Babasaheb emphasized on unity among these people as a question of life and death. They must come under one banner, under one as sociation and under a single political body (BAWS Vol. 17, Pt. 3, p 333). That is the only way to 'Save Constitution, Save Democracy and Save Country'.

A community that doesn't have representation in the political power, that community is dead.

Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram

To get the power, there is a need of mass movement, converting that mass movement into votes, then converting votes into seats, further converting the seats into [power at] states, and lastly converting the [power at] states into [power at] center. This is the mission and aim for us.

Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram

We don't want social justice, we want social transformation. Social justice depends on the person in the power. Suppose at one time, some good leader comes to power and people get social justice and are happy but when a bad leader comes to power it turns into injustice again. So, we want whole social transformation.

Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram



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

Time For Real Action on Homelessness



Sue Frost
Sacramento County Supervisor

During my tenure on the Board of Supervisors, I've observed various approaches and strategies addressing the County's homelessness dilemma. In the past I have referred to the age-old concept of "the carrot and the stick" which frequently emerges in conversations about the governance and regulation of the homeless community. At its core, this idea reflects the universal balance we all strike between rules and rewards.

The complexity of this issue increases when considering a segment of our community that is battling mental health challenges and drug-related disorders. Such individuals can lose track of their possessions, remain unaware of their conditions due to "anosognosia," face the harshness of outdoor living, and regrettably, some become targets for nefarious elements within and outside their community.

My recent discussion with the Sheriff's Office brought forth a key insight: the homeless are not an isolated group, but an intrinsic part of our broader community. Their primary dis-

tingtion is the lack of a fixed address, and the conscious choice to detach from societal norms. This, understandably, presents unique challenges for our tax-paying society. For example, how does one monitor parolees without an address?

In the unincorporated areas of the County, the Board of Supervisors addresses these challenges by bridging the divide. Programs such as Navigator outreach, Park Rangers, Sheriff HOT Teams, and sweeps serve to maintain a connection with our homeless community. These operations identify encampments, determine if there are criminal records among inhabitants, combat human trafficking, and shield the most vulnerable. Sheriff Cooper's pragmatic approach to law enforcement underscores a simple truth: the laws exist, they merely need consistent application.

Recently, DA Thien Ho took an unprecedented step, sending a message to the City of Sacramento that reiterates this sentiment. His letter emphasizes the necessity for the City

of Sacramento to uphold existing laws, especially concerning the management of the downtown homeless population. The point isn't to demonize, but to highlight the importance of consistent enforcement of laws.

The current policy direction in our state has unfortunately widened the gaps in public safety and how we enforce laws.

But a lingering question remains, how much longer do taxpayers have to bear the burden of problems amplified by legislative inaction? This isn't just an abstract statement; it's a call for accountability!

Despite the obstacles, I remain hopeful. With leaders like DA Thien Ho and Sheriff Cooper standing up for justice and law, there's a silver lining. Even in the face of criticism, I hold a positive outlook for our Safe Stay communities.

Their mission is to pave the way for treatment and brighter prospects for those who need it most. DA Thien Ho's commitment to tackling Sacramento's homelessness issue sig-

nals a tide of change.

His candid criticism of Sacramento City's officials, especially regarding the inconsistent enforcement of rules, such as the encampment-clearing ordinance, resonates with many. A new approach is overdue. Residents of Sacramento, both in the County and City, should reside in a place free from illegal encampments, and most importantly everyone deserves an opportunity for a stable future.

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@sacounty.gov. 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 Murietta.

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