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Freedom, Caste, Capital: Seventy Years of India's Independence

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The history of the freedom movement in India has a unique place in the evolution of contemporary South Asia. Pre-partition India was the size of the present day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh putting together in one place. It has not only ignited the flame of independence in the region, but also impacted the subjugated nations in different parts of the world. Nehru, Tito and Nasser representing three diverse regions, helped build an international movement for restructuring the bi-polar world for the advantage of the downtrodden. The movement they built came to be known as Non-alignment. These renaissance leaders were of the opinion that freedom within could become durable if it is substantiated by the spread of freedom world over. The story of the framing of the Indian constitution talked about the roots of freedom in a country characterized by multiple castes, steep poverty, discriminatory social structures and uneven distribution of capital.

Caste lies at the heart of backwardness of the Indian society. The relationship between caste and poverty seems to be of a symbiotic nature. They reinforce each other. The inextricably intertwined phenomena of caste and poverty is so well entrenched that it has failed to recede even after the adoption of measures of economic reform in 1991. On the contrary, the latter has further strengthened the anti-democracy nexus between caste and poverty in the country. The capital intensive and profit driven model of neoliberal market- economy has, in fact, not only flared up the old, dormant caste contradictions in India, but also given rise to the new ones between Dalits and various 'Backward and Other Backward Classes' that have mushroomed in the post-Mandal era. Though the neoliberal market-economy has been promising to provide ample space to the socially excluded sections of society by opening new and unrestrained opportunities for them in the fast emerging domain of free market economy in India, the reality is the other way round. The neoliberal free market economy has failed to ward off the contagious effect of the hoary and exclusionary institution of caste in India.

It was in this crucial context that Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar made caste the prime focus of his life-long structure for its annihilation. For him capitalism and Brahminism were the two main enemies. By Brahminism he did not mean any particular person but a thinking based on discrimination and backwardness. He was of the firm view that true freedom will dawn on India in the aftermath of the annihilation of the caste system. His entire life was a great life devoted for this very purpose. The India of 21 century can really be an Azad Bharat only and only if it can get itself completely rid of the mess of caste and caste based orientations. Ambedkartimes.com congratulates its readers, contributors, supporters and all well-wishers on the 70th Azadi Year Day of Bharat - India's Independence.

Ninth Annual IVACC Picnic in Memory of Lahori Ram

Economic Development Commissioner, State of California

Elk Grove (Ambedkar Times Bureau):The Indus Valley American Chamber of Commerce (IVACC) along with the Ram Family organized the Ninth Annual Picnic in Memory of Late Lahori Ram, Economic Development Commissioner, State of California on Sunday August 6, 2017 at the Elk Grove Park in Elk Grove, CA. Family and friends came from all over California and from India to enjoy a beautiful day in the Elk Grove Park.

There were many activities for all ages. Children had fun in a jumping castle. Seniors had playing card tournaments. Adults and children had musical chairs competitions. There was also a tug of war competition. There was a competitive team sport where teams were given 1st place and 2nd place awards. The men's volleyball tournament was enjoyed by all the attendees. Children soccer games were organized by the local soccer league. Elk Grove Children's Wrestling League had a wrestling competition and coaches were present teaching kids different wrestling techniques.

Raj Brar, a renowned Punjabi singer, performed live traditional Punjabi songs in memory of Lahori Ram. He also sang many other traditional songs. Local artist Poonam Malhotra sang many melodious tunes. Many guest started dancing. Local DJ also played many songs and music.

Many elected officials also attended the event and presented Mrs. Prito Ram and Family with Certificates of Recognition.

Honorable Assemblyman Jim Cooper (Representing the 9th Assembly District which covers the Elk Grove area) spoke about the life of Commissioner Lahori Ram. He presented the Family with a Certificate of Recognition stating that Lahori Ram is deserving of special public recognition and the highest commendation from the people of the State of California. The esteem, gratitude, heartiest congratulations, and best wishes of the public are hereby extended to the Ram Family. He also appre-

ciated the political activism of the Indian community. He mentioned that his district director, Mikey Hothi, is a Sikh American.

Honorable Fiona Ma spoke about how she worked with Mr. Ram 25 years ago. Fiona Ma served as a San Francisco Board of Supervisor, California State Assemblywoman, and currently is a member of the California State Board of Equalization. She remembered the time when she worked closely with Mr. Ram establishing the

Mr. Ram. He said that we have a long way to go to get involved in politics and advancing our goals. Mayor Ly honored many of the competition winners with medals.

Bobbie Singh-Allen, Elk Grove Unified School District board member representing Trustee Area 4, spoke about the need for more Indo-American involvement at every level of governance.

Roger Dickinson former Assembly member spoke at the picnic. He said that the picnic is like a reunion of family and friends. He appreciated the opportunity to come every year.

Tej Mann former Yuba City councilman also said that he loved seeing everyone at the picnic every year.

Bill Cartwright three times NBA Champion also attended the Picnic. He encouraged the youth to be more active in sports and to help in community activities. He saluted Mr. Ram for his community involvement.

Many members for the local Sikh Gurdwaras were present. Indo-American Cultural Organization, CA-USA honored Mrs. Prito Ram for the family's service to the community. Special family friends, George Lieu also attended from the Bay Area (California), Mr. Balraj Singh from Chandigarh (India), Harmesh Singh Sidhu IAS Retired Punjab from Patiala (Punjab) India also attended the family picnic.

IVACC board members were very active in the festivities. Hot Choley Bhaturs were prepared on site by Jimmy's Indian Restaurant and pizza was provided by Ram Gopal Bhatia's Annabelle's Pizza and Pasta. There was lots of other food and drinks. Many prominent community leaders were present and many English & Punjabi media editors covered the picnic.

Jagdev and Ajaipaul Ram thanked everyone for attending and keeping the memory of their Father alive. They said we all need to continue the hard work of their Father and work together to reach the next level. They invited everyone to attend the picnic next year.



Gujarat - California Sister State relationship and then the Punjab - California Sister State relationship. Mrs. Ma presented the Family with a Community Award and honoring the 9th Annual Picnic. She said that Late Lahori Ram was a paragon of the ideal human being. Fiona Ma is currently campaigning for California State Treasurer. She asked for support from the community and reminded everyone the election will be in November 2018.

Honorable Sue Frost (Sacramento County Supervisor from District 4) spoke about the life and legacy of Mr. Ram. Although she never had the opportunity to meet him, she said that she could see him through his Family. She congratulated the Family and the community in keeping his legacy alive by having this annual picnic. She was surprised to see the large turnout and looked forward to attending the 10th Annual picnic next year.

Honorable Mayor Sunny Dhaliwal (Mayor of Lathrop) spoke about his close relationship with Lahori Ram. He said that Mr. Ram encouraged him to get involved in politics and would always give him advice.

Honorable Mayor Steve Ly (Mayor of Elk Grove) is a close friend of the Indian community. He congratulated the community on continuing the hard work of

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All pictures & Report:
Prem K. Chumber (Ambedkar Times)



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