



AMBEDKAR TIMES Forum REMEMBERS
SAHIB SHRI KANSHI RAM ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Remembering Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji

Prem K. Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Dalit Chetna has its roots in the sufferings of its progenitors who never tired in making efforts to wake up their people/Samaj. The beginning was made in a more systematic manner during the life time of revered Jyotirao Phule who with the support of his bold life partner revered Savitri Bai Phule made stringent efforts to educate the lowest of the low while equating education with the milk of Lioness that whosoever drink it will roar like a lion. The flame of this struggle was taken up soon after by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy who founded Justice Party to struggle for long lost Dalit human rights during colonial India.

Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar became the legitimate heir of Phule-Periyar tradition of the generation of Dalit consciousness and took the same to new heights, never witnessed before since the beginning of the raising of voice against social exclusion and justice in the discourses by Tathagat Buddha. Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar remained on the platform of Dalit struggle from the time of his first publication on Genesis of Caste in 1916 till his last breath on December 6, 1956. From 1956 till 1972 Dalits in India experimented with his conversion formula to get rid of untouchability and getting organized under Dalit political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation, Republican Party of India) to fight back social segregation, political marginalization and economic peripheralisation. Conversion somehow could not succeed in throwing off the debris of untouchability even from the confines of their newly embraced religions. The experience with the distinct Dalit political parties also remained quite disheartening as at different electoral intervals Scheduled Castes failed to register victory. Reservation in the legislature both at state and national levels encouraged opportunists from within the rank and file of the low castes to get played in the hands of the upper castes masters in the mainstream political parties to be ready to come forward to defeat their counterparts from the Dalit political parties. That is why Babasaheb used to say that on the reserved seats deaf and dumb low castes are picked up by the shrewd mainstream political party bosses to defeat the genuine Dalit candidates from the Dalit Political Parties. This was the outcome of the failure of Communal Award hard earned by Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar.

A new wave came with the arrival of Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji on the political scene of the Dalit Politics in India as well as with the birth of Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra in the early 1970. It was also the time of the revival of Ad Dharam movement in Punjab by Mr. Mangu Ram, the namesake of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, who after long stay in England came to stay put in Jalandhar to work for the upliftment of the Dalit Samaj. Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji also made sincere efforts to stir new consciousness in the minds of Dalit people in Punjab while referring to the various achievements of the glorious Ad Dharam movement. Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji, in fact, had successfully been able to inject a new energy and passion among the Scheduled castes, especially of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, by bringing them together on the platform of BAMCEF, DS4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangarsh Samiti) and Bahujan Samaj Party. He was of the firm opinion that political power is the key to all locks of Dalit empowerment. He wanted to strengthen his own people and Samaj who had been taken for a free ride during centuries.

What Sahib Shri Kanshi Ji said and done for the Dalit Samaj has once again being realized by his followers and scholars of Dalit studies that the current times need him and his style of politics more strongly for the emancipation and empowerment of the Scheduled castes people.

Ambedkar Times (www.ambedkartimes.com) and Desh Doaba (www.deshdoaba.com) forum pay floral tributes to the fond memory and momentous work that Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji had done for his people and Samaj on his anniversary!!

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA) hosts Sukhmani Sahib Path



Last Sunday, October 3rd, 2021, newly formed Sri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg (CA) committee celebrated appointment of S.Charanjit Singh Channi as First Chief minister of Punjab from a egalitarian community. Mr Channi was handpicked from bunch of political leaders for his qualities of head and heart being the most deserving, influential, unbiased, impartial, and credible and above all an elite with masters and doctorate degrees under his belt. Not only the residents of Punjab but the migrants from Punjab (NRI's) living in USA, UK, CANADA and other countries of the world have high hopes from him to rebuild the Punjab .Founding member, Mr. Om Parkash Balley and Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber Chief Editor of "Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba" congratulated Sangat and gave best wishes to S. Charanjit Singh Channi. We are very happy to see Mr. Charanjit Singh Channi taking over as the Chief Minister of Punjab and promising to follow the imprints and footsteps of Baba sahib Dr. B R Ambedkar.

Sweets were distributed on this great occasion by various Sri Guru Ravidass Gurdwaras in California. This celebration was coordinated by the Supreme Council of Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas (USA). Thanks to Mr.

Shashi Paul and all the members of Supreme Council and Gurughar committee /members of Pittsburg, Sacramento, Yuba City, Fremont, Selma and Fresno for spearheading this event in their Gurughars respectively.

Gurughar committee at Pittsburg hosted Sukhmani Sahib Path and Lager Sewa and thanked Guru Maharaj for granting them this Sewa. Raagi Jatha of Bhai Gurnam Singh and Ompal Singh started the Kirtan Darbar. Raagi Jatha of Bhai Satnam Singh from San Jose delighted the Sangat with melodious Shabad Kirtan. Bibi Kamaljit Kaur also recited one Shabad and applauded & congratulated the New Chief Minister of Punjab. Mr. Abhishek Narabut General Secretary conducted stage very well.

May Waheguru bless new CM with all the strength and wisdom to be the greatest Chief Minister. We pray to Guru Sahib Ji for the success of S. Charanjit Singh Channi in improving the situation in Punjab, especially helping the underprivileged people with health, education, dignity and jobs.

Ramesh Suman
(Former: President & Chairman
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha
Pittsburg (CA)

See concerned pictures on pages 11 & 12



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Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba

Deterioration of Punjab's land, air, water and economy : Who is responsible?

In the July/September 2021 issue of the Journal of the Indian Social Science Institutions, Ph.D., Department of Economics, Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh A research paper published by Scholar Kariti Jain and Senior Professor Sucha Singh Gill entitled "Environmental Impacts of Groundwater Irrigation Economy: A Case Study of Indian Punjab" Attempts have been made to study various aspects of maintaining accuracy. This study is based on a survey of 320 farming families in 4 districts of Punjab. The results of this study try to show that the environment has not been maintained in Punjab with the methods adopted for agriculture. High crop densities and the use of inputs have led to degradation of land, air, water, and humans through a rich agricultural structure. Although mechanization has increased agricultural productivity, it has also caused environmental degradation. N.C. R. And in the adjoining states, a large num-

ber of deaths are caused every year due to road accidents and health disasters due to the 'smog created' by the paddy harvest. In order to overcome these problems, the present research study has tried to explain that there is an urgent need to spread awareness among the farmers about the benefits of soil testing and the use of organic fertilizers and organic pesticides. Due to the 'Green Revolution' fertile land has been depleted, natural crop diversification has been eroded and as a result Punjab is facing scarcity instead of abundance. Efforts have been made to make the ignorance of the farmers the focal point for the deteriorating environment of Punjab.

There is no doubt that Punjab's land, air, water and economy have deteriorated to a great extent in recent times, which is having a devastating effect on the lives of the people living here. Decades ago, due to natural crop diversification, the soil was fertile, the air and water were clean, the environment was healthy, and the economy was generally ahead of all the other states in the country. The social relations of the people were very warm.

The geographically very small (1.53 per cent) people of the state contributed more than 80 per cent to

the sacrifices and martyrdoms made for the independence of the country. In the three wars with our neighbor Pakistan, the people of Punjab made commendable contributions in body, mind and money. Punjab being a border state of the country is constantly forced to face various problems. During the Second World War, the country was facing severe shortage of foodgrains and their skyrocketing prices and these problems were also threatening the country's independence. These problems could be addressed as the development of the agricultural sector was given top priority by the Central Government during the first five year plan (1951-56). However, during the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61), the country again faced a shortage of foodgrains due to the central government's shifting of priority from agriculture to industrial development. Drought in most parts of the country in the two years between 1964-66 led to a sharp rise in foodgrains. The shortage of foodgrains in the country had increased

so much that the then central government had to face the dilemma of importing foodgrains from abroad. In the end, the central government sent PL from the US. Ordered foodgrains under 480 which cost the country dearly. To overcome this problem, the central government decided to adopt a 'new approach to agriculture' in the country. This agricultural technique was a bundle of high yielding seeds, guaranteed irrigation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, fungicides and other chemicals, machinery and modern farming methods. After the decision of the Union Government to adopt the 'New Technique of Agriculture', various aspects of different parts of the country were studied and this technique was adopted by the hard working farmers, farm laborers and rural small artisans of Punjab. Considering the rich natural resources, fertile land, proper ground water level, suitable climatic conditions for different crops, etc., priority was given to Punjab. The hard work of the farmers, farm laborers, and rural artisans of Punjab and the over-utilization of its rich natural resources have succeeded in overcoming the scarcity of foodgrains in the country to such an extent that the then Central Government Get rid of the stumbling block to order food grains.

Under the 'New Technique of Agriculture' introduced in Punjab, the immense increase in wheat productivity and production, which could be sustained for a long time, which led to some fundamental changes, was termed as 'Green Revolution'. The Central Government, in view of the outstanding contribution made by Punjab to the Central Foodgrains Reserve, has imposed the Minimum Support Price (MSP) policy on agricultural commodities since 1973. Paddy crop was not suitable for Punjab's agro-climatic conditions. During that time, kharif, cotton and maize were the major crops during the kharif season and basmati paddy was grown in some Shivalak semi-mountainous areas. Summer

Due to the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, fungicides and other chemicals in agricultural production in Punjab, and the 'pond irrigation' method for paddy crop, the fertility of the land has been steadily declining. Apart from this some land has either be-

ing sacks have become a source of debt for farmers.

The use of machinery and pesticides in the bundle of 'New Techniques of Agriculture' adopted in Punjab has taken a heavy toll on agricultural employment. It has had a devastating effect on all sections of the agricultural sector, but has hit the marginalized, and small farmers, landless farmers, farm laborers, and rural artisans. Farm laborers, and rural artisans are the two poles at the bottom of the ladder of the agricultural economy that are more prone to wear, more prone to



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come barren or is on the verge of becoming barren. Chemicals, 'pond irrigation' for paddy and forced burning of paddy straw and wheat stubble are constantly polluting the environment. Nowadays, every corner of Punjab has become poisonous due to which the creatures living here are often afflicted with innumerable dangerous and deadly diseases.

Punjab was first among all the states in the country in terms of ground water level and its quality. Due to sowing / sowing of paddy crop, the ground water level in Punjab has come down to dangerous levels. Dr. Gian Singh (author), Dr. Surinder Singh and Harwinder Singh's research study 'Groundwater Development in Punjab' has revealed that in the areas of Punjab where wheat / paddy crops are sown / planted, the ground water level is below dangerous levels. Has gone These areas cover more than three-quarters of Punjab. In 1960-61 there were only 7445 tubewells in Punjab and at present due to paddy sowing the number has gone up to around 15 lakh. Monoblock motors have stopped working due to continuous depletion of ground water, which has resulted in the installation of submersible motors, the high cost of which and the ever-increasing cost of their deepen-

breakage, and more prone to cold. These sections have no other means of production other than selling their labor.

Punjab has been the number one state in the country for a long time in terms of economy. Punjab's status has come down due to the agricultural policies of the governments, especially the Union Government. Young children of Punjab are going abroad due to lack of employment and very low standard of employment. Such a phenomenon is depriving Punjab of intellectual and capital as well as demographic benefits which people are paying a heavy price nowadays and it is not easy to predict what other problems / disadvantages this phenomenon will create in the future.

The above facts, their analysis and the peasant struggle show that the farmers of Punjab and other sections of agriculture are well aware of the inputs used in agricultural production. Also do not make sense. In order to control the deterioration of Punjab's land, air, water and economy, it is imperative that the governments, especially the Union Government, do their part so that the food security of the country is not jeopardized.



Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor. District 4



Sue Frost

2021-2022 Sacramento County TOT Grant Program

One of my favorite things to do as a County Supervisor is support local organizations that give back to the community. Nonprofit organizations fill gaps left by government, providing services and supporting cultural growth in a way that is more personal and more direct. Every year that I have been on the Board of Supervisors, we have been able to support the invaluable work of nonprofits with funds generated by the Transient Oc-



cupancy Tax (TOT), which comes from guests staying in hotels/motels. Through the TOT Grant Program, the Board of Supervisors awards a million dollars to nonprofits every year to help them enhance their impact on the community. I am thrilled that we are yet again launching the TOT Grant Program for the 2021-2022 cycle and the applications are open! For that reason, I thought that I would use this as an opportunity to increase awareness of the program and encourage as much participation as possible.

Applications are located here: bdm.saccounty.net/TOTGrantProgram

Applying organizations are required to be based in Sacramento County and must have specific programs they are requesting to fund. Programs can be for training, events that support tourism, address community issues, or that reach underserved populations. Applications are reviewed and measured by subject area experts and are divided by the subject areas of arts and culture, community development, economic/workforce development, and health and human services. The more specific applicants can be, the better. The more information about how an organization and program have helped and will continue to help the community, the better. All applications must be submitted online and on time. I want to stress all of those points because we receive so many applications and I want every organization to maximize its chances of receiving funds.

While the total amount of grant funds available is one million dollars, no single organization can receive that much. Grants can be no smaller than \$5,000 and no larger than \$50,000. Additionally, half of

the total grant funds is available for the communal competitive pool. The other half is divided among each Supervisor to award to organizations in their district, meaning a minimum of \$100,000 is guaranteed to go to our Supervisorial District 4. I love seeing the organizations in our district submit their proposals and it is never easy to pick who gets funds, but we have always had great successes in each of the communities in our district.

For example, in the past we have been able to secure over \$40,000 for the nonprofit "AboutKidz", where the funding went to purchase supplies throughout the year to equip children with a fully stocked backpack, new outfit and shoes. And last year we secured \$10,000 to "Citrus Heights HART" who provided rental assistance for Citrus Heights families who were in jeopardy of being evicted from their home due to unemployment as a result of COVID-19.

Applications for the TOT Grant Program are due no later than Monday, October 11th at 5:00 pm. As I mentioned, applications must be submitted online and no late applications will be accepted. The nonprofit organizations of Sacramento County do great work and enhance the quality of life for countless people. Whether your nonprofit organization is seeking to provide school supplies for children, organizing a community clean up, or expanding access to the arts, I encourage you to pull together your team and put together the best application possible. And if you know someone who has a local nonprofit, please send this information to them. The TOT Grant Program is a rare opportunity for us to directly support nonprofit organizations and I hope that many qualified organizations will jump on the opportunity.

Suicide Prevention Month: Help is Available

Suicidal thoughts, like other mental health conditions, can affect anyone



regardless of age, gender, or background. By recognizing the signs, knowing how to start a conversation and where to get help, you have the power to save a life.

If you are concerned about someone, ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide. Being direct provides an opportunity for them to talk about their distress. It will not suggest the idea if they aren't already thinking about it. The "Find the Words" section of the Know the Signs website suggests ways to start the conversation.

Help is Available

Suicide Prevention Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is operated by WellSpace Health, the region's Suicide Prevention Crisis Line. Calls are answered 24/7 by trained counselors.

Crisis Chat by Text. Text the word HOPE to 916-668-iCAN (4226). Crisis Chat and Texting are support services not meant for life-threatening situations. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the 24-hour Suicide Prevention Crisis Lines or 911. Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Services provides services including early intervention, outpatient services, case management services, crisis and intervention and stabilization services.

The National Alliance for Mental Illness/California (NAMI) has partnered with the Crisis Text Line, available 24/7. Text the word NAMI to 741741 and a crisis worker will respond.

The Trevor Project (for LGBTQ Young People): 1-866-488-7386
 Friendship Line (for Older Adults): 1-800-971-0016
 Trans Lifeline 1-877-565-8860
 Teen Line Call 1-800-852-8336 (from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. PST)

"Today, it's more important than ever before that we reach out and support each other," said Ryan Quist, Director of the Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services. "Most people thinking about suicide do not want to end their lives. If they can get through the crisis, treatment works."

Regional Parks Closes Three Boat Launches

The Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks is temporarily closing three boat launches to motorized boat launching along the American River due to low water levels. The closures will only affect motorized boat launching at the Howe and Watt

river access and Upper Sunrise recreation area boat launches.

These temporary closures begin today (Sept. 10, 2021) and will remain in place until further notice.

"Releases from Nimbus Dam are down to 550 cubic feet per second to conserve storage in Folsom Reservoir," said Liz Bellas, Director of Regional Parks. "The water levels are just too low for boats to safely get in and out at these access points. We will continue to monitor these boat launches and will open them when it is safe to do so."

To find an open boat launch near you, visit the Department of Regional Parks' Park Status page.

County Breastfeeding Program Receives USDA Award

The Sacramento County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program has received a WIC Breastfeeding Gold Award of Excellence 2021 award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This award recognizes the WIC agencies that provide exceptional breastfeeding promotion and support activities. Awardees serve as a model for other WIC agencies who want to



strengthen their breastfeeding promotion and support activities through their Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program.

The Sacramento County WIC Program has a history of program excellence. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program first received this award in 2016, which remained current for four years. In 2021, Sacramento County WIC was only one of four local WIC agencies to receive the award in the western region, which includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa.

The Sacramento County WIC Program was able to pivot quickly when the pandemic started in 2020, finding new ways to connect with families remotely by providing services by phone and video. One of the highlights of the BFPC Program is its virtual prenatal class, which gives participants an opportunity to meet their Peer Counselor and a Lactation
(Contd. on next page)



(Continue from page 3)
Consultant who will be supporting them after delivery.

"Our Breastfeeding Peer Counselors have done a wonderful job being responsive to the changing needs of the families we serve throughout this pandemic, providing exemplary services while keeping families and kids safe and healthy," said Chevon Kothari, Director of the Sacramento County Department of Health Services. "Their passion and dedication to supporting our families is exemplary and is what made receiving this award possible."

Breastfeeding is a practice that is proven to benefit both mothers and babies. It

helps mothers recover more quickly from childbirth, reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancers and may assist in losing weight after childbirth. Infants who are breastfed have a lower risk of developing asthma, ear infections, respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections and other ailments. The long-term benefits of breastfeeding may lower the child's risk of obesity, type 1 diabetes and childhood leukemia. Breastmilk contains all the nutrients babies need to grow and protects the baby's immune system.

For information about WIC services and eligibility, visit the Sacramento County WIC webpage.

Change of Name

I, Tejpal s/o Narender Singh

Currently Resident of:
3565 W Barstow Ave, Apt 122
Fresno, CA-93711, U.S.A.

Now I have changed my name

From: Tejpal
To: Tejpal Singh

All concerned Kindly note it.

Change of Name

I, Bir Singh s/o Gurdarshan Singh

Currently Resident of:
7464 E Simpson Ave,
Fresno, CA-93737, U.S.A.

Now I have changed my name

From: Bir Singh
To: Vir Singh

All concerned Kindly note it.



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A False Alarm – International Day of Equaity

PM Narendra Modi's address at the UNGA at New York on September 25 instant has prompted me to write again on the International Day of Equality immediately after my Tweet and Email message to PMO on September 21 on the subject. I quote from the address of PM Modi:-

"Respected Chairman

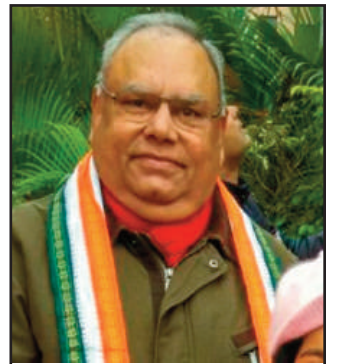
It was India that initiated the 'International Day of Non-Violence' on 02 October and 'International Day of Yoga' on 21 June. Similarly, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance are realities today due to efforts of India. India has always thought about the interests of the whole humankind and not about its own vested interests. This philosophy has always been the driving force of India's policies."

up at the UN, it will not only provide a sense of recognition to the cause dear to the weaker sections of the society in India but also add to the stature of India's international standing as did by International Day of Non-Violence and International Yoga Day".

It is simply not understandable what holds the GOI back in taking the stake holders in confidence and explain the position. We have no mind and intention to give any political color to the proposal on International Day of Equality. Ours is not a proposal to gain any brownie points but to get the due and just honour and recognition to one of the greatest sons of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar and to flag the lofty ideal of the UN to establish 'an equitable world order' of which India has been a staunch

the 'vote bank' of the followers of Ambedkar. Otherwise, they don't have any love lost for Ambedkar. It is evident and clear. But I must resist it here for the benefit of decision makers that the followers of Ambedkar, of late, are increasingly becoming conscious of the situation and they are watching carefully as to how to deal with the forthcoming scenario. They are no more interested in accepting the willful indifference on the part of the people at the helm in addressing the issues of concern and interest to the weaker sections of the society. The ruling outfits would ignore this ground reality at their own peril. What Mahatma Gandhi said about Ambedkar long before is equally true as of now too; "You can criticize Ambedkar but cannot ignore him". On one hand, there is an ongo-

ety, particularly the main stream Hindus, could not accept Ambedkar. The reasons, to my mind, was not only his political acumen and vision for the country and the society at large which did not go well with the so called Pundits or wise men but his belonging to so called low caste in the caste ridden society. But in spite



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While listening to the speech, I almost jumped on the sofa as I thought the moment has come when our proposal on the Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary, April 14 as International Day of Equality will see the light of the day and in the next sentence PM Modi would set the ball rolling. But that was not to be. It was a false alarm. Obviously, I was disappointed and decided to continue to persuade the GOI to consider the proposal and respond - Behosh Jo Paden Hain Sayad Unhen Jaga De – Rang Layegi Hamari Fakka Masti Ek Din The following extract from one of my letters to EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar would explain the 'false alarm' and my short lived moments of joy. I wrote to EAM Jaishankar in my letter of April 1, 2021:

" You are fully aware, Sir, if this proposal is accepted and taken

votary in pursuance of its 'soft power diplomacy' as rightly referred to by PM Narendra Modi in his September 25 speech from the high podium of the world body, the UN.

The only possible or plausible reason which comes to my mind as to why the GOI is sitting tight on the matter is that the promoters of the proposal are ordinary people like me and my associates and likeminded Ambedkarites in India and abroad and do not carry much weight politically, economically and socially. The Scheduled Caste MPs and MLAs and other big-wigs both in the ruling party and outfits in the opposition are blissfully silent – justifying the assertions of Manyawar Kanshi Ram in his book 'Chamcha Age'. It is a matter of regret. These politicians and parties are falling on each other to own the legacy of Ambedkar with an eye on



ing hoard among the political classes to encash Ambedkar and on the other there is a willful denial to provide him his due. It is not defensible. I am reminded of an Urdu shair of poet Sha-keel Badayuni:

kabhī yak-ba-yak tavajjoh kabhī
daf.atan taḡhāful
mujhe aazmā rahā hai koī ruḡh badal
badal kar

I wrote in these columns before also that Babasaheb Ambedkar could not get anything in life easily. He struggled hard throughout his life. In spite of proving his mettle at the national and international level, recognition and acceptance did not come as late as 1970s after almost 15 long years of his demise in December, 1956. The political leadership of the ruling Congress Party and also other political outfits willfully tried to sideline Ambedkar. The soci-

of all odds, Ambedkar's legacy was so potent that it could not be ignored for long. The polity of India started shaping up under the new Constitution of India of which Babasaheb Ambedkar himself was the chief architect. The life, mission and legacy of the great leader stirred the entire edifice to such an extent that it became difficult to ignore Ambedkar anymore. This fully explains that Ambedkar was such a phenomena which would surge forward on its own. The proposed International Day of Equality under the aegis of UN would not be an exception, I think. I only hope somebody in the Government of PM Narendra Modi listens and act. Sooner the better. I repeat that it is just not possible to ignore the greatest son of India. Babasaheb B.R.Ambedkar. We would continue till we reach.

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How Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' rendered Indian Shudra rulers powerless

The Brahmin priestly forces who, apart from being head priests in every kingdom, occupied the office of the prime minister in all Shudra monarchical states and other bureaucratic networks, have been in control of the State from the days of Kautilya, the author of 'Arthashastra' – a book of dangerous statecraft, writes Kanchallaiah Shepherd

BY KANCHA ILAIAH SHEPHERD
ON OCTOBER 1, 2021 NO COMMENTS

But for the accidental reading of Shahu Maharaj's letter to the former governor of Bombay presidency, Lord Sydenham, written in 1918, I would not have thought of writing this essay. As I wrote about Brahmin-Bania power over society and State both post Independence and earlier over the years amid threats to my life and cases foisted on me in various levels of courts, the Dwija pundits tried to dismiss my arguments. Many Brahmin-Bania liberal intellectuals argue that when so many Shudra kings ruled the Indian states in ancient and medieval times how could the Brahmin-Banias have controlled the system! For a long time, they also dismissed Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Jotirao Phule's observations about the grip of Brahmins on the State and society on the same grounds. But a lengthy letter written by Shahu, as the king of the Kolhapur state that existed till 1947 and belonged to the dynasty of the great king Chhatrapati Shivaji, provides an indisputable testimony of how the Shudra kings suffered under the spiritual and intellectual yoke of Brahmins. This control of Brahmin priestly forces who, apart from being head priests in every kingdom, occupied the office of the prime minister in all Shudra monarchical states and other bureaucratic networks, has existed from the days of Kautilya, the author of Arthashastra – a book of dangerous statecraft.

This essay looks at the history of Shudra kings and their fear of Brahmins from the days of Chandragupta Maurya's kingdom, in the light of Shahu Maharaj's letter.

Kautilya's Arthashastra stipulates that the State has to maintain the caste system in the following order:

"As the triple Vedas definitely determine the respective duties of the four castes and of the four orders of religious life, they are the most useful.

* The duty of the Brahman is study, teaching, performance of sacrifice, officiating in others' sacrificial performance and the giving and receiving of gifts.

* That of a Kshatriya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, military occupation, and protection of life.

* That of a Vaisya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade.

* That of a Sudra is the serving of the twice-born (dwijati), agriculture, cattle-breeding, and trade (varta), the profession of artisans and court-bards (karukusilavakarma)"[i]

" This people (loka) consisting of four castes and four orders of religious life, when governed by the king with his sceptre, will keep to their respective paths, ever devotedly adhering to their respective duties and occupations."

He further says "the observance of one's own duty leads one to Svarga (heaven) and infinite bliss (Anantya). When it is violated, the world will come to an end owing to confusion of castes and duties. Hence, the king shall never allow people to swerve from their duties; for whoever upholds his own duty, ever



adhering to the customs of the Aryas, and following the rules of caste and divisions of religious life, will surely be happy both here and hereafter. For the world, when maintained in accordance with injunctions of the triple Vedas, will surely progress, but never perish."[ii]

Having stipulated strict caste duties and condemning the Shudras to serve Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishyas by investing their labour power forever, Kautilya makes a false spiritual promise of granting moksha/heaven to the Shudras. The Shudra masses were made to believe that if they did not adhere to the caste order they would be punished by Brahmin gods both in this life and after death. Nowhere in the world have authors of religious books played with the lives of innocent productive masses, who were illiterate and ignorant, in such an evil manner. By portraying the Vedas as divine texts both Kautilya and Manu created a barbaric civil society and State. The Brahmins who came after them practised the spiritual and political ideology formulated in those books. No book of divine origin would divide people into such inhuman categories and let the combined institution of religion and State unleash fear – and promise heaven if they remained slaves. No slave in the world other than in India would accept this kind of barbaric book knowledge as God-given. The Shudras and Dalits of India

accepted this so-called divine sanction for millennia.

SHUDRA KINGS UNDER A SPELL

The Shudra kings of India from ancient days, particularly from the times of Chandragupta Maurya to the present, came under the mystic spiritual spell of Brahmin writers. Though they knew warfare and could negotiate with nature and produce food, the Shudra masses surrendered the written word to the Brahmin and internalized a psychology of enormous fear and slavishness. The Brahmin assumed the status of God, and the food producers began to fear

tion was established and the Arthashastra pushed that system into the State structure with a full violent force of the "fear of God".

Even the Shudra kings were forced to suppress their own brothers and sisters who were toiling in the fields. Kautilya gave full freedom and leisure time to Brahmins and entitled them to gifts from the State and Shudras at will. The duties that he assigned to the Shudras, Vaishyas and Kshatriyas, including giving gifts of wealth to the Brahmin, shows the Brahmins were completely freed from the labour and production process.

The so-called mental labour the Brahmin assigned himself was very negative. If the Shudras did not part with their wealth in the form of a gift, he would say the State had to punish them. The Shudras had to pay taxes to the State for its maintenance and also provide for the labour-free life of the entire population of Brahmins. The Brahmin has only been a receiver and never a giver at any time in Indian history. This idea of Bhodeva is opposite to the universal God who gives humans life, wealth and the knowledge to produce food from the earth and raise a family. Both the Brahmin god and the Brahmin himself are opposite to universal spiritual ethics and morals. Once the Shudra kings accepted Brahmin divinity, they lived against their own interests, framed laws against their own people.

CONSTITUTION VS MANUDHARMA

Given this background of the Brahmin written word and its mystic power in the past it is important to understand the present ruling Hindutva forces projecting only Vedic and post-Vedic books written by Brahmins like Arthashastra and Manusmriti and Vastyanana's Kamasutra as the source of Indian civilization. They are trying to re-establish the Arthasatric State and Manuwadi civil society even in the 21 century. Not many Shudras understand this historical process that they have been part of. As we have shown in The Shudras: Vision for New Path, K.B. Hedgewar, founder of Rashtriya SwayamsevakSangh (RSS), praises Manu's laws as being greater laws than the laws written by Lycurgus and Solon and says "To Constitutional pundits that (Manu's laws) means nothing". He had no respect for the Constitution that Ambedkar had helped draft and that paved the way for a person from the Other Backward Class (OBC) and the RSS, Narendra Modi, becoming the prime minister in 2014. While Modi was still the Prime Minister, Ram Madhav, an RSS leader, wrote in the introduction to his book Because India Comes

(Contd. on next page)

How Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' rendered Indian Shudra rulers powerless

(Continue from page 6)

First – Reflections on Nationalism, Identity and Culture (2020), "Through its living history of over five millennia, India has offered invaluable gems of wisdom enriching all of mankind ... This wisdom was proclaimed in Manusmriti, one of the oldest constitutions of India." He further quotes a Sanskrit sloka from the Manusmriti to say, "Men all over the world would come to beseech lessons in character through the lives of the great men born in this country." [iii] According to Madhav, Manu was the greatest wise man of India from whom great men of the world should learn how to institutionalize – perhaps, caste and untouchability. He knows pretty well that Ambedkar burnt this "great constitution", treating it as the most barbaric book, which does not deserve to be positively talked about at all. Madhav, a middle-aged RSS Brahmin leader from Andhra Pradesh, knows that the Shudras and Dalits all over the country treat Manu as anti-national, as their book, the Manusmriti, has made them perpetually slaves. Prime Minister Modi never takes the name of Manu – he takes the name of Gautam Buddha on international platforms – but Ram Madhav tells the Shudras/Dalits/Adivasis working for both the RSS and its affiliate, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), that they should follow only the Manusmriti that Ambedkar burnt and not the Constitution that Ambedkar championed, giving them equal rights with Brahmins, at least in the State institutions. In the Hindu spiritual system, Brahmins still control everything. Even the RSS Shudras/Dalits/Adivasis cannot become priests in the Hindu temples, even now. This is where the Shudras/Dalits and Adivasis working in the SanghParivar must realize that even in the 21st century the Brahmin leaders of the RSS from Hedgewar to Ram Madhav worship only Kautilya and Manu. They certainly don't look up to Ambedkar who wrote a Constitution that liberated them in the political and legal domain.

ORTHODOX VERSUS SECULAR BRAHMINS

The Hindutva Brahmins quite openly own Kautilya and Manu but the secular, liberal and left Brahmins by and large remain silent about them. They pretend as if the ancient thought of Brahmins does not matter. There is no left-liberal and secular critique of these texts written in a manner that we could use to counter the Hindutva Brahmins. The silence of left-liberal Brahmins must be treated, for all practical purposes, as them being in agreement with the Hindu Brahmins and hence the Shudra/Dalit/Adivasis must suspect their liberalism, secularism and socialism. There is however, a fundamental problem with the Shudra-ness and Brahmin-ness, which I will examine at

the end of this essay.

In the latter half of the last century, many leaders from Shudra castes became the chief ministers in different states and also state and central government ministers. For them, a question lies unanswered: for how long in Indian history the Shudra kings were made the slaves of the mystic powers of the Brahmin books? The RSS's calculated silence means that they want the mystic power of the Brahmins to remain unchecked. The RSS Brahmin leaders know enough now to not let go of the Manu and Kautilya who gave them enormous power in the political domain.

THE TYRANNY IN ARTHASHASTRA

The Arthashastra does not talk of Chandal and Adivasi as separate categories. In accordance with the Kautilyan classification, the Dalits and Adivasis are part of the Shudra category. In Kautilya's socio-legal formulation all the agrarian and artisanal masses are Shudras. But at the same time they all are fragmented based on their occupations and Kautilya asks the State not to allow them to move out of each one's occupation and caste boundaries. Due to this kind of long enforcement of caste-occupational rules by the brahmanic state power, the Shudra masses who constitute about more than 52 per cent population of modern India believe even now that they must surrender to Brahmin authority, spiritually and socially. Irrespective of what their economic and political status in modern India is, they treat the Brahmin as Bhoodevata. Such a mental surrender has not allowed their intellectual, philosophical and spiritual energies to evolve even now. The Shudra and Namasudra submission to Bengal Brahmins and Kayasthas, whatever their ideology, left or liberal or Hindutva, is a strong case in point.

Though there has been a lot of discussion about Manu's role in controlling the productive Shudra/Dalit/Adivasi masses with the iron grip of Brahmanism – through his socio-legal text Manusmriti – there is not much discussion around Kautilya's Arthashastra in terms of its role in controlling the State institutions as part of the brahmanical ideological apparatus through human management in accordance with the hierarchical Varna system. In his very serious critique of the Hindu social order, B.R. Ambedkar examined numerous key texts of Brahmanism except Arthashastra. But this is the text that strategized their perennial control over the State structure of India. They have a strong grip on the State institutions even in our times because the Kautilyan Varna classification has acted as the normative principle that guides the State. The so-called secular and liberal Dwij scholars have tried to hide this aspect of the Indian state as this provides them enormous scope to control post-Independence

State institutions and civil society.

Many get misled with the title of the book Arthashastra mistaking it for a text on the science of economics. It actually is a book that gives hegemonic control to Brahmanism in every field of state activity and weakens the potential of the productive forces – the Shudra and Dalits.

THE MISCHIEF IN KAMASUTRA

The third book is Kamasutra, written by ancient Brahmin author Vastayana. It was meant to control the Shudra/Dalit masses, particularly women. He turned Shudra/Dalit/Adivasi women into sexual objects.

On the contrary, Wendy Doniger, a well-known American Sanskrit scholar, writes "The Kamasutra is almost unique in classical Sanskrit literature in its near total disregard of class (varna) and caste (jati). Of course, power relations of many kinds – gender, wealth, political position, as well as caste – are implicit throughout the text. But wealth is what counts most." [iv] But that is not true if we look at the social distinctions mentioned while discussing sexuality. It is primarily a book for anti-production leisure of the Brahmin Kshatriya ruling class and Bania businessmen. Kamasutra stipulates that the Brahmin women should be wives of only Brahmin men but the Shudra/Dalit women should work as Granikas (sex workers) for nagarikas (the urbanite Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya leisure-centred male citizens).

No Shudra king in our long history could dare to oppose the brahmanical hegemony. Neither were they ingenious enough to record or authorize the history of the spiritual system of the productive masses that existed outside the brahmanical fold, nor did they establish schools for the Shudra children and commissioned writers to write books of their own, history, culture and civilization. The Shudras and Dwijas do not live like one nation. Rather, they are two different cultural and civilizational entities. Even the kings were made to obey the Brahmins unquestioningly as they themselves treated the Brahmin as God – Bhoodeva. Even the kings were like socio-spiritual slaves without any rights to read and write books. After getting the Kshatriya status some could learn to read and write but they too, having been injected with fear of the Brahmin-controlled gods, were forced to isolate themselves from the productive masses. The Shudra kings never realized that their ancestors had gods/goddesses who were different from the gods constructed by the Brahmins in their books. The gods in the Brahmins' books were mainly their war heroes. The Shudra gods/goddesses evolved mostly from their culture based on production and science and development (see this author's Why I am Not a Hindu) processes. But even today Shudra leaders revere Brahmin gods. Brah-

mins would tell the Shudra king that they themselves would curse the king if he did not obey them, or that their god would punish him. This whole spiritual ideology was a myth constructed to acquire wealth and power without getting involved in agrarian or artisanal production.

Shudras should have doubted this spiritual theory propagated both orally and textually, for like the Brahmins they, too, are humans. The Shudra kings were also made to fear the books that the Brahmins wrote as if they were god's words and the truth. When Brahmins told them they should not even touch their spiritual books the Shudras believed them. Such a dictum is patently a historical fraud committed in the name of spiritual theory. Once the right to read was taken away from Shudra/Dalit/Adivasi masses, their fear of Brahmins and their gods increased manifold.

Fortunately for us, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj has left evidence of the Brahmin grip on his state. He was a revolutionary ruler with a vision to overturn the caste hierarchy. He has put it on record the reality of his own kingdom – the Brahmin hegemony and control in all spheres of the state. His letter to the former governor of the Bombay Province talks about the role of Brahmins in that state. This is the only document available written by a king from the Shudra community with a commitment to their development.

Perhaps from the 3rd century BCE onwards, ever since Kautilya became the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya, the kings who came from the Shudra varna have been virtually under the control of the Brahmin prime minister and the head priest. The situation did not change much even after the reign of Muslim kings and the British. It is a known historical fact that the Shudra agrarian and artisanal communities never rebelled against the varna dharma order that the Vedas, Arthashastra and Manusmriti ordained. Until the British came and opened school education for the Shudras they had no right to educate themselves and express their point of view in writing. The Shudra masses could never organize themselves cutting across the internal caste-occupation divisions. Rather than helping them advance, brahmanical knowledge stalled the growth and transformation of the food producers who were the main source of the national wealth production.

Even the epigraphs from the Shudra kingdoms were written by Brahmins. Except Ashoka, no other king could reject Brahmin authority. King Ashoka did that only after he became a Buddhist. Quite ironically, after Ashoka's ancient Buddhist revolution and his pursuit of a welfare administration, a Brahmin counter-

(Contd. on next page)

How Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' rendered Indian Shudra rulers powerless

(Continue from page 7)

revolution took place with Pushyami-traShunga capturing power. Since then Kautilya's Arthashastra and Manu's Dharmashastra have been systematically used to suppress Shudras in all fields of life. From that period to that of the Muslim rulers all the kings ran the state apparatus with Brahmins as the real drivers of administration.

I have examined in detail the fundamental difference between the Buddhist political and social thought and the Brahmin thought in my book *God As Political Philosopher – Buddha's Challenge to Brahminism* (2000). After Buddhism became a major religion it influenced the kings who ruled India till Kautilya wrote Arthashastra, which changed the State structure in favour of the Brahmin ministers and priests regardless of whoever was the king. From Magadha rule to Nanda rule, that is till the 3rd century, Brahmins were not allowed to interfere with the State structure. Kautilya systematically planned to overthrow the Nanda dynasty and established the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, who was a Shudra, under his control. He became the prime minister and head priest. That authority and power of Brahmins continued into the post-colonial period as well.

It was a surprise to those of us who were born and brought up in Hyderabad, in Nizam's state, how Brahmin authority over civil society continued to play a critical controlling role. Though the Muslim rule here had lasted more than 300 years, as soon as it ended in 1948, a Brahmin, Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, became the first Chief Minister, marking the beginning of several years of Brahmin control over united Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Even during the Satavahana rule and later Kakatiya rule (from 13th Century AD onwards), the Brahmin bureaucratic and priestly power had continued unabated. The Kummaris, or potters, even today claim that Satavahanas belong to their community, which is of the lower Shudra order. Kakatiyas were Shudras, with several Shudra castes today claiming the community as their heritage. There is a strong claim that Kakatiyas were Kammas and Mudirajas in their organizational writings. The Kakatiya stone edicts, making adherence to the fourfold varna compulsory, were written by Brahmins.

Even the kings of the small princely states during the British colonial rule could not reject the Brahmin authority over what is now known as the Hindu system. The Shudra kings who fought bravely in battles with enemies feared the Brahmin spiritual power. All the Shudra warriors who won wars and became the kings were forced to take on the Kshatriya status without which the Brahmins said gods would punish them. Once they

were declared Kshatriya they were told to stay away from the Shudra masses and follow only the Brahmin's instructions and run the state in accordance with the Brahmin Prime Minister's directions.

In the domain of religion the Brahmin head priest guided the king. The priests regularly took gifts from the king. In many cases they got huge areas of cultivable land as the temple Agrahara land. The priest's family, over a period of time, made the land their private property. Again, this land was cultivated with the free labour of the Shudra masses. The priests and the ministers made the kings build massive temples for the Brahmin gods with State money in accordance with Agamashastras and the priesthood rights were taken in the name of Brahmin families in the vicinity.

In West Bengal, the famous Shudra woman queen Rani Rashmoni built a Dakshineswar Kali temple on the riverbed of Ganga at Hooghly in the 19th century. She bought 33 acres of land around the temple. But the Bengal Brahmins did not allow the queen to inaugurate the temple. They told her the temple would be functional only if she granted the entire piece of land and the temple to a Brahmin. She transferred the ownership of that land and the temple to Ramakrishana Paramhansa's elderly father Ramkumar Chattopadhyay and Paramhansa inherited that land and the temple. Paramhansa built his spiritual image from that temple and its property. Gradually, they erased the queen's place from history itself. Amitanghush Acharya, in his article in *The Hindu*, says, "As upper caste (Brahmin and Kayastha) Rajaram Mohan Roy, Easwar Chandra Vidhyasagar, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda gained prominence, Rani Rashmoni who was one of the most influential icons of the 19th century, was relegated to the margins of history." [v]

Thus Kautilya's book entitled Brahmins to free land, free labour and exclusive rights to education, which continues to be the most important property of that caste granted by both the State and civil society. Their power was acquired from books – Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Arthashastra and Manusmriti. They would not have retained such vast powers with physical strength or through any other method, except for the mystic power of the written word. With all that power and property, the Brahmins adapted to post-Independence India with a clever shift from Sanskrit to English as their private educational language. Under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (a Brahmin with Kashmiri roots) the Brahmins mostly educated in England captured the State and civil society institutions and the Brahmins who could not go to England for English education ei-

ther studied in local English-medium schools or in Sanskrit Gurukulas and became officers and priests in the temples. They defined all Shudras/Dalits/Adivasis as Hindu for keeping their political hegemony in a democratic polity without giving the Shudra/Dalit/Adivasi the basic spiritual rights. The Shudras/Dalits/Adivasis were forced to remain either illiterate or regional-language literates. Historically, the productive community's relationship with the king was quite consciously cut off by the Brahmin priest and the Prime Minister. The Shudra kings could not do anything to weaken the power of the Brahmin. The issue of graded inequality and caste-based human untouchability could have been gradually abolished if only the Shudra kings had rebelled against the Brahmin spiritual, social and political power. But

that power was so deeply entrenched and Brahmin's grip on the spiritual idea of god so strong that even the kings couldn't muster the courage to oppose the Brahmin. The Shudras – both rulers and masses – did not realize that they had a spiritual tradition of their own, independent of the Brahmin tradition. But unlike that of the Brahmins, their tradition was not recorded in a book and did not have a systematically trained priesthood. That was so because the Brahmins refused to educate them in their gurukulas and did not allow the Shudra kings to open schools of their own. The Shudra kings also naively believed that if they opened their own schools the Brahmins and their gods would curse them. There are many examples of great warrior Shudra kings surrendering to the Brahmin power of spiritual letter and mantra. Chhatrapati Shivaji of the present Maharashtra region was made to take Kshatriya-hood under the leadership of Brahmin priests. When the local Brahmins refused to coronate him, as he came from an ordinary Maratha family, he had a group of Brahmin priests brought from Kashi to crown him, thus surrendering to their spiritual authority. Even such a brave man could not think of training Shudra priests and keeping the religion under Shudra control. A man who fought Mughal rulers could not oppose the Brahmins who controlled the domain of religion. In fact, such a religion that was not open to all human beings could not be defined as religion. But the same Brahmin and Bania intellectuals defined Hinduism as an inclusive religion. The Shudra kings treated a Brahmin as God and gave whatever he demanded as the Kautilya stipulated in Arthashastra.

Take, for example, Sayajirao Gaekwad, the king of Baroda, who sent Ambedkar to the United States for higher education. He was a Shudra king. He was a visionary enough to send a brilliant Dalit student for his higher education to America. The scholarship given to Ambedkar came

with the obligation of working for Baroda state after he finished his education. Yet, when Ambedkar began working for the Baroda administration after returning from the US, the Brahmins intervened. Even in the 20th century, they had not come to terms with the fact that a Dalit man had become their superior/colleague. The fact that Ambedkar studied in Columbia University and London School of Economics mattered little to them. So the priestly caste forced the king to send him away, as it was not agreeable to them to provide him accommodation within the city. Within four days, in 1917, Ambedkar had to leave the job and go to Bombay. That was the power of Brahmins in the kingdom of a Shudra king who was sympathetic to the cause of educating the exploited castes, including Dalits. [vi]

Even under Muslim rule, there were Shudra local rulers who depended on the Brahmin, Kayastha or Khatri's knowledge of the Persian language. The Muslim rulers were also wary of the Brahmins because if they were not happy they would instigate the Shudra masses against the State. Hardly any Shudras learnt Persian in the Muslim period. There is no historical evidence that the Muslim rulers started Persian schools in villages to teach the Shudras who were main tillers of the land and builders of artisanal and animal economy.

It is true that rulers from Chandragupta Maurya to the kings of princely states in the colonial times and to the chief ministers of many states today have been Shudras. Yet, they could never control spiritual power. Their political power was heavily circumscribed by Brahmin bureaucrats and priests. The kings and the chief ministers have been virtually slaves to the varna spiritual control that the Brahmins imposed. This control remains intact as the Hindu spiritual system is not democratized.

Why were they so afraid of the Brahmin population which was so small and which never directly controlled the army? They had no role in food production and improvement of its technology. They in fact considered productive work in the fields as polluting. Yet their control on the Shudra masses and rulers was unbridled. As I said earlier their spiritual power came from the written word. The Brahmins spread all over India with their common language – Sanskrit – and the Shudra masses were forced to live in disconnected regions without a common language. It was not that the Brahmins did not learn the local languages. They learnt the languages and gradually Sanskritized them. Today all the regional languages that were developed by the productive masses over centuries have become Sanskritized in varying degrees. As the script of these languages developed, the Brahmin

(Contd. on next page)

How Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' rendered Indian Shudra rulers powerless

(Continue from page 8)

writers took to the task of injecting Sanskrit vocabulary. At the same time, they saw to it that the Shudra/Dalit masses did not learn Sanskrit or Persian under the Muslim rule and English under the British rule. Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar's lives are proof of how difficult it was for them to learn Sanskrit or English. Ambedkar had to learn Sanskrit in Germany. Even the children of Shudra kings had not received good education in Sanskrit, Persian or English by the time India achieved freedom from the British. Only the Dwijis whom Brahmins – particularly Kautilya and Manu – had historically given the status of three upper varnas that did not have to be involved in agrarian production or animal husbandry had become educated by 1947. Mahatma Gandhi, a Bania from Gujarat who was a son of the prime minister of a small princely state, and Nehru, a Brahmin with Kashmiri roots, became the main pillars of independent India. No Shudra king could get an English education like these two leaders. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a peasant Shudra, and Ambedkar, a Dalit, competed with them with foreign degrees but they were kept away from the positions where the real power lay. Ambedkar became a Buddhist and died and Patel died as an equal Shudra. However, to understand the role of Brahmins in the states led by Shudra kings under British colonialism it is important to carefully read the full text of the memorandum that king Shahu Maharaj (1874-1922) wrote to Lord Sydenham, the former Governor of Bombay province.

Shahu Maharaj realized that the priesthood was critical to controlling civil societal life. He says "they control the religious and even the secular life of the people". According to him a Brahmin is only for Brahmins. He describes the Indian society as "priest-ridden and caste divided". He calls the Deccan as a society that was groaning under the tyranny of the (Brahmin) priests.

They help each other at every place, in the darbar and in the court. They were the village land revenue officers called Kulkarnis who exploited the tillers. A similar system was also there in the rest of India, including in

Telangana led by a Muslim ruler. The revenue system was under the control of Brahmins in my childhood in today's Telangana state. Shahu thus came to a conclusion that unless a proportionate reservation system was put in place, the non-brahmin productive population wouldn't get justice. But from that day to the present, the whole issue has been revolving around jobs in the government sector. There has been no demand from Shudras at the basic structural level – priesthood and handling of spiritual philosophy – for a share in every aspect of Hindu life.

Brahmins established their hegemony through the spiritual system and that system became institutionalized through philosophical written text. But understanding philosophy and the role of each symbol in a religion requires a critical reading of the religious texts. The Shudras, whether they were rulers or tillers or artisans, have not focused on that fundamental issue of equality in religious life. For example, Ambedkar in his seminal work, Who Were The Shudras: How They Came to Be the Forth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society says:

"1) The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the Solar race. (2) There was a time when the Aryan society recognized only three Varnas, namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. (3) The Shudras did not form a separate Varna. They ranked as part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan society. (4) There was a continuous feud between the Shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities. (5) As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the Upanayana of the Shudras. (6) Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth Varna." [vii]

Ambedkar treats the Shudras as part of Aryan society. That may be because when he wrote this book the race question was not well studied with advanced methodological tools such as archeology and DNA studies.

Now it has been settled that Shudras are Indo-Dravidians with Indo-African roots. The significant question, however, in Ambedkar's thesis is his importance to the spiritual symbol, Upanayana (so-called sacred thread). The Brahmin priesthood is still associated with this symbol. Even now when the RSS defines all Shudras as Hindu, it does not want a debate on whether it wants all of them to get this right to Upanayana. The Shudra kings who were given the Kshatriya status got the Upanayana, yet they did not have the right to priesthood. Why? This fundamental control over religious power is exclusively kept in the hands of Brahmins. Today, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, while claiming to be Hindu, rather militantly, do not ask for the right to priesthood. But they ask for reservation in the State and in fact several Bania castes got the right to reservation quotas as they defined themselves as OBC.

The exclusive control of the spiritual system in the hands of Brahmins over its long history of political systems, monarchical and post-monarchical, made India a very stagnant nation. Even the priestly class did not face competition and never improved the systems in any meaningful direction. The Shudras and Dwijis, particularly Brahmins, remained frozen.

The Shudras and Dalits got stuck not only in social fragmentation but illiteracy, spiritual backwardness and lack of national and international exposure. Both the masses and rulers remained helpless in their unorganized way of life. Both the Brahminness and Shudra-ness became shackles and have kept the productive forces and market relations primitive. No revolutionary movements sprang up from the Shudra forces and the Brahmin-ness did not allow the priestly forces to self-reform with an understanding of the global changes. If not for the British – notwithstanding their violent colonialism – and their globalized knowledge system, the Brahmins, without any outside exposure, would have been even more regressive social forces in the subcontinent.

The Sanskrit language would not have given them any additional advantage other than the spiritual

control over the Shudra masses. All Indians lived a very fate-bound life.

On the other hand, a dynamic spiritual discourse involving the masses would have changed every other sphere from time to time. But Brahmanism was uncannily successful in assimilating and swallowing up all the revolt against its oppressive spiritual conspiracy. The only major shake-up that the Shudra masses and the Dwij encountered collectively in their living history was the Freedom Struggle. Even the arrival of Islamic rule and its existence in India did not bring about any significant revolutionary change in Indian life. The Muslim rulers and the Muslim ruling class remained more aligned with the Brahmins and other Dwijis than with the Shudras, both when they established their administrative authority over most of the subcontinent or in specific regions like Telangana, Mysore, Junagadh and so on. This historical fact needs a separate study.

[i] Kautilya, Arthashastra, Shamahastri's translation, p 10
https://ia802703.us.archive.org/13/items/Arthashastra_English_Translation/Arthashastra_of_Chanakya_-_English.pdf Page 10

[ii] Ibid, p 10-11

[iii] Ram Madhav, Because India Comes First: Reflections on Nationalism, Identity and Culture, Westland, Chennai, 2020 (Accessed here: <https://www.amazon.in/Because-India-Comes-First-Reflections-ebook/dp/B08LDMMV2X?asin=B08LDMMV2X&revisionId=5e8f7294&format=1&depth=1> kindle version)

[iv] Wendy Doniger, 'What is the Kamasutra really about? Wendy Doniger reads the classic text', Scroll, 6 August 2015

[v] <https://www.thehindu.com/society/the-shudra-queen-rashmoni-and-a-sacred-river/article34847554.ece>

[vi] http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_waiting.html

[vii] Ambedkar B.R., Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Volume 7, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990, 11-12.

**Courtesy: FORWARD Press
How Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' rendered Indian Shudra rulers powerless**

"Freedom of mind is the real freedom"

A person, whose mind is not free though he may not be in chains, is a slave, not a free man.

One whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man.

One whose mind is not free though alive, is no better than dead.

Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence."

— Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Writings And Speeches:

A Ready Reference Manual

"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment.

It has to be cultivated.

We must realise that our people have yet to learn it.

Democracy in India is only a top-dressing

on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic."

— B.R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste



Ishwar Das Pawar
District and Sessions Judge (Retd.)

My Struggle in Life

My Guiding Principles in Service

Justice is not a blind man's lathi (walking stick.) It must have four eyes—one in each of the four directions. A judge must understand human psychology and the needs and requirements of society. He must also possess the power of discrimination—the intelligence and wisdom of separating the grain from the chaff, so to say, in order to hold evenly the scales of justice. He should be capable of rendering justice without fear or favor. Law is simply a flexible instrument in the hands of judges to be bent in the service of society and the nation and to enable our democracy to make a sustained effort to achieve its objective and the goal. Judiciary has thus to play an important role in the affairs of man and society. In order to prove worthy of the responsibility a judge shoulders, he should, in addition to the formal service rules governing him, suffer a self-imposed discipline.

When I went out to join the judiciary, I had carried in my mind certain principles to follow in the faithful, efficient, and dispassionate discharge of my duties; the loud and laudable ambitions of young age; and a flamboyant heart. I tried to measure up to them in my service as a judge. Here are some of those principles and the way how I applied them in practical life.

Parties to the litigation should be treated on the basis of equality irrespective of their creed, caste, community, or religion, whether big or small, rich or poor, weak or strong, state or subject. Equality before the law is a constitutional must. It should, however, always be kept in mind that a poor, helpless, and weak person should not suffer simply because he is so conditioned and situated. He should be helped by the judge so far as it is permissible under the law. Ultimately, it is the sacred duty and responsibility of the judge to see that justice is done. A poor man pitted against a rich and powerful party, an ordinary citizen, a man in the street and arraigned against the all-powerful administration suffers from certain obvious handicaps. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, he is equally entitled to get full and even-handed justice.

Parties and their lawyers should be treated with courtesy and respect. People come to courts with a grievance of their own and seek justice, and the bar and the courts are the two arms of the same machinery working in mutual cooperation and harmony for the achievement of the same objective—administration of justice weighed in golden scales. Therefore, the judge should be above suspicion like Caesar's wife. And for this purpose, justice should not only be done but should also appear to have been done. Parties and their counsel should be allowed full opportunity, even at personal inconvenience of the presiding officer, to have their full say.

The beauty of justice might be marred if a party or the counsel goes out of the courtroom with the grouse or even the feeling that he was not sufficiently and properly heard. Patient hearing is one of the greatest and essential qualities of the person presiding over a court of law and justice. The valuable motto of "hearing more and speaking less" should always be kept in view. This is the way how to understand cases.

At the same time, it is equally important to maintain and safeguard the decorum and dignity of the court. This is more in the interest of the public than of the court itself. But at the same time, the presiding officer should not be thin-skinned and unduly touchy. The minds of the litigants are exercised over and obsessed over their own cases, and the counsel have plenty of arguments to put forth, whatever the merits of the case finally be in the eyes of the judge. All these are to be received and considered with the care and sympathy it deserves.

In sex cases and, in particular, where the culprit has a fiduciary relation to the prosecutrix in cases of adultery, especially of food and medicines, and in cases of planned, cruel, and gruesome murders, guilty persons should be awarded exemplary punishment so that it serves its purpose in the individual case and also as a deterrent for others. This is necessary to protect the peace-loving citizens against the antisocial and abnormal conduct of criminals and turbulent elements. The best judgment is the one based on a compromise brought about with the consent and free will of the par-

ties. I was known to be good at compromises. It needs tact and patience on the part of the judge while tackling parties for a compromise. Even difficult cases can be handled successfully to the advantage of the parties. As one instance, I was at Tarn Taran. On the application of a creditor decreeholder, a notice was issued to the judgment-debtor to show cause why action should not be taken against him for offering resistance to the execution of the decree. In execution of money decree, the decreeholder had got attached a house of the judgment-debtor. The house was auctioned, and the sale was finally confirmed by the court in due course. The judgment-debtor offered resistance when the court official went to deliver possession of the house to the decree-holder, who himself was the purchaser of the property, of course, with the permission of the court. The judgment-debtor appeared before me in response to the notice. A very poor Mazhabi (lower caste person), he was accompanied by his young daughter, newly wed daughter-in-law, his wife, and a couple of other children. Instead of replying to the point of resistance, he repeatedly posed a question as to where his family should go if they were deprived of the house as they had no other house anywhere to live in. A real problem but there was a legal and final sale in favor of the decree-holder. He was a Jat and so not very calculating. In this context, I am reminded of a bania (trader/ moneylender) creditor producing, like a mystical juggler, a number of alternative formulas of a compromise with the result and difference of a few annas (term used for one 16th of an Indian rupee) in each case with the disputed sum running into thousands of rupees.

In the instant case, the Jat creditor had obtained a decree for Rs 3,100 and odd, and the sale of the house had brought him a sum even less than one hundred rupees. It was a chhappar-type (thatched roof) house situated in the abadi (population) of the Mazhabis (lower caste people) and therefore of little use to the purchaser. He however wanted to use it as a pressure lever. It was impossible for the poor judgment-debtor to make the payment and keep the house to himself. I thought of trying for a compromise, though it apparently looked a very difficult job. With great persuasion, the amount was brought down to Rs 2,000 by gradual scaling down. But it was no use to the judgment-debtor as he was too poor to pay this big sum. Further persistent persuasion brought forth the desired result. Sensing the mood of the parties and their counsel, I inquired from them as to what the actual amount originally advanced was. It was admitted by them that it was Rs 250 only. I suggested to the decree-holder that he should accept the original principal amount in full and final satisfaction of his decree. This almost surprised all concerned. But happily, the decree-holder agreed to the suggestion and an order followed. The judgment-debtor requested for a week's time for payment. He was, however, given a month's time to be on the safe side. Payment was made within the time allowed, and the poor, worried family retained their house. The payment so made was in full and final satisfaction of the huge decretal amount.

The compromise, though it looked a bit unusual, did not cause heart-burning to either party as it was entered into with free will on both sides.

Similarly at Nurpur in Kangra district, an eight-year-old case relating to a small piece of land, which had exhausted the parties both mentally and materially over the long period that passed, was settled through compromise though after a prolonged but tactful persuasion. The counsel for the parties were not in a mood to even talk of a compromise as they thought it was impossible in view of the stiff attitude of the parties. After the compromise, they exclaimed, "What a miraculous feat!" The parties were saved from further ruination.

Mixing up with the public at the station of posting should be strictly on restricted and selective basis. Mixing up with all sorts of people indiscriminately might create an awkward and sometimes very embarrassing situation. This has to be guarded against.

Wherever I went for the inspection of spot in pending cases I made it a point not to take even water within the bounds of that village or town. This may sound a bit too rigid an attitude but it pays. A small self-imposed disciplinary restriction might result in big gains and it did so in my case.

As an example: Once I went to village Sarhali,

about twenty-five kilometers from Tarn Taran, for the inspection of spot. It is a big village in a bite d mostly by Sandhu Jats. It has produced quite a number of important persons in

service in the field of education as well as in the public and political fields. The case under reference was between the Jats of the village on the one hand and the Udasi Sadhs (a particular sect of sages from the Sikh religion) on the other.

It related to a place which was claimed by the Jats to be a gurdwara (Sikh temple) while the claim of the Udasi Sadhs was that it was their dharamsala (a rest house for travelers).

There was in the village a family of Brahmin moneylenders who were related to a friend of mine. On learning that I was going to that village, the head of the family approached me in the courtroom through my friend and requested that I should also visit their house. The parties to the case and their counsel told me unequivocally that they had no objection to my visiting the house of the Brahman family, as they were in no way connected or interested in the case. I therefore accepted the invitation but declined their request that I should have tea with them.

After inspecting the spot, I went to the house of the Brahmins. The court officials also accompanied me besides the counsel for the parties and a large number of people who had gathered there. We were led to a very spacious hall that was a part of the house. It was packed with people. A good arrangement had been made—chairs, tables, fans, and flower vases—an impressive show it was. While the Jats, who were a party to the case, were seen inside the hall, none of the Udasi Sadhs was there. On my inquiring about them, I was told they were standing outside. Poor people! How could I be inside where men of one party were present while the men of the opposite party were standing outside? Therefore, they were also called in.

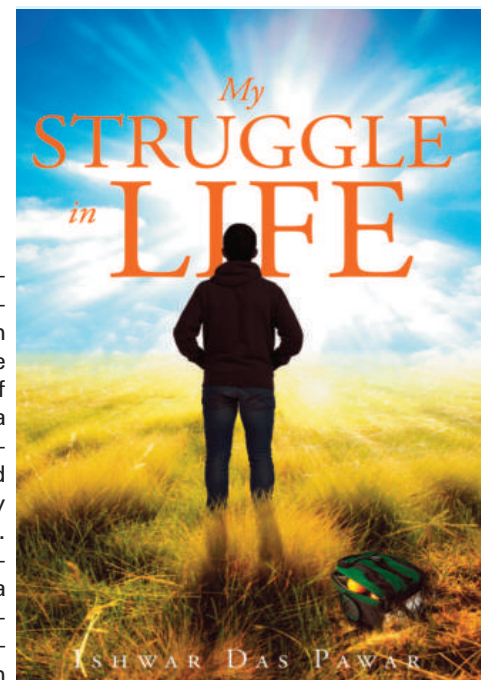
Soon, full plates of sweets, fruits, and snacks were brought in and soft drinks in the bargain. It created an awkward situation for me. I had made it clear at the time of accepting the invitation that I would not be taking anything during my visit to the house. But this was ignored by the host.

I was requested to start, but I politely declined. Pressure however mounted from the people, especially the host. I had to put up a strong resistance. As an alternative, they tried to press me to have at least a little of soft drinks. But that would not have made any difference. "All right. You must oblige us by taking only aqua pura (pure water)," said they. Agreeing to the request would have meant breaking of my principle of not taking anything at the place of my official visit. They were disappointed. I then asked the gathering to eat and drink their fill. All, including the parties, their counsel, court officials, and others made short work of the tempting eatables that lay before them in plenty.

Then I left. My host felt unhappy, but I could not help it. As a matter of fact, I was feeling thirsty. After covering a distance of about two miles on our way back, we came across a roadside well, and there I drank to the full the fresh, sweet, and refreshing water of the well. This was only one of the many occasions of the kind posing a difficult situation, but it was never an impassable hurdle. Determination and adherence to a vow taken solemnly always succeeds.

However, it should always be kept in mind that the well-meaning principles do not turn into bigotry of a sort, and it must be assured that they continue maintaining their rational character.

I tried in all earnestness and humility to follow the above principles in my service career and with a considerable amount of success. The self-imposed discipline made me strong and happy, and it also made many others as much happy.



Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA) hosts Sukhmani Sahib Path



All Pictures credit:
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