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Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji and the Birth of Dalit Movement in Punjab

Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:
Desh Doaba & Ambedkar Times

Punjab has the distinction of being the only state in India where caste based social exclusion was diluted because of the long spell of Muslin rule on the one hand and the most appealing egalitarian philosophy of Sikh faith and its grassroots impact on transformation of the life of downtrodden, on the other. However, caste and its resultant social negativities never ceased to torment the major section of the society. Caste discriminations in Punjab were/are more material in nature than social as in other parts of India. Prejudice takes precedence over pollution in Punjab. However, absence of pollution does not mean that Brahminism social order is alien to it. On the contrary, it thrives under new structures of social subordination entrenched in material deprivation of Dalits in the state. Material deprivation of the downtrodden in the state was reinforced by the customary laws of Razat-Namaas and the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900. Along with many other non-agricultural castes, Scheduled Castes people were historically deprived the right to own land. This restriction made them absolutely landless. It was because of this legal restriction that when Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji after his return to Punjab from USA asked his father to buy some land to evade social oppressions at the hands of landlords that he came to know that social subordination of the Scheduled Castes people was also rooted in the law of the land. This has led him to organize his fellow beings to form a movement for the emancipation and empowerment of downtrodden what eventually termed as Ad Dharm Movement. This movement was the first of its kind that became suddenly popular because of its grassroots appeals. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji devoted his entire life for the cause of total transformation of his country and the socio-economic and political uplift of his people who were relegated to the periphery since centuries. He exhorted his people to come over a common platform to challenge the forces that subjugated the Dalits. He waged a long battle and finally able to unite many communities among the Scheduled Castes to work for their upward social mobility. Scheduled Castes of Punjab, particularly of the Doaba region, consider him the pioneer of Dalit movement in the state that played a leading role in strengthening the mission of Dr B. R. Ambedkar not only in Punjab but in the whole of the country. <http://www.deshdoaba.com/> & <http://www.ambedkartimes.com/> congratulate all its contributors, readers, and well-wishers on this auspicious occasion on the 135th Birth Anniversary of Great Freedom Fighter Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji.

Babu Mangu Ram and Emancipation of the Dalits

Babu Mangoo Ram Mugowalia, a renewed revolutionary and founder of the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab whose birth anniversary falls on 14th January 1886, sets a clear agenda for the emancipation and uplift of the Dalits. The agenda was: to restore the lost indigenous religion of the sons of the soils in order to provide them with a sense of self-respect and dignity. The method to achieve this agenda was: cultural transformation and spiritual regeneration. Mangoo Ram was not in favour of embracing any other existing religion including Buddhism. He was in favour of strengthening the Ad Dharm (the original) religion of the indigenous, pre Aryan people of India. His views on Hindu religion were very clear. He was of the opinion that since Dalits were not born Hindu where is the need to leave that religion and to embrace some other one. Mangoo Ram Mugowalia was of the opinion that the pre Aryan people/the sons of the soil/Achhuts had their own independent religion that was forced into oblivion under the cruel and oppressive rule of the alien Aryan. He thought it appropriate to empower Dalits by carving out a separate Dalit identity on the basis of their original indigenous religious strength (Ad Dharm).

In the poster announcing the first annual meeting of Ad Dharm Movement, Mangoo Ram devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the untouchables at the hands of the caste Hindus. He also made an appeal to the Achhuts to come together to chalk out a program for their liberation and upliftment while addressing the Chamars, Chuhars, Sansis, Bhanjhras, Bhils etc. as brothers, he said, We are the real inhabitants of this country and our religion is Ad Dharm. Hindu Qaum came from outside to deprive us of our country and enslave us. At one time we reigned over 'Hind'. We are the progeny of kings; Hindus came down from Iran to Hind and destroyed our Qaum. They deprived us of our property and rendered us nomadic. They razed down our forts and houses, and destroyed our history. We are seven Crores in numbers and are registered as Hindus in this country. Liberate the Adi race by separating these seven crores. They (Hindus) became lord and call us 'others'. Our seven crore number enjoy no share at all. We reposed faith in Hindus and thus suffered a lot. Hindus turned out to be callous. Centuries ago Hindus suppressed us sever all ties with them. What

justice we expect from those who are the butchers of Adi race. Time has come, be cautious, now the Government listens to appeals. With the support of sympathetic Government, come together to save the race. Send members to the Councils so that our Qaum is strengthened again. British rule should remain forever. Make prayer before God.

Except for this Government, no one is sympathetic towards us. Never consider us Hindus at all, remember that our religion is Ad Dharm.

The way, the leaders of Ad Dharm chose to restore dignity and freedom to the untouchables was to completely detach them from Hinduism and to consolidate them into their own ancient religion - Ad Dharm - of which they had become oblivious during the age-old domination by the 'alien Hindus'. In fact, the task of the revival of their ancient religion was not an easy one by virtue of the fact that during a long period of persecution at the hands of the Savarnas, the untouchables had forgotten their Gurus and other religious symbols. In fact they were never allowed to nurture an aspiration to have their own independent religion. They were condemned as profane and were declared unfit to have their own theology. Thus to revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing an altogether a new religion for the Achhuts. Mangoo Ram's appeal that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enormous psychological impact on the untouchables who were treated as, even inferior to animals in Indian society. The appeal inspired them to come out of their slumber and fight for their freedom and liberty. The Ad Dharm provided a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity. For centuries, they were bereft of any identity and remained in the appendage of the hierarchically graded Hindu society.

Ad Dharm movement was instrumental not only in helping the lower castes to get registered as a distinct religion in the 1931 census and providing them the platform to enter into the State (Contd. on next page)



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Babu Mangoo Ram and Emancipation of the Dalits

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Legislature, it also went a long way in bringing a cultural transformation in their life. In fact, Ad Dharm movement, as has been mentioned above, aimed at facilitating a cultural transformation in the life of lower castes that, under the impact of the centuries old system of degradation, had actually internalised a sense of being low and polluted. Mangoo Ram wanted to liberate them from such a state of mind and also to inculcate in them the feeling of dignity and self respect whereby they could start thinking about them as equal to the so-called twice-born people. Report of the Ad Dharm Mandal, 1926-1931 lists a number of moral principles and duties, which the followers of the Ad Dharm are required to adhere to for creating spiritual regeneration and cultural transformation in their lives. Among the most important moral principles and the duties mentioned in the report are:

The basic principles listed in the Report are: (1) The essential teachings of the Ad Dharm will always be the same: no one can change them. They can stay alive and persist only through the help of a guru. (2) Every man and woman belongs to the faith, but they may not know it. To live without a guru is a sin. (3) A guru should be someone who truly and rightly knows the teachings of the previous masters. He should be able to distinguish between falsehood and truth. He should be able to bring peace and love within the community. (4) Everyone should be instructed by the lives of previous masters; progress comes from following the masters' examples. The practices of previous masters should not be abandoned. This leads to progress. (5) There should not be any discrimination in regard to eating with other castes. (6) Ad Dharmis should abstain from theft, fraud, lies, dishonesty, looking at someone else's wife with bad intentions, using anything which brings intoxication, gambling, and usurping other persons' property or belongings. All of these things are against the law of nature and therefore the law of Ad Dharm. (7) Every Ad Dharmi has the duty to teach his children current knowledge and also to teach them to be obedient to the present king. (8) Every Ad Dharmi should read the Ad Prakash and act upon it. This is a foremost duty. (9) Ad Dharm does not believe in the caste system or any inferiority or superiority of this sort. (10) To learn and seek knowledge, and to learn and seek progress is compulsory for every man and woman.

The twelve duties mentioned in the Report are as follows: (1) To

publicize and propagate Ad Dharm. (2) To take pride in Ad Dharm. (3) To promote the use of name of the community and to use the red mark, which is its sign (4) Ad Dharmis should try to retrieve any property of fellow Ad Dharmi that has been usurped. (5) We should distinguish among Hindus, Ad Dharmis, and other communities of India. (6) Those books, which have created the problem of untouchability and led to discrimination - books such as the Laws of Manu and other Shastras - should be completely boycotted and abandoned. (7) We should celebrate the festivals of our gurus and follow our faith to the utmost. (8) Abandon idolatry. (9) Receive education for ourselves and others in the brotherhood. (10) Boycott those who curse us as "untouchables" or discriminate against us. (11) Bring all demands of Ad Dharmis before the government. (12) Abandon expensive marriage and practice of child marriage.

The fifty-six commandments included in the Report are: (1) Each Ad Dharmi should know everything about the faith. (2) For the betterment and salvation of one's body - physical and spiritual - one should recite the word soham. (3) Each Ad Dharmi should remember Guru Dev for half an hour each morning or evening. (4) When Ad Dharmis meet, their greeting should be "jai Guru Dev." (5) We should be true followers of the founders, Rishi Valmiki, Guru Ravi Das, Maharaj Kabir, and Bhagwan Sat Guru Nam Dev. (6) a guru is necessary, one who knows about previous gurus and has all the capabilities of being a guru. (7) The wife of a guru should be regarded as one's mother, the guru's daughter as one's sister. (8) Devotion to one's wife should be a part of one's faith, for therein lies salvation. (9) Every Ad Dharmi should abstain from theft, fraud, lies, dishonesty, and usurping the property of others. (11) One should not cause someone else heartache. There is no worse sin than this. (12) Every Ad Dharmi should enthusiastically participate in Ad Dharmi festivals and rituals. (13) There should be equally great happiness at the birth of both boys and girls. (14) After the age of five, every boy and girl should be given proper religious teaching. (15) Extravagant expenses at weddings are useless. Every marriage should be conducted according to rituals of our tradition. (16) Ad Dharmis should marry only Ad Dharmis. To marry someone outside Ad Dharm is not legal, but if someone does marry an outsider, he or she should be brought into the faith. (17) All Ad Dharmis, both men and women, should be obedient to their

parents. (18) After the death of both parents it is the duty of each Ad Dharmi to cook food and distribute it among the poor. (19) The dead should be cremated, except for those under the age of five, who should be buried. (20) Ad Dharmis do not follow any other law except their own. (21) In the Ad Dharm faith only one marriage is allowed, but a husband may marry after the death of his wife. Also, if the first wife does not bear children, the husband may take another wife, provided he has the consent of the first wife. If this happens, the first wife remains a legal wife, with all the rights she had before. (22) Ad Dharmis should marry their children to the Ad Dharmis of the surrounding areas. (23) A girl should be more than twelve years old at the time of the marriage. The boy should be four years older than the girl. (24) It is illegal to receive money for a bride; on the other hand, there should not be a dowry. Those who sell their daughters commit a very great sin. (25) Offerings and sacrifices for prayers should be given only to those holy men who are Ad Dharmi and who have shown themselves to follow Ad Dharmi principles religiously. (26) It is necessary for each Ad Dharmi to provide primary education to both boys and girls. (27) The girls should be educated especially in household work such as sewing and needlework. (28) Young girls and boys should not be sent out to cut grass and gather wood. (29) It is the duty of parents not to allow young widowed daughters to remain in their household, because a young widowed daughter is a cause of disgrace. (30) If an Ad Dharmi widow with children wants to hold a commemoration of her deceased husband, but cannot afford it, then the Ad Dharm Mandal of Jullundur and its members will help her. (31) It is not good to cry and beat oneself at a death or funeral. To do so is to anger Guru Dev. (32) Among the Ad Dharmis sons and daughters should receive an equal inheritance. (33) To eat the meat of a dead animal or bird is against the law of Ad Dharm. (34) To use wine or any other intoxicants is a sin, except in the case of sickness. (35) It is legal to eat food offered at noon - Ad Dharm marriages, but the food should be decent, and not leftovers. (36) Cleanliness is important. It guaranteed good health. (37) It is forbidden to practice idolatry and worship statues, and one should not believe in magic, ghosts, or anything of the sort. (38) All Ad Dharmis should forget notions of caste and untouchability and work toward the unity of all people in the world. (39) Each Ad Dharmi should help a fellow Ad Dharmi in need. (40) One Ad

Dharmi must not work at a place where another Ad Dharmi works until the first Ad Dharmi has been paid his wages. (41) If Ad Dharmis enter into a dispute with one another, they should attempt to come to some agreement by themselves or within the community. If no agreement is accomplished, they should refer the case to the Ad Dharm Mandal, Jullundur, and the Executive Committee will take action. (42) Ad Dharmis should open shops and business in every village. (43) Every Ad Dharmi should be a missionary for the faith. (44) Ad Dharmis should call themselves such and register in the census as "Ad Dharmi". (45) A Red turban on the head is mandatory, for it is the color of our ancestors. (46) Every Ad Dharmi should work hard for the progress and peace of the community. (47) Ad Dharmis should organize themselves into cadres called martyrdom cells. They should work hard on the Ad Dharm's projects. (48) Each Ad Dharmi should separate himself from Hindus, Sikhs, and members of other religions. (49) Each Ad Dharmi should be a good citizen, a patriot loyal to the present government, and should follow the law of the land. (50) Ad Dharmis have the obligation to consider the Ad Dharm Mandal of Punjab, city of Jullundur, as their rightful representative, and to recognize that the programs of the AD Dharm are for their benefit. (51) It is the duty of every Ad Dharmi to trust the Ad Dharm Mandal of Jullundur, and to share its work. (52) All local branches of the Ad Dharm should be certified by the Ad Dharm Mandal of Jullundur, and those, which are not certified, should not be considered genuine. (53) All Ad Dharmis should save their fellow Ad Dharmis from fraud and selfishness on the part of other communities. If such a situation arises, the Mandal should be informed. (54) Each Ad Dharmi should report any difficulty concerning the community to the Mandal in Jullundur. (55) Ad Dharmis should subscribe to the qaum's newspaper, Adi Danka. They should receive it regularly, read it regularly, and help support it regularly. (56) Anyone violating the laws of the Ad Dharm or of the guru, or who insults these laws in one way or another, will be liable to punishment, even the greatest punishment - being banished from the community. The main emphasis of these commandments, principles and duties, in the opinion of Babu Mangoo Ram, was to strengthen the social, cultural and religious life of the Dalits so that it could help them build Dalit Solidarity and empowerment.

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(January 14, 2008)

HOW TO HANDLE THE SHRINKING INDIAN ECONOMY?

According to preliminary estimates released by the Central Statistics Office on January 7, 2021, India's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to shrink by 7.7% during 2020-21. During the April-June 2020 quarter, the GDP contracted by 23.9 per cent, while in the second quarter of July-September 2020, the contraction was 7.5 per cent. According to earlier estimates of the Central Statistics Office, for the remaining two quarters, from October 2020 to March 2021, the contraction will either end or remain at 0.1 per cent. According to the provisional data for 2019-20, India's gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated at Rs. 145.66 lakh crore, which is projected to remain at Rs. 134.40 lakh crore during 2020-21. For the first time since 1979-80, India's GDP has shrunk. The estimates released by the Central Statistics Office will be used for the budget estimates to be presented by the Central Government, but the exact figures will be available in May 2021.

Shrinking GDP figures need a serious discussion. Even at such times, the ruling politicians leave no stone unturned in giving false consolations to the common man and deliberately weave a web of statistics with the help of pro-government and pro-corporate economists. People can be confused. Despite the fact that these economists are well aware of the reality, they make their own figures after taking or hoping to get the smallest useless concessions for themselves. They are seen exerting more force than they can handle.

It is not appropriate to link the GDP figures for 2020-21 with the Covid-19 pandemic alone. This shrinkage in GDP started from 2016-17. Due to demonetization in November 2016, 86 per cent of the country's currency was out of use and the GST levied in a haphazard manner in 2017 has added to the problem. There is also no doubt that the demand for and supply of goods and services has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Countries around the world provided much needed financial and other assistance to their working class to cope with the pandemic, but the Government of India announced a package of Rs. 20 lakh crore, mostly in the form of bank loan guarantees and the working classes received little to no help from this relief package.

An increase or contraction in the GDP of a country is said to reflect the economic growth of that country. The overall economic growth rate may be significant, but far more important is to know how economic growth is achieved and which sections are benefiting from it. If a country's economic growth rate exceeds that country's population growth rate, it may be considered good, but it is important to know that it is not by misusing resources meant for the

present or future generations.

After the independence of India, the Planning Commission was set up in 1950 and with the introduction of Five Year Plans from 1951, planning began. The period 1951-80 is considered as the planning era in the country. During this time the country developed economically, albeit at a low rate but the economic inequalities in the country decreased as this was the time when the public sector came into being and expanded and developed and the functioning of the private sector was monitored and regulated. For some time after the 'New Economic Policies' of liberalization, privatization and globalization adopted in the country since 1991, the country's economic growth rate has been higher than that of most of the countries in the world. The rulers praised themselves for achieving high growth rate and if they lack in this re-



gard then government and courtier economists go to great lengths to address it. Forgetting the fact that the life of a water bubble is very short, the rulers of the country also started claiming to be the world's super economic power in the very near future. When the economic growth rate of the country went down, the working class was massively displaced and oppressed and the economic system was tilted and paid in favor of the capitalist / corporate world.

In order to keep the environment of a country clean and for the wildlife to survive, the area under forests must be one-third of the total area of that country. In addition to this, the use of chemicals in agricultural production, crop rotation, emission of toxic gases etc to keep the environment clean are also considered aspects. Deforestation is being carried out indiscriminately for economic growth in the country. According to the Forest Survey of India, the forest cover in the country during 2019 is 21.67 per cent and Punjab has been deforested to a large extent to meet the food needs of the country and the forest cover is only 3.67 per cent.

During the 1960's, the Central Government decided to adopt the "New Agriculture Technology" to curb

the country's severe food shortages. This agricultural technique was a package of high yielding variety seeds, assured irrigation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and other chemicals, machinery and modern agricultural practices. The Union Government launched the "New Agriculture Technique" in Punjab keeping in view the courageous farmers, agricultural labourers and rural small artisans of Punjab and its rich natural resources. The hard work of Punjab's courageous farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural small artisans and the misuse of its natural resources have contributed immensely to the severe shortage of food grains in the country. To meet the needs of Central Pool of Foodgrains, the Union Government has imposed the paddy crop on the farmers of Punjab through the policy of MSP for agricultural commodities

to this population. The three agricultural laws enacted by the Union Government in 2020 will not only bring a mountain of troubles to those who depend on agriculture, but will also break the backs of ordinary consumers while endangering the country's food security.

According to the 66th round of National Sample Survey data, 92.8 per cent of the country's workers were in informal employment during 2009-10. The percentage of formally employed workers has declined further in the last 10 years as public sector enterprises are increasingly being axed. Informal workers are not even sure if they will get only one day's employment in the future.

The industrial and services sectors in the country have made great strides since 1991, but this progress has been uneven. Large corporations have used the country's resources in legal and illegal ways to increase their profits, while small units in these sectors have been ignored. In this connection, it is important to know the fact that the products or services being provided by these two sectors are alienating the common man.

Economic inequalities are increasing rapidly due to the capitalist/corporate economic growth model adopted in the country. Various international and domestic studies have revealed that the economic gap between the richest 1 per cent and the remaining 99 per cent is widening. With regard to the growing economic inequalities in the country, the rulers have to understand that the Gota-Kinari (capitalist people) looks good only if the Chadar (common people) is healthy. Regarding the kind of economic development that is being carried out, the adage "to hell with that gold that eats away at the ears" is apt.

Understanding the fact that the grass growing on the graves of the poor workers gives rise to many awkward economic, social, cultural, political and other evils, the time has come to replace the capitalist/corporate economic growth model with a people and nature-friendly economic development model that ensures taxing of the rich people and spending the income received from taxation on the working class to ensure that their basic needs are met in a respectful manner. This will reduce economic inequalities.



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Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia And Ad-Dharma Movement



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While recalling the significance of the role of the Ad-Dharma movement launched by Babu Mangu Ram of Mugowalia in the year 1926, for

espousing the cause of the Untouchables of the pre-partition Punjab, we must remind ourselves of the circumstances prevailing in those times. For, since then tremendous changes have taken place in the social, political and administrative fields, and not many of the present times may have a precise idea of the harrowing conditions and environments in which our people found themselves.

Till about the mid-twenties there was no social and political awakening among the untouchables. People had been fed on the deceptive and demoralising Brahmanical philosophy that the Untouchables were born as such not by any coincidence but because of their accumulated bad deeds committed in the past lives. As a consequence, they were disintitiled to get education, to own and possess property, to take to professions and avocations of their own liking and choice, and to a place of equality, honour and dignity in society. This was the divine dispensation. It was dinned

into their ears day in and day out that this was not due either to their own fault in this life or to the fault of society that they were born in the lowest and wretched castes, and, therefore, they were made to suffer untold hardships and punishments under the edict of the Almighty for their past sins. Out of sheer ignorance these misguided and gullible people tacitly accepted their cursed fate foisted on them by the clever sort. For their woeful sufferings they would beat their foreheads in utter helplessness and say pathetically that it was due to their inevitable fate and destiny. It never occurred to them, and there was none to tell them, that they were being duped and cheated by the uppermost strata of society who were interested in keeping them under their feet. They could not understand why others who were leading most sinful lives before their very eyes were enjoying all comforts of life both good and bad. The good deeds of the ignorant and unsophisticated people of this life were of no consequence for them in this life; they were being stored and preserved for consideration in the life to come. It was a very cunning ruse played on the ignorant and deprived people.

There was none among the Untouchables to raise the banner of revolt against this aggression, oppression, tyranny, deception and exploitation of the poor and the ignorant committed behind the facade of religious philosophy. There, however, appeared on the scene an inspired soul in the person of Babu Mangu Ram of Mugowalia, who came back from

America after a decade's sojourn there. There he was a member of the Ghadar Party formed by the Indians living there to supplement the struggle of freedom launched by the nationalists here.

On reaching home Babu Mangu Ram founded an organisation under the name Ad-Dharma Mandal. Soon a band of enthusiastic and devoted workers gathered around him. The message brought by Babu Mangu Ram was new inspiring. It was aimed at awakening the Un-touchable. The message called upon them to know and realise themselves as they had forgotten their true selves due to the hostile influences in which they had been living for thousands of years. It caught the imagination and hearts of the oppressed and down-trodden people and soon Babu Mangu Ram's name became a household word. He succeeded remarkably well in creating awareness and awakening the people. His path was beset with difficulties and he had to work against odds and trying circumstances. Financial difficulties apart, he and his co-workers were chased everywhere and hounded out of bound out of bounds of towns and villages by the Hindus, and quite often they had to hold their meeting and conferences in open fields. One such incident also took place at Una. A weekly "Adi-Danka" in Punjabi was also started to carry the message to every nook and corner of the province. This was the beginning of the struggle for getting back the human rights of which they had been deprived of for centuries. Wherever Babu Mangu Ram went,

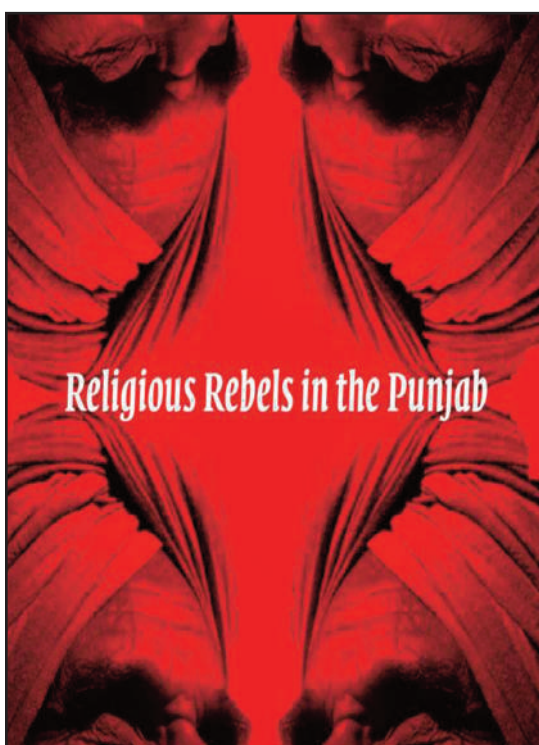
the people were eager to have a glimpse of their beloved leader and benefactor. He did the pioneering work to awaken the people. My own relations with him had been very close and cordial. From my college days I had been attending meetings of the Ad-Dharma Mandal and also occasionally contributing small articles to the Adi-Danka.

In the crucial days of the Round Table Conference held in London in the early thirties for the purpose of hammering out a new political set up for our country, Babu Mangu Ram worked enthusiastically shoulder with the greatest leader of the underdog, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was representing the Untouchables of the County at the Conference, to strengthen his hands in his historic struggle for securing political rights for his people on the basis of their being a separate and distinct political entity.

Babu Mangu Ram will be long remembered as the devoted pioneer in the crusade against social and political injustice. He fought relentlessly even in the face of crippling heavy odds for the achievements of the goal. Whatever rights we have been able to snatch so far is entirely due to these great men.

There is needed to look back lest we should forget our benefactors-the brave soldiers who fought our battles.

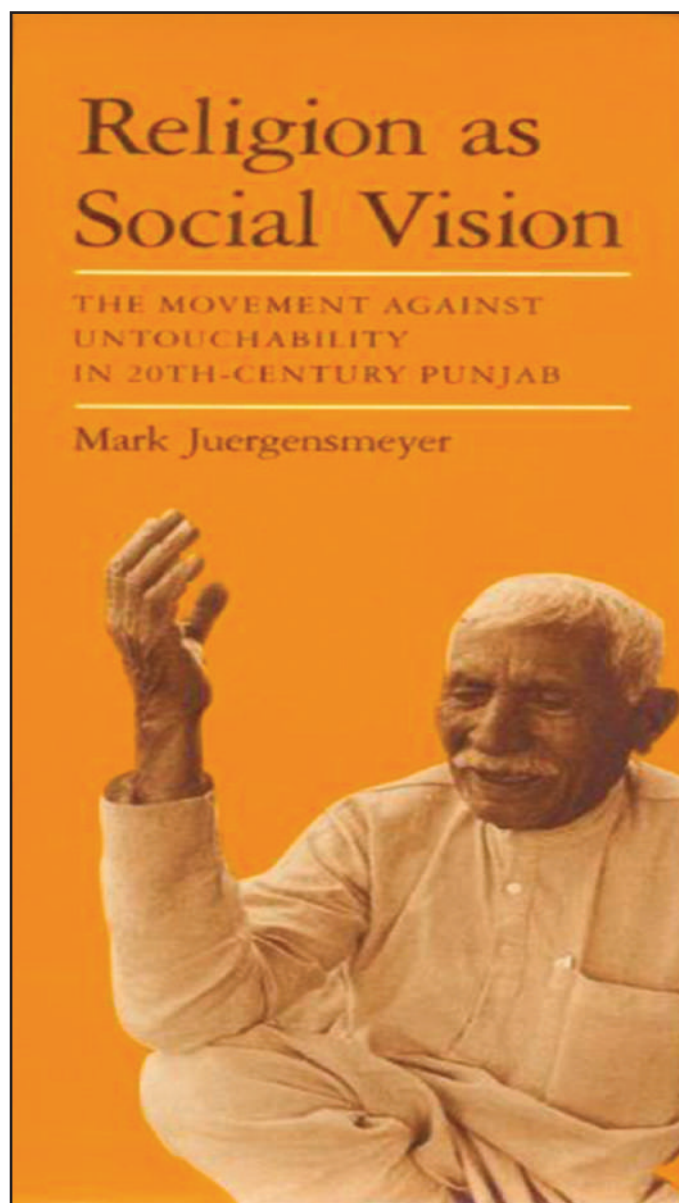
Source Courtesy: Souvenir, 1985
Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia
99th Birth Anniversary,
By Mr. C. L. Chumber



Religious Rebels in the Punjab

The Ad Dharm Challenge to Caste

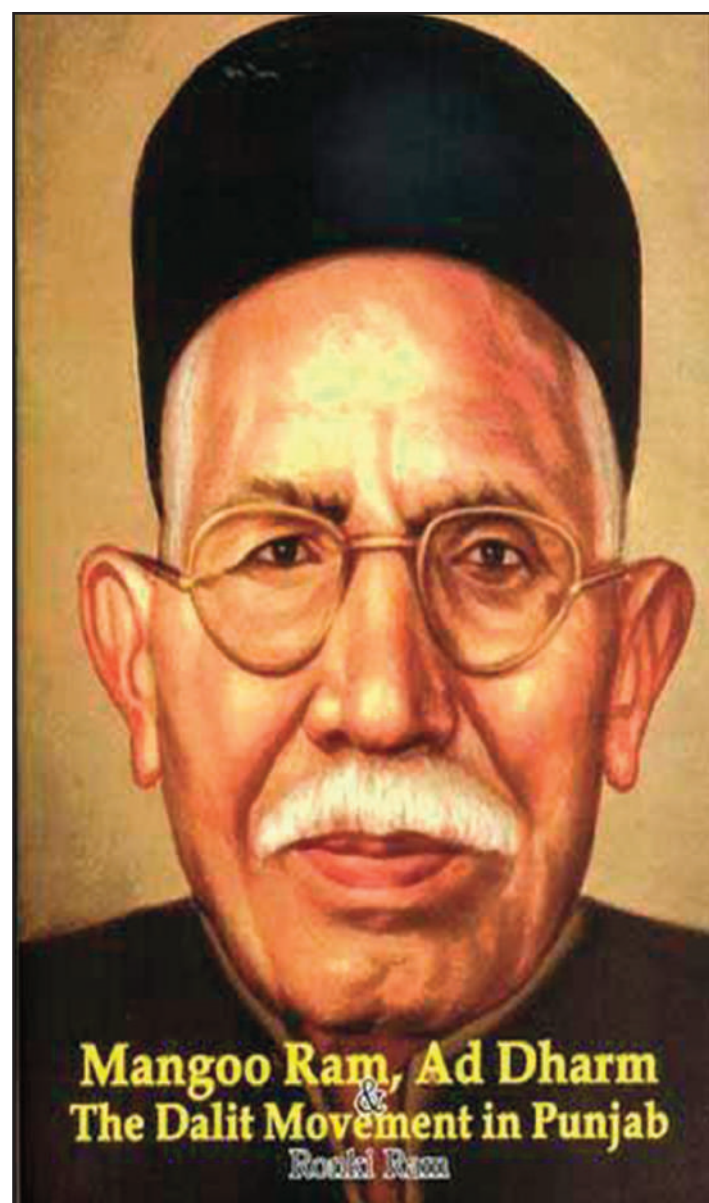
Mark Juergensmeyer



Religion as
Social Vision

THE MOVEMENT AGAINST
UNTOUCHABILITY
IN 20TH-CENTURY PUNJAB

Mark Juergensmeyer



Mango Ram, Ad Dharm
&
The Dalit Movement in Punjab

Roshal Ram

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia – A Tribute

The birth anniversary of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia (January 14, 1886 – April 22, 1980) falls on January 14. I have been writing off and on in the Ambedkar Times and my Blog: diplomaticbits.blogspot.in on the life and mission of Babu Mangu Ram "Prophet of dalit struggle in Punjab" as termed by Prof Ronki Ram of the Punjab University, Chandigarh. I thought of remembering the great dalit icon Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia again as a humble tribute to him for his pioneering contribution for the emancipation of the marginalized sections of the society in the early years of the 20th century under the banner of Ad-dharam Movement which was founded by him in 1925-26 on his return from the democratic world abroad and his sterling role in the Gadar Movement in the USA for the independence of India.

Initially, the ad-dharam movement was initiated by Vasant Rai, Achutanand among others as a 'reform movement' of Hindus under of Arya Samaj to counter Christians, Muslims and Sikhs who were targeting dalits to join them under the arrangements of communal divide initiated by the British rulers in 1909 and further strengthened in 1919 which ultimately resulted in the 'Communal Award' of PM Ramsey MacDonald in 1932 after the Round Table Conferences.

It goes without saying that the Communal Award was the outcome of untiring efforts set in motion of the Memorandum of Ad-dharam Mandal submitted to the Governor of Punjab in 1929 which was rightly called "Magna Carta of dalits" and aptly pleaded and registered by Babasaheb Ambedkar in the Round Table Conferences against a stiff opposition by Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindu leadership at large who wanted to keep dalits under the subjugation of upper caste Hindus. The Ad-dharam Mandal under the stewardship of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia stood by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar when he was struggling for registering his

view point for the emancipation of the depressed classes from the tyranny of caste Hindus. The rest is history.

With Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's expose to the liberal ideas of the USA and his work and interaction with the Gadari Babas made him revolt against the social discrimina-



tion of the caste Hindus against the depressed people under the caste system. He founded Ad-dharam Mandal, in cooperation and coordination with his likeminded colleagues and declared the following as their motive and agenda, as written by Prof. Ronki Ram in one of his articles on the subject,

"The leaders of Ad Dharm thus chose to restore dignity and freedom to the untouchables by detaching them completely from Hinduism and consolidating them into their own ancient religion – Ad Dharm— of which they had become

oblivious during the long domination by the 'alien Hindus'. In fact, the task of reviving their ancient religion was not an easy one, for the untouchables had forgotten their Gurus and other religious symbols during long period of persecution at the hands of the Savarnas. They had been condemned as impure and declared unfit to have their own theology. Thus, to revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing a new religion for the Achhuts. Mangu Ram's claim that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enormous psychological impact on the untouchables, providing a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity." Manyawar Kanshi Ram, a dalit icon who brought the marginalized sections of the society to the political map of the country in recent times to carry forward the mission of Babu Mangu Ram, explained the agenda and rationale of Ad-dharam Movement in one of his public speeches in Hoshiarpur and said,

"What is Ad-dharm? To tell people about this, I have called this meeting at this place. The Ad-dharm movement was the movement of rebellion against the Hindu religion. It was the movement against the Manuwad. A religion that mistreated and exploited Chamars for years and years, Ad-dharm movement was the movement against that oppression. It was the rebellion against all those atrocities. Ad-Dharm movement was the revolt against the Hinduism."

The agenda and mission of Ad-dharam Movement and Babu Mangu Ram was clear and candid in

establishing the dalit identity separate from the Hindus and Sikhs as Moolnivasis of the land. The contribution of Babu Mangu Ram and Ad-dharam Movement in this regard was immense and appreciable.

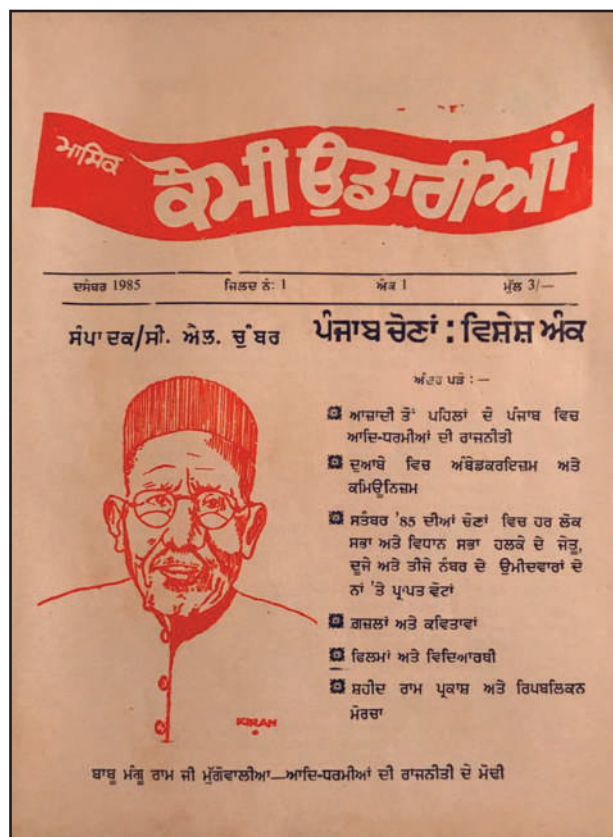
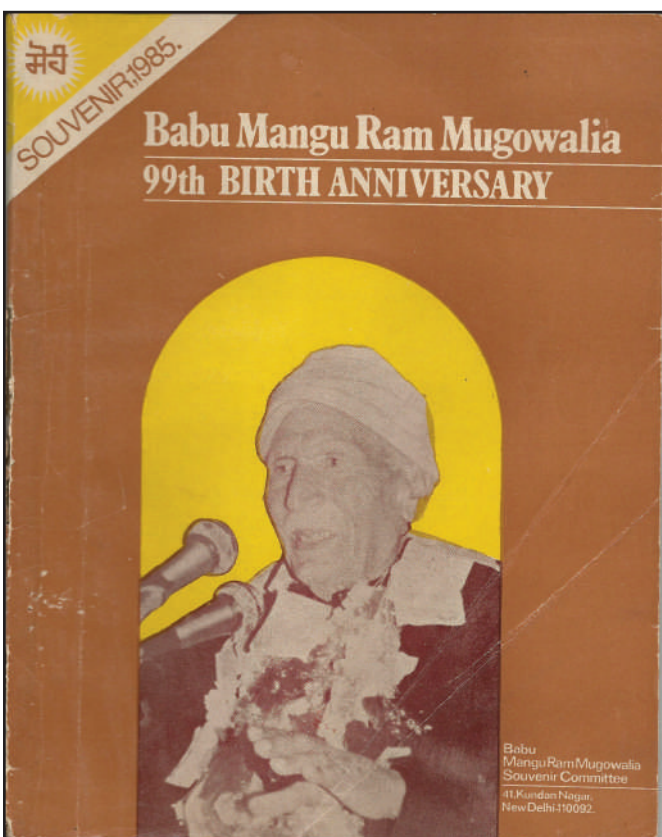
It must be recorded in history in its right perspective. The subsequent developments like the Poona Pact of 1932 signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the wake of the Communal Award, independence of India in 1947 and the new constitution of India and also Babasaheb Ambedkar's embracing of Buddhism in 1956 changed the political and social scenario which resulted in diminished relevance of Ad-dharam Movement. But the impact and contribution of the Movement, nevertheless, will remain in the dalit consciousness for long years to come.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the mission of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia with appropriate changes to cater to the needs of changing scenario is being followed and promoted by All India Ad-dharam Mission under the leadership of Sant Satwinder Singh Hira of Khuralgarh Sahib, historic site pertaining to Guru Ravidass ji, in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab and many other outfits. I take this opportunity to wish them all the best in realizing the lofty ideal of establishing a casteless and equitable society as visualized by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

With this I close here with Naman to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia on his birth anniversary as my humble tribute to the great leader. ਹਜ਼ਾਰੇ ਸਾਲ ਨਰਗਸਿ ਆਪਣੀ ਬੇਨੂਰੀ ਪੈ ਰੋੜੀ ਹੈ, ਬੜੀ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲਿ ਸੇ ਹੋੜਾ ਹੈ ਚਮਨ ਮੈਂ ਦੀਦਾਵਰ ਪੈਦਾ !



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940



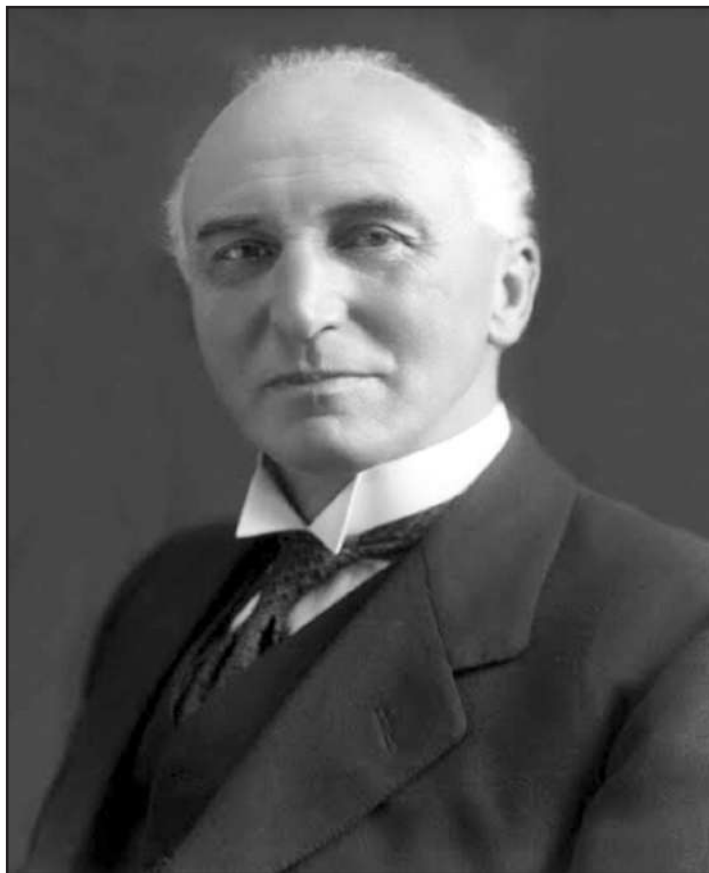
Source Courtesy: The Indian Quarterly Register Being a Quarterly Journal of Indian Public Affairs In matters Political, Social and Economic, etc. Volume-II, July-Dec.1928, Numbers III & IV

**The Indian Statutory Commission
The Depressed Classes' Deputation
Page No.126**

Before the Conference met, a contingent of 500 members of the depressed classes' men from various parts of the Punjab, had arrived – all red-turbaned and dressed in white – and wished to meet Sir John Simon. Sir John's time being fully occupied, he was unable to witness the demonstration but received a small deputation of six of them led by Mr. Rajah.

Sir John Simon received the deputation's address and assured them that though he could not hear them publicly, he was giving his best consideration to their case and that Mr. Rajah was there giving all the facts and figures and devotedly representing the cause of the depressed classes.

The depressed classes deputation, said in the course of their memorial that they belonged to an ancient race which ruled India about 5000 years ago, prior to the invasion of India by the Aryans. The Aryans, whose present descendants were called high class Hindus, had all along been treating them with the most inhuman brutality, so that their unlucky community, numerically large as it



was, is now little more than a mere name. In spite of the fact that there were some highly-educated and capable men in their community, they were not given any honourable status

in society nor the right of ownership or anything. They had not even the right to safeguard their individual lives.

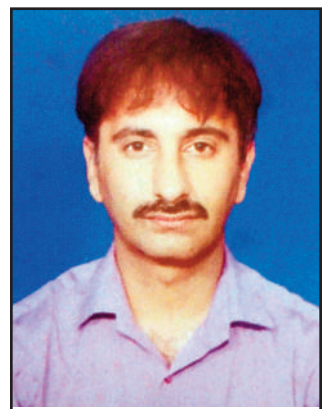
This deplorable condition of the mute millions of the depressed community was due to the horrible treatment meted out to them by high-class Hindus in consequence of the pronouncements of the ancient Aryans, which were embodied in the Manu Smriti and a lot of other Hindu scriptures of that ilk.

The deputations next stated that they did not wish to be called Hindus but 'Addharmis' and in the next census they should describe themselves as 'Addharmis'. They did not want Swaraj in India under pres-

ent conditions, as it would mean practically a monopoly by caste Hindus.

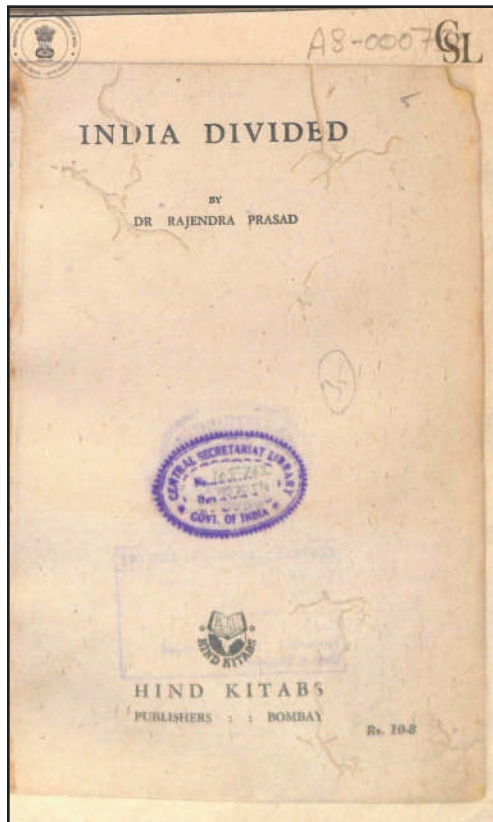
They enumerated their demands as follows:

Necessary arrangements for the better education of Addharmis (untouchable) boys and girls; separate representation in all public bodies and the Legislature; a share in all public services, including the police, civil and military; a Minister in every province; equal rights of using all District Board public wells with other communities; equal rights of ownership of any property – dwelling houses and common fields – with other communities and proscription of the Manu Smriti and all such Hindu scriptures in which contemptuous references are made to the race and community. References to the community by the term of Shudra, the memorial urges, should be strictly forbidden. Land in the new colonies should be distributed just as it is done in the case of other communities.

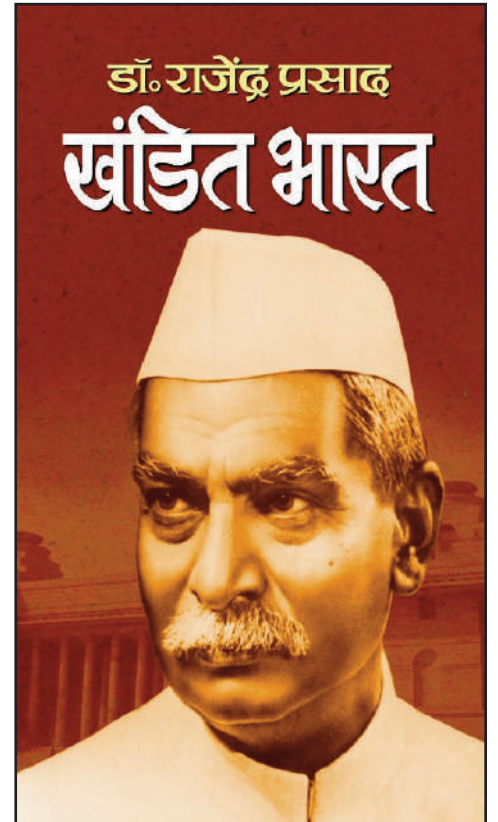
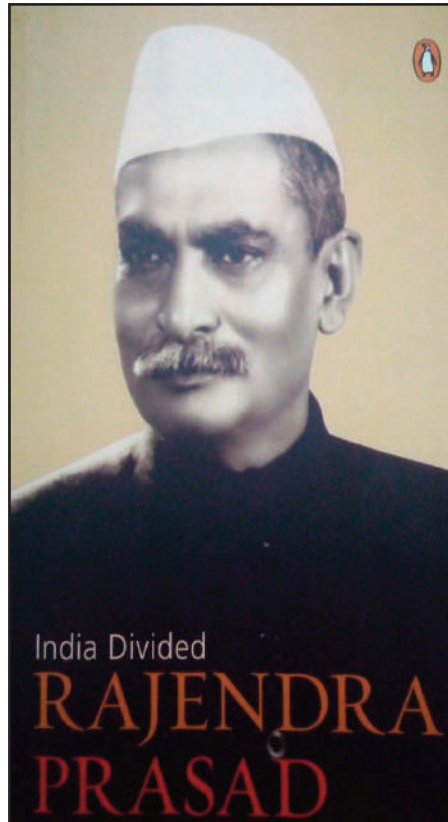


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India Divided, Authored by Dr. Rajendra Prasad



Province	Chalchala population	Others	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Others	Others
Province	29,271	47,08,023	5,76,079	40,20,144	23,228	2,20,277	1,07,127
Province	21,703	6,80,217	2,24,799	48,20,203	97,747	3,12,823	64,207
Province	10,430	31,04,243	6,20,254	25,44,262	5,14,289	6,21,191	28,276
Province	67,774	1,48,29,909	22,24,287	1,28,23,469	6,28,206	10,09,209	1,09,204
Total	1,07,127	1,48,29,909	22,24,287	1,28,23,469	6,28,206	10,09,209	1,09,204



Source Courtesy: India Divided, Authored by Dr. Rajendra Prasad First Published in 1946
[This book by Dr. Rajendra Prasad has information about the Ad-Dharmis] Before analysing the figures given in the above table it is worth noting that under 'others' are included Adidharmis, Jains, Parsis, Jews and those who returned no specified religion or community. Of these the most numerous are the Adidharmis, who according to the Census Commissioner

though included in scheduled castes do not claim to be Hindus and are hence recorded separately not only from the Hindus but also from the scheduled castes. They number 3,43,685 or 1.21 per cent of the total population of the Punjab. They are concentrated very largely in the Jullundur Division where their number is 2,50,267 or 4.60 per cent of the population of that Division. Their next largest concentrations are in the Multan Division

and Lahore Division where they number 68,641 or 20,488 respectively. Their number is negligible in the Ambala and Rawalpindi Divisions being only 2,795 and 1,534 respectively. As has been pointed out in the Census Report of 1931: 'The most notable feature of the present (1931) census from the stand-point of returns of religion has been the adoption of the term Adi Dharmi by numerous Chamars and Chuhras and other Untouchables. At previous cen-

suses Chuhras unless they returned some recognized religion were always included among Hindus. The 1941 Census Report also notes that all those who are recorded as Adi dharmis belong to the scheduled castes but have not claimed to be Hindus. The last two census days have thus succeeded in reducing the number of Hindus in the Province by excluding the Adidharmis from amongst them.

THE GREAT CENSUS 1931 THE AD-DHARM RELIGION

Source Courtesy: Census of India, 1931, Volume XVII, Punjab
By Khan Ahmad Hasan Khan
Superintendent of Census Operations
Punjab & Delhi
Printed by: Civil & Military Gazette Press, Lahore (1933)
Page No.289
A "New" Religion

The most notable feature of the present census from the standpoint of return of religion has been the adoption of the term "Ad-Dharmi" by numerous Chamar and Chuhras and other untouchables. At previous censuses Chuhras, unless they returned some recognized religion, were always included among Hindus. In this respect the instructions for the

return of religion at the present census were the same as in 1921, viz. "All Chuhras, who are not Muslims or Christians, and who do not return any other religion, should be returned as Hindus. The same rule applies to members of other depressed classes who have no tribal religion." Thus under the instructions if a Chuhra refused to be recorded as a Hindu he was to be so recorded in case he failed to return any other religion. An addition was, however, made to the instructions by the insertion of the clause: "Persons returning themselves as Ad-Dharmis should be recorded as such." The Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal had petitioned the Punjab Government before the census operations started in 1930, rep-

resenting that the depressed classes should be permitted to return Ad-Dharm as their religion at the time of the census as they were the aborigines of India and while the Hindus kept them at a respectable distance they did not believe in the Hindu religion. The President of the Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal was informed that a clause was being provided in the Census Code requiring that persons returning their religion as Ad-Dharm would be recorded as such. Ad-Dharm literally means original or ancient religion.

Page No.294
Revolt of Untouchables
 There has been in the last few years a movement among the untouchable classes to organize them-

selves as a separate community in order to consolidate their position, and many of them have returned themselves, particularly in the central districts, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, as Ad-Dharmi or the followers of Ad-Dharm, meaning the ancient or original religion of Hindustan. The figures of Ad-Dharmis are given in the margin for the districts returning more than 100 of them.

The following tabular statistical information are from Chapter XI - Religion and XII - Race, Tribe and Caste from the above-mentioned source, which highlights the Ad-Dharm Religion in Census 1931:

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Page No.291:
Proportion of Numerical Strength by Religion:

Religion	British Territory	Punjab States
Muslim	56.54	32.53
Hindu	26.83	46.26
Sikh	12.99	20.56
Christian	1.74	.09
Ad-Dharmi	1.69	.4
Jain	.15	.16

Chapter XII
Race, Tribe and Caste
Page No.333:
 The distribution of Chamars and Mochis between the Hindu and Sikh religions in 1921 and among Hindus, Sikhs, Ad-Dharmis in 1931 is given in the margin:

Locality	1921		1931		
	Hindu (1)	Sikh (2)	Hindu (3)	Sikh (4)	Ad-Dharmi (5)
Punjab	980,293	163,290	705,189	225,833	256,349
British Territory	766,424	85,020	479,162	126,410	248,431
Punjab States	213,869	78,270	226,027	99,423	7,918

Page No.311:
 Figures since 1881 for some of the most numerous depressed classes, who have been returned as belonging to more than one religion:

Caste and Religion	1931	1921	1911	1901	1891	1881
Bawaria	Hindu	16,045	25,517	26,847	27,633	24,401
	Sikh	15,858	9,005	6,002	1,275	1,635
	Ad-Dharmi	56	..	..	..	..
Chamar	Hindu	684,963	968,298	909,499	1,089,003	1,029,335
	Sikh	155,717	161,862	164,110	75,753	106,328
	Ad-Dharmi	256,349	..	..	..	..
Chuhra	Hindu	368,224	693,393	777,821	934,553	859,571
	Sikh	157,341	40,345	49,937	21,673	90,321
	Ad-Dharmi	86,548	..	..	..	..
Ramdasi	Hindu	12,235	..	..	..	..
	Sikh	67,080	..	..	..	..
	Ad-Dharmi	47,169
Sansi	Hindu	26,665	17,090	22,022	23,658	18,246
	Sikh	1,238	77
	Ad-Dharmi	384

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Page No.334
 Proportion of literacy among Chamars under different religious denominations, is illustrated by the marginal table, which also gives the figures for Chuhras.

CASTE AND RELIGION	Total Population	Literates per mille aged 7 and over
	Chamar	
Hindu	684,963	5
Ad-Dharmi	256,349	13
Sikh	158,753	14
Chuhra		
Hindu	368,224	8
Ad-Dharmi	86,548	5
Sikh	169,247	9

Page No.334:
 The figures for the last two censuses are given in the margin with detail by religion. Hindu Chuhras have decreased by 47 per cent, while Chuhras among other religions show a varying degree of increase. The Ad-Dharm religion has been returned for the first time...

CHUHRA	Hindu	Sikh	Ad-Dharmi	Muslim (including Mussalli)	Christian
Strength in 1921	693,425	42,476	..	374,884	..
Strength in 1931	368,224	169,247	86,548	434,644	34,996
Actual Variation	- 325,201	+ 126,771	..	+59,760	..
Percentage Variation	- 46.9	+ 298.5	..	+15.9	..

Depressed Classes in the Punjab

Source Courtesy: The Indian Social Reformer, Vol.XLVIII
Bombay, Saturday October 16, 1937
Editors: K.Natarajan, S.Natarajan

The following paragraphs which has reference to the Ad-Dharmis, are from the above-mentioned source:

Depressed Classes in the Punjab

The deep concern of the Punjab Government to ameliorate the condition of "Ad-Dharmis" (untouchables) in the Province was voiced by the Hon'ble Mian Abdul Haye, Education Minister, addressing a conference of Harijans at the village of Pilanwali, near Hoshiarpur on Sunday (October 3) afternoon. The Conference was held in a mango grove under a large shamiana, where more than 1000 Harijans of the Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and

adjoining districts had collected.

The Minister, speaking in Hindustani, announced that he had come to the Conference on behalf of the Premier and the Punjab Government, who considered "Ad-Dharmis" as good as members of any other community and addressed the audience as his brethren. He emphasized that he would give them the same status as a Brahmin or a Sayyad would receive from him. He felt pain at addressing them as "Acchut" and found no difference between them and himself in the eyes of God. He added that the Punjabi nation was constituted of various communities and the "Ad-Dharmis" were a part and parcel of that nation. The Hon'ble Minister compared "Ad-Dharmis" with the bricks laid in the foundation of a house on

which the whole structure was standing, while the bricks near the roof i.e. members of Cabinet and Government could only keep their position if the foundation was there, otherwise the whole building would come down. He assured them that the Punjab Government and its officers would very gladly help them in their troubles and the extra help rendered would mean nothing but doing justice to a down-trodden community.

As regards the Punjab Government's anxiety for the "Ad-Dharmis" he said that there was altogether free primary education for their children in the province, half fee concession in middle and high classes and special scholarships were being awarded in colleges. He men-

tioned that out of 16 Parliamentary and Private Secretaries of the Cabinet, two had gone to "Ad-Dharmis", that they had been nearly about 2 annas in the rupee instead of about a pice or so, to which they were otherwise entitled. The District Board of Jullundur had even made education free for their children up to high classes.

As regards the question of opening special schools for Harijans, the Minister said that he considered all the institutions were meant for "Ad-Dharmis" and if he came across any refusal from any institution whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Government or of a local body he would see that serious notice was taken and if needed he would not mind the closing down of that institution.

Facts About Ad-Dharmis

The following information/statistics are reproduced from the source "Facts About India" by Dr. Ishwara Topa, D.Phil., Osmania University (1944) and highlights Ad-Dharm as a Religion. The information is retrieved from Chapter-III - The Punjab Province, Page No.63-103:

Page No.67-68:

Urban population by Religion

We give below two tables showing (1) the number per mille of the total population of each religion who live in towns and (2) the number per 10,000 of urban population in the Punjab and by natural divisions.

Natural Division	Population	Hindu	Ad-Dharmi	Sikh	Jain	Buddhist	Zoroastrian	Muslim	Christian	Jew
Punjab	124	154	47	63	590	5	928	122	159	846
Indo-Gangetic Plain, West	166	280	75	60	536	826	975	213	169	800
Himalayan	33	26	..	179	165	..	667	145	668	1,000
Sub-Himalayan	106	153	16	67	834	818	974	95	180	857
North-West Dry Area	87	264	34	70	915	667	830	60	89	..

Natural Division	Hindu	Ad-Dharmi	Sikh	Jain	Muslim	Christian	Zoroastrian
Punjab	3,764	55	726	72	5,191	190	1
Indo-Gangetic Plain, West	3,797	70	791	87	5,097	157	1
Himalayan	7,451	..	226	8	1,987	287	..
Sub-Himalayan	3,224	27	734	89	5,578	347	1
North-West Dry Area	3,891	42	541	11	5,391	121	2

Page No.70:

Rural population by Religion

The number per 10000 of rural population by religion is tabled thus:

Natural Division	Hindu	Ad-Dharmi	Sikh	Jain	Muslim	Christian	Zoroastrian	Buddhist
Punjab	2,913	160	1,528	7	5,247	141	..	3
Indo-Gangetic Plain, West	3,445	172	2,467	15	3,747	153	..	..
Himalayan	9,388	121	41	1	399	5	..	43
Sub-Himalayan	2,117	204	1,216	2	6,273	188	..	..
North-West Dry Area	1,032	112	686	..	8,053	117	..	..

Page No.81:

Percentage for the British territory and the Punjab States are given below:

Religion	British Territory Per cent	Punjab States Per cent
Muslim	56.54	32.53
Hindu	26.83	46.26
Sikh	12.99	20.56
Christian	1.74	0.09
Ad-Dharmi	1.69	0.16
Jain	0.15	0.16

Page No.96:

LITERACY BY AGE BOTH SEXES AND RELIGION

Number per mille* who are literate (both sexes)

*The proportion is calculated on the population of the age-period and not on the total population.

Religion	All ages Total	5 and over	5-10	10-15	15-20	20 and over
Punjab all religions	59	110	35	79	157	128
Hindu	90	168	52	113	221	198
Ad-Dharmi	16	31	11	22	45	36
Sikh	82	152	50	110	209	196
Jain	302	572	197	390	719	677
Buddhist	65	134	18	25	117	177
Zoroastrian	529	1,039	565	812	827	1,167
Muslim	34	63	23	51	99	69
Christian	102	198	70	123	870	240
Christian (European)	626	1,143	668	914	1,227	1,179
Christian (Indian)	66	132	54	104	187	152
Jew	250	543	1,000	..	..	500

Page No.96:

Literacy by vernaculars, namely, Urdu, Hindi and Gurmukhi is also recorded and it is tabled thus:

I - PUNJAB				
Religion	All vernaculars	Urdu	Hindi	Gurmukhi
All religions	1,272,301	908,521	216,296	188,484
Hindu	562,126	362,142	198,464	51,861
Ad-Dharmi	5,540	2,073	338	3,228
Sikh	246,375	112,696	11,533	141,171
Muslim	411,925	409,048	2,084	1,778
Christian	17,343	16,804	369	334
II - BRITISH TERRITORY				
All religions	1,133,022	839,252	173,193	167,112
Hindu	503,684	326,550	159,060	40,974
Ad-Dharmi	5,413	2,060	335	3,121
Sikh	212,617	104,556	9,363	114,538
Muslim	386,468	384,494	1,241	1,071
Christian	17,062	16,452	353	322
III - PUNJAB STATES				
All religions	139,279	69,269	43,103	36,372
Hindu	76,432	36,592	39,404	10,887
Ad-Dharmi	127	13	3	107
Sikh	33,704	6,140	2,170	26,635
Muslim	25,457	24,554	643	707
Christian	372	352	16	12

THE AD-DHARMIS

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE AD-DHARM RELIGION

The Ad-Dharm Mandal was a Society which was formed by the Depressed Classes (Untouchables) and its first meeting was held on June 11-12, 1926 in the village of Muggowal in Tehsil Garhshankar, Hoshiarpur, Punjab. This meeting took place under the chairmanship of Mangoo Ram, and was attended by all the Untouchables of Punjab. The Untouchables collectively took the decision that their religion is Ad-Dharm, as they were the indigenous inhabitants (Moolniwas) of the Indian Subcontinent. Ad-Dharm literally means "Original Religion/Ancient Religion".

In the Resolutions which were passed at Muggowal, the Untouchables declared that the Founders of the Ad-Dharm Religion were Bhagwan Valmiki, Guru Ravidas, Guru Kabir, and Guru Namdev. They unanimously chose the sacred word Soham for themselves as their insignia. The salutation Jai Gurudev (Victory to the Divine Guru) and Dhan Gurudev (Blessed be the Divine Guru) was and is and will continue to be forever originally belonging to and is the creation of the Ad-Dharm Religion chosen by the Untouchable Castes for themselves.

Among the many resolutions which were passed at the meeting, high priority and importance was given to education, employment, business and property ownership:

- (1). All girls and boys of the Untouchable brotherhood should have compulsory primary education,
- (2). The Minister of Education of the Punjab Government, should give special scholarships and education for the Untouchable children. Because of our poverty we cannot bear this expense,
- (3). Our children should be taken care of by the government, since the private schools do not help us or encourage the admission of our children. We should get the same grants that

others get, and special schools should be set up for the Untouchables,

- (4). We are agriculturalists, we know our work well. But we are not paid enough in agricultural wages. We cannot take care of our families properly. Vacant lands should be given to the Untouchable community,
- (5). Untouchables should be able to own the houses where they live. The term rayit-namma and similar terms should be eliminated. The Land Transfer Act should not apply to Untouchables.
- (6). To learn and seek knowledge, and to learn and seek progress is compulsory for every man and woman,
- (7). Receive education for ourselves and others in the brotherhood,
- (8). Ad-Dharmis should open shops and businesses in every village. 1

Towards Census 1931:

The Ad-Dharm Mandal approached the Government on October 10, 1929 to have Ad-Dharm listed as a separate religion in the Census. This was readily accepted and a total of 418,789 of our community members recorded themselves as Ad-Dharmis. This was almost equal to the Christian population (419,353) in Punjab and much higher than the combined Jain and Buddhist population in Punjab. Addition had been made to the Instructions for Census 1931 that: "Persons returning themselves as Ad-Dharmis should be recorded as such." The Punjab Government had informed the Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal that a clause was being provided in the Census Code and that the persons returning their religion as Ad-Dharm would be recorded as such. 2

Support from Census Commissioner for Census 1941:

After the acceptance of the demands of the Ad-Dharm Mandal for the Cen-

sus 1931 in which Ad-Dharm was recognized as a distinct religion separate from the rest, and the Untouchables successfully recording themselves as Ad-Dharmis, support was again given to the community for Census 1941. There had been a decrease in the number of Hindu population in Punjab, and after reviewing the causes, certain "external" sources "inquired of Khan Bahadur Sheikh Fazal-i-Ilahi, Superintendent of the Census Operations in the Punjab, whether in the next Census also the Ad-Dharmis would be counted as non-Hindu." The reply received by the "external" source in a letter dated 13th August 1940 from the Superintendent, Census Operations, was: "I have the honour to say that Ad-Dharmis will be treated as non-Hindus and will not be included in the general total of Hindus at the ensuing Census as in 1931." 3

This again then resulted in a positive development for the Untouchable Castes to have themselves recognized as Ad-Dharmis in the Census 1941. According to Census 1941 Vol.VI, "a separate column has been provided, as at the last census, for Ad-Dharmis who though included in the scheduled castes, do not claim to be Hindus." 4

The book "India Divided" by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, first published in 1946, has a passage with reference to the status of Ad-Dharmis and further confirms to the fact that the Ad-Dharmis were listed separately from the Hindus and confirmed its status as an independent religious identity in both Census 1931 and 1941. Dr. Rajendra Prasad accepted and acknowledged in his own words:

"Before analysing the figures given in the above table it is worth noting that under 'others' are included Adidharmis, Jains, Parsis, Jews and those who returned no specified religion or community. Of these the most numerous are the Adidharmis, who according to

the Census Commissioner though included in scheduled castes do not claim to be Hindus and are hence recorded separately not only from the Hindus but also from the scheduled castes. They number 3,43,685 or 1.21 per cent of the total population of the Punjab. They are concentrated very largely in the Jullundur Division where their number is 2,50,267 or 4.60 per cent of the population of that Division. Their next largest concentrations are in the Multan Division and Lahore Division where they number 68,641 or 20,488 respectively. Their number is negligible in the Ambala and Rawalpindi Divisions being only 2,795 and 1,534 respectively. As has been pointed out in the Census Report of 1931: 'The most notable feature of the present (1931) census from the stand-point of returns of religion has been the adoption of the term Adi Dharmi by numerous Chamars and Chuhars and other Untouchables. At previous censuses Chuhars unless they returned some recognized religion were always included among Hindus. The 1941 Census Report also notes that all those who are recorded as Adidharmis belong to the scheduled castes but have not claimed to be Hindus. The last two census days have thus succeeded in reducing the number of Hindus in the Province by excluding the Adidharmis from amongst them.' 5

References:

1. Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad-Dharm Challenge to Caste - Mark Juergensmeyer
2. Census of India, 1931, Vol. XVII Punjab, Part-1 Report
3. The Modern Review, Vol.LXVIII, July to December 1940
4. Census of India 1941, Vol.VI - Punjab
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AD-DHARM MANDAL MEMORANDUM TO THE EARL OF WILLINGDON

Hail to the Government

To

**His Excellency the Right Honourable
Freeman Freeman-Thomas, Earl of
Willingdon, G.M.S.I., G.C.M.G.,
G.M.I.E., G.B.E.**

Viceroy and G

overnor General of India

May it please your Excellency,

We the members of the Adi Dharm Mandal Punjab Jullundur City are the representatives of downtrodden community comprising four million souls in the Punjab, and seventy million in the whole of India, who are disgracefully called the "Shudars" or untouchables. Your Excellency may be aware that we belong to an ancient race which ruled India about 5000 years ago, prior to the invasion of India by the Aryans. These bands of outsiders from Central Asia raided India, and defeated our forefathers, the latter were most ruthlessly treated, they were forcibly made to serve their foreign cruel masters in a way which spoke volumes of the barbarous mentality of the so called "Civilized" Aryans. The rest of the conquered race, who due to their self respect, refused to be enslaved, were driven away to take shelter in the jungles.

The Aryans whose present descendants are called high class Hindus, have all along been treating us with the most inhuman brutality, so that our unlucky community numerically large as it is, is now little more than a mere name. In spite of the fact that there are some highly educated and capable men in our community still we are not given any honourable status in society. No right of ownership of anything, rests in us, even we have not the right to safeguard our individual lives. This deplorable condition of the mute million of our oppressed community is due to harsh treatment meted out to us by the high class Hindus in consequence of the "August" pronouncements of the ancient Aryans which are embodied in the Manu Smriti and a lot of other Hindu scriptures of that type.

Your Excellency will be amazed to learn that the scriptures of the so-called religion are replete with the sayings such as that we the Adi Dharmis have been created to serve the high class Hindus, that we have no right to hold any property, that even our wanton murder by a high class Hindu involves him in no difficult etc. All our demands have been willfully suppressed by high class Hindus, and all our attempts at ameliorating our condition have been deliberately trampled upon. We therefore beg to submit the position and demands of our community which we venture to hope will receive adequate consideration at your

hands. We are sorry to say that the Hindu officials who appropriated all our rights and privileges have not done any justice to us. All the dealings of the Government with the Hindus mean with the High class Hindus only, with the result that our grievances cannot reach the Government. It would be no exaggeration to say that the reforms given to Hindus have been so given to the high class Hindus only. This being so, we are now under two Governments, the high class Hindus Government and the present British Government.

Owing to the predominance of the Muslims there is less untouchability in this province, as compared with other provinces but as regards political condition we are not a bit better than the worst untouchables of other Provinces, but we are in the worst condition from the political point of view. Not even a single member of our community has ever been nominated to the local legislature or to any local body although in other provinces such nominations have been made by the Government to the extent of seats ranging between 1 to 11 in local legislatures. The present system of electorate cannot be of any use to us because the high class Hindus are steeped in caste prejudices. Therefore the only method open to us should be separate electorate where in our political social and even moral salvation lies.

Our position can be briefly described as follows:

(1) That our community consist of about four millions in the Punjab and about seventy million in whole of India.

(2) That comparatively speaking we are the most backward people in the Punjab as regards education, public services, social position etc.

(3) That we do not believe in the Hindu religion, nor do we hold it in high esteem, therefore we do not wish to call ourselves Hindus but we the all untouchables of different castes being the ancient population of India wish to be called "Ad Dharmis".

(4) We do not desire to keep any close social or political contact with the high caste Hindus, who think that they are polluted by our mere touch or even by the casting of our shadow on them though they endeavour to count us with them so that they may enjoy greater rights at our expense. So this aspect of our position can be remedied by the grant of our following petty demands.

Our Demands

1. The 'Ad Dharam' should be accepted as a separate body from the Hindu Community.

2. We, the Ad Dharmis strongly condemn the joint electorate system,

and are in favour of separate electorate, in all Public bodies and legislatures. The representation to be selected by the Committee of our Mandal.

3. No change in the Constitution of the Central Government should be made unless the question of representatives of Minorities is settled.

4. a) Share in all public services, including Police, Civil, Military, Railway, Education, and Medical etc. Our separate military regiment should be established by the Ad Dharmi names.

b) Our representation in Municipalities and District Boards, Councils and Assembly according to our number are immediate and special demands; we urge 18% representation of our Community.

5. a) The Punjab Alienation Act has made us so weak that the people of other Communities forcibly make us to do their service in return of living in the houses built on their lands, because we cannot buy any land even for our houses under the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 A.D. Therefore provisions be made in this act for the benefit of Ad Dharmis.

b) Equal rights of ownership of any property of dwelling houses and common fields as enjoyed by other Communities, the full ownership of the houses, where ever they are situated, and of long standing are strongly demanded.

c) Our caste do the work of agriculture with agriculturist but they give very meagre share to the poor (untouchables) and we hear that there are 15,18,72,000 acres of uncultivated land in the hands of the Punjab government, therefore, land in the new colonies should be reserved for us in the same way as it has been done for other communities.

6. a) The law that we, the Ad Dharmis, are not allowed to stand as security in legal matters for another Ad Dharmis, should be altered as it has retarded our progress in various activities.

b) There is criminal blame upon our community. While we are free from every crime, therefore, this blame should be wiped off. The natural presumption of innocence should attach to Ad Dharmis as well.

7. Permission should be given to us to go to the foreign countries viz. Canada, New Zealand, Australia etc as our condition is very poor.

8. The professional tax to be levied on the Ad Dharmis by the Municipalities and District Boards, is highly objectionable, we beg therefore, the abolition or suspension of the tax unless our representatives are taken into the bodies in question.

9. The Banking facilities afforded by the government to the rural population, have not, in the

least benefited the untouchables, so the special banking arrangements are badly needed by us, under the government control.

10. Either our representations should be included into the rural Panchayats, or our (of the Ad Dharmis) separate rural Panchayats, should be legally established.

11. a) Owing to the coercion practised by the Hindus and Sikhs against Ad Dharmis, the Census figures of this year is not acceptable to us, therefore a correct estimate of the Ad-Dharmis should be made after an enquiry into the alleged excesses of the Hindus and Sikhs.

b) Since the census of 1931, almost in every village where the Hindus and Sikhs are in majority, Ad-Dharmis have been very much oppressed and the attention of the authorities has been drawn to these facts. Special measure be taken for its prevention.

12. a) Necessary arrangements for better education of Ad Dharmis (boys and girls), and national scholarships should be separately given to them. Arrangement for separate schools should also be made as far as possible.

b) Although the Ad-Dharmi scouts have been exempted from the school fees in the primary classes (for which we are grateful to the government) yet in the middle classes it is burdensome on account of poverty and besides its exemption, we request the authorities to grant scholarships.

13. The Ad Dharm Mandal of Punjab, Jullundur City should be accepted as representing the Ad-Dharmi community. Daya Nand Dalit Udhar Mandal Hoshiarpur, Patit Udhar Mandal, Achhut Udhar Mandal and Antaj Udhar Mandal Lahore are not representative of Ad Dharam community (untouchables)

14. At least one representative of Ad Dharmis nominated by the Ad Dharam Mandal Punjab Jullundur City should be sent to the round table conference to be held in London.

15. It is the earnest desire of the Ad Dharmis that the government should show a favour by buying through the Ad Dharm Mandal of Punjab Jullundur the leather articles supplied by other communities and used for the requirement of armies, police department etc. We desire that we should no longer be deprived of the benefit of this occupation which up to this time has been unfairly been received by others.

**We have the honour to be
Sirs,**

**Your most obedient admirers
The Members of Ad Dharam
(Aborigine) Mandal (Punjab)
Jullundur City**

Memorandum submitted by the AD-DHARM MANDAL of the Punjab, Jullundur City

Source Courtesy:
Indian Franchise Committee,
Volume-V (1932)
Selections from Memoranda and
Oral Evidence
(Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, Central
Provinces, Assam, North-West
Frontier Province, Delhi and
Miscellaneous Memoranda)

In the first place we want to make it quite clear that we are not Hindus. There is no doubt that from time immemorial on account of political and economic pressure we have been kept in the fold of Hinduism. But this was done by the trickeries of the Hindus for their own political purposes. We are as separate from the Hindus as east is from the west and north is from the south.

We are the descendants of the aborigines of India who were the real sons of the soil. We were conquered by the Aryans, and since then we are treated as war captives and therefore something below humanity. Since then many kings have ruled this country, but our lot has not been bettered in the least.

We are treated by the Hindus as Untouchables; but strange to say that we are treated as Hindus in the census report; we are shown as Hindus, although no Hindu would eat food or drink water touched by a member of our class. A Brahman would take a bath if he were to touch our person nor would he act as priest over our ceremonies. No Hindu would tolerate our living with him; we are looked down upon by everybody. No Hindu barber will shave us, no Hindu washerman will wash our clothes, no Hindu water-carrier will supply water to us, no Hindu will shop from our shops. In short, no Hindu would like to enter into any dealing with us.

The Hindu religious sacred books have emphatically separated us from the high class Hindus. For exam-

ple, we might quote the following:

(a) Manu Smriti, Chapter VIII, shloks 413, 414, 415, 267, 271, 272, 279, 280, 282, 283.

(b) Manu Smriti, Chapter XI, shlok 131

(c) Manu Smriti, Chapter IV, shloks 80, 81

(d) Valmiki Ramayana, Uttarakhand Sarf, 87

(e) Manu Smriti, Chapter X, shloks 125, 129, 96

(f) Manu Smriti, Chapter V, shloka 140

(g) Vishnu Smriti, Chapter I, shlok 15

(h) Dharam Sutra of Maharishi Gotam, Chapter IV, shlok 12.

It is, therefore, submitted that we are absolutely separate from the Hindus. Under no circumstances we are prepared to join the Hindus. We are a separate body and form a separate entity of our own. We would, therefore, urge that in justice separate representation ought to be given to us. Without this we cannot have any voice in the legislatures. It has always been unjust on the part of the Government to yoke us with the Hindus. This is why we have not been able to make any progress at all. We have been always exploited by the Hindus and now we refuse to be exploited by them anymore.

According to the Census 1921 we are nearly 40 lakhs in the Punjab. We claim that in the 1931 census our number must be much more. It is true that in the census of 1921 we are given as Hindus or Sikhs; this is due to the absence of our awakening to the real state of affairs. We have not till lately bothered ourselves with political questions as the clever Hindus had always thrown dust in our eyes. In this respect the movement for our uplift dates back from 1925, and since then we have claimed to be separated with the result that in the 1931 census more than four lakh

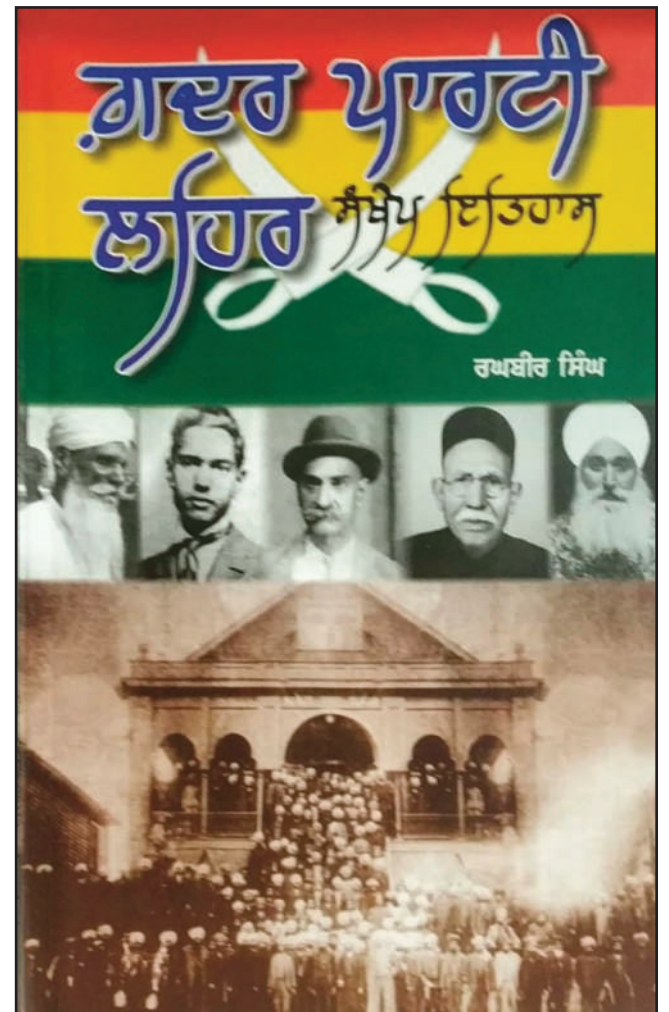
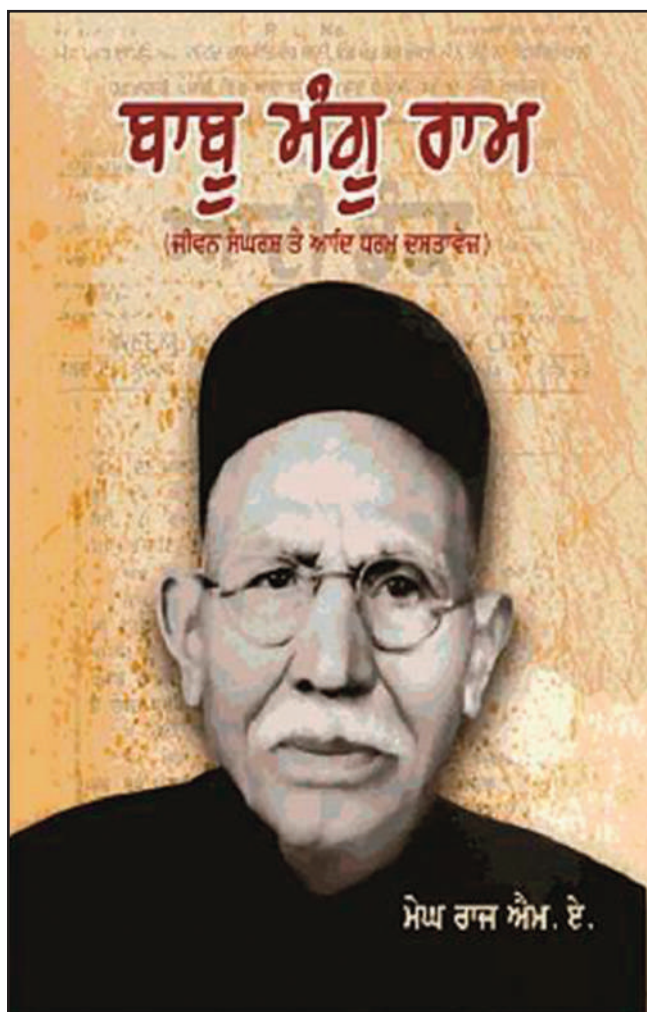
were recorded Ad-Dharmis in opposition to Hindus and Sikhs. You know the atrocities committed on us by the Hindus and Sikhs for having insisted on our recording ourselves Ad-Dharmis. But for these atrocities our number must have been recorded in the census of 1921 much more than it has been done.

This being the case we insist that we must be given separate representation on the population basis. At the time of the preparation of the electoral roll every member of our community must be asked whether he would like to vote with the Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs or with the Depressed Classes. It is only then that our real voting strength will be realized. We want separate representation, because if this is not given, the Hindus will monopolise our seats as they have always done. A number of depressed classes must vote for a member of the Depressed Classes as a Hindu for a Hindu, a Muslim for a Muslim, and so on. We want adult franchise because a very few members of our class have any property qualifications in both urban and rural areas. We do not believe in the group system, because in the first place in our class there will be very few secondary voters who will have property qualification. Secondly, a secondary voter will virtually mean that the primary voter has no vote. The right of voting will thus be usurped by the secondary voter who would be under the thumb of the capitalist and the Hindus.

The question of forming Depressed Classes constituency will rest with the Government. The Government cannot shirk its responsibility to the loyal depressed classes by saying that it is difficult to form special constituencies for the Depressed Classes when it can form constituencies for the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs

and Christians. There is no reason why the Government cannot form special constituencies for the Depressed Classes. There is no rural urban question among the Depressed Classes; there is no quibble of castes among the Depressed Classes; we want to be enfranchised as Depressed Classes, nothing else. Among our ranks there might be some who might have adopted Vedic Dharm, or Islam or Christianity or Sikhism. We have no quarrel with this; if such people want to vote with their respective coreligionists, let them please themselves. But those members of the Depressed Classes who have not adopted Vedic Dharm as their religion or who have not adopted Islam or Christianity they must be given special representation and nothing but special representation.

In conclusion, we want to contradict certain observations made by certain Hindu leaders; for instance, Raja Narendra Nath, an out and out exploiter of the Depressed Classes, has said that there was no Depressed Classes problem in Punjab. He is simply fooling the Brahmin people by saying so. The real thing is that Hindus do not want that a substantial portion of their population should separate from them and thus leave them in a hopeless minority in the Punjab. Raja Narendra Nath is blowing hot and cold in same breath at the Round Table Conference. He says that there is no Depressed Classes as such in the Punjab whereas a member of the Punjab Reforms Committee has laid great stress on their special representation. The same is true of the Honourable Dr. Gokul Chand Narang, Minister for Local Self-Government. The Simon Commission has also clearly laid stress on the special representation of the Depressed Classes. It is in special representation that our salvation lies.





**Hari Paul Randhawa Chief Editor
"Begumpura Times" UK
"Voice of Ad-Dharm"**

Mangoo Ram was born on January 14, 1886, in village Mugowal, Hoshiarpur district, where this father, Harman Dass, had left the traditional Chamar caste occupation of training and preparing hides and attempting to sell tanned hides commercially¹. Mangoo Ram's mother, Atri, died when Mangoo Ram was three, so the father began to depend heavily on his sons – Mangoo and an older and a younger brother for assistance. Because the leather trade required some facility in English, Mangoo Ram's father was forced to rely on literate members of upper castes to read sales orders and other instructions to him. In payment for their reading instructions for an hour, he would have to do a day of crude labour. For that reason, Mangoo Ram's father was eager to have his son receive an early education.

When Mangoo Ram was seven, he was taught by a village Sadhu (Saint) and soon after attended a variety of schools in the Mugowal area (Tehsil Mahilpur of district Hoshiarpur). He also attended school in a village near Dehra Dun, where his older brother has settled. In most of the schools, Mangoo Ram was the only Scheduled Caste student. He sat at the back of the class, or even in a separate room, and listened through the open door. When he attended high school in Bajwara, he was forced to stay outside the building and listen to the classes through the windows. Once when he came inside during a heaving hailstorm, the Brahmin teacher beat him and put all the classroom furniture, which he had "polluted" by his presence, outside in the rain to be literally and ritually washed clean. Nonetheless, Mangoo Ram was a good student: he placed third in his class in primary school. But whereas the other good students were encouraged to become patwaris (village record-keeper) or to seek higher education, Mangoo Ram was encouraged to leave school and help his father at a more proper "Chamar task". In 1905, he did quit school; he married, and for three years helped his father develop their leather trade into a thriving

business.

In 1909 America was in the air. Scores of upper caste farmers from Mangoo Ram's area of Hoshiarpur had gone to the United States, and those who had not gone were talking about it. Mangoo Ram decided to go also. He persuaded his father that it would be good for the business – he would send money back from America – and his father responded by giving him some savings from the family business. Amid assurances from some of the local

Zamindars ("landowners") and two Chamar friends set off for the new world.²

The friends turned back, but Mangoo Ram persevered and arrived in California late in 1909. For four years he picked fruit for the former Zamindars of his village who had settled in the San Joaquin valley of California. He was also employed in a sugar mill. Mangoo Ram lived first in Fresno, then in Stockton, Sacramento, EL Centro, Vacaville, Visalia, and again in Fresno.³ He did indeed make money and set his savings home.

In 1913 some of the Punjabi settlers in California were forming a militant nationalist organisation. Mangoo Ram joined this group, the Ghadar movement, as a full-time worker in San Francisco. He was struck by the fact that, as he was later to say, "it was a new society; we were treated as equal"⁴. There were not many Scheduled Caste persons in the Ghadar movement, however; Mangoo Ram recalls only one other Chamar besides himself.

Initially Mangoo Ram played only a minor role in the organisation, but in 1915 he volunteered to be one of five Ghadrites to participate in a dangerous mission involving smuggled weapons shipped from California to the Punjab. He was chosen for the task by the main whom he identifies as the "leader of the Ghadar" party at that time.⁵ Sohan Singh Bakhna. The secretary of the Los Angeles where they boarded an intermediary boat after collecting all their personal identification. For the rest of the saga, Mangoo Ram would be known by a Muslim pseudonym, Nizamuddin.

According to Mangoo Ram, the intermediary boat took them to the Socorro (sic) islands to rendezvous with the weapons boat, but after thirteen days military ship from Sydney, the "Man of War", discovered the timely intervention of an American warship were they spared. They went to Vera Cruz, Mexico, to receive rations.

There they finally connected with their weapons boat, the Maverick; they joined the crew, took on giant turtles for food, and headed for India.⁷ They were halted again in Hawaii, where Mangoo Ram witnessed the

eruption of volcanoes. Free again, they advanced a bit further, perhaps to Java or New Caledonia.⁸ There the Japanese, on behalf of the British, imprisoned them for one year. Eventually, the British decided to hang them, but at midnight the night before they were to be hanged at dawn, fate intervened. The Germans spirited them away in the dark, and the five went their separate directions – Harmans Dass and Charan Dass to Bangkok; the others, including Mangoo Ram, to Manila.

But again, according to Mangoo Ram's memory, the intervention of fate altered their plans. A typhoon appeared, and the ship went to Singapore instead, where British spies, Bela Singh and Bhag Singh, turned Mangoo Ram over to British authorities, who promptly ordered him to be placed before a cannon and shot. Again, however, the Germans whisked Mangoo Ram away, and again he was placed on a ship bound for Manila.⁹ When Mangoo Ram arrived in the Philippines he read a news report in the Manila Times indicating that he had been executed for treason by the British in Singapore. Mangoo Ram assumes that one of his captured colleagues had taken on his name to protect him, and that that man had been shot in his place. The news of his alleged death preceded him to the Punjab, where his wife heard the report and promptly married his younger brother, as custom dictated. In the meantime, Mangoo Ram was sequestered in the Philippines in a series of hideouts on various islands. Members of the Ghadar party were his benefactors during this period, and Mangoo Ram remembers fondly their hospitality and friendship: he was no longer an Untouchable but a comrade in distress.¹⁰

The war ended in 1918, the Ghadar party was no longer quite the threat it was earlier when it enraged the British by compounding separatism with sedition through its liaison with the Germans. But Mangoo Ram decided to stay in Manila nonetheless. He met an American, a Mr Johnson of Marshall Field and Company (a department store in Chicago), who hired him to work in an

Early in 1925 he set sail, this time on a more pleasant and uninterrupted trip. He arrived in Ceylon in the company of a Christian missionary he had met on board, then travelled through the subcontinent to the Punjab, visiting Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Sitara, Nagpur, and Delhi. He observed the conditions of the Scheduled Castes en route and was dismayed "to see our people being treated to badly"¹². At the Minaksi Temple in Madurai, for instance, he was told to be careful not to touch the Achhut (Untouchables): people assumed from his dress that he was of decent caste. By the time Mangoo Ram reached the Punjab he was convinced that there was need for social change, and wrote to Ghadar Party headquarters in San Francisco about the difficult conditions of

the Scheduled Castes in India, announcing that their freedom was more important to him than that of the nation itself. According to Mangoo Ram, leaders of the Ghadar party at that point designated him to work for the uplift of the Untouchables¹³. Thus, in a new context, the old revolutionary from Fresno continued the Ghadar spirit.

Late in 1925, after his return to the Punjab, Mangoo Ram began teaching in a primary school in his home village of Mugowal, a school which Mangoo Ram claims he named the Ad Dharm School. It was in that school, on June 11 and 12 1926, that Mangoo Ram convened the meeting that formally launched the Ad Dharm movement. Mangoo Ram was elected its first president, a title he was retained for the duration of the movement. On November 1926, when the Ad Dharm organisation opened an office in the city of Jullundhar, Mangoo Ram took up residence there, where he remained until he became active in politics in the 1940s, at which point he moved to the town of Hoshiarpur. Later, the newly independent government of India presented him with some land near Garhshankar, not far away, which developed into a small farm.

In 1977, after the Ad Dharm movement had been re-established, and Mangoo Ram had been again elevated to leadership of the movement, his supporter sent him on a triumphant tour of communities of expatriate lower caste Punjabis in Great Britain. It was Mangoo Ram's first major voyage since returning from America, half a century before. For him the occasion was one of nostalgia, but also one of completeness, for it enabled him to mark the closing phase of his long public career with a trip abroad, just as he had opened it in a similar way many years before. It was to be the last great event before his death on April 22, 1980, at the age of 94.

The pattern of expatriate experience leading to nationalism and political activism when the expatriates return home is replicated in the personal histories of other leaders: the lives of Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the Ghadar militants, and other Third world figures such as Kwame Nkrumah and Ho Chi Minh. Seldom, however, has a personal history held such dramatic extremes – from leadership in a secular movement to leadership in a religious one, from an anti-British to a pro-British stance (and then back again), from being a banished Untouchable to being an imposing political figure. The sheer diversity of Mangoo Ram's colourful life would invalidate any claims he might have wanted village culture of the lower castes, but experience forged him into a modern man. Ultimately, his characteristics were modern were those of the movement he led and of the proud new breed of ex-Untouchable he came to represent.

**Source Courtesy: Ambedkar Times,
Posted on July 30, 2009**

BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA - A PROFILE

Prof. G.S. BALL M.A., M.Phil.
President, Ambedkar Mission
Society, Punjab (Regd)

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia combined in his personage the qualities of a fierce revolutionary, a staunch patriot, a devoted crusader against social evils and above all a true humanitarian through. Born among the lowliest of the low, he crossed all social barriers dauntlessly and suffered all sorts of indignities of life and made his way to reach the pinnacle of greatness.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia represents a rare example among the revolutionaries Ghadarite philosophy. In those dark days, it was rare for an untouchable to understand the essence of revolution against imperialism. But he rose to the occasion and proved his mettle. He joined the Ghadar Party when he went to California (U.S.A.) in 1909 A.D. as its active member. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, it appears desired an establishment of society which must be based on Equality. And he saw one being fought for by the Ghadarites as they had abolished all social distinctions among themselves first which, perhaps, is not the practice with the modern community or who profess change of the sort. As Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia spoke of the Ghadar Party, "It was a new society, we were all treated as equals".

As a Ghadarite, he took part in the organizational activities at first but in 1915 A.D. an occasion came when he volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites in a dangerous mission involving smuggled weapons shipped from California to the Punjab. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was chosen by the leader of the Ghadar Party at that time. Mr. Sohan Singh Bhakna, the Secretary of Ghadar Party, whom Babu M.R. Mugowalia remembered as "Godha" sent the five to Los Angeles, where they boarded an intermediary boat, after depositing all of their personal identifications with "Godha", for the rest of the journey's saga. Mangu Ram would be known by a pseudonym, "Nizamuddin".

Putting his life into danger and travelling through Serrero Islands and halting at Mexico, Caladonia Islands, Manila, Singapore and again to Manila where he stayed for sometime and finally to India where he reached in 1925 A.D.

It is after 1925, that his career as a crusader against untouchability and casteism began. As he travelled from Ceylon to Punjab through Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Sitara, Nagpur and Delhi, he observed the condition of the untouchables on route and was dismayed to see these people being treated so badly. In Madurai, when Babu Mangu Ram visited the Meenakshi Temple, he was told to be careful not to touch Achhut (Untouchables) since they assumed by his dress that he was of a decent caste. By the time Babu M.R. Mugowalia had reached the Punjab, he was convinced that there was need

for social change.

Babu M.R. Mugowalia wrote to the Ghadar Party headquarters in San Francisco about the difficult conditions of the Untouchables in India. He wrote them that their freedom was more important to him than Indian freedom. According to Babu Mugowalia, leaders of the Ghadar Party then disengaged him to work with Scheduled Castes (Untouchables), and wrote him that they would support him in his tasks. Thus, in a new context, the old revolutionary from Fresno continued the Ghadar spirit. This clearly shows that even Ghadarites had realized the need to awaken these slaves of Indian Society - the then Untouchables.

When he started his task of social reform i.e. establishing schools for untouchables, he began to look for an alternative which may provide a lever for the unity of the untouchable poor and then to demonstrate through that alternative the political presence of the untouchables in the politics of Punjab of those days. It must be remembered that Punjab was already witnessing political uphaul and each class was trying to reap at political harvesting. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with other conscious men from his class, then founded on June 11-12, 1926 A.D. at his village Mugowal Ad-Dharma as the alternative.

Ad-Dharma's main aim was to create a feeling of identity among the untouchable class which numbered at that time about one fourth of the entire population of India. Babu M.R. Mugowalia and the early leaders of the Ad-Dharma perceived their first task to be the creation of a new religion. In their initial meetings, even before they developed an organisational structure, they labored over a basic ideological theme upon which they could build a system of religious ideas and symbols. Its central motive was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a quum, a distinct religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and that the quum had existed from time immemorial. It was a myth of power addressed to the people without power. It was intended to communicate the sense of strength that Babu M.R. Mugowalia felt belonged to his caste fellows by right. As he explained, "The

untouchables have their powers: communal pride (qaumiat), religion (mazhab), and organisation (mazlis)". The hope was that these powers could be fostered and spilled through force of ideology.

Ad-Dharma was almost Babu M.R. Mugowalia's show. It inspired the lowliest of the low to fight for equality, economic, social and political in a converted way. The Ad-Dharma, under the dynamic leadership of a true revolutionary like Babu Mugowalia, was an aggressive and autonomous movement or compared to similar movements that took birth in other parts of the country. Within a short span of time, it jolted



the 'haves-not' through its rallies, publications, deputations and demonstrations to demand new government policies or to protest upper caste discriminations. The most influential political action of the movement that can be listed as one of its great achievements, was to get Scheduled

Castes registered as a followers of new religion. In 1931 A.D. census, almost half a million of them registered as "Ad-Dharmi" rather than Hindus or Muslim or Sikh. Mr. Mark Juergensmeyer writes as, "Later in the 1930, their political influence turned towards electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with the Congress. It was the logical consequence of the political awakening created among them by Ad-Dharma Movement in Punjab, whose undisputable leader was Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

Thus through several means, then, the Ad-Dharmis presented to its followers a vision of a world which both confirmed and transformed the rude experience of untouchables. And in doing so it implied that a different sort of world was coming into being, for the separate identity so defined signaled hope for a society in which social groups carried no inherent mark of judgment and in which the benefits of progress could be shared by all. Cultural and humanistic aspects of the personality of Babu M.R. Mugowalia were even more glaring. As a humanist his vision of the world was near to rationalist view of the universe (we can even say materialistic as well though in rudimentary form), he believed in the inherent

equality of all human-beings; he was against all sorts of exploitations of man against man; and he earnestly devoted his bodily energy and financial resources in founding a new society based upon the gospel of equality. His ideas about the universe and equality of all men are echoed in the Ad-Dharma Mandal (1926-1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played a big role. It reads as follows:

"Nature (Qudrat Ka Mela) created human beings from original source (Adi) at the time that it created all beings in the earth. The knowledge of moral behaviour (karm-dharm) was also given to them at that time by Nature. Nature made humans superior to animals, but among humans all were equal.

In the beginning, when Nature created human beings, there was no discrimination. There were no differences and no quarrels. In particular, there were no such concepts as high or low caste. God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony. Everyone believed in one dharma which Nature had given then through intellect and knowledge". Babu M.R. Mugowalia did not mean by the word 'God' as something supernatural beings who is said to have created the world and since then regulating it as is believed in theology. Mark Juergensmeyer makes it quite clear in his work, Religion As Social Vision, thus: "Occasionally there is mention of God in a more formal sense". "God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony". And Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia made a practice of using the name Adi-Purkh for the divine - literally "the originator", or the "Original Being". All these designations, although they are theistic terms, are impersonal in intent.

He, all his life, stood like a rock against social evils such as untouchability, caste-system, women slavery, exploitation etc. His life in cultural side symbolized with the creation of new social virtues such as women's rights, the value of education, abstinence from alcohol and drugs - which were 'nothing less than a new concept of moral order'. Thus Babu M.R. Mugowalia, a Ghadarite revolutionary, social crusader, political activist and strategist and as a humanitarian fought for the establishment of an ideal society till he breathed last. The noble way of commemorating celebrating the 99th Birth Anniversary (for that matter every birth anniversary) of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - who desired his movement to coincide with Ambedkarite Movement to give the movement of depressed classes a country-wide stature, is to emulate him. Therefore, let us resolve to emulate the great Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - patriot, social revolutionary, a successful strategist and, above all, a humanist.

Source Courtesy: Souvenir, 1985
Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia
99th Birth Anniversary,
By Mr. C. L. Chumber

HISTORY OF DALIT ACTIVISM N PUNJAB

In the third decade of last century, dalits of Punjab took the path of activism. This reflected in their search for a new religious identity, apart from a phase of social reforms with special focus on education. Their movement also took a political turn...

► **JUNE 1926** | Ghadar Party's Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with others from the community, set up Adi-dharam Mandal. "Its main aim was to create a feeling of identity among the untouchable class that was close to one-fourth of India's population," said late Gian Singh Bal, a civil servant-cum-activist specializing on dalit movement. Movement gave four gurus to the dalits – Guru Ravidass, Maharishi Valmiki, Bhagat Kabir and Bhagat Namdev – a separate symbol (Sohang) and a slogan (Jai Gurudev)



► **1931** | With a separate identity in place for scheduled castes, almost half-a-million registered as 'Adi-dharmi' during the Census. Quoting American scholar Mark Juergensmeyer, Bal said, "In 1930s, Adi-dharmis' political influence turned towards electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with the Congress." This, Bal added, "Was the logical consequence of the political awakening created among them by Adi-dharma movement in Punjab."

► **1937 ELECTIONS** | Adi-dharam Mandal bagged seven out of eight reserved seats in undivided Punjab

► **1942** | Scheduled Caste Federation formed by Dr B R Ambedkar launched Punjab chapter. But state president Seth Kishan Dass lost elections

► **1945** | Mangu Ram became MLA for first time

► **1950** | Mangu Ram retired from active politics when Independent India got its Constitution with safeguards for dalits. BSP founder Kanshi Ram's grandfather Telu Ram emerges as an active leader of Adi-dharam Mandal

► **SEPTEMBER 30, 1956** | SC Federation, led by B R Ambedkar, forms Republican Party of India (RPI), which then became the platform for political activities to champion the cause of downtrodden. Lahori Ram Balley remained All India general secretary of RPI from 1958 to 1966. RPI contested 1967 election and four MLAs, including Dr Jagjit Singh Chohan – a protagonist of Khalistan in 1970s and 80s – elected

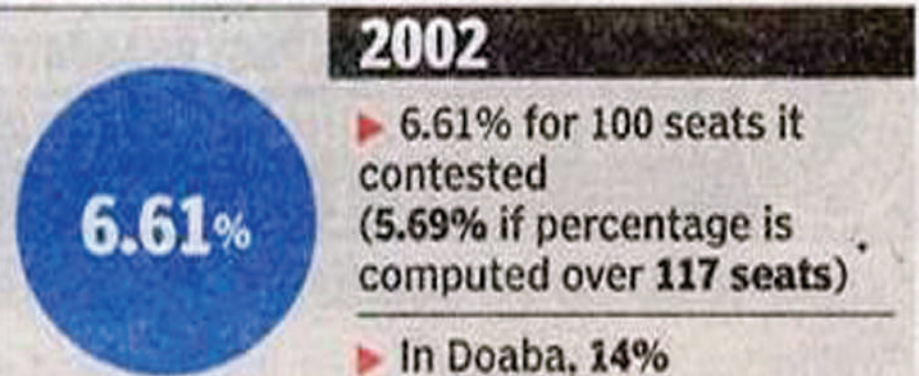
► **DECEMBER 6, 1978** | Kanshi Ram formed BAMCEF, an organization of educated employees from SCs, STs, OBCs and converted minority communities



► **DECEMBER 6, 1981** | Kanshi Ram formed DS4 or Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangharsh Samity, which then transformed into BSP on April 14, 1984

BSP'S DECREASING VOTE SHARE

► ASSEMBLY ELECTION

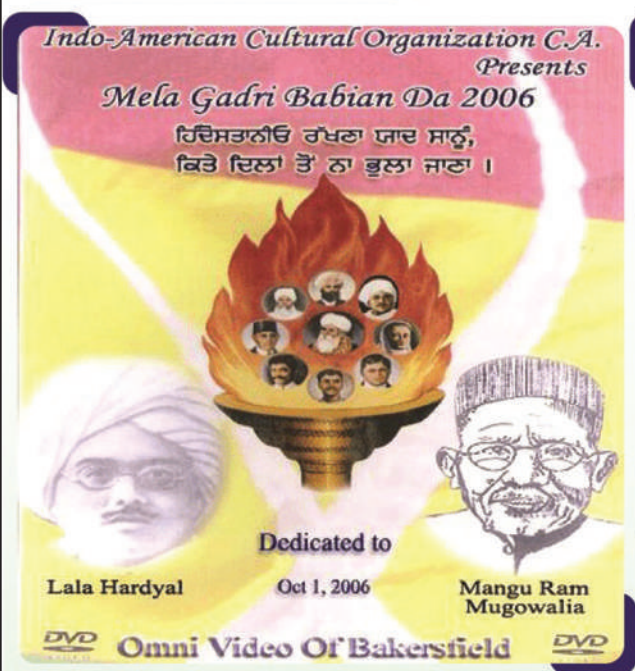


► PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION (for 13 seats)



The Times of India Chandigarh Page 4, January 16, 2012

By Mr. I. J. Singh with thanks Mr. C. L. Chumber



Journalist Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a Picture of Great Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to Mr.Kewal Bolina (President of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Sacramento, California, USA), Mr. Hans Raj Kajla (Secretary), Mr. Tawinder Kazla (Vice Chairman) & Mr. Satish Kumar Ralh (Ex Stage Secretary) at Shri Guru Ravi Dass Temple, Rio Linda (California) on Sahib Shri Guru Ravi Dass's 629th Gururpurb day, March 12, 2006.



Journalist Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a Picture of Great Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to S Gurbachan Singh, the president of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Selma, California (USA) in the presence of sangat on April 02, 2006. Standing sangat: Rajinder Singh Gangar, Bhai Harjinder Singh Rassia, Sukwinder Suman, Dev Raj Singh (present President of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Selma) Mrs. Gurbachan Singh, Narender Chumber, Takshila Chumber & others.



Journalist Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a Picture of Great Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to Mr. Lahori Ram, Economic Development Commissioner, California in the presence of sangat at the Shri Guru Ravi Dass Temple, Pittsburg, California (USA) on Sunday (May , 2006) .Standing Sangat: K. D. Paul (President, IBO California), Daswinder Paul (President, Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Pittsburg, California), Ajay Kataria (present, President Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Pittsburg, California), Balvir Mall (Chairman, Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Pittsburg, California), Sewak Dass, Satpaul Surila, Jagat Jaggi, Ram Ralh, Kundan Pall, Salinder Bhatia, George Bhatia, Giani Harblas Singh, Kamaljeet Surila, Jaila Jaggi, Giani Ball Singh and Jarnail Dugh & others.



Journalist Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a Picture of Great Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia to Mr. Vinod Kumar Chumber (President of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha, Bay Area, California, USA) in the presence of sangat on May 21, 2006. Standing Sangat: Amrik Chand Lakha (President of Dr. Ambedkar Educational Aid Society Fremont, California, USA), Sucha Ram Bharta, Balbir Singh Shinmar (General Secretary of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha, Bay Area, California, USA) & others community members.



Journalist Prem Kumar Chumber presented a book Religious rebels in the Punjab (written by Prof. (Dr.) Mark Juergensmeyer) to Mr. Bansi Lal Bangar, the president of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha (C.V) Fresno, California (USA) on Sunday, Feb.11th, 2007, the 630th birth day celebration of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Ji. Standing Left to Right: Baldev Suman, Chairman Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Bay Area, San Francisco California, Vinod Chumber, the president of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Bay Area, San Francisco California, Des Raj Bangar, Secretary of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha (C.V) Fresno, California , Sonu Ambedkar (K.K.Saroya) Vice President I.B.O. California, Kewal Bolina, the president of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Sacramento (California), Balbir Mall, Chairman Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha Pittsburg (California), Piara Singh Virdi, Assistant Secretary of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha (C.V) Fresno, California , Bhai Avtar Singh Maheru Head Garanthi of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Temple (C.V) Fresno, California, Karam Singh Bangar, Chairman of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha (C.V) Fresno, California, Parmod Loi Gen. Secretary of Shri Guru Ravi Dass Sabha (C.V) Fresno, California.



Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a photo of Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangoo Ram Muggowalia to Shingara Singh Ralh (President Shri Guru Ravi Dass Temple, Yuba City) & standing: Left to right Mohan Gill, (Behind Davinder Ralh), Sukhveer Heer, Charan Singh, Gurbachan Chopra & Parshotam Sood.



After we hung the picture of Mugowalia: Charan Singh, Davinder Ralh, Mohan Gill, P.K. Chumber, Shingara Singh Ralh & Sukhveer Heer



Prem Kumar Chumber is presenting a book "Religious Rebels in the Punjab" (Written by Dr. Mark Juergensmeyer) to Parshotam Sood (Chairman Shri Guru Ravi Dass Temple, Yuba City) standing: L. to R. Gurbachan Chopra, Dayal Ram Nar, Mohan Gill, Davinder Ralh, Charan Singh & Sukhveer Heer.

Great Ghaddri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia

