



# Ambedkar Times Weekly

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## EDUCATION, SELF-RESPECT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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

**Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weeklies**

Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar used to lay special emphasis on the agency of education for the emancipation and empowerment of downtrodden. So much so that he coined a emancipatory slogan with education at the beginning of the Bhim mantra "Educate, Agitate, Organize." What Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar was/continues to be and what he had been able to achieve in his life-long mission of Dalit Empowerment is all due to his world reputed stature based on his brilliant academic achievements which still are hard to match not only in comparison to his own people but also with his counterparts among the so-called upper castes across the length and breadth of the country. Again, it was his world towering record of academic excellence combined with his life long commitment towards the annihilation of caste from the soil of Indian social set-up that brought him in the forefront of the queues of the most celebrated personalities of our time.

Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar was of the firm view that the first lesson to march on the road of social transformation could be to learn how to inculcate the quality of self-respect among the socially excluded millions of our countrymen contemptuously called Untouchables. The quality of self-respect in turn relies on the faculty of critical knowledge based on sound education meant for self-illumination and overall awareness of ones surroundings. Education in ancient and medieval Hindu society was restricted to those who were born in the upper three higher Varna. Fourth Varna of Shudras and the fifth/Avarna of Ati-Shudras were denied the facility of education because of their low birth. The denial of education had also led to lack of self-respect among the lower-castes that further transformed them into docile servants of those who monopolized the power structures of the society. Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar wanted to overcome this vicious circle of degradation based on the shrewdly designed system of denial of education to the downtrodden.

Education leads to self-respect that further in a logical sequence of the emancipatory mantra of "Educate, Agitate, Organize" creates the conditions for the realization of the higher goal of social justice. That is what 'Educate' is meant for in the slogan. It means to be aware of ones life conditions and the overall surrounding social set-up. Such a versatile knowledge will stir self-introspection within and creates an urge for an organization of the like-minded fellow beings to transform the unequal social structure into an egalitarian order. Ambedkartimes.com congratulates its esteemed readers, contributors and supporters on the auspicious day of 14th April, the Birth Day of Bodhisattva Babasaheb Bharat Rattan Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar.

Courtesy: www.ambedkartimes.com

## Mr. DEVRAJ SANDHU-NO MORE - END OF A LEGEND

**I**t has been noted with a deep sense of grief and sorrow to know about the sudden and sad demise of Mr. Devraj Sandhu, a very well-known figure in the community and a founder member of Sri Guru Ravidass Temple, Pittsburg. He worked with shoulder to shoulder with other

was the first Shri Guru Ravidass Temple built outside India which was registered under the name of The Punjab Ad-Association. It bears ample testimony to the fact that Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's Ad-Dharam Movement had an profound influence on the minds of our ancestors settled in Fiji Islands at that time.

Mr. Devraj was blessed with very noble and lofty

ideals for the welfare of the community and stood by those ideals with a zeal, dedication and commitment till his last breath.

After his retirement from the city of Walnut Creek a few years ago, Mr. Devraj, in spite of some recent health concerns, was living a very relaxed and a quiet life with his wife at his home in Concord keeping in frequent contact with his close friends about his health and well-being. He always demonstrated a spirit of humility in his behavior and dealings with others with his contagious smile which was a very rare and a distinct feature of his personality.

This loss is irreparable not only for the family but the whole community at large. Though we will miss Mr. Devraj physically but a person like him never dies with his spirit being deeply embedded in the hearts and souls of those who happened to know him.

After the funeral services, Bhog ceremony of Shri Sehej Path in the loving memory of the deceased will be performed on Wednesday (7/21/2021) at Sri Guru Ravidass Temple, Pittsburg.

On behalf of Supreme Council, Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA we convey our heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family -especially his wife Mrs. Swaran Kaur- with prayers to Almighty God to bless the departed soul with peace and tranquility.



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



Late Mr. Devraj Singh Sandhu

founder members of Guru Ghar ever since the very inception of Pittsburg Gurughar Sabha. He was among the pioneers who migrated from Fiji Islands to USA in early 1960's, carrying with them their cultural heritage learnt from their ancestors which kept them and their families, attached to the teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj and Guru Granth Sahib Ji Maharaj.

In a video interview recorded by Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Chief Editor: "Desh Doaba" and "Ambedkar Times", on August 12, 2018 at Sri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg (CA), Mr. Devraj traced a detailed history of Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Nasino Suva, Fiji Islands built in 1940-41 with unceasing efforts of their forefathers. Fiji Gurughar



**Mr. Devraj Singh Sandhu sitting with Sangat in the Sri Guru Ravidass Temple, Pittsburg (CA)  
Picture by Prem K. Chumber Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba**

File Picture





Ishwar Das Pawar  
District and Sessions Judge (Retd.)

# My Struggle in Life

## More Instances of Insulting Discrimination

**B**esides the instances of humiliation already mentioned, a few more need to be added. These events will bring into focus the then prevailing distinctions between Hindus and the Achhuts (untouchables).

While in my village of Naangran during vacation, as a daily routine, I used to go to a seasonal pond about half a mile distant to take my bath early in the morning irrespective of inclement weather, rain or storm. The pond lay in the middle of the road and, till the water dried up, the path took a circuitous course along the bank of the pond till it joined the cutoff end of the road. Obviously it was the state property, and it did not include any part of any private land. One fine morning as I was taking my bath in the pond, a Hindu of the close-by village, who resembled a ghost in appearance, happened to pass by. He knew me. On seeing me taking my bath in the pond, he flew into a rage, eyes red and face flushed. He angrily shouted at me, saying that dire consequences would follow if he saw me taking my bath there again. I felt deeply insulted and went back home with consuming bitterness in my mind. My father, however, counseled me patience, observing that Hindus had always behaved like that. It may be mentioned that the pond was used only for watering the domestic animals including dogs. There was nothing sacred about it. The incident hurt me grievously.

Once in hot season, I was on my way to Lahore, and I had to board a train at Garhshankar. I was travelling on foot to cover a distance of about fifteen miles as no conveyance was available. The footpath ran through deep, stony, and sandy khuds (seasonal ravines) interspersed with high and deep climbs till it joined the kachcha (unpaved) road

on the outskirts of village Binewal. From there up to village Kot Maira, the walk was not so bad. But beyond that, the road and footpath that lay after a descending slope led through stony and sandy terrain. Just before the sharp slope started, there was a piao (free water station for general public). After covering a distance of about ten miles in the summer heat, I was feeling awfully thirsty and therefore wanted to drink water at the piao. I asked the village man on duty there to serve me water. He came with a garvi (a small round shaped pitcher) full of water, but before he could pour water on my cupped hands, he enquired of me who I was. This question has always been a must with the Hindus. On learning that I was not a Hindu but an achhut (untouchable), he motioned me to a semi-cylindrical, carved-out piece of wood mounted on a thick piece of wood on which he would drop water and I was to catch at it with my cupped hands on the other end to quench my thirst. That pinched my conscience. I asked him to serve me water from the brass-garvi, but he declined on the ground that it was meant for Hindus only.

Then I suggested that the other aluminum garvi might be used. "But it is meant for Muslims" came a prompt reply. At that stage, a grasscutter villager came there and dropped down the bundle of grass he was carrying on his head. He was profusely perspiring under the impact of the heat and the burden. As he wiped the perspiration from his forehead and face with his soiled hands, he enquired as to what the matter was. On learning that an untouchable wanted water to be served from a garvi, his eyes flashed, and he said to me in an angry tone, "You want to be equated with Hindus and Muslims?"

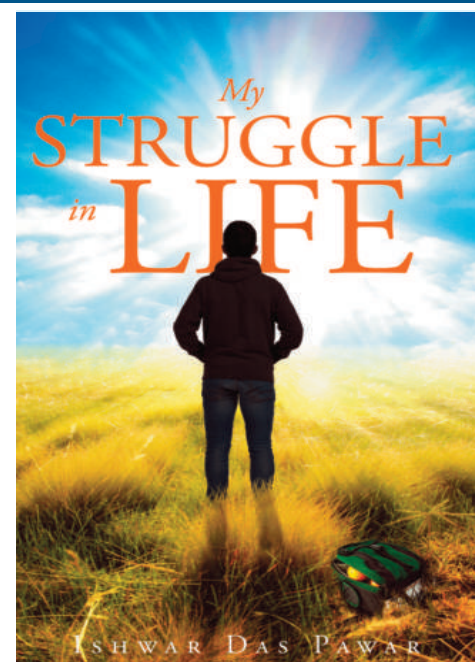
If you want to drink from the wooden apparatus, well and good, otherwise buzz off." So I had to buzz off without water. My mind was tor-

mented. Righteous indignation gripped me. The rest of the journey became a hell due to overpowering thirst coupled with the burning heat.

Another instance: It was probably in 1942. After spending September vacation, we left our village on our journey back to Alipur, district of Muzaffargarh (now in Pakistan) where I was posted. From the village to Una, we had to travel by horses as, due to the rains, the roads had become unworthy for plying of buses. After we had travelled about three miles beyond Santokhgarh, we reached down the outskirts of the village of Nangarraan where we came by a roadside well. We were feeling thirsty, and the children were actually crying for water. Two Hindus of the village were seated on the parapet of the well, enjoying puffs of huqqa (hubble bubble, smoking pipe). We asked them for water. On coming to know that we were not Hindus but untouchables, one of them refused to give us water directly from the iron-pot fitted to the lift. We declined to accept water from the rusty and dirty rectangular tin by which he offered us water. His other companion was, however, a bit reasonable. He said to him, "Look at the good-looking children, so well-dressed; they are thirsty.

Give them water as they desire." But the Hindu in the other man prevailed, and he did not listen to his prudent advice. So we walked on with our thirsty children crying for water. After we had covered about a mile, there we came by an unmanned roadside well fitted with a wooden device dhingli, (stone weighed lever fitted with a rope strung pail to retrieve water from the well). We stopped there, drew water from the well, and all of us drank water to our satiation.

Lastly, I had not yet entered service though I had done my BA. One day, Mohan Lal of the Servants of the People Society and also in charge of the Achhutodhar Mandal located in the La-



hore. jpat Rai Bhavan, Professor Surya Kanta of the DAV College, and myself were going on the Mohan Lal Road. Mohan Lal was a well-known social worker and was considered an authority on the problems of the untouchables. Even Gandhi Ji used to consult him on this subject occasionally. Professor Surya Kanta was a noted Hindi scholar. Needless to say, both of them were so-called high-caste Hindus. As we came by a lassi shop, they proposed to have a glassful of lassi (buttermilk) each as it was very hot. They asked the shopkeeper to supply us three glassfuls of lassi. After a little, while two glassfuls were brought and when asked about the third one, he refused to serve me lassi in his glass because he happened to know me. Mohan Lal and Professor Surya Kanta were completely taken by surprise. They never thought such a thing would happen in the cosmopolitan city of Lahore.

They were visibly upset and told the shopkeeper in an angry tone that if he so liked, he could also have the price of the glass itself, but to behave that way was an unpardonable affront to all of us. On hearing the exchange of arguments, quite a number of persons gathered there. The shopkeeper stood firm in protecting and safeguarding the Hindu dharma, which would have been stigmatized and polluted if he had served lassi to me in his glass. I felt extremely insulted and slighted. It was a biting experience never to be forgotten.

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Goodie Takhar, PhD



# Debt Waiver for Agricultural Labourers and Landless Farmers in Punjab

On July 14, 2021, the Punjab Government announced that it would hold a state level function on August 20 to waive the debt of agricultural labourers and landless farmers (pure tenants) of Punjab to the tune of Rs.590 crore. Prior to the 2017 elections, the Congress party had promised in its election manifesto and public speeches that the Punjab government would waive all the institutional and non-institutional debt of farmers and agricultural labourers of Punjab. According to official data, the Punjab government has waived only around Rs.4624 crore. Promises made to the agricultural labourers have not been fulfilled even partially. The Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh said that Punjab government would waive debt of Rs.590 crore of 2,85,325 members of Primary Cooperative Societies which would provide relief of Rs.20000 per member.

In 2017's election Congress party made promises about a debt waiver for the farmers and agricultural labourers of Punjab. It's worthwhile to judge how Punjab Government's actions fared on their promises. According to various estimates, At present, farmers of Punjab are under institutional and non-institutional debt of around Rs.1 lakh crore. Out of this debt, till date only around Rs.4624 crore relief was actually delivered only to farmers and not even a single rupee made it to the agricultural labourers. Rs.4624 crore is a very meager amount in comparison to the promises made by the Congress party to waive off the entire debt, as of today their promises made in 2017 still remain unfulfilled. More heartbreaking is the fact that this partial debt waiver was announced by publicly issuing cheques (of large size) to the farmers leading to a publicized humiliation for their inability to repay loans. This situation sounds like if a kid from a poor family was unable to pay the tuition fee for school and the school administration publicly announces to waive only 1/5th of the amount from the total fee, make the kid hold a signed cardboard stating "School Helped to pay fee", a symbolic albatross around the kid's neck. Given the farmers have suffered humiliation and pity at the hand of government, now these 2021 claims of waiving debt of agricultural labourers and landless farmers would not be desirable to repeat the humiliating exercise again by holding a partial debt waiver function.

The number of landless farmers in Punjab is steadily increasing because agriculture has become a loss-making proposition, switching from agriculture to non-agricultural sector in itself is tough and there is a lack of employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors too. Marginal and small farmers are becoming landless by selling their small holdings to repay their debt and get rid of its burden on their heads. Some of them even become labourers. But most of them do not work in the villages under the false pretense of socio-cul-

tural milieu. They can be seen wandering in the labour squares of cities seeking employment on a daily basis. Some of these farmers are leasing in land on contract basis for cultivation and when their agriculture is affected by natural calamities, they eventually owe more debt. And unfortunately, when all their hopes of life are dashed by the government and society, their mental strength becomes so weak they resort to committing suicide. Different surveys conducted in Punjab have revealed the fact that around 40 per cent of the suicides committed by farmers and agricultural labourers in the state are of agricultural labourers. More than 75 per cent of the suicides committed by farmers are of marginal and small farmers.

The lowest rung of the ladder of the agricultural economy, the one that grinds the most, the one that breaks the most and the one that is beaten the most is the landless agricultural labourers. Their socio-economic conditions are worse than all



the other categories of agriculture. They are forced to face many unspeakable and unbearable problems. A field survey was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Gian Singh to study and analyze the various aspects related to debt and levels of living of farmers and agricultural labourers of Punjab for the year 2014-15 covering one village each out of 27 development blocks in all the three agro-climatic zones of Punjab. This survey covered 1007 farming households and 301 agricultural labourer households. At that time the average annual per household income of agricultural labourers in Punjab was Rs.81452. Since the agricultural labourers are landless, they have no means of production other than selling their labour, so their labour in the agricultural sector is their main source of income. Around 91 per cent of the total household income of agricultural labourers in Punjab came from agricultural wages. The average per capita annual income of an agricultural labour household was Rs.16735. The annual per household consumption expenditure of agricultural labourers was Rs.90897 and most of it was spent on non-durable items. The per capita annual consumption expenditure of these families was Rs.18676. The agricultural households in Punjab were spending Rs.112 on consumer goods for an income of Rs.100. It is clear that the

agricultural labourers try to maintain a minimum level of consumption just to survive, whether they can afford it or not, for which they have to borrow and day by day their debt burden becomes heavier. The survey revealed that an average indebted agricultural labour household in Punjab was under a debt Rs.68,330. Of this debt, only 8.21 per cent came from institutional sources (primary co-operative societies 3.33 per cent, and commercial banks 4.88 per cent) and the remaining 91.79 per cent from non-institutional sources (large farmers 67.81 per cent, relatives and friends 11.69 per cent, traders and shopkeepers 9.41 per cent, and moneylenders 2.88 per cent). As much as their 52.11 per cent of total debt was at the interest rate of 22-28 per cent and their only 7.28 per cent debt was at the interest rate of 1-7 per cent. When agricultural labourers get a loan not just to survive, if the loan is not repaid due to their meager income it becomes debt and a serious problem

for them. This causes many other unspeakable and unbearable problems for this lower rung of the agriculture economy's ladder. A vast majority of agricultural labourers are from Dalit castes and most of them live in areas with poor facilities and even poorer conditions. Their living quarters are often called courtyards with streets so narrow that if a woman is in labour pains, a person has a heart attack or any other fatal attack or an accident, a vehicle can't fit in the street. Often-times they cannot afford to rent a vehicle because of their low income, but if someone out of the goodness of their heart wants to help them too, they can't bring their vehicles because of the narrowness of the streets.

Agricultural labour households have one or two animals for their livelihood, which are often seen tied up in the streets or common areas outside their small houses. Women usually own the responsibility of daily care of these animals and rearing them. Women of the agricultural labourers go to the fields of the farmers to get hay for these animals, where they are often exposed to the incidents of abuse and rape. Some of these families cannot even afford to buy livestock due to their low income. They take the calves on a shared basis from the relatively rich families for milking and the whole family works hard on them until they start

milking. The relatively high income families who give calves on a dhara (shared basis) eventually take the milking animals to their homes by paying some amount to poor agricultural labourers, once the animals are gone, they and their children are left scant of milk.

A vast majority of agricultural labourers in Punjab belong to the Dalit castes. One-third of the Panchayati land in Punjab is reserved for them on contract basis. It is not uncommon that big farmers take Panchayati land on contract in the name of Dalits or increase the contract rate to such an extent that the needy agricultural labour households are barred from farming by leasing in Panchayati land on contract. In addition, these labourers are beset by other numerous problems and difficulties day and night.

The Punjab Government's announcement of debt waiver for agricultural labourers and landless farmers would be meaningful only if all their debts are waived and their income is increased to such an extent that all the people belonging to these sections could respectively satisfy their basic needs of food, clothing, housing, education, healthcare, clean environment and social security. If agricultural labourers and landless farmers want to start their own small business units other than wages / farming, they should have the facility to take interest free loans but in the meantime their income should be at least enough so that they can repay their loans on time. These loans shouldn't later become a debt due to the inability to pay them back. To improve the socio-economic conditions of these sections, all those working under MGNREGA should be ensured employment throughout the year or as per their requirement. MGNREGA's wage rate should not be less than the minimum wage rate set by the government. The main purpose of income from the lands of village Panchayats and religious institutions is the welfare of the weaker sections of the society. In Sikhism it is considered 'the mouth of the poor, the sphere (Golak) of the Guru'. Therefore, it is the duty of the government and the society to provide lands of Panchayats and religious institutions to these landless sections for cooperative farming absolutely free of rent. Apart from these resolutions, in order to raise the living standards of all the workers, the corporate and capitalist economic development model should be replaced by the pro-people and nature-friendly development model.



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# Groundwater Depletion in Punjab : The Way Out

**D**epleting ground water in Punjab has been a rising concern for a few decades, data shows that the groundwater level in Punjab has gone down to dangerous levels and the main reason for this is the plantation of paddy in Punjab. Some people blame that groundwater depletion is the doing of farmer's self-indulgence for their monetary gains. While paddy is the fundamental cause of this crisis Punjab sees itself in but farmers are a victim to the issue instead of being an offender.

A recent research study led by Professor Rajiv Sinha from IIT Kanpur and his Ph.D research scholar Sunil Kumar Joshi has revealed that Punjab and Haryana are the worst hit areas for groundwater depletion levels all across India. This study reveals the fact that the area under paddy plantations in Haryana has increased to 1,422,000 hectare in 2017-18 from 192,000 hectare during 1966-67 and the area under paddy plantation in Punjab has increased to 30,64,000 hectare in 2017-18 from 227,000 hectare in 1960-61. One of the conclusions of this research study is that the fulfillment of the agricultural productivity objective of 'Green Revolution' is responsible for the continuous use of groundwater and its rapidly declining levels.

There are several factors responsible for the declining groundwater level in Punjab. One of the most important factors is the use of groundwater for irrigation in agriculture. A research study "Groundwater Development in Punjab" (2003) by Dr. Gian Singh, Dr. Surender Singh and Harwinder Singh on the declining groundwater level revealed that the groundwater in Punjab is being used for growing crops more than its available quantity. There is a strong correlation between crop-combinations and groundwater balance. Wheat and paddy crops account for more than three-quarters of the total sown area in Punjab and are responsible for the continuously declining groundwater level in most of the development blocks. The area under paddy planting/sowing is specifically responsible for the continuously declining groundwater level in Punjab. High yielding varieties of Paddy have a higher irrigation requirement than that of cotton, maize and many other crops which is the major reason for prevalence of pond irrigation systems for paddy crops in general.

Some people blame farmers

of Punjab to be solely responsible for rapidly declining groundwater levels in Punjab. The author disagrees with the claim to solely blame farmers for the crisis. Looking back at the old days, it is important to understand the historical crop-combinations in Punjab and the changes made in them for the needs of the country. In the second Five Year Plan, the Central government shifted the focus from agriculture to the industrial sector, leading to a severe shortage of foodgrains in the country and the country had to resort to importing foodgrains under PL480. The Central government decided to adopt the 'New Agri-



culture Technology' to resolve the foodgrains shortage. The technology was a package of high yielding variety seeds, assured irrigation, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, fungicides and other chemicals, machinery and modern agricultural practices. Essence of the 'New Agricultural Technology' is commercial in nature i.e. production for profit. After taking a decision to adopt this technology, the Central government decided to introduce it in Punjab as a matter of high priority. The onus to execute this decision of the Central government came upon the hard-working and courageous farmers, agricultural labourers, small rural artisans and the rich natural resources of Punjab. The introduction of New Agricultural technology in Punjab increased the productivity and production of wheat to such an extent that the Central government didn't need to import foodgrains any longer. The Central government, keeping in view the remarkable track record of Punjab for what it had achieved in adoption of New Agricul-

tural technology and the needs of the Central Pool of Foodgrains, imposed the paddy crop on the farmers of Punjab since 1973 through relatively higher Minimum Support Price and the guaranteed procurement of paddy by the Central government. With the assurance of procurement at MSP, area under paddy planting/sowing in Punjab eventually increased due to the commercial/profitable nature of the 'New Agricultural Technology', keeping the Minimum Support Price of paddy relatively higher than other kharif crops. Prior to the adoption of the 'New Agricultural Technology' in Punjab, irrigation was generally done

vicious circle of self-indulgence. Prior to the adoption of the 'New Agriculture Technology', there were warm social relations between farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and other rural people. Big rich farmers helped all other sections. There was a Siri (sharing) system among farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural artisans. The self-indulgence amongst the farmers of Punjab is attributed to the inherent commercial nature of the 'New Agriculture Technology'. The farmers are well aware of the fact that their problems will increase in the future as a result of continuously declining groundwater levels.

Therefore, blaming the farmers for the declining groundwater level in Punjab is by no means justified. People putting the sole blame on farmers seem completely unaware of the agricultural practices and blindly urging the farmer to stop planting paddy. This sounds like if you ask a farmer to apply brakes on the cart while he is coming down the slope of a bridge.

If a farmer applies sudden brakes, it's common sense that his oxen's neck will be crushed and only a farmer can understand the pain of oxen if that happens. In order to apply brakes on the cart of the farmers of Punjab, i.e. to prevent the groundwater level from falling continuously, it is imperative that the Central government fixes remunerative prices instead of MSPs on agricultural commodities and ensures their procurement so that crops which are an alternative to paddy can be sown/planted according to the agro-climatic conditions of the state. With regard to irrigation, the canal irrigation system should be streamlined and the distribution of water in the rivers of Punjab should be done in accordance with the 'Riparian Principle'.

At the same time, farmers and all other people need to realize that a single drop of wasted and misused water is a huge and unforgivable crime. If every person has this realization and acts towards saving water, it might seem like a drop in the ocean but if you save enough drops, they would be enough to make an ocean.



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## Indian society needs to examine why caste discrimination still takes place: Desmond Tutu

South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate and anti-apartheid campaigner Archbishop Desmond Tutu told The Hindu that he had not heard of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was pleasantly surprised when informed that Dr. Ambedkar chaired the drafting committee of the Constitution of India.

Asked why African leaders fighting apartheid had not paid enough attention to him unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Archbishop Tutu said: "We were involved in our struggle against the racial injustices in South Africa, and you were looking for allies who would be able to help change your own set up. So obviously there was need to link up with those who had influence and power in their country."

He hinted that it would be natural for an alliance to develop between Africans who struggled against injustice under apartheid regime and Dalits who are struggling against caste prejudices. "More of us should be concerned about it [caste discrimination] and perhaps be interrogating the other part of Indian society as to why they are allowing this to continue if it is an egalitarian society. I mean your Constitution says so." The Archbishop stressed that Indian society should be challenged about the situation of Dalits because it affects one's humanity.

With thanks "The Hindu" Posted on  
www.ambedkartimes.com November 25, 2014

# Explosive Topic of Sacramento County

There are some issues that never seem to go away despite the best efforts of Sacramento County and the agencies we work with. This time of year, an issue that comes to the forefront of discussion is fireworks. It is a heated topic with valid concerns on both sides and every year, my colleagues and I hear all of them. One of the requests we most often get is to ban fireworks throughout the county. This would, of course, not only include the fireworks that are already illegal, but the permitted fireworks referred to as "safe and sane." That is not an action I am prepared to take and I wanted to use this article as a chance to discuss some of the reasons why.

First, I think we can all agree that illegal fireworks are a problem. When we are talking about illegal fireworks, we are talking about the large rockets exploding in the sky or the ones you cannot see but can certainly hear from across town. The complaints my office gets about fireworks are almost always referencing these types of fireworks, and that is understandable. These fireworks are dangerous and disruptive. Unfortunately,

there is nothing the County can do to make these any more illegal than they already are. Nor is the County in a position to cut these fireworks off at the source. Illegal fireworks are brought in from outside the state, mostly from Nevada. The state does not provide the checkpoints and enforcement that are necessary to stop people from buying fireworks in Nevada and driving them home to set off in our communities.

Ultimately, that is what it comes down to – enforcement. The County cannot be the authority at the state border for obvious reasons. At the same time, whether it is the use of illegal fireworks or abuse of safe and sane fireworks around the 4th of July, the Sheriff's Department does not have the resources to find and cite every violator. The Sheriff also cannot shift resources to focus solely on fireworks when they have to prioritize more serious crimes which increase during this time of year. Our best option, and my highest priority, is working with state legislators to get solutions to what is truly a state-level issue. Meanwhile, I do not anticipate safe and sane fireworks leaving

the County any time soon either.

Some of the loudest voices of concern I hear call for the banning of safe and sane fireworks in addition to those that are already illegal. But safe and sane fireworks are not the bulk of the problem. Additionally, every year, Sacramento County nonprofit organizations raise thousands of dollars to support their causes from the sale of safe and sane fireworks. With illegal fireworks being the more prominent problem, banning safe and sane would do little more than deprive local nonprofits a significant fundraising opportunity. The same scenarios with illegal fireworks could play out with safe and sane if they were to be banned as well. Driving to a neighboring county to purchase illegal fireworks is a lot easier than driving to Nevada. My preference would be to maintain the fundraising opportunity for Sacramento County organizations, rather than drive local dollars outside the county just to have a minimal impact.

The fact is there is no easy solution. Other counties with bans on all firework sales face similar problems to Sacramento County. We will

not truly see relief from the major fireworks issue until the state can take control of the illegal fireworks flooding into the state. And while I understand the concern of those who think a full ban is the answer, I do not believe that to be the sentiment of most. For now, we are better served to focus our efforts on the illegal fireworks that pose the biggest threat to safety and sanity.

Thank you for reading – and as always, if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at [SupervisorFrost@saccounty.net](mailto:SupervisorFrost@saccounty.net).

*Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes all or part of the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, Rio Linda, Elverta, Gold River, Rancho Murieta, North Highlands, Carmichael, Foothill Farms and Fair Oaks*



**Supervisor  
Sue Frost**



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# My Short Trip to Delhi

My friends and colleagues invited me to Delhi for a pre-launch meeting of a new business outfit, Atmanirbhar Global Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AGCCI) which will be formally launched soon under the patronage and guidance of my retired diplomatic colleague Ambassador Anil Trigunayat and my friend Anil Mehta, a businessman of his own standing. They proposed my name as an Advisor to AGCCI which I accepted with all humility. AGCCI, as I visualize, would serve the small and medium companies – manufacturers, traders, importers and exporters, distributors, service providers etc. in

fortably by 7 in the evening. But that was not to be. We got stuck at Rajpura in Punjab. Kisans had blocked the traffic from both sides and sat on Dharna in protest against some skirmishes between Kisans and the Police the day before. It was total chaos with a jam of about two kilometers on both sides of the road. It is good or bad, I don't know, I have observed that the common Indian has a lot of patience and no sense of time. It is totally unwarranted, unethical, uncivilized and avoidable to block the highways at will by the rowdy crowds and harassing the common man on the road. But what to do in spite of the

we hit the highway at Shambhu – Punjab-Haryana border almost 4 hours behind schedule. Is it not 'Grammar of Anarchy'? Yes, it is. We were to take a detour to reach Delhi from Singhu border, site of Kisan Dharna, for the last 7-8 months the standoff between the farmers and the Government on the laws on agricultural matters. It is a widely discussed and written about subject and I would not like to write much. But let me register my first hand impression about the scale and conduct of the Dharna – it is spread in the middle of the road in about a 10 kms. stretch before the Singhu border. Makeshift

should be in Delhi and be at Andaz. Andaz, I found, a nice place to stay.

After AGCCI meetings and working lunch at Andaz, I was to catch up with my friend and relation, Dev Raj, a retired senior Delhi Police officer who lived in a nearby posh area of Palam Vihar in Gurgaon. Sardar D.S. Chadha, a



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'doing business with ease' both in India and abroad in cooperation with important apex business facilitators like FICCI, FIEO and various export promotion Councils as partners in development. My colleague and friend from the IFS fraternity, Dilbag Singh will hold the fort for day to day administration of AGCCI. I am confident that AGCCI would deliver to the benefit and advantage of business communities to enable them to come out of the Covid pandemic difficulties which have retarded their operations. I wish AGCCI all success in its endeavors.

It was a trip undertaken after one and a half years primarily owing to the deadly pandemic and the ongoing Kisan Andolan which has resulted in uncalculated difficulties to the common traveler to and from Delhi. On being invited to Delhi by my friend Anil Mehta for a meeting on July 14, I was reluctant to accept the invitation on account of my apprehensions about difficulties on the way because of the Kisan Andolan but he assured me that slowly things were becoming normal and drivers knew how to enter Delhi through alternative routes. I agreed to join them. Accordingly, I started at 12 noon on July 13 to reach Delhi com-

fact, the Chief Architect of the Constitution, Babasaheb Ambedkar warned in his last speech and said, "If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us." The greedy and unethical Dhabas around, though we claim to be religious and open our shops etc. with Dhoop-batti, fleeced people by charging as they wished without any scruples. After a wait of about two hours, my driver took the initiative and decided to go back and take an alternative route through the villages. Finally

houses in trolleys, trucks and tents and even steel, wooden structures having generators, air-conditioners have come up. The food requirements are met under the lofty concept of Langar. My immediate reaction, after seeing this, was that Government should not allow this conflicting situation to prolong and decide the issues at stake with the farmers in all seriousness before it gets further complicated. We are a democratic country. There is no place for undue egos on both the sides. This standoff should end as soon as possible. Otherwise, it is bound to harm our polity, society and our international image which in any way is not in the national interest.

I reached my place of stay, Hotel Andaz at Aerocity, around 11 in the night. The hosts and the Hotel staff were good enough to serve the ordered dinner of soup and vegetables in the room itself before I hit the bed. Later in an informal chat, Event Sales Manager, Devender Kumar of Andaz told me that Andaz – a concept by Hyatt was one of the most modern dens of good living out of the 10 hotels in the Aerocity. It has 401 rooms. Interestingly in my room, there was a Coffee Table Book which enumerated 401 reasons why one

well established businessman who was also with us at the AGCCI meeting kindly offered to drop me at Dev Raj's abode. I gladly accepted the kind gesture. The ride, though short, was rewarding as we could exchange our respective life experiences and became good friends instantly. Thanks Chadha Sahib.

Dev Raj and his gracious wife Sheila, a harmonious couple, belong to my native place Jalandhar. We enjoy many common connections of friends and relations. There was much to talk and revive our old memories and ponder upon the on goings. The green and well manicured lawn and matching flora around was a good place to sit and talk over rounds of masala tea. Dev Raj is a good raconteur and jovial while Sheila a reticent and quite lady. The evening was totally relaxed. The well stocked house-bar enticed me and I sipped a couple of Chotta pegs of smooth Chivas Regal before a good dinner. Visit to Dev Raj and their overflowing hospitality charged my batteries. I returned to Jalandhar on July 15 after a short trip to Delhi, a good change to break the monotony of confinement in the wake of Covid mess.



# THE AD-DHARMIS: SOURCES/WRITINGS

## ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE AD-DHARM MOVEMENT

In addition to the book "Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad-Dharm Challenge to Caste" authored by Mark Juergensmeyer which is a history book about the glorious Ad-Dharm Movement of the Untouchable Castes of Punjab for Ad-Dharm Religion, there are many other sources of information about the Ad-Dharmis.

The Indian Franchise Committee Report 1932 is another invaluable source of information which has a Memorandum submitted by the Ad-Dharm Mandal delegation to the Committee. The Memorandum starts with the following lines:

"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."

Support was also extended to the Ad-Dharmis by Mr. M.A. Ghani, M.L.C., General Secretary, Punjab Labour Board via his Memorandum submission to the Indian Franchise Committee, which stated:

"A strong movement is afoot among these people to cut themselves off from the Hindus and form a separate religion of their own. This religion is called "Ad-Dharm". So popular the movement is among them that in the last census, with all the atrocities and cruelties perpetrated upon them by the Hindus and Sikhs, no less than 4 lakhs of them were able to have themselves recorded as Ad-Dharmis. Had there been no pressure on them from the well-to-do communities, their number would surely have been no less than 25 lakhs. Under the circumstances, I would strongly appeal for separate electorates for them."

Dr. Rajendra's Prasad's book "India Divided" is an invaluable source of information of that time pe-

riod, which has passages about the Ad-Dharmis and further confirms the status of Ad-Dharm as a separate religious identity in pre-partition period in both Census 1931 and 1941. This book was first published in 1946. This book is a must buy for those interested in Indian History.

In 1985, a Souvenir was pub-



BABA MANGU RAM MUGGOWALIA JI

lished by Late C.L. Chumber, Organiser, Babu Mangu Ram Memorial Committee, on the 99th Birth Anniversary of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia, which has invaluable information in Punjabi language about the Ad-Dharm Movement.

Recently it also came to my knowledge from Mr. Prem Chumber, Editor-in-Chief, Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba, that there is also reference of the Ad-Dharm Mandal in the writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. "Shaheed Bhagat Singh Te Una Deya Likhta" in Punjabi and "Bhagat Singh Aur Unke Sathiyon Ke Dastavez" in Hindi, are both edited by Jagmohan Singh. From this input about the Writings, I then also came across during

research, a news article published in The Tribune dated March 22, 2018 titled "Pro-Dalit stance largely forgotten" which has a line stating: "Bhagat Singh backed the activities of the Adi Dharm Mandal led by Babu Mangu Ram." In addition to this, the article titled "Problem of Untouchability by Shahid Bhagat Singh" was published in Red Spark and "Achhoot Samasya" was published in Hindi in the Marxists Internet Archive (MIA). The source of information of this article was: "Kirti, a Punjabi Magazine published from Amritsar in June 1928." Balbir Madhopuri, Punjabi Writer and Sahitya Academy award winner, brought to my notice another publication titled "Bhagat Singh - Amar Vidrohi" edited by Malvinder Jeet Singh Warriach, and published by the Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.

Additionally there are references/important passages about Ad-Dharm from the following sources in English:

1. Continuing Revolution of Dalit Identity Paradigms and Possibilities in Punjab - Nirmal Singh
2. Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire - Maia Ramnath
3. Sikh Identity: An Exploration of Groups Among Sikhs - Opinderjit Kaur Takhar
4. Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories - Gyanendra Pandey
5. Internal Classification of Scheduled Castes: The Punjab Story - Avinash Kumar Mishra
6. Rich Heritage of Punjabi Dalit Literature and its Exclusion from Histories - Raj Kumar Hans
7. The Ravi Dasis of Punjab: Global Contours of Caste and Religious

8. Mapping Social Exclusion in India: Caste, Religion and Borderlands - Paramjit S. Judge
9. Dalit Empowerment - Felix Wilfred
10. The Un-

- touchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India - Oliver Mendelsohn, Marika Vicziany
11. Religion, Language, and Power - Nile Green, Mary Searle-chatterjee
12. When Scholars Study The Sacred - Andrea Diem-lane
13. Dalit Empowerment through Entrepreneurship: A Case of Punjab - Gurpreet Bal
14. Mangoo Ram, Ad-Dharm and the Dalit Movement in Punjab - Ronki Ram

Important among the sources is the Ad-Dharm Mandal Report and the Census 1931 Punjab Report. The Ad-Dharm Mandal Report is available in English in the Appendix in the concluding part of the book "Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Ad-Dharm Challenge to Caste". The Census 1931 Punjab Report has a Chapter on Religion which has a separate Section on Ad-Dharmis. In both Part-1 Report and Part-2 Tables of the Census 1931 Punjab, can be found statistical information about the Ad-Dharm Religion. Some statistics in tabular format has also been reproduced in the previous edition of Ambedkar Times.

In the previous two editions of Ambedkar Times I had shared information about the Ad-Dharmis from other available sources of the pre-partition period, "The Modern Review" and "The Indian Social Reformer". There may be many other sources of information which needs to be found and researched.

This research work is an ongoing process, and as and when more information is found, would be made known and shared.



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## BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF AD-DHARM

"The real objective of the Ad Dharm movement was to create an egalitarian social structure where Ad Dharmis would be proud of their community and feel free to aspire for equal opportunities. With an aim of achieving the same objective, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has become active in Punjab since 1985. Of late the Party has claimed that "the ideology of Ad Dharm has become the spine, heart, brain, eyes, feet, and arms of the struggle of the BSP" (Bahujan Samaj Bulletin 12 January 1997:8). In 1996, it won three of the thirteen parliamentary seats and recorded leads in as many as seventeen assembly constituencies in Punjab (Verma 1999). Kanshi Ram, founder of the BSP, was elected to Lok Sabha (1996) from the Hoshiarpur constituency, wherefrom 50 years ago Babu Mangu Ram, founder of the Ad Dharm movement, got elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1946. More interestingly, it was again in Hoshiarpur that the BSP celebrated 75th year of the AD Dharm movement on 28 February 2001. On this occasion, Kanshi Ram in his address exhorted the "Bahujan Samaj" to follow the principles of the Ad Dharm movement of which the BSP has, now, become the torch-bearer."

REF: AD-DHARM MOVEMENT AND DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS IN PUNJAB  
- DR. RONKI RAM



# AMBEDKARTIMES GROUP REMEMBERS

## SAHIB SHRI KANSHI RAM JI

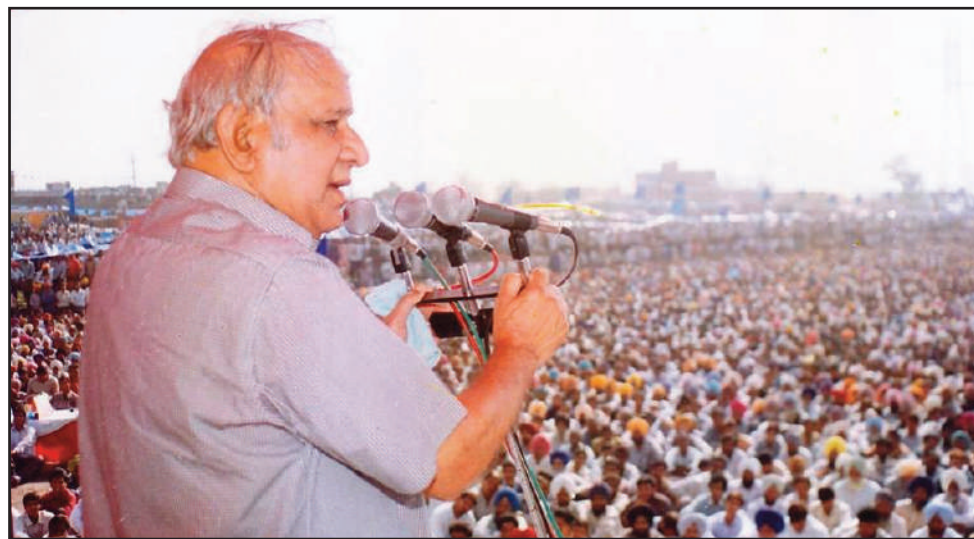
**Prem Kumar Chumber**  
(Editor-In-Chief: Ambedkar Times)

**Sahib** Shri Kanshi Ram was born on March 15, 1934, in Khawas Pur village of Ropar District of Punjab (India). He was the eldest of eight siblings. He belonged to the Ramdassia (Ad Dharmi/Mulnivasi) community of the Scheduled Caste group, which is the largest group in Punjab. He was named Kanshi because after his birth the midwife placed him in a tray made of kansa metal. His father owned some land and his uncles were in the armed forces. In Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram's own words, "I was born and brought up amongst those who sacrificed themselves but never betrayed the country..." Despite his low caste background, he earned a bachelor's degree in science from the Government College at Ropar (Punjab).

His upbringing was modest. During his education years there was nothing special about him to suggest that he would mature into great social revolutionary. It was only after he took up a government job in the western Indian state of Maharashtra that he began to be influenced by the writings and life of Baba Sahib Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who voiced the concerns of India's low caste community and worked hard throughout his life for their empowerment. Soon after his graduation, Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji joined the research staff of Kirki's Explosive Research and Development Laboratory (ERDL) in Pune 1957. While working in Pune, he quit his job after becoming involved in the famous Deena Bhan case. Shri Deena Bhan, a Rajasthani Scheduled Caste employee and senior colleague of Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji was suspended. His fault was that he protested against the decision of ERDL management for the cancellation of holidays for Baba Sahib Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Lord Buddha Jayantis and their replacement by the Tilak Jayanti and one additional holiday for Diwali. Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji de-

ecided to fight against such a caste ridden and dictatorial behavior of the management. The fighter in Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram got the suspension orders of Shri Deena Bhan revoked and Dr. Ambedkar and Lord Buddha Jayantis holidays were restored.

This was the beginning of the long battle for the emancipation of the Dalits in the country that Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram had to lead till his last breath. He resigned from his job



and totally dedicated his entire life for the cause of the community. He never married nor visited his home since then. His struggle was not for the home and family. He devised a new strategy to regain the lost glory of the original (Adi) inhabitants of Bharat (India). He gave utmost importance to the culture of work and democratic method of struggle. He also expanded the circle of the Dalits by incorporating other Backward Classes and Minorities into it.

He criticized the post-Ambedkar leadership of Dalits in India. For that he declared "Poona Pact" as the main reason. He said that "Poona Pact" made Dalits helpless. By rejecting separate electorate, Dalits were deprived of their genuine representation in legislatures. Several and various kind of Chamchas were born in the last fifty years. As and when India's so called high caste Hindu rulers felt the need of Chamchas and

when the authority of the upper castes got endangered by real and genuine Dalit leaders, Chamchas were brought to the fore in all other fields".

In his "The Chamcha Age", a well-argued and polemical tirade against the pseudo Dalit leaders, Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji sharpen the contradiction for the legitimate acquisition of political power by the downtrodden in electoral democracy in

India. In, the Chamcha Age, "he focused very much on the Poona Pact which was a point of a rather decisive Gandhian victory over Dr. Ambedkar after a long duel between the two at the Round Table Conference". In the mid-1960s, Sahib Kanshi Ram Ji began to organize Dalit government employees to fight against what he saw as the deeply entrenched prejudice of higher caste peoples. It was around this time that he decided that he would not marry and dedicate his life to the cause of Dalit improvement. Finally he decided play a crucial role in the politics of the country.

The result was, Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji launched his first organization on December 6th, 1978: All India Backward (SC, ST, and OBC) and Minority Communities' Employees' Federation, popularly known as BAMCEF. Three years later, on December 6th 1981, Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji founded another organization:

DS-4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti) and on April 14th, 1984, Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji announced the formation of the Bahujan Samaj Party (the Common Man's Party). As a politician, he became very popular among his people, who found a new hope and vision in his style of functioning and sincerity. Suddenly he became a national figure. He was a master strategist and a meticulous organizer. He used his strengths to carve out a niche for Dalits. This was done by deploying an often combative and aggressive strategy, with virulent attacks on other political parties which he claimed only represented the interests of higher caste Hindus. He was sharply different from other politicians of the mainstream. He used to communicate before he spoke.

In 1996 Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji elected to the Lok Sabha from the Hoshiarpur constituency, from where 50 years ago Great Ghadri Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji founder of the "Ad Dharm Movement" had been returned to the Punjab assembly in 1946. Interestingly, it was at Hoshiarpur, the strong hold of "Ad Dharm" that the BSP celebrated the 75th year of the "Ad Dharm Movement" on February 18th, 2001. On this occasion Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji exhorted the Bahujan Samaj to follow the principles of the "Ad Dharm Movement" of which the BSP has now become the torch-bearer.

He was one of the few great leaders of Independent India who actually expanded the limits of Dalit politics. His political vision was never confined to Scheduled Castes only, as is often thought about him. All of the political organizations he founded were meant for the downtrodden of all sorts – SC, ST, OBC and Minorities. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he was the one who took a lead in making Indian democracy more competitive and practically open to the Dalit-Bahujan Samaj.

(Courtesy: [www.ambedkartimes.com](http://www.ambedkartimes.com)  
Posted on March 15, 2012)



File picture



File picture

Mr. C. L. Chumber, Kewal Krishan Banga, Bhupinder Banga and more with Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji during his visit to Mr. C. L. Chumber's residence in Jalandhar.