



# Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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## Freedom, Caste and Nation

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar said that "He who is not a slave of circumstances and is always ready and striving to change them in his favour, I call him free. One who is not a slave of usage, customs, of meaningless rituals and ceremonies, of superstitions and traditions; whose flame of reason has not been extinguished, I call him a free man." On the freedom of India while expressing his joy he said "Independence is no doubt a matter of joy. But let us not forget that this independence has thrown on us greater responsibilities. By independence, we have lost the excuse of blaming the British for anything going wrong. If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is a greater danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing." The evil of caste system continues to stay with us even after sixty-eight years of India's Independence! We have to blame ourselves for this bad deed. But the first question is who are these 'ourselves'? Why they did not put the caste to an end? On the contrary, caste seems to be rather getting further strengthened given the distribution of tickets for elections to the state assemblies and the national legislature. Even grassroots electoral bodies are not spared. Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar views that "There is no nation of Indians in the real sense of the world; it is yet to be created. In believing we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not yet a nation, in a social and psychological sense of the world, the better for us", sound perfect with the current ground realities in India.

To tackle the menace of caste and to put an end to it, Babasaheb struggled with full determination and courage. He did whatever possible within his reach to root out the caste system from the social soils of India. One of his seminal contributions in that regard is the drafting of the constitution of Independent India. In his own words, "I feel that the constitution is workable, it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peacetime and in wartime. Indeed, if I may say so, if things go wrong under the new Constitution, the reason will not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we will have to say is that Man was vile." He further said "On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of democracy which this Constituent Assembly has so laboriously built up."

Let us take a lesson from the warning of Babasaheb and join our hand to annihilate caste from India and usher in a new era of social democracy which facilitates the fulfillment of his dreams India: free from the evil of caste and vibrant with social justice and peace all around.

## Future of Parliamentary Democracy

This speech was delivered by Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar at D.A.V. College, Jalandhar on October 28th, 1951

I am indeed thankful to you for the great honour done to me of asking me to address the special session of your parliament. During my whole life I have been, so to say, a wanderer from subject to subject, from profession to profession. I began my career as a Professor of Political Economics in the Government Commerce College, Bombay after my return from England. But I soon felt that the Government Service was no good for a man who was bound by rules of discipline. He is hampered at every stage in his work of public service. I then went back to England and qualified for the Bar. After my return I rested for a short period and then accepted the post of the Principal of the Law College at Bombay. I came back to the profession of teaching. I worked as the Principal of the Law College for five years. Then the 1935 Government of India Act came into being which brought the popular legislatures into being for the first time. I then thought of taking a jump into politics and I left the service and took to politics. Since then I have alternately been doing legal practice and serving the public. Legal practice and public service are thus the alternating currents in my life, and I do not know on which current my life will end, whether A.C. or D.C.

I am very fond of the teaching profession. I am also very fond of students. I have dealt with them. I have lectured them in my life. This is the first opportunity I have got to address students since my resignation from the Cabinet. I am very glad to talk to students. A great deal of the future of this country must necessarily depend on the students of this country. Students are an intelligent part of the community and they can shape public opinion. I, therefore, take special pleasure in addressing you the members of the Parliament and I am really thankful for the opportunity given me.

When your principal wrote to me requesting me to address you, he did not indicate any particular

topic on which I shall speak to you this morning. But suddenly, as usually happens in my case, in the flash of a moment the subject became clear to me and I have decided to speak a few words to you on the subject of parliamentary government. The time at my disposal is very short and I will therefore be able to give only a brief analysis of the subject.

During the discussion in the Constituent Assembly there was a variety of opinion as regards the

nature of the Constitution that we should have. Some preferred the British system; some the American system. There were others who did not want either of these two types of government. But after a long discussion, a large majority of members came to a conclusion that the system of the Parliamentary Government as it is in Britain is best suited to our country.

There are some sections of people who do not like Parliamentary Government. Communists want the Russian type of government. The socialists are also against the present Constitution of India. They are agitating against it. They have declared that if they come to power, they will modify it. Personally speaking, I am very at-

tached to the Parliamentary system of Government. We must understand what it means and we must preserve it in constitution. What is meant by Parliamentary Government? There is a book on the English Constitution written by Walter Baggot; it is indeed a classic treatise. It was later expanded by other authorities on constitutional government like Laski and others. He has put the conception of the Parliamentary Government in one sentence. He says Parliamentary Government means government by discussion and not by fisticuffs. You will always find in the British system of Government that they hardly ever resort to fisticuffs when taking any decision. The decision is always taken after discussion. Nobody introduces the element of disturbance in the British

(Contd. on next page)



Read more: [http://www.ambedkartimes.com/about\\_ambedkar.htm](http://www.ambedkartimes.com/about_ambedkar.htm)



**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the First law minister of India**  
 seen with Principal Lala Gian Chand and Staff Members of DAV College, Jalandhar.  
 He addressed the Students parliaments on the topic "Future of Parliamentary democracy"  
 on 28th October, 1951 in the College hall.

# Future of Parliamentary Democracy

(Continue from page 1)

parliament. Look at French Politics. Decisions are arrived at more than often by knocking knockout blows. You will find that this system is hardly adequate to those not born in that system. It is an alien institution to them. We must learn, understand and make it a success.

Parliamentary democracy is unknown to us are present. But India, at one time, had Parliamentary institutions. India was far more advanced in ancient times. If you go throughout the Suktas of Mahaparinirvan, you will find ample evidence in support of my point. In these Suktas it is stated that while Bhagwan Buddha was dying at Kusinara (Kusinagara) a message to the effect was sent to the Mallas who were sitting in session at that time. They were decided that they should not close the session but would carry on with their work and would go to Kusinara after finishing the business of the Parliament. There are innumerable references in our literature to prove that the Parliamentary system of Government was not unknown to us. There are many rules about Parliamentary procedure. May's parliamentary practice is generally followed. One rule that is invariably followed everywhere is that there can be no discussion without a motion. That is why there is no discussion on a question. The rule was also practiced in our land in ancient times. The system of secret ballot now in vogue is also not new to us; it was followed in Buddhist Sanghas. They had the ballot papers which they called Salapatrakagrahakas. Unfortunately, we have lost this entire past heritage that was good. Historians of India must tackle this question as to why these parliamentary institutions disappeared from our land. But I find that they cannot or do not want to find out the reasons for it.

Ancient India was the master of the world. There was such intellectual freedom in ancient India as was nowhere else to be found. Then why was it that this ancient civilization went to the dogs? Why was India subject to autocratic monarchies? We were familiar with parliamentary institutions, we knew about votes, voting, committees and other things related to parliamentary institutions. Today the Parliamentary system of government is alien to us. If we go to a village, we will find that the villagers do not know what it is to vote, or what a party is. They find it something strange something alien. It is, therefore, a great problem as how to preserve this institution. We will have to educate the public; we will have to tell them the benefits of Parliamentary Democracy and of the Parliamentary system of Government. We know what Baggot means by Parliamentary government. But today his definition is of no use, it is utterly inadequate. There are three main things inherent in the Parliamentary system of Government. Parliamentary Government means negation of

hereditary rule. No person can claim to be a hereditary ruler. Whoever wants to rule must be elected by the people from time to time. He must obtain the approval of the people. Hereditary rule has no sanction in the Parliamentary system of government.

Secondly, any law, any measure applicable to the public life of the people must be based on the advice of the people chosen by the people. No single individual can presume the authority that he knows everything, that he can make the laws and carry the government. The laws are to be made by representatives of the people in the Parliament. They are the people who can advise the men in whose name the law can be proclaimed. That is the difference between the monarchical system Government and the democratic system Government. In monarchy, the affairs of the people are carried on in the name of the monarch and under the authority of the monarch. In democracy the affairs of the public are carried on in the name of the head of state but the laws and the executive measures are the authority on which the government is carried on. The head of state is the titular head; he is merely a symbol. He is consecrated 'Murti'. He can be worshipped but he is not allowed to carry out the government of the country. The government of the country is carried out, though in his name, by the elected representatives of the people.

Thirdly and lastly, the Parliamentary system of government means that at a stated period those who want to advise the head of state must have the confidence of the people in them renewed. In Britain, formerly, the Parliament were carried out every seven years. The Chartists agitated against this; they wanted annual elections. The motive behind this agitation was very praiseworthy indeed. It would have been best in the interests of the people if annual elections were held, had it been possible, of course. But Parliamentary elections are very costly affairs. So some sort of compromise was arrived at and a five year period was supposed to be the responsible period at which the legislators and the ministers were to go back to the people and obtain the fresh renewal of their confidence.

This is also not enough. The Parliamentary system of Government is much more than government by discussion. There are two pillars on which the Parliamentary system of Government rests. These are the fulcrums on which the mechanism works. Those two pillars are an opposition and free and fair elections. For the last 20 or 30 years we acclimatized to one single political party. We have nearly forgotten the necessity and importance of opposition for the fair working of Parliamentary Democracy.

We are continuously told that opposition is an evil. Here again we are forgetting what the past history has to tell us. You know that there were Ni-

bandhnars to interpret the Vedas and Smritis. They used to begin their comments on Slokas and Sutras by stating firstly the ParvaPakshs, the one side of the question. They used to follow up by given the Uttar Paksha, the other side. By this they wanted to show us that the question raised was not an easy question, it is a question where there is dispute, discussion and doubt. Then they used to give what they termed as Adhikaran where they used to criticize both the Pakshas. Finally, they gave the Siddhant, their own decisions. From here we can find that all our ancient teachers believed in the two party system of Government.

One important thing in the Parliamentary Democracy is that people should know the other side, if there are two sides to a question. Hence a functional opposition is required. Opposition is the key to a free political life. No democracy can do without it. Britain and Canada, the two exponents of the Parliamentary system of Government, recognize this important fact and in both countries the Leader of the Opposition is paid a salary by the Government.

They regard the opposition as an essential thing. People of these countries believe that the opposition should be as much alive as the Government. The Government may suppress the facts; the government may have only one-sided propaganda. The people have made provision against these eventualities in both these countries. A free and fair election is the other pillar on which Parliamentary Democracy rests. Free and fair elections are necessary for the transfer of power from one section for the community to the other in a peaceful manner and without any bloodshed. In older times, if a king died, there was at least one murder in the palace.

Revolution used to take place in the palace resulting in murders before the new king used to take the reign of his country into his authority. This has been the history of India. Elections must be completely free and fair. People must be left to themselves to choose those whom they want to send to the Legislatures. Now the question arises as to whether there is any desire on the part of the party in power to permit any opposition to be created. Congress does not want any opposition. Congress is attempting to gather people of sundry views under one canopy.

I ask you whether this is a desirable trend in the Political life of this country. What about free and fair elections? We must not lose sight of the fact that Big Business is trying to play a great part in the political life of this country. The amount that is being contributed to Congress on behalf of Big Business is a very dangerous thing. If moneyed people try to influence the elections by contributing to the election fund of any political party, what will be the result? If the party which they have supported financially comes

into power, they will try to extract concessions for themselves either by modifying the present legislation or by influencing the party in power to legislate in such a manner as would be beneficial to their interests. I ask you, gentlemen, whether under these circumstances there is any hope left for the Parliamentary system of Government to do any good to the country. I would like to refer to the Mahabharat. During the battle between the Pandvas and the Kaurvas, Bhishma and Drona were on the side of the Kaurvas. The Pandvas were in the right and the Kaurvas were in the wrong. Bhishma admitted this.

When somebody asked Bhishma as to why he was supporting the Kaurvas if he found the Pandvas to be in the right. Bhishma replied in the memorable sentence. I must be loyal to the salt if I eat the food of the Kaurvas. I must take their side even if they might be in the wrong. Today the same thing is happening. Congress is accepting the financial help of the Baniyas, Marwaries and other multimillionaires. Congress is eating their food and it follows therefore naturally that Congress will have to take the side of these Big Businesses at all crucial times. We also find that the government servants are influencing the elections in favour of the party which is feeding them and their dependents. No less a personality than Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, at the inaugural session for the Bhartiya Jan Sangh at Delhi recently, openly charged government servants of helping the Congress and thereby nullifying the elections from being free and fair. Under these circumstances, do you, gentlemen, think that there is any hope for Parliamentary Democracy to succeed? If Parliamentary Democracy fails in this country, and is bound to fail for the reasons mentioned by me, the only result will be rebellion, anarchy and Communism.

If the people in power do not realize that people will not tolerate hereditary authority, then this country is doomed. Either Communism will come, Russia having sovereignty over our country, destroying individual liberty and our independence, or the section of the people who are disgruntled at the failure of the party in power will start a rebellion and anarchy will prevail.

Gentlemen, I want you to take note of these eventual certainties and if you wish that the Parliamentary system of Government and Parliamentary Democracy prevail in this country if you are satisfied that we cherish the inherent right of individual liberty, then it is your duty as students, as the intelligent community of our country, to strive your utmost to cherish this Parliamentary system of Government in its true spirit and work for it. Gentlemen, I have done. I thank you for having given me this opportunity to address this august gathering.

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## Remembering Martin Luther King Jr.



On January 20th we remember Martin Luther King Jr. # MLK Day Remembering the profound impact of a man who impacted his generation, and still impacts us today, Dr. Martin Luther King. May we choose light over darkness and love over hate. #mlkday

The fight for justice through pioneering, peaceful, and very potent farmers protest going in India is exemplary and would find place in the annals of peaceful protests globally. Members in the group deserve commendation for their moral and intellectual support to the fight for justice. The justice shall prevail. The hubris shall loose.

# Remembering Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu on his 102nd Birth Anniversary

Prem Kumar Chumber  
Editor-in-Chief Ambedkar Times

Though Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar did not born in Punjab, but in his mission, he got more support from the people of this state than any other state including Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh (Mhow, his birth place). The names of Sohan Lal Shastri, Bimal Prasad, Kartar Singh and Nanak Chand Rattu are the prominent among his followers from Punjab, who remained with him until his last breath. Among them Nanak Chand Rattu was the most prominent. Born on 6th February 6th, 1922, in village Sakruli of Hoshiarpur District of Punjab, Nanak Chand Rattu is best known as the most closely associated and loyal lifetime Private Secretary to Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar who served him dedicatedly for over 17 years. He was with him till late night on a day before and was the first one after Dr. Savita Ambedkar (2nd wife of Babasaheb) to notice his Mahaprinirvan on December 6th, 1956.

Nanak Chand Rattu came into the contact of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar after a year of his arrival in Delhi and remained in his service, first in person during his life, and after his Mahaprinirvan, in the form of writing his reminiscences and remembrances about him. Once he came into his Babasaheb's contact, he never missed a single day, including Sundays and official holidays, in his service before and after the government service

duty hours. After the mortal journey of the messiah of down-trodden and the Chief architect of the Constitution of Independent India, Nanak Chand Rattu wrote a large number of

books about the life and teachings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Some of the most widely read among them are: Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar; Little Known Facets of Dr. Ambedkar; Dr. Ambedkar: Important Messages, Sayings, Wit and Wisdom; Reminiscences and Remembrances of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar; Pioneers of Ambedkar Buddhist Movement in United Kingdom.

For his untiring service to the mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Nanak Chand Rattu was awarded Bheem Medal, Bheem Rattan Award, Ambedkar Centenary Award, Anand Award, Ambedkar Rattan Centenary Award, Vishvratant Dr. Ambedkar Bhushan Award and Letters of Appreciation by various national and international bodies within home and abroad. He also had embraced Buddhism with Baba Sahib. He was one of the few who accompanied the mortal remains of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Mumbai. His writings about the life and teachings of Babasaheb are a rich treasure for those who do research on Babasaheb and his mis-

sion of the annihilation of caste. His writings provided vivid description of events related with Dr. Ambedkar's life and mission. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba Weeklies remember him reverently on his 102nd birth anniversary and pay him floral tribute.



# Nanak Chand Rattu- An Unsung Warrior of the community

February 6 is the 102nd birth anniversary of an unsung warrior of the community, Nanak Chand Rattu (February 6, 1922- September 15, 2002), a dedicated and close

came into contact of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Leader of the oppressed and suppressed segments of the society, and offered his services with total dedication and devotion in 1941

Recently, I learnt from a TV interview of Shashi Sidharath, Rattu Sahib's daughter-in-law (wife of his son Sidharath) that her mother-in-law that is the wife of Rattu Sahib was such a nice and homely lady that every evening on her husband's late return from Babasaheb's residence, she used give him fresh and hot food and fully supported her husband without any murmur. I vow my head in Naman to her also on this important day.

Nanak Chand Rattu remained with Babasaheb for almost 17 years till his Parinirvan on December 6, 1956. Rattu Sahib was almost a part of the family and he was the first person who was called to Babasaheb's bed side by Mai Saheb Savita Ambedkar, wife of the icon, on the fateful morning of December 6, 1956. I was told that Rattu Sahib himself informed the high-ups in the government about the sad demise of Babasaheb including the residence of PM Jawaharlal Nehru. Mai Saheb even took along Rattu Sahib to Bombay (Mumbai) for the last journey and rites of the departed leader. Physical connect between Babasaheb Ambedkar and Nanak Chand Rattu ended but spiritual and emotional bonds between the two remained till Rattu Sahib passed away in September, 2002 in Delhi.

Earlier Rattu Sahib retired from his government job as Under Secretary in February 1980, a dignified position in the bureaucratic hierarchy in the corridors of power. Nanak Chand Rattu was a reservoir of infor-

mation and knowledge about Babasaheb with first hand touch and experience. Some of the details are duly registered in his 5 books which he wrote about

Babasaheb Ambedkar and his mission. Two of these immensely informative and educative books, Reminiscences and Remembrances of Dr. Ambedkar and Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar, were reviewed by me and are available on the links given below.

<https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/search?q=nanak+chand+rattu>  
<https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/2014/12/last-few-years-of-dr.html>

Some of the personal belongings of Ambedkar Sahib which were available with Rattu Sahib were thoughtfully donated by him to various museums and memorials of the leader for the benefit of the he generations to come.

Naman to Nanak Chand Rattu, an unsung warrior of the community, was a man of sterling worth by all standards on his centenary year, February 6, 2024.

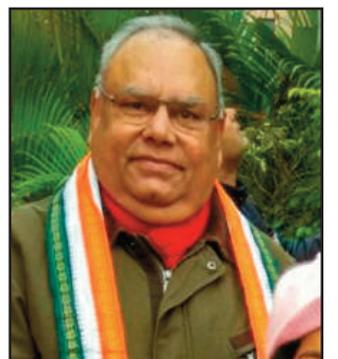


Dr. Ambedkar during the conversion ceremony at Nagpur 14.10.1956 with Mrs. Savitha Ambedkar, Mr. Nanakchand Rattu (his personal assistant) and Samta Sainik Dal volunteers.

Aide of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar. Rattu Sahib was born in a remote village Sakruli of Hoshiarpur District of Punjab. After Matriculation, he went to Delhi in search of a job in 1938. Initially, to sustain himself, he did whatever came his way and succeeded in getting a job in the central government in 1941. Rattu, a laborious young man, did his B.A. in part-time and joined higher studies of M.A. In the process, as a son of the soil and an awakened person, he

as an all-purpose Aide not only in secretarial assistance but also in the day to day personal and household chorus at the residence of Babasaheb. Rattu Sahib soon won the trust of his benevolent boss with sheer dedication.

He will reach the residence of Babasaheb early in the morning on his bi-cycle before going to his own office and again in the evening after office and will remain at the disposal of Babasaheb till late in the evening.



**Ramesh Chander**  
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)  
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# NANAK CHAND RATTU

## A TRUE AND TRUSTWORTHY SOLDIER OF Dr. B.R AMBEDKAR

**O**n the historic occasion of 102nd Birth Anniversary of late Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Private Secretary of Bharat Rattan Babasaheb, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar from 1941 to 1956, I am driven by an internal urge to share some of my personal reminiscences of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu which made him reckon as an iconic name associated with the life-long vision of Dr. B.R Ambedkar.

As regards his personal life Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu was born on February 6, 1922, in village Sakruli, in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab and after completing his High School education in 1938 he moved to Delhi in November 1939 in search of a job. After strenuous efforts and difficult times he got a job in Government of India in 1941. While in service he worked his way up and passed his B.A degree Examination. He had to abandon his studies for M.A in the middle in order to serve Dr. Ambedkar.

Because of his hard work, loyalty and personal sacrifices in the service of his mentor, Mr. Rattu was able to win a unique level of trust, confidence and respect from Babasaheb, which he cherished and upheld as a holy relic throughout the rest of his life after Babasaheb's Pr Nirvana on December, 6th, 1956.

My personal remembrances of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu go back to the year 1955-1956 when I moved from Punjab to Delhi in search of a job and came in close contact with him in Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh, New Delhi where he was living with his family in a Government allotted accommodation. I even stayed at Mr. Rattu's home for some time in 1955 before I could settle down in a job. Mr. Rattu being quite senior to most of us in age and social status was highly respected among the community. At that time he was fully devoted in his task as private secretary to Babasaheb who was residing at 26, Alipur Road, Delhi.

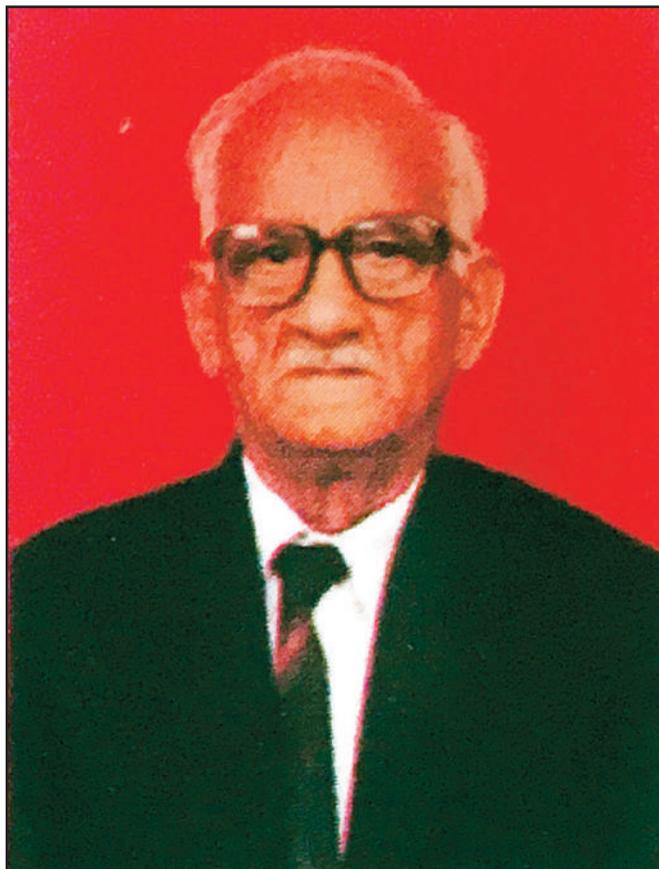
Almost every day Mr. Nanak Chand used to go on his Bike to Alipur Road and usually come back to his home in Karol Bagh late at night to get ready in the morning to go to his office in Central Secretariat area in New Delhi. Sometimes he had to stay overnight with Babasaheb depending on the volume of work he had to handle single handedly. It was a great personal sacrifice on the part of Mr. Rattu which was adversely impacting on his health as well as his professional career. But in spite of all this there was no lapse in his dedication towards Babasaheb. Like a shadow he remained in his sacred company till his last breath and was to Dr. Ambedkar what Ananda was to Lord Buddha.

During the course of my association with Mr. Rattu, I learnt a lot about the life-long struggle, sacrifices and accomplishments of Babasaheb

for equality and emancipation of the suppressed sections of society.

In 1956 Babasaheb was not keeping a stable health because of the heavy work load and mounting pressure on his mind to complete what he had undertaken to do. It was not possible to see him in person except through Mr. Rattu who had direct access to Babasaheb without any interference even from his wife. So it was Mr. Rattu gave me an opportunity to see Babasaheb in person many times at his residence on Alipur Road which was hardly a hundred yards away from my office in Old Secretariat area.

On the fateful day of December 6th, 1956 while, as usual, I was



going to my office on my bike when the heart breaking news of Babasaheb's mysterious death in his sleep was unleashed on All India Radio. It was a nerve wrecking news spreading like a wild fire all over the Globe. Skipping my day from work I went straight to 26, Alipur Road which was just at a stone's throw from my office. Only a handful of persons including Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri and Mr. M.R Bhardwaj, close confidants of Babasaheb, were there ahead of me. Since Babasaheb's dead body was still in his bed-room on the ground floor I joined Mr. Rattu and four other persons present there to co-ordinate and help physically in moving the body to the spacious Drawing Room close by to facilitate the viewing by a stream of mourners rolling in from different parts of the adjoining states. I was an eye witness to a crowd of people crying and screaming and pressing for post-mortem and unbiased investigation in the mystery of Babasaheb's sudden passing away. Many people were loudly blaming Babasaheb's

wife for her role in the mysterious death. It was only Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu who was profusely crying but was persuaded by Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri to appease the surging rage of the uncontrollable crowd.

Prime Minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru also visited Babasaheb's residence to pay his tributes and enquired from Mr. Rattu, Sohan Lal Shastri and Mrs. Savita Ambedkar about the circumstances of the death. I was a young man of almost 21 years of age at the time and am also visible in the picture now getting viral on the internet, standing in the crowd next to Pt. Nehru, Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Sohan Lal Shastri near Babasaheb's dead body. The entire cabinet of the Prime Minister also visited the residence to offer their condolences.

In an attempt to avoid the surging wrath of the crowds of followers of Babasaheb, Mrs. Savita Ambedkar insisted to transport the dead body to Sarnath (Place of Buddhist shrines) but was vehemently opposed by Nanak Chand Rattu and other close supporters because more than five lakhs of Babasaheb's followers were waiting in Bombay to participate in the funeral procession. As stated by Mr. Rattu and Sohan Lal Shastri no financial help was available from Government of India including the Prime Minister to

air-lift the mortal remains of Babasaheb to Bombay for final ceremonies and cremation. Even Mrs. Savita Ambedkar declined to help. It was only Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu who offered to shoulder this big and moral responsibility and managed to collect some money at the spur of the moment from some close and staunch followers of Babasaheb to pay for transporting the body to Bombay by a chartered plane. Since the collection fell short of the required payment, Babu Jagjivan Ram, the then Communication Minister came to rescue and authorized the chartered flight leaving the balance to be settled later. 3-mile long procession was taken out from 26 Alipur Road to Safdarjung airport for flying the mortal remains of Babasaheb to Bombay for cremation. Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri, Mr. M.R Bhardwaj, Mr. Shankranand Shastri, Mr. Puran Chand Madhar and Mrs. Savita Ambedkar accompanied the body to Bombay.

**AWARDS:-**In recognition of his laudable and unique services to

glorify the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar, many eminent writers and research scholars

who wrote the biography of Dr. Ambedkar, highly appreciated and gratefully acknowledged Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu for providing the information and readily available material about the glorious history of Babasaheb's battle in the liberation of the voiceless people.

Mr. Rattu was also the recipient of Bheem Medal, Bheem Rattan Award, Ambedkar centenary Award, Vishvratna Dr. Ambedkar Bhushan Award and many letters of appreciation from Dr. Ambedkar organizations in India.

With restless endeavors of Mr. Rattu, Ambedkar Museum, set up by him in Nagpur has become a historical monument and a famous Buddhist pilgrimage center.

Retired as Under Secretary from Government of India on February 29, 1980 Mr. Rattu continued to remain actively involved and associated with the spread of Dhamma and the noble mission of Babasaheb till his last breath. Though I am permanently settled with my family in USA, I always met Mr. Rattu in Delhi while visiting India.

**CONCLUSION:** - Much more can be said about Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu's selfless services especially during the last few years of Babasaheb's life at the cost of his personal sacrifices, but I must not refrain from saying that even after Babasaheb's departure Mr. Rattu personally visited all the places connected with the mission of Babasaheb and left no stone unturned in keeping the flame alive and the caravan moving in the direction, his master wanted.

Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu's name will remain with its glow and luster in the galaxy of unrelenting efforts of Babasaheb's vision for breaking the shackles of social barriers. He will remain as an inspiration for future generations.

I also appreciate the services of Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Chief Editor, Desh Doaba and Ambedkar Times, the two weekly Newspapers, who always inspires and encourages me to write occasionally on historical as well as day-to-day issues of public interest for publication in the esteemed columns of his Newspapers. Let me again express my hearty congratulations for celebrating the forthcoming 102nd Birth Anniversary of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu on February 6th, 2024 who guarded as a true soldier in carrying out the mission of Babasaheb for social emancipation.



Humble Sewadar,  
O.P. Balley (General Secretary)  
Supreme Council  
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA  
1-925-252-6085

Jai Bhim  
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# MAKING SENSE OF DALIT IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY PUNJAB

## REVIEW ARTICLE OF A RECENT STUDY IN PUNJABI

Punjab has the highest proportion of Dalits (29 percent, Census of India 2001) in India and this whopping numerical presence has further increased with the inclusion of Mochi and Rai Sikh/Mahatam castes into Scheduled Castes category in the state. Despite having the highest proportion of Dalit percentage in the country, Dalits in Punjab, however, are extensively deprived of agricultural land. Among them less than 5 percent (Census of India) are cultivators. They shared only 4.82 percent of the number of operational holdings and 2.34 percent of the total area under cultivation (1991 Census). Consequently, their landlessness rendered a large number of them into agricultural labourers and made them subservient to the landowners. However, a significant change has taken place over the last few decades. Dalits in Punjab have improved their economic position through hard work, job diversification and emigration abroad. They have entered into a number of professions, which were traditionally considered to be the mainstay of the business and artisan castes. This has led to a sharp decline in the number of Dalit landless agricultural workers in Punjab whose strength has come down from 24 percent in 1991 to 16 percent in 2001.

However, the dissociation of Dalits from the menial and agricultural work in Punjab and their relatively better economic conditions have probably failed to get them entry into the local structure of power, almost totally monopolized by the so-called dominant/upper castes. This is what forced them to look for alternative ways of social mobility and empowerment.

The story of Dalit identity, emancipation, empowerment and mobility is quite different in Punjab from that of the rest of India. There happened to be two main models of social mobility available to the socially excluded sections of the Indian society. These two models are: Conversion and Sanskritisation. Conversion and Sanskritisation aim at seeking Dalit emancipation by crossing over to something new/external that would facilitate them to quit their centuries-old entrenched subordination [Ram 2012: 639].

But as far as Punjab is concerned, Dalits seem to have avoided this two fold way of social mobility for the reasons best known to them. They prefer to improve their social status through highlighting their caste identity.

What distinguished caste in Punjab from the rest of the country is the primacy of the material (land) and political factors over the principle of purity and pollution dichotomy. Punjab is primarily an agrarian state. Social status in Punjab is basically measured in terms of possession of land. In Punjab, land is basically under the absolute control of the dominant caste

i.e. Jat Sikh [ibid: 656].

Therefore, Jat Sikh considered themselves at the top of caste hierarchy in Punjab, particularly in Sikhism. Since Purity/Pollution is not the criterion of social exclusion in Punjab, it does not make much difference whether you follow the cultural norms of priestly class or not. Even if someone embraces some other religion in Punjab to get rid of caste-based discrimination rampant in Hinduism, it still does not make much difference so far, as long as he fails to acquire some land in agriculture-dominated state of Punjab. So Dalits conversion into another religion becomes meaningless and they prefer to improve their social position through reconstructing their identity on the basis of caste and reinventing their cultural heritage.

Dalit Pachhan Mukti Ate Shaktikarn (Dalit Identity, Emancipation and Empowerment) is the second book written by the author in the Punjabi language. This ethnographic work, under review, is based on historical and analytical methods. The main argument of the book is that Dalits in Punjab are consciously and systematically constructing their caste/religion based identity. Caste based identity helps them in emancipation from the inferiority complex and gaining empowerment in the otherwise oppressive mainstream Punjabi society. It also discusses the sources and stages of Dalit identity formation in Punjab by focusing on various Dalit movements like Ad Dharm, Ambedkarite, Bahujan Samaj and the mushrooming growth of Ravidass Deras. Relying on archival and ethnographic sources, the study meticulously explores the causes behind the rise of Dalit identity in Punjab and the ways it exhibits the same. Before exploring the various themes which the book analytically discusses, there is a need to highlight the prologue of the book.

In the prologue, the author has described the importance of vernacular/mother language. In the views of the author mother tongue is not only used as a tool of conversation but in reality it also helps in understanding the complexities of social existence, culture, identity, nationality, economy and psychology. Language and culture are the two intricate determinant factors of the existence and development of a community.

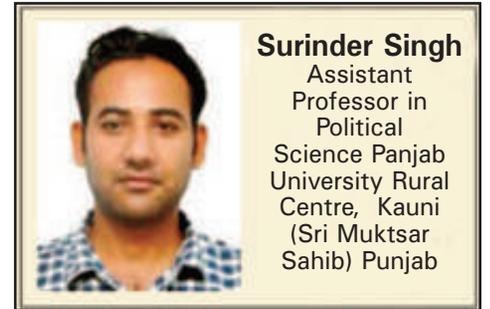
There is a common impression that one can write about the complex aspects of life and society rather more comfortably in ones mother tongue. Till date, the most

renowned literary works, opinioned the author, were written by authors in local languages. The writers who achieved this reputation through mother/local language are: Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Derrida among many others. Similarly, Punjabi i.e. the local language of Punjab, was popularized by Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith, in gurmukhi script. Punjabi language, culture and literature eventually developed through the gurmukhi script. Today, the domain of Punjabi language is shrinking while relying more on ditto vocabulary of other languages than making use of original Punjabi vocabulary. The author alarms that by doing

so we would not only weaken our mother tongue vocabulary but also dwarf our culture. The book is arranged into eight chapters in addition to a detailed prologue, foreword, introduction, epilogue (Dalit suppression and emancipation: synthesis and reaction) and a detailed bibliography based on scattered but rich Punjabi sources. The first

chapter explores the long journey of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment in Punjab. The chapter opens with the ubiquity of Dalit question in Indian society which remained inflamed during the period of Buddhism, Bhakti movement, the mission of social equality and justice run by Sikh Gurus, Adi movements and also during the movements run by Phule-Periyar/Ambedkar- Kanshi Ram. The protest against the silence of upper castes on Dalit question is raised from time to time.

However, the big silence on Dalit question at the time of Indian national movement has not only revealed its narrow canvas but also separated it sharply from its wider social domain deeply drowned in social inequalities and social evils. Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment are discussed in two perspectives: first, Marxist/Leftist and second, caste prestige. Marxists/Leftists study Dalit question from economic/class perspective. They observe Dalit identity in terms of class. They argue that the Dalit oppression is based on their economic subjugation. They consider caste to be the superstructure on class. They criticize the newly emerged middle class among Dalits who follow the bourgeoisie and casteist parties. Particularly, they criticize the Bahujan Samaj Party leaders who limit themselves to 'caste politics'. They argued that bourgeoisie Dalit class wants to maintain its position in present politi-



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cal system. They never participate in Marxist struggle and always oppose it.

Therefore, Marxists adopt similar planning for bourgeoisie, religious and Dalit political parties. They also argue that Dalit consciousness is a hurdle in revolutionary thinking. Although, Dalit consciousness recognises the revolutionary spirit but in the end it goes in favor of capitalism and makes it strong. Second, the author argues that in Punjab, Dalit identity is emerging on the basis of caste. The caste inferiority is challenged through the proverb of caste prestige. The caste based Dalit identity is giving birth to Dalitism. And Dalitism has become victim of one-sidedness which looks at the Dalit emancipation only through the prestige of caste. The author questioned caste based Dalit emancipation while asking a pertinent question that is it a positive way of Dalit emancipation? He described that Dalit question is not a question of Dalits only. This question, in his views, is related to the change of social, economic and political structure of the entire Indian society. Quoting Dr. Ambedkar, the author says that Dalit question is facing two main rivals: Brahmanism and Capitalism. If Dalit movement failed to abolish Brahmanism and in the presence of capitalism somehow able to gain slightly through reservation, then this type of change will be far away from Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment as defined by the author. Dalit emancipation, emphasized the author, is related with the freedom of individuals from individuals who are encircled within oppressive structures of social dominations based of hoary caste system. The struggle for Dalit emancipation is waged by Dalit middle class. The Dalit middle class is the product of constitutional affirmative actions and the teachings of Ambedkarite ideology. This Dalit middle class firmly observes that Marxist parties are their opponent. The basic reason of their opposition to the Communist parties is that such left parties are themselves votary of capitalism and therefore are unable to understand the everlasting caste based division of Indian society.

The instances of caste based Dalit identity are normally observed in Doaba region of Punjab. Couplets of caste prestige such as "putt Chamaran de" (the babes of Chamars), Guru Ravidass di foj kardi a moj" (the children of Guru Ravidass are relishing) etc. are often found written on cars,

(Contd. on next page)

# MAKING SENSE OF DALIT IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY PUNJAB

(Continue from page 5)

jeeps and bikes in the Doaba region of Punjab. The religious places popularly known as Deras/Ravidass Deras are mushrooming on caste line. Such caste based religious places are providing most sought after socio-religious space to Dalits which differentiates them from other communities. Ravidass Deras, as argued by the author, are providing a new and different identity to Dalits by combining spirituality with politics. Dr. Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass have become the center of Dalit identity. It was first highlighted by Ad Dharm movement. The question of Dalit emancipation and empowerment has been continuously raised by different persons through different ways for instance Buddha, Sants of Bhakti movement, Sikh Gurus, Jotirao Phule, Adi/Ad Dharm movements, Ambedkarite movement, and Kanshi Ram. Dalit empowerment critically analysed through different ideologies.

Gandhian philosophy emphasises on Dalit emancipation and empowerment within Varna Vyastha through eliminating the caste hierarchy from the minds of people. It represents Varna Vyastha with moral principles. In other words, it emphasises on Dalit emancipation without elimination of the caste system. Ambedkar-Gandhi Poona Pact is the outcome of such philosophy. Efforts of British government (divide and rule policy) had also empowered the Dalits in a limited way. On one hand, Britishers empowered Dalits through communal award and, on the other hand, they kept away Dalits from land ownership. The reservation provided by the Colonial government in electoral system, recognition of Ad Dharm as a new religion of Dalits, victory of Dalits on the reserved seats of Punjab provincial Assembly election in 1937 and 1946 etc are known as examples of Dalit empowerment. In the views of the author, it shows that such a process of Dalit empowerment is ultimately went in favour of further strengthening the already entrenched institution of caste system. The educated and middle generation Dalits have been trying to seek emancipation and empowerment through constructing separate religious/caste identities. The educated class has legitimized their act by using the idea of caste based identity as popularized by Kanshi Ram. From the last few decades, religion/caste based Dalit identities have emerged as hub of Dalit emancipation and empowerment.

However, the emergence of caste based Dalit identities are fast becoming the cause of routine caste conflicts in Punjab. Second chapter is a detailed account of the changing basis of Punjabi Dalit identity. Dalit identity is related to resourceful, prosperous and respectable life.

It is a demonstration of positive efforts of Dalits who consciously put emphasis on projecting themselves as an altogether a separate different social group/community. It also helps them in flouting their distinct

political value in the arithmetic of electoral politics. Earning respectable space in society through political power, seems to be the sole purpose of emerging Dalit identity. It also looked at as if providing freedom from Brahminical structures.

Historically, the idea of distinct Dalit identity started from the Buddhism. Buddha was the first to raise voice against the symbols and behaviors of Upper Castes which were responsible for oppression of Dalits. Due to the efforts of Buddhist prophets Dalits attained opportunities to capture the political power. After a long period, in medieval time, in north India Sants of Bhakti movement and Sikh Gurus' mission of social equality provided a new meaning to Dalit identity. However, during Ad Dharm movement, Dalits for the first time took initiative to construct their identity on their own. The leaders of Adi Dharm movement created religion based Dalit identity i.e. Ad Dharmi. The religious paradigm of Dalit identity was a process of regenerating the hitherto eclipsed Dalit history, culture and heritage. 'Ad Dharmi' as a religious identity separates Dalits from the mainstream religions such as Hindu, Sikh and Muslims. In edition of religion, the leaders of the movement also constructed the different Dalit identity through religious texts, Gurus (Guru Ravidass, Bhagat Kabir, Balmik, Namdev), shrines, slogans (Jo Bole So Nirbhye – Sri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai" and Jo Bole So Nirbhye – Ad Dharm Ki Jai"), symbols (So-hung), prayers, dress codes, construction of religious places, and salutations. Ad Dharm movement also encouraged the Dalits to attain political power and to become resourceful to further strengthen Dalit identity. Subsequently to the Ad Dharm, Ambedkarite movement played a significant role in construction of Dalit identity. It is notable that Ad Dharm movement constructed Dalit identity on religion. However, Ambedkarite movement focused on the rational Buddhist identity. Dr. Ambedkar argued if Dalits want to live like human beings than they should construct their distinct political identity.

Dr. Ambedkar was highly respected among the Dalits in Punjab. Dalits of Punjab not only respect Guru Ravidass but also adhere to neo-Buddhism that concentrated on rational thinking in respect of devotion. Dr. Ambedkar's understanding toward caste and its solution through democratic way presents him as the most effective leader of downtrodden. After the Ambedkarite movement, Bahujan Samaj movement played a vital role in formation of Dalit identity.

Babu Kanshi Ram emphasized on caste based Dalit identity and its importance for gaining political power. He organized middle class of Dalits Bahujan Samaj at a platform i.e. Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF). Systematic organizational structure of BAMCEF provides a new Dalit identity that organised Dalits around political programmes. The sole

purpose of this identity is to make Dalits as the holders of political power. The next two stages of Bahujan Samaj's political programmes which play a vital role in construction of Dalit identity are: Dalit Soshit Sangarsh Samiti (DS4) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). This was for the first time when Dalits realized to capture political power through caste line. BSP through its caste card is providing different meaning to Dalit identity. It is also providing a new alternative to young Dalits of rural and urban Punjab. The roots of Dalit identity are based on political alternative or capture of political power. In Punjab, the distinction of Dalit identity did not gain appreciation in political field but it has become fashionable in cultural field. In the earlier stage of BAMCEF, caste symbols were used in derogatory sense but now they are deployed to gain recognition as Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment.

Ravidass Deras are the major socio-religious institutions that hold the command of the Dalit identity in the state. Ravidass Deras are dedicated to the Guru Ravidass mission. The Deras demonstrate distinct Dalit identity through different religious traditions, customs, slogans, prayer, festivals, hymns, dress etc. It revolved around the Bani and teachings of Guru Ravidass. In the rural Punjab, particularly among Chamar community, new socio-cultural movements are silently growing its influence. The numbers of Dera followers are increasing day by day due to their adoption of the blended philosophy of Guru Ravidass and that of Dr. Ambedkar. The credit of blending the philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass goes to Dera Sachkhand Ballan.

Ravidass Deras do not only exist in Punjab but also in abroad. The growing numbers of Ravidass Deras are taking the shape of new socio-cultural Dalit movement. The Sants of Deras Sachkhand Ballan are leading the movement of Ravidass Deras. Dera Ballan, also known as Dera Sant Sarwan Dass, is playing a vital role in construction of Dalit identity. Since, Sant Sarwan Dass Dera is providing multifarious facilities (schools, hospitals etc.), religious places, symbols, salute, slogans, and respectable social space to Dalits for led a descent life. Recently, Dera was in news to provide new religious identity to Dalits i.e. Ravidassia and holy book "Amrit Bani of Guru Ravidass".

In the third chapter, author describes the role of Punjabi qaum in Dalit emancipation and empowerment. He has criticized those people who defined Punjabi qaum narrowly. He defines Punjabi qaum in broader and positive sense that includes common language, area, economy and mind-set. In other words Punjabi qaum constituted all the people who reside in and outside of Punjab and have common language, culture and worldview. Due to influence of different religions, the Punjabi qaum is believed to become synonymous with

the welfare of all, brotherhood and commonhood, serve freely, and secure the interest of poor and humble. It demonstrates that Punjabi qaum represents devotion of love, equality, sharing-ness and democratic values. It neither opposed anyone nor oppressed anyone. Because of these characteristic of Punjabi qaum castism never become much rigid as in the other parts of India. In Punjab castism has been based on materialistic things i.e. land. Therefore, Dalits are free from the notion of Purity and Pollution. It becomes the major cause of their emancipation from Brahminical ideology and elastic attitude toward castism that can help for their empowerment. Author argued that not only the question of Dalit emancipation and empowerment but the problem like communalism also can be solved through the philosophy of Punjabi qaum.

The lager qaumi identity (Punjabi) will liberate Punjabis from all other small identities. It will teach the lesson of love and social equality not only to Punjabis but to the whole world. The fourth chapter describes the issues related to caste and class and Dalit emancipation in Indian Punjab. It is generally perceived that Punjabi society is free from Brahminical Varna system. However, the criticism of caste system by Sants of Bhakti movement, Sufis and Gurus, argued the author, highlights the fact of caste system in Punjabi society. According to the author the existence of caste system in Sikh panth can be judged from two questions: first why Dr. Ambedkar, who once wanted, changed his decision to convert into Sikhism? Second, what was the reason that Sikh leadership started a campaign to seek the constitutional provisions of affirmative action for Scheduled Castes for the lower castes among Sikhs? Sikh Gurus vehemently criticized the evil of caste system both theoretically and practically. The author further discussed that the period from Sikh Gurus to the missals was known as 'golden period of Sikhism'. During this period Sikh panth was free from caste system at all. This was the period when Shudras joined the Sikhism and played an important role in the emerging egalitarian Sikh identity. Not even a single example of caste based discrimination can be found during that period.

Subsequently, caste system emerged into Sikh panth: first, due to its close relationship with Hinduism. Second, it entered into Sikh panth with the adoption of the cultural patron of Jat community. During the second half of 19th century Singh Sabha movement was launched to reform the Sikh panth. Though the movement offered some relief from castism but it failed to eliminate caste system from Sikh panth. Caste hierarchy in Sikh panth, however, is different from that of Hindu religion. Among the Sikh, Jat Sikhs are recognized as superior. The lower castes in Sikh panth are largely categorized

(Contd. on next page)

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(Continue from page 6)

into two groups; Chamars and Chhuras. The Chamar Sikhs also known as Ramdassia Sikh and Khalsa Brader. The Chhuras Sikhs are known as Mazhabis and Rangretta Sikhs. They are kept in the lowest rung of caste hierarchy in Sikh panth as well as in Hinduism.

Caste hierarchy in Sikh panth is based on materialistic things not on purity and pollution. Priestly activities in Sikh shrines are not only limited to upper/dominant castes in Sikh panth. The fifth chapter deals with Guru Ravidass, Ad Dharm and Dalit emancipation. According to the author, Bani (spiritual poetry) of Guru Ravidass is a major source of Dalit consciousness in Punjab. Guru Ravidass did not only write in spiritualistic sense. In fact, his poetry also challenged insidious caste system and oppression of the lower castes. In his Bani Guru Ravidass also talked at length about Beghampura (an ideal state) where no one would be found sad and each one would live a happy life. The author wrote in detail about how the leaders of Ad Dharm movement highlighted Guru Ravidass and his bani which was already a great source of Dalit consciousness. Ad Dharm leaders meticulously spreaded this consciousness among Dalits. The movement made every attempt which ideologically and philosophically was necessary for the establishment of a new religion including religious book, symbol, prayer, salute, slogans, etc. But in the post independent period, the movement did not sustain.

However, the seed of Dalit consciousness that were sown by Ad Dharm movement are now nurtured by Ravidass Deras. Recently, the Ravidass Dera of Sachkhand Ballan announced a new religion i.e. Ravidassia. And Dera also appealed to Dalit communities to register their religion 'Ravidassia'. The author ends this chapter with a critical note that time will tell whether Dalit will accept Ravidassia as their religion or it will end up like Ad Dharmi as a new caste category among Dalits.

The sixth chapter is a detailed description of the ideas and efforts made by Dr. Ambedkar for Dalit emancipation. Dr. Ambedkar's vision about Dalit emancipation and empowerment are discussed by the author broadly in the following three aspects: first, the problem of Untouchability should be resolved through reforms in Hindu religion and society.

Secondly, by constitutional provisions of reservation and social inequality should be reduced and anti-Dalit elements should be dealt strictly by law.

Thirdly, emancipate the Dalits from caste system by converting into Buddhism. For Dr. Ambedkar issues like social equality, self-esteem and respectable life are more significant than poverty and resource-less for Dalits. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar suggested the necessity of social democracy for Dalits' emancipation. Social democracy, for him, is based on the

three principles; freedom, equality and fraternity. These three principles are necessary to live a dignified life and establish political democracy. That's why he set up three political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Caste Federation and Republican Party of India) for Dalits' emancipation. However, he failed to organise Dalits to attain political power. Beside the political and legal methods to resolved the problems of Dalits. He also emphasised the peacefully social protest against the discrimination. He lunched many movements for emancipation of Dalits for instance temple entry movements and to get water from restricted pounds.

In the seventh chapter the author discussed in details the views of Shaheed Bhagat Singh towards the

Therefore, he called himself atheist. As contrary to Congress, he did not prefer only political independence but also wanted to resolve the social and economic problems of Dalits, labourers, artisans and farmers. He criticized the disgust of Upper Castes towards Dalits. He argued that Dalits are hatred because of their bad economic condition.

Therefore, we should remove their poverty rather than hate them. He asked Dalits to organised and struggle for their emancipation. He argued "you are real labourers, labourers be organised. You will not lose except the chains of your slavery. Awake and revolt against the ruler.

Nothing will happen with these slow reforms." He also warned Dalits about bureaucrats and feudals which he said were also responsible

draw the pictures of Dalit life, oppression and empowerment. This chapter also talked in detail about the Dalit poetry that was written during the Ambedkarite movement in Punjab. In the opinion of the author, Dalit thinkers observe the Dalit identity and emancipation in Dalit poetry from two perspectives: small stories and social criticism. Dalit poetry criticizes all types of socio-cultural, religious and political conditions which preserve the social hierarchy based on oppressive four-fold Varna categories. Dalit poetry, said the author, represents the labourers, farmers, poorer, untouchables, cobblers, wavers as its hero who were earlier ignored.

The author further states that at present, Dalit poetry addresses the Dalit struggle from both caste and class perspectives. But to receive relief from caste system it lays stress on Ambedkarite and medieval Sants' philosophy than Marxist. Dalit poetry, writes the author, has been in the process of inventing counter culture as against the mainstream culture of social domination and all pervasive hegemony.

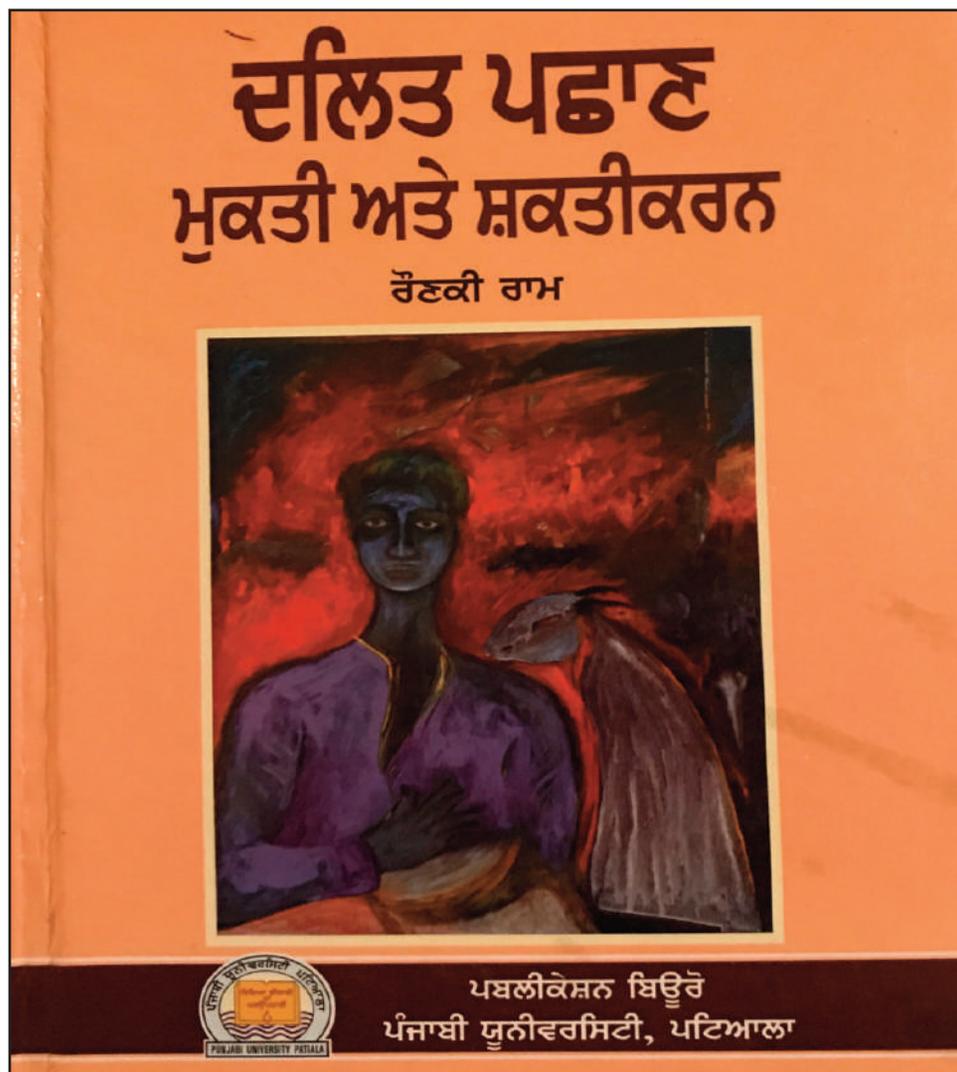
The epilogue includes various interviews of the author which were published at different intervals in various local/vernacular newspapers and magazines. These interviews help in understanding the complex issues of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment. It provides us deep understanding of the author on the issues like Dalit identity, education, literature, their social, economic and political position in the pre and post liberalization, privatization and globalization period.

On the whole, this book is another good attempt by the author to analytically explore in Punjabi language the complex theme of Dalit identity, emancipation and empowerment. The book provides a compact and rich account of the rise of Dalit consciousness, identity and assertion in Punjab. Based on ethnographic and archival methods, this analytical volume in Punjabi is a welcome addition to the growing critical Dalit literature on Punjab in vernacular.

The publisher too deserves commendation for bringing out the book in an impressive form and wrapped up in an artistic cover with a reasonable price tag. It is a must read for lay, academic, political and media persons.

**Ref.** Mochi and Rai Sikh/Mahatam were added in the list of Scheduled Castes by the Constitution Scheduled Castes Amendment Act 2002 (Act No. 25) and 2007 (Act No. 31 of 2007) respectively. With the inclusion of these two castes the numbers of SCs have reached up to 39 castes For more detail see Ronki Ram (2012), Beyond Conversion and Sanskritisation: Articulating an Alternative Dalit Agenda in East Punjab, Modern Asian Studies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 639-702.

Posted on www.ambedkartimes.com (January 12, 2013)



question of Untouchability. The two waves of non-Dalit movement that raised voice for Dalits' emancipation along the national independence were Gadhar movement and Hindustan Socialist Republic Party (an organisation established by Bhagat Singh).

Due to the influence of Arya Samaj, Bhagat Singh and his family were against the caste and Untouchability. Bhagat Singh discussed deeply the problem of religious fundamentalism and Untouchability in his three writings; Firkhu fasadh ate uhana da ellaaj (communal violence and their solutions), Dharm ate sadhi azadi di jang (religion and war of our independence), and Achhut da swal (question of Untouchable). In his essay Achhut da swal, he argued that religion is the foundation of Untouchability and caste system in India. Religion morally confesses the lower castes to serve the upper castes for salvation.

of their slavery. He argued that it is through awareness that Dalits could achieve their emancipation from caste. The eighth chapter deals with the question of Dalit emancipation in Punjabi Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry, as pointed by the author is not only related to life of Dalits but also criticized the perpetrators of Dalit atrocities. It challenges, writes the author, the political and religious authority which supports Dalit oppression. The oppression of Dalits was first time challenged in the radical poetry of the Bhakti movement of medieval period. Subsequently, the leaders of Adi movements of 1920s also used poetry as a medium to criticize Dalit subjugation, documents the author with a number of examples. It is an excellent achievement of the book that it elaborates minutely how the poetry of Babu Mangu Ram, Gurdass Ram Alam, Charn Dass Nidhark and Chanan Lal Manak clearly

# THE AD DHARM

**Prem K. Chumber**  
**Editor-In-Chief:**

**Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba**

The Ad Dharm movement, the glorious Dalit movement that not only envisaged an egalitarian social set-up but also struggled hard for the same, was founded formely on June 11-12, 1926 in village Muggowal near Mahilpur (Hoshiarpur) under the dynamic leadership of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, a famous Gadhrite. Sarva-shriBasant Rai, Thakur Dass and Shudranand were the equally powerful other lieutenants of the Ad Dharm movement. However, when it comes to the brass stack, it was Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia who emerged as the leading star of the movement.

Ad Dharm is a name of the indigenous religion of the Dalits of the region who are the natives of this land (India). The invading Aryans sub-

jugated them and established their rule over the natives. They see to it that the culture and religion of the natives had to be wiped out fully so that they could not stage a revolt. Mangu Ram Mugowalia thought it appropriate to relocate the lost native religion in order to re-establish sovereign Dalit Raj once again. He named his movement deliberately

after the name of the religion of the natives: Ad Dharm. Thus Ad Dharm



He approached Sant Sarwan Dass Ji Maharaj at Dera Sachkhand Ballan for

is both 'Religion' as well as 'Movement'.

Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia made concerted efforts in the direction of laying solid ground for the revival of Ad Dharm in Punjab. He was of the opinion that if the ex-untouchables have to live a dignified life they had to revive their gurus, religious scriptures, festivals and religious places as well.

concretizing the Bani of Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj and the proliferation of his mission. The Ad Prakash, a holy Granth containing the Bani of Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass and other Dalit Gurus was prepared. Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia expressed his will among close circle that his last rites should be performed amidst the chanting of the holy Bani of Ad Parkash.

aln the Ad Dharm Mandal approach, it is clearly mentioned that every Ad Dharmi should live his/her life according to the tenets of Ad Dharm and should not believe in any other religion. He said our Gurus are Guru Nam Dev Ji, Guru Ravidass Ji, Guru Kabir Ji, Guru Valmiki Ji and all other Dalits saints. Thus Ad Dharm movement has very early shown the vision for the establishment of a separate Dalit identity based on distinct Dalit native religion: Ad Dharm.

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