



RELEVANCE OF THE TEACHINGS OF TATHAGAT BUDDHA IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Editor-in-Chief: www.ambedkartimes.com

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weekly Newspapers



Teachings of Buddha are based on his long journey on the unknown path of self-realization – a path which everyone has to search for oneself. One has to lit one's own lamp! Tathagat Buddha began his search for an answer to an eternal question: Why one encounters *dukha* (suffering – physical, mental, moral & social). He abandoned his palace

and sought the company of recluses of his time. His sufferings did not emerge from any scarcity of material resources or physical ailments. In fact, It was the outcome of subtle realization on his part after a chance encounter of sickness, old age, and death – a realization that nothing is permanent in this world. It went so deep into his mind that if someone faces sickness, turned old and become dead then this will also be the fate of every human being irrespective of his status, age and place including his very self. Though Buddha was neither sick, nor old but his encounter with the sufferings of others made him convinced that every human being will pass through all such stages and finally has to face death. Such a realization forced him to renounce his palacial living, King father, beautiful wife, a very small son and to live a mendicant life full of self-invited sufferings. He began his search for the emancipation of sufferings of all sorts outside the palace and in the company of the known renouncers. He did what was told to do to attain the 'truth'. He practiced every formula, yogic exercise and put himself to self-severe physical afflictions to the extent of turning his body frame into a mere skeletal. Living for days just on a single grain. None did work. Finally, it became clear to him that answer to suffering cannot be found outside. It might have occurred to him that how come an answer to sufferings that experienced within could be located in the outer-world? This led him to chart a new journey in search of the 'truth' – a journey within his very self. It also made him realize that on this journey, the best way is the middle way – in between extreme indulgence and total renunciation! But what distinguished Tathagat Buddha from all other practioners of spiritual way of finding truth is his scientific approach to know 'thyself'. He taught us there is *dukha* in life. It has a cause. The cause can be tracked down. And the answer to get rid of that has to be found.

Another insight of the realized truth that he shared with the humanity is that all human beings are same. There is no upper and lower caste. Freedom, equality and social justice are the fundamental foundations for such a journey to launch within by each one of us. Sufferings begin in craving and it never ends at any stage of life. The only exit is to lit one's own lamp within. Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar found the noble way to the emancipation and empowerment of the lower castes in embracing Buddhism, which for him not a religion of rituals but of social justice, freedom and equality. It taught us to struggle for salvation through our own efforts. It did not ask for any mediator between the sufferers and the God. It called upon us to understand what caused our suffering and to find a way out. The way he suggested is: Educate, Agitate, and Organize!

Dr. Ambedkar Equality Day celebrated at Parliament Hill

The Dr. Ambedkar Equality Day celebration at the Parliament Hill - inspires MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) and MP Randeep Sarai (Surrey Center) to work together across the party lines in addressing the emerging issues of caste in Canada

Ottawa: A sense of gratitude and pride was felt by more than two hundred delegates from across Canada and the United States of America who participated in the Dr. Ambedkar Equality Day and the Jayanti Celebration hosted by MP Don Davies (Vancouver-Kingsway) and MP Randeep Sarai (Surrey Center) on May 6 and 7 at Parliament Hill in Ottawa. For many delegates, it was their first time to visit Canada's Parliament and participate in the educational sessions and celebrations of the many accomplishments of Baba Saheb Dr. Ambedkar.

On the opening day of celebrations, MP Sarai acknowledged the event and all delegates in his statement in the House of Commons and set a stage for the educational session and the celebration on the Parliament Hill. Sarai

was a key component of the celebration", says Bains.

"We applaud MP Davies and MP Sarai for their tremendous support in hosting the celebration and sharing their interest in working across the party lines to consider adding caste as a stand-alone category", says Jai Birdi, executive director of Chetna Association of Canada and a director for steering the planning of the celebration. Surjit Bains, a treasurer for the event, along with a prominent researcher Dr. Smita Pakhale, welcomed the delegates to the celebration.

Harjit Sohpaal (president of Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha, Vancouver), Ratan Jakhu (President, Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Montreal), Kuldeep Kailey (General Secretary, Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Ontario), Makhan Tut/Deo (Mamta Foundation Canada), Roop Lal Gaddu (ex-president, AISRO), Rashpaul Bhardwaj (president, AISRO), Prof. Arun Gautam (AIM Canada, Toronto), Gopal Lohia (of Shri 108 Sant Sar-



delivered a one-minute statement on Dr. Ambedkar's contributions.

A day after the event, on May 7, MP Davies read his statement in the House of Commons and described Dr. Ambedkar as a towering personality. Davies concluded his statement with the salutation, "Jai Bheem", a history making moment to hear the salutation in the parliament outside of India for the first time!

The event, planned and organized by Chetna Association of Canada and AICS Canada (Ambedkarite International Coordination Society), was inaugurated by Venerable Bhante Saranpala, Urban Buddhist Monk. Bhante Saranpala, along with four of his colleagues, recited Buddhist prayers. Land acknowledgment and gratitude were expressed on behalf of the organizers by Jasmine Ballely. The event included greetings by dignitaries and community leaders; a presentation on the caste movement across Canada by Professor Jangam of Carleton University; the host Members of Parliament MP Davies and MP Sarai; former member of parliament Frank Baylis: MP Chandra Arya (Nepean): MP Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton), and MP Param Bains (Stevenson- Richmond East). Manoj Bhangu, and Bill Basra were presented with recognition awards for their services.

Manjit Bains, co-chair for the event representing Chetna Association of Canada described the purpose for hosting the event while Anand Ballely described the history and contributions of AICS Canada.

"We are pleased to see the action planning

wan Dass Charitable Trust Western Canada and Punjabi Mela) represented their organizations and shared their greetings for the occasion.

Rajesh Angral, who contested in the Alberta Provincial Elections for the NDP, was also present and took notes of the proceedings. Dr. Paramjit Chumber and Dr. Harjinder Kumar of USA shared their poems.

Santokh Jassi, a journalist based in Montreal, explained the prominence of Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar and why he should be nominated for the Nobel Prize. Ratan Jakhu also included this sentiment in his message. High Commissioner of India, His Excellency Shri Sanjay Kumar Verma, was expected to be present and grace the occasion.

"However, I started receiving calls from some of the dignitaries in this room that they will not be able to attend the event if the High Commissioner is present. I spoke to His Excellency Shri Sanjay Kumar Verma in this regard. Considering the significance of this event, His Excellency agreed not to join us. However, he sends his best wishes for the success of the occasion and pays his tribute to the father of Indian Constitution Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar", announced Birdi.

"As the High Commissioner Verma was not present, the organizers presented the recognition award to his delegate for his 'outstanding leadership' on the following day," continued Birdi.

Several other dignitaries, including an MP of Bloc Quebecoise, participated and networked with the participants and organizers.

Report and pictures: Jai Birdi

WRITE IT ON THE WALLS OF YOUR HOUSES

OUR AIM AND ASPIRATION IS TO BE GOVERNING COMMUNITY

Dr. Ambedkar, then Mr. Bhimrao R Ambedkar, appeared on the political scene of the country in 1919 when he was called upon to give evidence before the Southborough Committee on Franchise. He was examined on 27 January 1919. His evidence and written Statement exhaustively covered various aspects of the Franchise highlighting the conditions of the Untouchables and need for their special treatment and empowerment in the new Constitution. He pointed out that the Untouchables, besides being very backward, were suffering under a great social tyranny. They had been ignored in any political scheme on the score that they had no interest to protect. He contended that though they had no large property to protect from confiscation but they had their very personal interests. He stressed that they must have their own men in the Council Hall to fight for the redress of their grievances as it was not enough to be electors only, it was necessary to be law-makers; otherwise those who could be law-makers, would be masters of those who could only be electors. Instead of leaving the untouchables to the mercy of the higher castes, the wiser policy would be to give power of governing to them who were anxious, not like others to usurp power but only to assert their natural place in society¹.

Born in a family of the lowest strata degraded and treated as untouchables under the tyrannical iniquitous socio-religious and economic Hindu Social Order, Dr. Ambedkar had suffered agony of the draconian stings of its inhuman social code from childhood itself. He endured the indignities with a stoic cool but steel resolve to liberate his community from the age old thralldom, and establish an egalitarian order with the invincible weapon of education and truth. During his interview with the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad, for scholarship for higher study in Columbia University, New York (U.S.A.) in June 1913, his resolve was conspicuously revealed when he said that by studying Sociology and Economics, and specifically public Finance, he could improve the condition of his backward community and practice social reform. He set out on this holy mission of his life never to look back².

His M.A. degree in Economics with Sociology, History, Political Science, Anthropology, Moral Philosophy, French and German languages as ancillaries; Ph.D in Economics from Columbia University, New York; M.Sc (Economics) and D.Sc (Economics) from London School of Economics; and Bar-at-Law from Grays Inn London bear the testimony of his weaponry of vast study to relentlessly pursue his mis-

sion. His thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce' and 'Administration and Finances of East India Company' (M.A), 'National Dividend of India - A Historic and Analytical Study (published subsequently under the title 'The Evolution of Provincial Finances in British India) (Ph.D)', Paper on 'Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' presented before the Anthropology Seminar of Dr. Goldenweiser (1916), 'Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finances in British India' (M.Sc), 'The Problem of the Rupee, its Origin and Its Solution' (D.Sc) and a paper on 'Responsibilities of a Responsible Government in India' read before the students' Union show his

ety was just like a tower which had several storeys without a ladder or an entrance. One was to die in the storey in which one was born. In his view the backwardness of the non-Brahmins was due to lack of education and power⁴. He launched his social movement for the uplift of the Untouchables by establishing an institution named 'Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha' on July 20, 1924 with its vow "Educate, Agitate and Organize"⁵.

A firm believer in the divine principle that self-help is the best help, he exhorted his people to rise up and fight for self-elevation and self-respect at their own. It was the noblest mission of his life that aimed at adding to

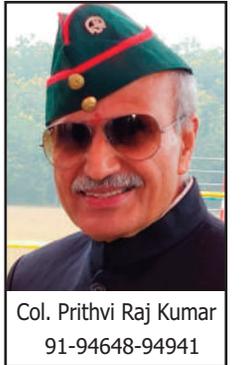
pouring into it a mixture of cow dung, cow urine, curd and water contained in one hundred and eight earthen pots⁷.

Dr. Ambedkar started a fortnightly Marathi paper "Bahishkrit Bharat" on April 3, 1927 as the

"Mooknayak" had stopped publishing in 1923. As the Municipality revoked its resolution to open the Tank to the Depressed Classes on August 4, 1927, he decided to resume the "Satyagraha" on December 25 and 26. But it was postponed on the intervention of District Magistrate on the ground of law and order situation. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ambedkar said, "...The aim of abolishing untouchability alone without trying to abolish the inequalities inherent in the caste-system is a very low aim. Let us remember 'not failure but low aim is a crime'. Not only the untouchability and restrictions regarding inter-caste dining must be removed, but inter-caste marriages must be made common. This alone will lead to the establishment of true equality. If we achieve success in our movement to unite all the Hindus in a single caste we shall have rendered the greatest service to the Indian nation in general and to the Hindu community in particular". The Hindu scripture 'Manu Smriti', containing draconian anti-human, anti-Shudras and anti-women laws was ceremoniously burnt by Dr. Ambedkar and his followers on December 25, 1927. It is a red letter day in the annals of India as it marked the beginning of social and political movement by Dr. Ambedkar for the liberation of his people, and to actualize the ideals of egalitarianism⁸.

Another historical movement (Satyagraha) launched by Dr. Ambedkar was 'Kalaram Temple Entry Movement' at Nasik on 02 March 1930. The purpose of the movement was to make an appeal to the Hindu mind, and to test whether the Hindus were willing to treat the untouchables as human beings and grant their humanitarian rights. He said millions of people might have visited the temple and have had a glance at the God made of stone but who would say that their basic problems were solved by this act. Their problem was social, political, religious, economic and educational etc. They were treated even worse than cats and dogs by the Hindus. The historic movement commenced on March 03, 1930. But the Hindus indulged in violence resulting in death of a protester. The Hindus did not allow them the entry, and the temple remained closed and guarded for the whole year. The

(Contd. on next page)



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extensive research and width and depth of erudition intended not only to provide solution to the socio-economic problems of his people, but also to bring about socio-economic reforms in the country to achieve the ideals of 'one India one people'.

A Barrister reinforced by multiple Doctorates on the subjects directly impacting the human life, Dr. Ambedkar was fully equipped as a lawyer and an authority to challenge the scholars of Economics and Sociology, and to storm into the Indian citadel to open the gates of socio-religious and economic liberation for his people and translate the idea of an egalitarian Indian State into reality. Speaking at the Conference of the Untouchables presided over by Ambedkar at Manggaon (Kolhapur State) on March 21, 1920, Shahu ji Maharaj declared in a prophetic vein: "You have found your savior in Ambedkar, I am confident that he will break your shackles. Not only that, a time will come when, so whispers my conscience, Ambedkar will shine as a front-rank leader of All India fame and appeal³."

He started a fortnightly paper *Mook Nayak*, leader of the dumb, on 31st January 1920 with the help of Maharaja. In the first issue of the paper, he brilliantly propounded its aim as awakening the Depressed Classes to their disabilities saying that India was a home of inequality. Hindu soci-

the nation's strength, health, wealth, honor and culture by relieving these dumb millions who crawled in the dust with hunger and thirst in their eyes and perished in hovels and dunghills. His messages of self-respect and self-elevation, unity and mass struggle started gathering force. He was so firm in his resolve and dedication to the cause of his people that the loss of his three sons and a daughter couldn't deter him from the mission⁶. Two momentous events in the life of Dr. Ambedkar and the Depressed Classes took place in 1927, namely his nomination as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and launch of the 'Mahad Satyagraha' for establishing their right to take water from the 'Chowdar Tank'. A conference of the Depressed Classes of Colaba District was held at Mahad on 19-20 March 1927. In his presidential address on 19 March he brought out the importance of self-respect and higher education to achieve equal human rights. Multiple resolutions were passed including introduction of inter-caste marriages as a measure to abolish the distinction of caste and establish egalitarian society. It was on 20th March that Babasaheb led the vast multitude of men and they all drank water from the Tank and vindicated their right. However, the evil-minded orthodox caste-Hindus indulged in violence against them after the incident. They purified the Tank by

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movement continued but the Hindu mind remained fossilized. Dr. Ambedkar made it clear that the movement was not for making the Depressed Classes worshippers of idols, but it was considered to be the best way of energizing and making them conscious of their position. As the purpose was achieved, the movement was, therefore, withdrawn in 1934. He advised the people to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education⁹.

While his relentless efforts to awaken, energize and inspire his people continued on social front, his fight for their political safeguards and power, and egalitarianism for the country also went on with back to the wall. Be it the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance (1925); Simon Commission (1928); three Round Table Conferences (1930-1932); Joint Committee of both Houses of British Parliament (1933) resulting in Government of India Act 1935 (Constitution of India till 26 January 1950); Bombay Provincial Legislative Assembly (1927-1939); Cripps Mission (1942); Governor General's Executive Council (1942-1946); Cabinet Mission (1946), he fought every inch to accomplish his mission. He firmly believed that problem of the downtrodden was political and their political empowerment and education were the answer. He set up a printing press and launched five news papers namely, *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, *Samata (Equality)*, *Janata* and *Prabuddha Bharat* to share his vision and philosophy. With the message of "struggle and more struggle; sacrifice and more sacrifice", "Do or die", "now or never", "unity" and "fearlessness and truth" for his people, he led them by example to prepare their heads, hearts and hands to achieve the mission of social liberation and political empowerment.

In his historic inspiring speech delivered at the meeting of untouchables at Madras on September 24, 1944, Dr. Ambedkar shared his life journey of struggle and sacrifice, and explained as to how mountains of hurdles were created in his way by the

Hindu orthodoxy and the Congress leadership but nothing could stand before his rock determination and steel resolve. Whenever any public question came up in the Round Table Conference (R.T.C), he proudly proved that he was a patriot far ahead of the gentlemen such as Mr. Gandhi and host of others in the conference who were supposed to be the patriots India. Mr. Gandhi attended the second R.T.C. (7th September - 31st December 1931) with a mandate to demand nothing short of Independence. But he was content with a most extraordinary thing of recommendations of the Simon Commission and Provincial Autonomy only. The British Government found it to be a God-sent opportunity to close the Conference at that point. But he (Babasaheb) was one of those who opposed Mr. Gandhi's stand and saved the situation. He said that Mr. Gandhi knew very little of politics. In view of his immaturity in political knowledge and the fact that he was not present at the first R.T.C. he managed to speak in the Conference before Mr. Gandhi to expose the whole business and let him know what the situation was. He spoke for one and half hour which was probably his longest speech in that country. When Mr. Gandhi spoke, he counteracted everything that had been said by him. The first sentence of Mr. Gandhi's speech was; "My heart is with Dr. Ambedkar but my head is not with him." This was nothing but a declaration of war by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress against the untouchables¹⁰.

Dr. Ambedkar further said that he and his people had thousand excuses to adopt the attitude of Mr. Carson, the Irish leader, who said "Damn your safeguards; I do not want to be ruled by you" but it was patriotic and generous on their part to ask for reasonable safeguards only in the interest of the country as a whole. They were forgetting the Brahmanical rule under which they had been suffering for the last 2,000 years in the hope that if they were given safeguards, they might with the help of the other generous elements in the country be able to build up a system in which this

country would grow to its fullest manhood and nationhood. Unfortunately, there was no adequate response from the Hindu Community. When the Lothian Franchise Committee went to investigate and ascertain the total number of Scheduled Castes people in the different States in 1932, all Hindus joined together in a conspiracy to tell the Committee that there was no such thing as Depressed Classes or Scheduled Castes in the country. This was done to defeat the project of separate electorate for the Scheduled Castes. When the British Government said in 1944 that it was prepared to grant freedom at the end of the war, it insisted that the Constitution should have the consent of all the important elements in the national life of India. He projected Scheduled Castes as an important element¹¹.

Referring to the ongoing talks between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi on the communal issue, he said that the communal problem was a wider problem involving not only Muslims but also Christians, Scheduled Classes and probably other minorities. Consequently, the wisest and safest and the most honest course would be for all representatives of the different minorities to sit together, place their cards on the table, and get in common consultations and arrive at an agreed decision. The sectional settlements and arrangements between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi appeared as deals between the two men who had decided to rob the third man and better their position. If Mr. Gandhi gave Mr. Jinnah something more than he was entitled to, that was going to someone out of his (Ambedkar's) share. It was most important policy of Mr. Gandhi somehow to acquire strength for the Congress by getting help of the largest party in the country and to intimidate the British Government to force it to come to terms without being obliged to grant the demand of the Scheduled Castes. Ever since the communal problem loomed large, Mr. Gandhi in his entire public career had done only one thing and that was to neglect the Scheduled Castes. At the R.T.C. Mr. Gandhi tried to isolate him (Dr. Ambedkar). He

failed for a long time and ultimately he used a weapon which no honest man would have used. He went to the Muslims and told Mr. Jinnah that he was prepared to grant his 14 demands provided he did not agree to "this dirty dog of Untouchables (Dr. Ambedkar)." Fortunately, Muslims did not agree to Gandhi's proposal¹².

Concluding the historic speech, Dr. Ambedkar said; "You should realize what our object is. Our aim and aspiration is to be a governing community. Let all of you bear that in mind and let all of you write it on the walls of your houses so that every day you should remember that the aspirations which we cherish, and the cause, which we are having is not a cause of a petty character. It is the biggest cause that we ever cherished in our hearts. That is to see that we are recognized as the Governing Community. If you realize that, you will recognize what tremendous effort we have to make in order to carry it into effect. Mere words will not count, mere resolutions will not count. We must build up our own strength. We must remove other causes. You could never gather strength by carrying on your local activities in a local manner and with local spirit. You must all learn to come under one banner; one association; and a single political body¹³".

Source: 1. (BAWS, Vol.1, pp. 251,255, 268); 2. (Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, struggles and Message by Dr. M.L.Sahare and Dr. Nalini Anil, pp.72, 73.) ; 3. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.42); 4. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.41); 5. (BAWS, Vol.17, Pt. 2, p.395); 6. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.66); 7. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, pp. 69-74, 79); 8. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, pp.80, 90, 100, 103, BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp. 22-24); 9. (Keer, pp.136-138, BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt.1, pp.181-185, 189, 202); 10. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 322-328); 11. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 329, 330); 12. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 330-332); 13. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 332, 333).



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Goodie Takhar, PhD

An Open Letter to Candidates in the Lok Sabha Election, 2024 International Day of Equality

Dear Candidates - aspiring MPs and the Voters

You may be aware that I am the initiator of the proposal on April 14, birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar, as the International Day of Equality to be declared under the aegis of the UN. I made this proposal to the then EAM Sushma Swaraj in June, 2015 in the run up to celebrate 125th birth anniversary of one of the greatest sons of India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as declared and observed by the GOI. Later this proposal was brought to the attention of PM Narendra Modi by the Forum of SC MPs under the stewardship of the then Speaker of Punjab Legislative Assembly, Sardar Charanjit Singh Atwal in a Memorandum submitted to PM Narendra Modi in November, 2015. Accordingly, for the first time, the birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar was celebrated at the UN in New Year in April, 2016. The proposal on International Day of Equality was duly made and appreciated at the prestigious function. On return from New York, Speaker Atwal Sahib wrote to PM Narendra Modi and submitted his report informing the Hon'ble PM that the proposal was made and requested the GOI to take it to the UN through diplo-

I take this opportunity to wish all the candidates in the fray all the best.

Yours truly,
(Ramesh Chander)
Ambassador – IFS (Retired)
Jalandhar

Text of my Facebook post of May 12, 2024
April 14, birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar, as International Day of Equality

Since June 2015, proposal on the International Day of Equality is resting with MEA and PMO of the GOI. We have been reminding the GOI on the pending proposal religiously and regularly but GOI has not responded. Why it is so? It is difficult to understand in spite of the fact both the ruling outfits and those of in the opposition are falling on each other to claim and own the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar. But when it comes to real issues, they get blissfully ignorant and silent.

I have two humble submissions to make in these days of Festival of Democracy that is Elections:

Vijay Kumar is very good idea and suggestion for the community at large ,, we are bound to ensure the dignity of Baba Sahib , which will definitely boost the morale of our community too

Roop Sidhu Great I fully support it
MamtaSood

Yes It's a very good decision

It's a real tribute to our BABA SAHIB JI.

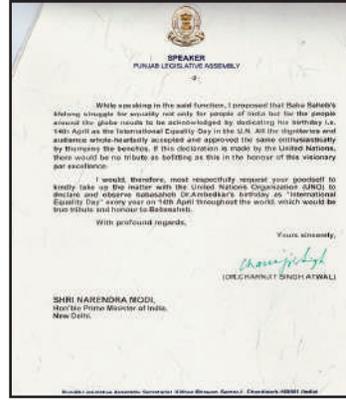
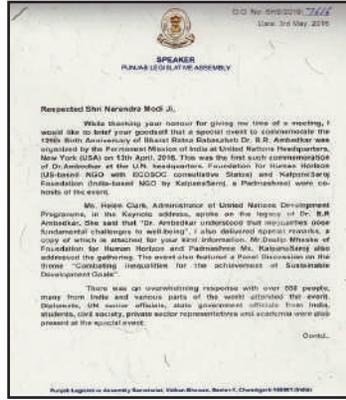
Arun Kumar

We are doing whatever we can do. But in India, people are not pushing this agenda. They must ask the candidates for their commitment to this cause.

Ramesh Chander Arun Kumar Thanks. I value your support. Our people don't understand. Even the so called Ambedkarite outfits are not even aware of



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matic channels. The rest is history. Most of the correspondence and related documents are available in my various blogs at: www.diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com and me perused. The proposal is resting in the cup-boards of MEA/PMO since then. I have been making some retrained and constrained noises but could not illicit any response from the MEA/PMO/GOI. The reason for this blissful silence could either be ignorance or arrogance. I am sorry to say.

The positive fallout of the noises, I made was that, by now, many states and cities in in the US, Canada, the UK among other countries had already declared April 14 as 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Day of Equality' and observe the day officially for the last many years. I will be failing in my duty if I don't mention my interlocutors and supports abroad like Chetna Association of Canada, Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organizations of the UK and others who supported the proposal on International Day of Equality and interacted with their local counterparts to honour the iconic personality, Babasaheb Ambedkar.

It is surprising that in spite of the fact that all political parties are falling on each other to own Ambedkar but their response to the proposal to honour Babasaheb Ambedkar at the high pedestal of the UN is not getting their attention. With a view to address this lop-sided attitude of the politicians, I thought of addressing this open letter to all the candidates in the ongoing festival of democracy, Lok Sabha Elections, 2024. The response to my latest post on the Facebook has further provoked my imagination to explore further support to the proposal. I urge all the candidates to kindly consider and support the proposal on April 14 to be declared as International Day of Equality. It will not only honour the greatest votary of equality, Babasaheb Ambedkar but also further strengthen cultural and soft diplomacy of India on the lines of International Day of Non-violence and International Day of Yoga. Before I quote that post, I conclude this with an often repeated poetic assertion –
Har Dardmand Dil Ko Rona Mera Rula De
Behosh Jo Paden Hain Shayad Une Jaga De

- i) All candidates, particularly dalits and reserved category, should consider and extend their support to the proposal on International Day of Equality.
- ii) All well-meaning and concerned voters may ask the candidates when they approach them for votes to support the proposal and qualify to earn their votes.

It is time to assert and demand due and rightful recognition to the greatest son of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Some random comments by my friends:

VB Soni Great suggestion.. I am presently in Boston. wpuld be back just a few days ahead of the elections. If approached by any candiadte I will certainly plug the line. Good luck.

Sita Ram Mahey

Yes we must exert pressure on the candidates to support our rightful demand.I will definitely do it.

Ronki Ram

Definitely, it needs to be taken up at this crucial time of, as you rightly out, the festival of electoral democracy!!

Balbinder Kumar

A very important initiative which is to be done as early as possible. We make a team and exert pressure on every political party. Jai Bhim

Vinod Kaul

Definitely Sir..

MadhuRachhna

Follow

This needs to be implemented, sir. Great suggestion.

Jai Bhim Jai Bharat

Kashmir Singh I will certainly take it up with the contestants of different parties on reserve seat.

Jai Birdi

Kashmir Singh thank you. Let us also take this to the general seats because Dr. Ambedkar was a great Nation Builder and worked towards inclusion for all.

Ramesh Chander

Jai Birdi Yes, Ambedkar was not the leader of dalits only. We the People of India proudly own him

Mohit Bhardwaj Salute to you Sir!

Hussan Lal

Good suggestion and must be followed till it is accepted

the issue.

Zile Singh

Only a minuscule percentage of Indian population is in support of this important issue. Not even all Dalits, Tribes and OBCs.

Recently, politics played in Ottawa during Equality Day celebration is very disturbing.

Ramesh Chander Zile Singh thanks Zile Singh ji. We would catch up on phone. I value your support.

Chaman Lal Great initiative, a befitting tribute to Baba Saheb, the great humanist emancipator! I shall make it a point to get in touch with various organisations to strongly take up with their fellows and politicians and push up the issue with them! Thank you!

Col Tilak Raj*It's a praiseworthy suggestion. All candidates contesting Lok Sabha elections must declare in their manifesto that they would do everything possible to achieve this goal.*

Ramesh Chander Chandigarh – Highly appreciate your enduring efforts in having our only par excellence saviour Dr. Ambedkar's birthday, April 14, to be declared as International Day of Equality.

Jai Pal Singh Kharar - We will definitely ask this question from the candidates coming for votes..

Lekh Raj Nayyar - Full support.

SurinderBhatti – Sir I really support.

Malkit Singh Beas – Would persue as suggested. Commendable.

Mohit Bhardwaj Advocate – Salute to you Sir.

Madhu Rachana Advocate – Very effective. We are with you, Sir/Ramesh Muley Pune – We support you, Sir earnestly.

Ronki Ram Chandigarh – Definitely, it needs to be taken up

Tirath Ram – It is a great suggestion to achieve the long pending agenda with GOI.

In addition to this, I have received several message of support and the course of action to carry forward the proposal on International Day of Equality. I think, the candidates in the elections and their political parties would take note of the emerging scenario and respect the wishes of their masters that is "We the people of India"

My Pantheon

I am an Indian--
A Muslim by birth
Living in a ghetto,
A Buddhist
Who came here in 1959,
A Hindu
Who holds the Ganges as sacred,
A Sikh soldier
Offering even his life blood at the borders,
A Parsee
Contributing richly to National wealth,
A tribal
Getting you the best native folk-craft !

Irrespective of my personal deities
I offer my services
To people of all pantheons !
I roll Beedis in dingy rooms,
I put my life in peril
To get you dazzling fireworks.
I go down the gutter
To decongest the sewer lines,
I water the fields before dawn in winter,
I load and unload your trucks,
I break stones
And spread bitumen on roads in June,
I cast lintels for your multi-floors
Though my house may have no doors !

I carve Idols for your temples,
And stitch and embroider attires
For deities and scriptures in your churches.
I weld iron for your grills and gates
At the cost of my vision!
You know who I am.
You know that work is my religion ?
All shades of work make my Pantheon !

As my pledges dissolve

I am a literate Indian,
Rather a well educated one!
I publicly declare myself secular
But all my altruistic declarations
Melt and vanish in thin air
When my interests clash with others.
I try to visit all places of worship
Yet lack equality of veneration
If it is not the church of my baptism!

I deplore every fanatic
But at times behave like one.
Even the gods of my religion
Fail to curb my desire
To cheat wherever I can.
I am an honest Indian
But don't mind accepting gifts
Which can facilitate people's official work!

I don't mind taking up cases
To plead in favour of clear offenders of law !
"Who is guilty until convicted?", I tell myself.
I avoid paying the bill when in a group
At the common work place canteen !
I don't mind asking for facilitation money
Before my patient's surgical procedure !
I don't mind sending my research scholar
To do the errands for my wife !
After all , it is only a part of human conduct
Which shouldn't render me less nationalistic !

God is the master example of forgiveness
So , He shall forgive my infirmities ,too.
And I can continue to count among good people!
Why do you blame me
When you are guilty of similar slips of conduct?
It doesn't make me a lesser Indian , I tell myself.
What a relief that my conscience is clear
In spite of all this.
Thank God ! Thank God !

Be it any land...

Whichever the continent
Or the unit called country
The same tenets of faking
Hold good to serve the masters
To stay in control .



DESH BIR
+91-98780-24304

Born in 1951 and brought up and schooled in Kangra district of erstwhile Punjab (now Himachal Pradesh), Desh Bir did his M.A. in English from DAV College, Jalandhar and topped the GND University, Amritsar. Taught at DAV College, Jalandhar for three years before joining Punjab Govt. Education Service in 1976 as a Lecturer at Govt. College Hoshiarpur. He was selected in Central Services based on combined UPSC exam for IAS etc in 1978, but chose to stay in Education. He was promoted as Principal, Govt. College, Hoshiarpur, in July, 2006 and retired in October, 2009. After retirement, he was appointed as Ombudsman, NREGA for five districts of Punjab for four years. Has nearly 170 creative articles published in English Newspapers like Daily Post, Deccan Herald, The Tribune, Daily World, Punjab Advance and Kashmir Vision. Lately, he has taken to poetry for pouring out his intensely felt perceptions

They succeed in their role
When they take their lessons
From Orwell's 'Animal Farm'.

They know that people
At once grab the latest post
And easily forget the earlier edicts.
Rather, people start doubting
Their own abilities to remember.
This is happening abroad
Where an official version
Of falsehood is sent afloat
So that the boss returns to power again.

This has happened in all lands
And in all seasons across history.
It happens in your own land !
Once entrenched, they think
It is their throne for ever !

They forget
That time is another name for change!
It must roll on and on
And bring new things and people
To breathe in freshness
Which stands for life!
It happens with men , manners and systems
And will continue to happen
Without the foolish lot learning any lesson
Except that of sticking to authority!
God save such a lot !

Live your expense

Nothing is everlasting here,
Neither status nor riches,
Neither anonymity nor penury.
Your day was waiting to arrive !
You never owned an inch of land!
Only had a poor cottage pitched on stilts
On occupied common land of the village!

Today, in three countries
You have a hearth!
One child in Vancouver ,
Another in Perth !
The village landlord's progeny
Took to drugs
And vanished in ignominy!

The Moving Finger had ordained it
And by it you were dictated
To dream , think and act,
And make your dreams a fact!

Your children read the writing on the wall,
Interpreted Nature's cosmic dance
And grabbed their chance
By invoking education- the great blessing !

The wheel came full circle
And filled the bucket
With material joy
And emotional fulfillment !
Perhaps , in divine scheme
It happens quite often that way.
Thank your often-blamed God
Now that it is Your Day !

You Know it

I lay bricks for your house,
I pull the rickshaw for you,
I pick the junk from your parks
I parch corn at the corner,
I raise cows for your milk,
I sweep your roads daily,
I scrub and mop your floors,
And do the laundry for you.
I raise fruit and veggies
And rice and wheat, too.

I mend your injured shoes
And polish them , too.
I wash your utensils at home
And cups of tea at shops.
Do ironing to smarten your dresses.
I restore the electric supply
Even at the darkest hour.
I lay the table for you
At the Food Court
With the best delicacies.

I bear your children,
And rear them ,too !
I cook for them,
Fear for them,
Live for them,
And die for them !
You say
That you know it !
Yet, you know not a fraction of it...
Because you haven't
Walked a day in my shoes!

That's in my own Land

I am either Ram Khilawan or Shiva
Or Bandhan or , may be , Kisna !
The thread that may join
All these names of mine
Is my dress code and skin .

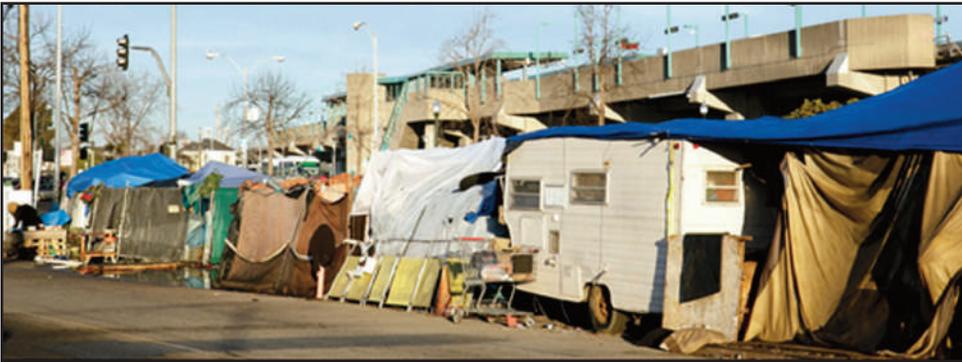
Skin that is not fair,
And a not-very-clean shirt,
As I can't do the washing everyday,
And a lungi and hawai chappals
Earn me the name "Bhaiya"!
Nothing that I may carry
In my heart or head
Is enough to change this branding
Which renders me an alien
In my own country!

Either I don't own any land
Or my holding doesn't yield enough
So I come in search of work
To another part of my country
Just as they go to Dubai
Or to Canada....
But those are certainly foreign lands ...
While my work place is in my own land.
Yet I am a category apart
An alien--- fit to be branded!

The only time
That I feel I am an Indian
Comes when it is election season !
Then in all states
The candidates come wooing me
With honeyed words
And promises of sops !
Yet I know that it is only for a week or so
And I shall regain my previous status ----
An alien in his own India!

Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Oversight Hearing on Homelessness
This week I participated in an Assembly oversight hearing on homelessness and it shined a light on a very troubling reality. After spending \$24



billion taxpayer dollars on homelessness, our lead agencies in California have no idea where the money has gone or how many people it has helped. This is a complete failure of leadership by Governor Newsom and it's time for the Legislature to demand more accountability.

When pressed, representatives from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) admitted they have no data to share on existing homelessness programs and investments. In fact, ICH claimed they would need even more money to implement transparency measures recommended by the State Auditor. This is completely unacceptable.

Earlier this year I authored AB 2903 to require state-run homelessness programs to annually report cost and outcome data to ICH. It would also require ICH to develop uniform procedures for collecting the data and reporting it to the public. This implements the recommendation of the California State Auditor following the results of a recent audit that I requested, which found that the state has failed to systemically track homelessness spending and is not adequately positioned to collect data and assess outcomes.

According to the Auditor's report, California has spent nearly \$24 billion taxpayer dollars since 2018 to solve our homelessness crisis. During that same period the state's overall homeless population increased by 32 percent and half of the nation's unsheltered homeless now live in California.

"Aztec Solar" Named Small Business of the Month

Excited to announce Aztec Solar as our Small Business of the Month for May 2024. It is located at



11370 Trade Center Dr in Rancho Cordova and is open Monday through Fri-

day from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Aztec Solar is owned by Ed Murray, and has provided the Sacramento Region with their services for four decades, moving their headquar-

ters to Rancho Cordova in 2004. They are committed to meeting the energy needs of home and business owners by offering multiple top quality solar products and technologies, supported by knowledgeable solar experts and award winning customer service.

Ed Murray exhibits unwavering dedication to advancing solar energy through State and local policy. He actively contributes to the progress of the industry, serving on the Standards Committee of the Solar Ratings and Certification Corporation, while also assuming the role of Chair for the Solar Heating and Cooling Division within the Solar Energy Industries Association. If you know of a small business that you think is deserving of being recognized, you can nominate them by clicking on this link.

New Podcast Episode

In this week's episode of the Point of Order Podcast I was joined by Assemblymember Kate Sanchez to dis-



cuss a number of topics including campus protests, NDAs in the legislative process, new legislation on self check-outs, the best state to be a police officer, community crime concerns, a lawsuit on homelessness in Sacramento, and a recent oversight hearing on homelessness spending.

CalFire Wildfire Preparedness Kickoff Event



Team Hoover joined CAL FIRE to kick off Wildfire Preparedness Week.

Our Office heard from the California Highway Patrol, Office of Emergency Services, the California Military Department, the California Conservation Corps, and the U.S. Forest Service regarding the ways they are working together to protect Californians this summer as we approach fire season. It was also encouraging to see the new tankers and fire fighting equipment the CAL FIRE Aviation Management Unit will be employing this year to fight fires more rapidly and effectively.

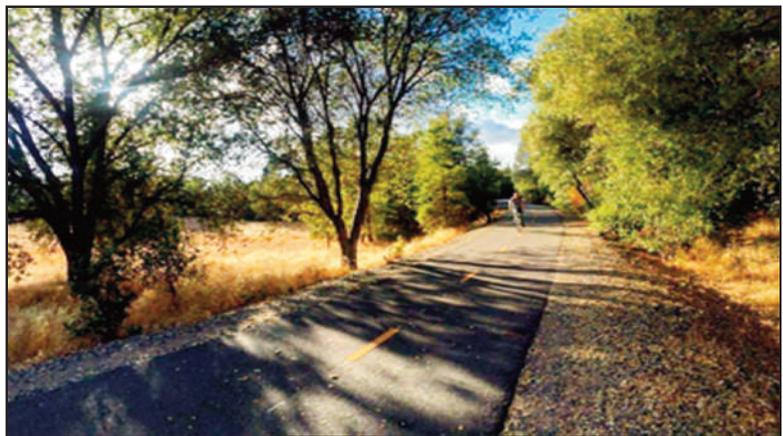
Community Meeting Recap

On Wednesday I wrapped up the fourth community meeting I have held in the past month (meeting locations: Carmichael, North Highlands, Orangevale, Folsom). One of my fa-



vorite parts of being a State representative is participating in these meetings, where I get to hear directly from the constituents about the important issues facing their lives. We talked about issues ranging from homelessness, road repairs, public safety, State budget, and more. I hope to see you at my next round of community meetings in the coming months.

Grand Opening of "Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail" in Citrus Heights



This past Saturday marked the grand opening of the new 2.9-mile Ar-

cade-Cripple Creek Trail, which stretches from the Arcade Creek Park Preserve in the western direction to Wachtel Way in the east, traversing over Arcade and Cripple Creeks en route. It passes through Mitchell Village Park before diverging to link with the rear of Tempo Park. Along its route, the Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail navigates six parks within Citrus Heights, with a small segment extending into two parks located in Orangevale. Collaborative efforts from the



Assemblyman Hoover

City of Citrus Heights, Sunrise Recreation and Park District, Orangevale Recreation and Park District, San Juan Unified School District, Sacramento County, and SMUD have been integral to the development and implementation of this project.

Celebrating the Oldest Organization in Folsom

This week my staff was on hand to celebrate the "birthday" of Natoma Masonic Lodge No. 64, which

was established on May 4, 1854, and is the oldest continuously operating organization in Folsom. They have a substantial and vibrant membership that are active in the local community,

and they operate in a great space which is available to rent.



Surjit Patar (1945–2024): The poet who sang of Punjab's collective consciousness

ASHUTOSH SHARMA

The celebrated poet, who passed away at 79, explored the region's cultural richness and pluralism, giving voice to its struggles and aspirations.

As I think of Surjit Patar, this following verse, which I had first heard on radio during my college days, reverberates in my mind:

Je ayi pathjhar taa fer ki hai
tu agli rutt ch yakeen rakhin,
main labh ke lyona kalma kito
Tu fullan jogi jameen rakhin...

(Never mind even if autumn descends, maintain faith in the forthcoming season;

I'll seek out and bring a scion for you, (till then) safeguard a piece of land as small as a flower)

In February 2022, I called the poet from Chandigarh to request a meeting. He invited me to his home in Ludhiana. I had to spend a few minutes looking for the address plaque, which had been obscured by plants. I came across an alley leading up to a room that was lined with hundreds of books stacked on both sides. Without a second thought, I rang the gate-bell. Someone showed me into the room. It was his workstation, a book house, a

nexus" of bureaucrats, politicians and the businessmen.

Even at 79, age hadn't really caught up with him. He had attended a literary function in Barnala district on May 10, a day before his death. Undeniably, he was the most celebrated and critically acclaimed poet from Punjab after Shiv Kumar Batalvi (1936-1973). He sang about the indomitable human spirit and optimism and justifiably belonged to the cultural lineage of the Sufi saints and poets, who continue to influence Punjab.

Patar's PhD thesis was on 'The evolution of folklore in Guru Nanak vani'. During his literary career, he translated Federico Garcia Lorca's Three Tragedies into Punjabi, Girish Karnad's play Naga-Mandala, and poems by Bertolt Brecht and Pablo Neruda. After retiring as professor of Punjabi at Punjab Agricultural University, he went on to serve as president of the Punjabi Sahitya Akademi and later the Punjab Arts Council. In 2015, he returned his Sahitya Akademi award in protest against a series of targeted killings of rationalists and communal attacks on minorities. He returned his Padma Shri in support of farmers protesting at Delhi's borders in 2020.

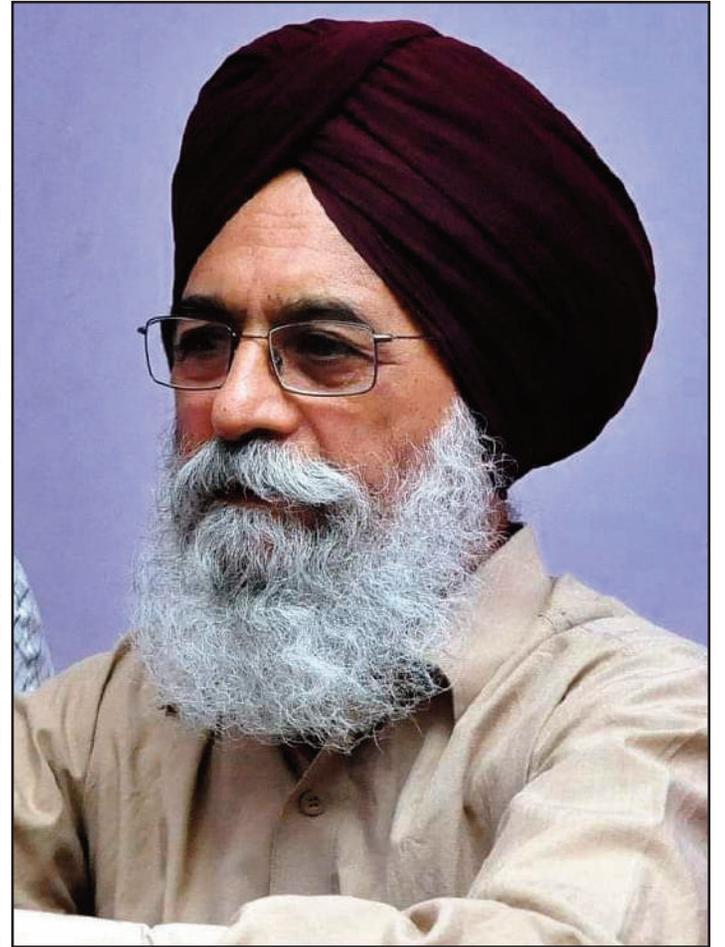
mukhi in the government schools whereas native children from well-off families go to convent schools to learn English. Patar would refer to Baba Sheikh Farid, a 13th century mystic poet, whose Punjabi poetry found its way in the Guru Granth Sahib, as a migrant. Farid's parents had come to Multan from Afghanistan.

While Patar frequently engaged with historical and contemporary events, he explored Punjab's collective consciousness and demonstrated a strong commitment to the arts as an instrument of social change. Whether delving into political issues, interpersonal relations, human struggles, or socio-economic hierarchies, his verses, of high aesthetic standards, abstain from sloganeering. His poetry appears to be located between an urge to say something in an unoffending way and a keeping frustratingly silent. He has spoken about this dilemma: "Kuchh keha taan hanera jarega kiven, Chup reha taan shamadaan ki kehenge (How will the darkness endure if I say something? If I remained silent, what will the candlelabrum say?"

Even when he wrote on sensitive subjects such as an ailing justice system, his ghazals resonated as contemporary folk melodies. Sample this verse: 'In these court rooms, the petitioners have become trees, They have dried-up listening to the judgments/ Tell them to return to their ruined homes/ For how long will they stand here rooted?'

The partition of Punjab, the surge of the Naxalite wave in the State and the armed insurgency impacted him deeply. In his epic poem, "Laggi Nazar Punjab Nu (Punjab has fallen under an evil eye)", there is no direct reference or a loud cry but his anguish is apparent as he scrutinises every aspect of the turmoil with an great subtlety.

In another poem, which he wrote during the days of the anti-Sikh violence triggered by the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, post Operation Blue Star, he talks with some sense of satisfaction about how a smirk on a poet-friend's face brought tears of joy to his eyes. 'My dear poet still understood the relation between



Then-President Pratibha Patil presents the Padma Shri to Surjit Singh in 2012.

bibliophile's haven, reflecting a vibrant tapestry of pluralism and cultural richness.

Soon the mild-mannered poet, with a flowing white beard, appeared. Wearing his trademark maroon turban, Patar greeted with a broad smile: "Jee aaya nu" (welcoming me with his heart). The books outside the room, he told me, were intended for dispatch to a local library. It was a practice that he performed regularly.

It was election time, and Patar dwelt upon the difference between khoti rajneeti (bad politics) and khari rajneeti (good politics). "Whether it is Punjab or India, we're in the grip of khoti rajneeti," he said, underlining the "politics of distraction" and "the

The foremost memory of his early childhood that remained etched in Patar's mind was that of his father, Harbhajan Singh, leaving for South Africa in search of work. Later, he would write about it in one of his songs: 'It was a foggy morning of a grubby winter, the dawn was yet to break, when my father left for the foreign land, there were tears and darkness in my mother's eyes'.

In 1999, he wrote a poem, Aaya Nand Kishore, exploring the relationship between migration, aspirations, livelihood and language. He captured the contemporary paradox in Punjab's society: The children of Purnvanchali migrant labourers, who work as farm labour, learn uda, aida of Gur-

my turban and my Guru. Those were the days when such relations were supposed to be forgotten. Those were the days meant to feign ignorance about such ethos'.

Punjab derives its name from two words: Punj (five) and Aab (water) and is historically known as land of five rivers, Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum. Besides people, the partition also divided rivers between Indian and Pakistani Punjab. While Sutlej, Ravi and Beas rivers flow in India, the remaining two, Chenab and Jhelum, are now across the border in Pakistan.

Patar talks about an undivided Punjab in another poem, renaming the five rivers: Maatam (mourning), Hinsa (violence), Dar (terror), Bebas (helplessness) and Anyaay (injustice). But the poem concludes with an optimistic tone as he expresses hope that the five rivers will come to be identified with Mausiqi (music), Shayari (poetry), Husn (beauty), Mohabbat (love), and Nyaay (justice) one day.

Avtar Singh Sandhu, the poet better known as Paash, had written in a letter to Patar: 'Having read your poems, I've experienced a rollercoaster of emotions, ranging from shock and excitement to fear, on numerous occasions. Undoubtedly, you are the greatest poet of our times'. His words, infused with passion and love, remain relevant to date. Paash was assassinated by Khalistani militants in 1988.

Patar concluded our conversation at his home quoting one of his iconic verses: 'A seed will certainly listen to what I say/ The entire forest seems involved in the plot invented by the air'.

Courtesy: The Tribune

My humble tribute to Surjit Patar

Dr. Jasbir Singh Kang

Surjit Patar, one of the most accomplished poets of contemporary times, left us two days ago, but he has left behind a treasure trove of his poetry and wisdom. He was a poet of hope, possessing the ability to articulate simple words on very complex issues. I had the privilege of meeting him when he visited us in Yuba City a few years ago, and I spoke to him about a community project just a few months ago. Despite receiving worldwide recognition and awards, he remained very humble. For those who can't read Punjabi, I am sharing two of his poems that I have attempted to translate into English in order to convey his thoughts, rather than simply providing a word-for-word translation.



"If I say something": one of the most popular poems of Surjit Patar.

"If I speak out, the darkness (representing those in power) will not tolerate it. If I stay silent, what will the lights (those fighting

against the darkness) say? If my song fades tonight, how will my companions bear my continued existence?

While others will rest under the trees where their loved ones are laid to rest.

These egotistic rulers fail to deliver justice;

These people are like emotionless stones. Those who face the gallows will not be erased from memory; Regimes will change, and a new day will dawn.

The words spoken in color will fade with time, and softly written words will vanish. When scorched hands etch words in the air, only those words will endure... forever.

Perhaps this is mere false hope (misconception) but someone may place a lamp on my tomb. If the current winds of injustice persist, the lamps at homes may

In this court of delayed justice, the people have become like old trees, perishing while waiting for justice.

Tell them to return to their ruined homes - how long must they endure this injustice?

Those who ventured to foreign lands in search of livelihood, upon their return, some will feel the burn of their mothers' funeral pyres,

even flicker and dim."

Poem of hope:

"So what if fall has arrived, Embrace optimism for the coming spring, I shall seek hope - new seeds -from somewhere afar, Kindly reserve an open land - a mind - for blossoming thoughts."



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