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CONGRATULATIONS ON 645th THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SAHIB SRI SATGURU RAVIDASS JI MAHARAJ

Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:
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Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, whose 645th birth anniversary is being celebrated throughout the world, is revered as Shiromani Sant of the medieval

Bhakti movement of North India. He was born in the so called lowest of the low castes, in Seer Goverdhanpur near Varanasi (Utter Pradesh), whose touch was used to be considered polluting to the Savarnas. He opened a frontal attack on the system of Untouchability and spoke against the system of hegemonic Brahminical mediation for an access to spirituality. He also said that one needs not to hide his caste or leave his low profession to reach God. He became a model for his fellow beings to overcome the hierarchical barriers of Brahminical Social Order and to establish Begumpura a state without fear and sorrows. Sri Guru Ravidass elevated the status of the labour by emphasizing on the fact that manual labour is the best way to lead a pious life. He vehemently opposed living on alms and charity of others.

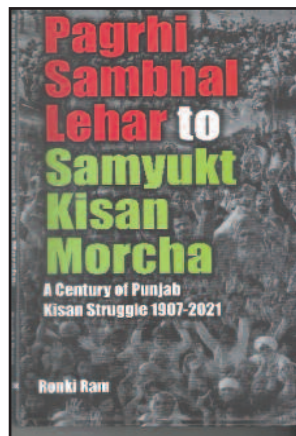
He defeated the famous Kashi Pundits in a formally organized Shastrartha and proved that merit is not the fiefdom of the so called upper castes alone. Everybody is capable of obtaining knowledge and to worship. He underlined the fact that the fourfold division of the Hindu society is a sham and a gimmick keep a large section of the society under the cruel control of a few Upper castes in the name of purity-pollution principle cunningly devised by Brahmins. It is against this very system of oppressive social differentiation that Guru Ravidass envisioned an egalitarian socio-political order where there would be no place for untouchability and social oppression. For the social transformation of the society, Sri Guru Ravidass Ji laid emphasis on labour, compassion, virtue, prohibition of alcohol and all bad deeds. He also reiterated on the urgent need of remembering the formless God whom he addressed by varied names. Some scholars are of the view that Guru Ravidass did not form an organization nor he launched any consistent and systematic agitation against the system of untouchability. This is true. But to raise a loud voice at his times was no less than a clarion call to dismantle the unjust system of Brahminical social order. It is also true that the path told by him has become the beacon light for the Dalit movement.

Pagri Sambhal Lehar to Samyukt Kisan Morcha

A centenary of Punjab Kisan Struggle 1907-2021 By Ronki Ram

published by Unistar Books in association with Ambedkar Times INC (CA, USA), PP. 142, Price: Rs. 595

I could lay my hand on this recent book on the subject written by my good friend in the academia. Prof. Ronki Ram, currently Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Professor of Political Science at Panjab University, Chandigarh; courtesy yet another friend, Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief, "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" Weeklies being published from California in the USA. Prem Chumber joined hands with the publisher, Unistar Books, to carry forward the mission to support and promote the common matters of concern and interest of the undermined and struggling masses of the society. I highly appreciate this gesture on the part of Prem Kumar Chumber and his media organs. It is also a matter of gratification that academic and intellectual and also literary circles have taken a due note of the epoch making struggle of farmers which lasted for more than a year against all odds and difficulties. The government, ultimately, had to relent and repeal the said to be 'black laws' on agrarian reforms. It is a well-documented and meticulously compiled history of Kisan movements in the last over 100 years and also the



Dr. Ronki Ram

Ramesh Chander - Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)

current scenario in the wake of Samyukt Kisan Morcha. The book has thoughtfully been dedicated to the Unknown Fighter of the century old Kisan struggle in Punjab. In a brief Foreword, Prem Kumar Chumber noted with satisfaction: "The historic struggle has not only forced the central government to repeal the contentious farm laws but also put in place the most desirable narrative of communal harmony built from below across class and caste fault lines." Amarjit Chandan, Writer & Activist, aptly articulated in the Preface of the book: "The world has recently witnessed the largest and longest peaceful farmers' struggle against globalism in general and capitalism in particular." He has underlined the role of Punjab in Kisan movements in noting that "The state of Punjab has the distinction of leading various farmers' struggles during the British rule as well as post-independence." Prof Ronki Ram has done a good job in putting Kisan movements in larger perspective since the annexation of Punjab in 1849, with an emphasis on the century of Kisan movements - 1907-2021 - from the days Pagri Sambhal Oh Jatta to the current allegedly black farm laws of 2020-2021 dealing with agricultural produce, sale, storage, marketing and contract farming. The stakeholders, particularly farmers and parties (commission agents), dealing in the sale and purchase in agro-markets, opposed tooth and nail these hurriedly passed laws in a hush-hush manner by the Central government of the country. The book rightly provides all the necessary details of the 'Non Partisan Peaceful Protests' for the benefit of the readers. Finally, a year-long agitation was

called off after nullifying the controversial laws following the announcement by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on November 19, 2021, on the auspicious occasion of Gurupurb of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The learned author, Ronki Ram, asserted that this long drawn struggle could sustain itself and finally succeeded because of the fact that the spirit behind the struggle was 'the rich heritage of peasant struggles in both pre-partition undivided Punjab and post-independence Indian Punjab. The following chapters related in minute details the valourous story of peasants' movements in undivided and Post partition Punjab. In the backdrop of the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and turbulent period of Sikh Misls (Confederacies), the book details the farmers' struggle under the banner of 'Pagri Sambhal-Jatta Lehr' in 1907 led by Ajit Singh uncle (paternal chacha) of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Nilli Bar Morch of 1938 with the slogan - Banney Utey Adho-addh - 50-50 share in the agricultural produce, Amritsar Morch of 1938 against the increase in land revenue, Muzara Struggle of Gurdaspur, Charhik Morcha of 1938, Korotana Struggle to oppose the

ban on kisan movements during the WWII, the Lahore Morcha of 1938-39, Harsa Chhina Morcha on the issue of canal waters in 1946 and 'perhaps the last kisan morcha for the restoration of land rights before the partition in 1947, Tanda Urmur Morcha. Similarly, the post-partition East Punjabi in India also saw a number of important Kisan movements such as Pepsu Muzara movement against the 'Biswedari' (system of hereditary property), Anti-betterment Levy Agitation of 1959 (known as Khush-Hashiyati Tax Morch) led by Punjab Kisan Sabha of the CPI, Mehatpur Byet Muzara Movement said to be influenced by the Naxalites, Chandigarh Morcha of 1972 of Punjab Khetbari Zimindara Union. These details provided good information on the Kisan movements which worked as the torch bearer of the current Andolan. With this detailed narration of varied Kisan movements, the author has given thoughtfully articulated 'Critical Reflections' as food for thought. Agriculture is a complex issue for the Indian economy, polity and the society. The other has weighed pros and cons of reform process of the agricultural sector very carefully. Agriculture cannot be left to 'subsistence' level. It has to develop as industry on commercial basis not only to meet the basic needs of farmers to make it viable but also to integrate the agricultural sector with the main stream of the economy of India and beyond. The way out is not confrontation but co-operation among the stakeholders. I hope the government has fully realized this ground reality. The book is a good compilation of all relevant material on the Kisan movements and the legal framework and also a balanced view on the way forward.

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS

645th Birth Anniversary, Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj

On the auspicious occasion of celebrating 645th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj at Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Pittsburg on 18th, 19th, and 20th February, 2022, I convey my heartiest congratulations to the entire Sangat.

A glimpse in the pages of history during the middle ages reveals that social degeneration based on caste system, fanaticism, bigotry, hypocrisy and ritualism was alarmingly high and was eating into the very vitals of civilization and human dignity. At such a critical juncture of social decline appear prophets of spiritual awakening to create a just and equitable social order. It was this dark period of history when Guru Ravidass Ji was born at Seer Goverdhanpur in 1377 AD in Kashi, Varanasi. Guru Ravidass Ji, Satguru Kabir Sahib and Guru Nanak Dev ji were contemporaries and were in the forefront of a Bhagti Movement which had started to bring the degenerating social order to the path of righteousness.

DIVINE TEACHINGS: -Guru Ravi-

dass Ji's teachings were based on equality and universal brotherhood and were not meant for any particular section of society. Guru Ravidass Ji reminds us of the fact that human birth is a rare privilege obtained as a result of meritorious deeds of innumerable lives primarily for the purpose of God realization. The very basic purpose of human life is defeated if one remains lost in the quagmire of material possessions and worldly delusions. God is always within us and can be seen with our inner vision. We need not have to wander around in mountains and forests to find Him.

CASTE, CREED AND RELIGIOUS DISTINCTIONS:

- As we learn from Guru Ji's teachings all men emerge from the same divine flame and the same creator pervades through them all. The four-fold

classification of society into Verna system of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaish and Shudras is all man-made to maintain the fake and artificial superiority of priestly classes which has infected the entire society with a vicious disease ruining the very core of the entire social organism. The sacred hymns of Guru

Ravidass Ji Maharaj, as enshrined in Guru Granth sahib Ji, are simple and intelligible and full of devotional sentiments going straight to the heart and soul of the reader. The Brahmins and higher priestly class who initially opposed him with their thinking of superiority complex were dazzled and humbled to see Guru Ravidass Ji tear open the skin on his chest to show them the gold-like sacred thread (or his inner light). This made them recognize his real and spiritual greatness and many of the Brahmin priests and rulers like Maharani Mirabai and Jhallanbai of Chittor-Rajasthan became his followers and bowed before him in reverence.

**"AISA CHAHUN RAJ MEIN
JIS MEIN SABHAN KO MILE ANN
CHHOT BARE SAB SAM BASEIN
RAVIDASS RAHE PRASANN"**

In the end I wish and pray that the rays of Guru Ji's philosophy and teachings may keep illuminating our minds and souls as long as the sun shines and the stars twinkle. Our best tribute to the nobility of his life and to perpetuate his ideals is to follow



them as a way of our daily life.

I gratefully appreciate this opportunity for expressing my respectful homage to the memory of our great Satguru Dhan Dhan Sri Guru Ravidass Ji through the esteemed columns of "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" Weeklies USA.

**"JO BOLE SO NIRBHAI SHRI GURU
RAVIDASS MAHARAJ KI JAI"**



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The Ad Dharm in Dr. Ambedkar's writing!

STATEMENT "E" [f1] NOTE BY Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR TO THE INDIAN FRANCHISE COMMITTEE (LOTHIAN COMMITTEE) ON THE DEPRESSED CLASSES SUBMITTED ON MAY 1st, 1932

Depressed Classes in the Punjab

In connection with the population figure for the depressed classes given in the census of 1931 I wish to draw attention to two facts:

(1) The population of those who caused pollution by touch was according to the census of 1911, 2-8 Millions while in the census of 1931 the population of untouchables is given as amounting to 1.3 million.

(2) The census of 1911 gives a list of 23 castes which are deemed to cause pollution by touch. The census of 1931 mentions only castes as forming the untouchable population in the Punjab. 12. Why the total population of the untouchables and the list of castes included in that category should have shrunk so much between 1911 and 1931 I am not able to ascertain. It is however necessary to state that among the untouchables of Punjab there has been going on for some years past a strong movement called the Ad-Dharm Movement the object of which is to separate from the Hindu fold and form themselves into a distinct community under the new name of "Ad-Dharmis". Such has been the strength of the movement that the untouchables decided to return themselves as "Ad-Dharmis" instead of Hindus in the census of 1931, and the



Government gave recognition to this feeling and allowed the Census Superintendent of Punjab to open a new category of Ad-Dharmis. This led in some parts of the Punjab to riots between the Hindus and the untouchables. As a result the untouchables in some parts returned themselves simply as "Ad-Dharmis" without mentioning their respective castes, and in other parts where they were prevented from doing so returned themselves as Hindus under their caste names. I am mentioning these facts to show that the difficulties created in the enumeration of the untouchables and which are admitted by the Government of Punjab may be responsible for this shrinkage in the number and list of untouchables in the Punjab. The matter therefore requires to be carefully looked into.



C. L. Chumber

Courtesy: C. L. Chumber
Editor-in-Chief: Kaumi Udarian
(Monthly Journal in
Punjabi/Hindi/English) Jalandhar City

A Pattern of Inconsistency

It may be hard to realize this, but we are already well into 2022. I say this because I find myself reading headlines that make me feel like I am still living in late 2020. As has been the case throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the rules are made up and the data does not matter. After months of a reinstated, statewide mask mandate, Governor Newsom announced the mandate would be lifted on February 15th.

Shortly after, I was elated to see the county's public health officer would follow the state's lead and lift our mask mandate as well. The vexing thing about these decisions however, is that the originally stated thresholds for freedom from such mandates have again been irrelevant to the process.

I think it is great that the requirement of masks indoors is being lifted ahead of schedule but it just goes to show how subjective all of the benchmarks are. At the time the county's mask mandate was reinstated, we were told that it would be lifted when we dropped below a case rate of five per 100,000. When the announcement came that the mask

mandate would be lifted, we sat at 63.8 cases per 100,000 which is obviously significantly higher than the previous goal. Again, these guidelines and benchmarks are clearly subjective, and it makes me wonder why any of these false goal lines have continued to be identified – especially when the science we are all supposed to be following continues to change.

Case in point, Sacramento County's most recent mask mandate was put in place to help slow the spread as cases spiked. While the mask mandate was in place however, we saw our highest case rates of the entire pandemic. At the same time, the death rate remained far below what we saw at its peak. With numbers like those, it would seem the mask mandate achieved essentially nothing.

On March 8, 2020, Dr. Fauci made a comment on 60 Minutes, "There's no reason to be walking around with a mask..." – then on April 3, 2020, he and the CDC directed us to wear a mask. As time progressed, we were told to wear 2 masks, that children must mask

while playing sports outdoors, and that cloth masks don't work but N95 masks do. We were told that if we get the shot, we can take off the mask and travel, then we were told to put back the mask because it turns out the vaccine does not prevent contracting or transmitting the disease. We've been told we must wear a mask indoors, but if we are sitting at a table in a restaurant, we can take the mask off. Children who are not at-risk are required to wear a mask, while adults who are at-risk can go without a mask.

We clearly have a long way to go to regaining common sense and normalcy. Lifting mask mandates only for the vaccinated did not work last time but that is what we are doing again.

As the virus changes and we watch case rates of both the vaccinated and unvaccinated rise and fall together, it is becoming more evident that the need for emergency declarations and knee jerk mandates need to be left behind. Instead, we need to do as we have with all other viruses that mutate too often to be eradicated – we must learn to live

with the virus while minimizing its impact on society.

At this point, the only things we should be hearing about masks

is when we are discussing studies of how they have impacted our health, the total well-being of students, and how we can better respond to similar outbreaks in the future.

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.

Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, North Highlands, Rio Linda, Elverta, and Rancho Murietta.



Sue Frost

Sacramento County Supervisor

Counter Magnet and Satellite Towns are not Necessary for Shimla

On February 9, 2022, the Government of Himachal Pradesh passed, among the key proposals, the Shimla Development Plan for the construction of a Counter Magnet and four Satellite Towns to decongest and transfer urbanization load for the crore city. A Counter Magnet town will be set up near Shimla Airport and four satellite towns will come up near Ghandal, Naldehra, Fagu, and Chamiyana. Counter Magnet towns are those that can be developed as alternative hubs of development and have the potential to attract more people/immigrants from a larger city in the area. Satellite towns are small municipalities that are adjacent to a larger city and serve as part of the larger city and provide housing and other amenities for the people working in the larger city.

Shimla was made the summer capital of India in 1864 during the British rule. The city could meet the needs of a population of only 16000 persons. Its population was only 13960 persons in 1901 which increased to 169572 in 2011 and is expected to 210277 persons in 2022. The population has grown more than 15 times in the last 120 years.

With the rapidly growing population in Shimla, the people here are facing problems like increase in traffic congestion and high house rents and expensive land for houses. To solve these problems, it became necessary to build Counter Magnet and Satellite towns. Therefore, this decision can be termed as a welcome decision of the Government of Himachal Pradesh, but if viewed and tested from the environmental point of view, it will have a very negative impact on the people and the environment of the state. Shimla is situated in the hilly region. Mountainous areas cannot bear the weight of population and any kind of infrastructure beyond their capacity. The more cities in the mountains, the more they will be exposed to natural disasters. While such cities in the plains reduce the problems of the main city, the increase in population in these cities in the hilly areas will create more problems.

Shimla falls in an earthquake sensitive area. In the event of an earthquake, the growing number and population of cities could cause further loss of life and property. The Himachal Pradesh government has been depleting its natural resources through various development programmes in the recent past in the name of economic development. On 19 January 2022, the Government of Himachal Pradesh allowed any kind of construction on 17 green belts which were banned by the National Green Tribunal on 9 December 2000. The Himachal Pradesh government has said that the ban has been lifted from these areas because some people have bought land in these restricted areas which was causing them loss. It is pertinent to note here that the ban was lifted from 414 hectares of land out of which only 90 hectares are under private ownership and the rest is government land. The lifting of

the ban on these areas will lead to large scale construction in Tutikandi, Nabha, Phagli, Bemloe, Himland, Khalini, Lakkar Bazar, Sanjoli, Chhota Shimla, Charleville, Jakhu, and Elysium Hill areas. If the government cares about the interests and rights of landowners then the easiest way is to save the green belts by Payment for Environmental Services (PES). This model is being widely used in many countries of the world. In Rome, England, Costa Rica, and Scandinavian countries, as well as in Palampur in this very state and Mumbai cities in India, this programme is very successful in protecting the environment. Using this model will protect the interests of landowners and also save the environment.

In February 2021, the Himachal Pradesh government had sought approval from the Supreme Court to carry out various projects in 736 hectares of forest area which were covered under the Forest Conservation Act 1980 (614 hectares) and the Forest Rights Act 2006 (122 hectares). In this way deforestation and construction in the hilly areas causes the ecosystem of the hilly areas to lose its balance which causes the mountains to start sliding downwards.

The Himachal Pradesh government is not only destroying Shimla's green belts and forests to promote Shimla as a tourist destination. At the same time, the forests of other districts of the state have also been severely damaged due to the four-laning of the Shimla-Parwanoo road. Ever since the government started widening the road to make it four-lane, the incidences of landslides on this road have increased manifold due to deforestation and cutting of mountains. In Himachal Pradesh, 35 major landslides had occurred from June 13 to July 30 (in just 48 days) before the onset of the monsoon in 2021. That was more than double the 16 incidents that occurred in 2020. On August 11, 2021, 28 people were killed in a landslide in Kinnaur. From early 2021 to early August, natural disasters, including landslides, cloudbursts, and flash floods, killed 246 people, compared to 161 people during the monsoon last year (2020). On an average, one person dies every year within a radius of 100 square kilometers in the Himalayan region as a result of landsliding. When forests are cut down and mountains are blown up with explosives to construct roads, this results in sliding down hills that causes great loss of life and property.

Apart from landslides, the incidence of monsoon cloudbursts in Himachal Pradesh has increased by 121 per cent in 2021 over the previous year. Flash floods in Himachal Pradesh have been on the rise due to melting of glaciers, cloudbursts and

rising global temperature. The pro-capitalist/corporate economic growth model adopted in India is also responsible for the increase in average local temperature which results in the increasing number of natural disasters in the mountainous states of India.

According to the Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Plan, the temperature in the state of Himachal Pradesh has risen by 1.6 degree Celsius in the last century, which is changing the trends of rainfall. Earlier pleasant rain used to continue for a week, but now rainy days have decreased and intensity of rain has increased, causing flash floods, cloudbursts, heavy and unseasonal snowfall, landslides, droughts, melting of glaciers, and forest fires. These incidents are on the rise. It also makes clear that in the name of economic development, roads have been built in the Himalayan states (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) to promote tourism, dams have been constructed on rivers for clean energy



and cutting of forests for horticulture have also increased the local temperature as well as the number of natural calamities and the damage caused by them. The plains of India have seen a lesser increase in average temperature than the Himalayas. The temperature has risen 1 degree Celsius in the plains while 1.6 degree Celsius in the Himalayan region during the last one century.

A recent India State of Forests Report-2021, reveals that the area under forests in Himachal Pradesh has increased, but the Government of Himachal Pradesh's plan to ignore the forests does not confirm the increased forest area figures. It is pertinent to mention here that the India State of Forests Report 2021 clearly states that the area under dense forests in Himachal Pradesh is declining. Apart from road and other construction works, deforestation is also done in the state for hydropower projects. Hydropower projects are considered an important part of India's clean energy plans. Therefore, in spite of strong protests from locals and environmental activists, hydropower projects are being set up by the government in environmentally sensitive areas, ignoring environmental regulations. According to a report by Himdhara Collective (Environmental Research and Action Group), there are a total of 813 large, medium, and small hydropower projects in Himachal Pradesh. According to a study by Mansi Asher, between 1980 and 2014, 90 per cent of the hydroelectric projects and transmission lines were in the forest area of Kinnaur district in Himachal Pradesh, causing severe damage to forests and biodiversity. According to the study, 53 hydropower plants are planned in the Sutlej basin of Kinnaur where 37

people were killed in landslides in 2021. Hydropower projects on rivers for clean energy are causing huge damage to the environment of hilly states. According to a Landslide Risk Assessment Report by the Government



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of Himachal Pradesh, more than 18500 villages in 77 development blocks of the state are at risk of landslides.

The Himachal Pradesh government is aware that the population burden on Shimla is increasing. The city does not even have enough parking space for Shimla residents and besides it falls in an earthquake sensitive area. Then why the Himachal Pradesh government is trying to attract tourists to Shimla. The tourists are attracted to visit Shimla only because of the tall trees that touch the sky and the cool temperature and its natural beauty. What will Shimla do if the green belt (forests) itself turns into concrete forests and the temperature rises further with such activities of the government. Apart from forests, Shimla will also become a hot city with concrete buildings resulting in the increasing local temperature.

The Himachal Pradesh government is now following the same path as the Uttarakhand state government started two decades ago. The natural beauty of the state of Uttarakhand has been the victim of various misleading economic development schemes of the government. If the Himachal Pradesh government does not change its economic development plans, Shimla could face similar tragedies as Uttarakhand is already facing.

To save Shimla and its natural beauty, the Himachal Pradesh government does not need to set up Counter Magnet and Satellite towns around Shimla. The government of Himachal Pradesh should fix the number of tourists visiting Shimla and their vehicles or the government of Himachal Pradesh should provide convenient public transport for tourists so that there is no need to build multi-storey parking spaces for vehicles.

Reducing the number of vehicles and fixing the number of tourists will save the environment of Shimla from excess greenhouse gasses and particulate matter which rapidly increase the temperature here. Instead of widening the roads, the government should repair the old ones and make them more efficient. More trees should be planted in vacant lots. The means of public transport in the city should also be made efficient. Instead of constructing multi-storied buildings for tourists in Shimla, the government of Himachal Pradesh can save the environment as well as increase the income of the people by following the slogan "Har Ghar Kuchh Kehta Hai".

An Open Letter to All Political Parties Punjab Elections – Dalit Vote Bank



Dear Political Leadership of All Political Outfits,

I am apolitical common citizen of India living in Jalandhar. I venture to write on a current issue of concern and interest to all of us with regard to the elections currently underway in Punjab and some other states of India.

All political parties and politicians are falling on each other to woo dalits and encash their electoral cheques on the Dalit Vote Bank with 34 reserved seats in the total of 117 and with more than 33% share in the population. The Congress Party has declared Charanjit Singh Channi as their CM face. The Akalis have alliance with BSP and professes to have a dalit as a Deputy CM like the AAP with a dalit as the Leader of Opposition in the current Assembly. BJP has gone back from their earlier decision to have a dalit as CM. Many cross currents are underway which reveal the reality on ground with regard to the status and space of dalits in the society and polity. The efficacy of a democratic polity with the dictum of 'one vote – one value' is, of late, increasingly coming to the fore and rightly so. Today, February 8, a renowned journalist and political commentator Chandra Suta Dogra has raised a pertinent question and said that the Congress Party's gamble to name Channi, a dalit, as the CM face was a 'double edged sword' and asserted that it would tend to alienate the caste Hindus and the Caste Sikhs. I have no issue with Chandra Suta. She has narrated the obvious. But it has left a definite 'food for thought' for the Thekedars of the society in the RSS, SGPC among others and the 'Shouting Brigade' who cry from the roof tops against the reservations for dalits. Where dalits should go, if they cannot have a due space and share in the pie? What are we doing to address this issue of caste divid? Should dalits remain in the margins only in spite their strength and place

in the polity? Why shall they be? These are some of the pertinent questions which need to be answered. Dalit intelligentsia, though not vocal as yet, is watching this carefully. Media has reported that Navjot Sidhu's wife and Bhagwant Mann have tried to raise a question about 'how come Channi is a poor man' as mentioned by Rahul Gandhi. Do they want a pauper to stand against them? Channi is an educated man with a sound track record. He would prove himself or would be side tracked by the system itself. Why to worry? Some reports have criticized the Congress Party as it has succumbed to caste considerations in naming the CM face. It is a fallacious argument. Nobody thought of this caste divide for the last 75 years. No



dalit could make it the top in spite their demographic advantage. That caste divide suited the Manuwadi mindsets.

I know that nobody has the time to listen or read the long sermons and high flown ideas. The crux of the matter is that the time has come when dalits are no more interested in freebies of 'daal atta'. They want to have their identity with dignity and respect. Their emotional chord is crying for to hold their hand. Can we ignore this reality, if we intend to have harmony and fraternity in the society? Two immediate issues of interest and concern to dalits come to my mind in these days of elections when all parties are vying to garner the votes. This also explains the reason to address this open letter to all political parties. These two issues, if addressed properly, have the potential of providing the 'swing advantage' in dalit votes. The followers of Guru Ravidass and Babasaheb Ambedkar are increasingly getting upset about the indifference shown by the BJP government at the centre as both these issues pertain to the realm of

the central government in Delhi. I take the liberty of listing these here in the light of the Urdu couplet:

इक तरज तगाफुल है ; ओ वो उनको मुबारक ,
इक अरजे तमन्ना है वह हम करते रहेगे।

i) **Tughlakabad Guru Ravidass Dharamasthan** - Majority of dalit population of Punjab are the followers of Guru Ravidass. The Central Governments indifference and DDA's highhandedness in the matter – first destruction and desecration of Guru Ravidass Dharamasthan, a historic site which was gifted by the then ruler Sikander Lodhi to the great Guru in 15-16th-century, in 2018, in the wake of agitation by the followers of Guru Ravidass, Government agreed to give 400 sq. meter of land and building of the Dharamasthan in 2019 and now again DDA's demand of 4.33 crores of rupees and allotment of land only for 30 years n lease has again raised the hackles of the followers of Guru Ravidass particularly in Punjab and UP. All political parties should consider and raise this subject with concerned authorities in Delhi to assuage the ruffled sentiments of dalits of

was suggested and proposed in June, 2015 to the then E A M Sushma Swaraj to consider and make a demarche to the UNO to declare April 14 as International Day of Equality.



Ramesh Chander
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The proposal was duly acknowledged by the Joint Secretary of the UNES Division of the MEA. The matter was taken up by the Forum of Scheduled Caste MPs and MLAs under the stewardship of Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal of Punjab with PM Narendra Modi in November, 2015. Accordingly. For the first time, Ambedkar Jayanti on April 14 was celebrated at the UN in New York in which an officially backed delegation headed by Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal participated and referred to, in his speech, the proposal on International Day of Equality and urged the GOI to take up the matter through proper diplomatic channels with the UN. Subsequently in May, 2016, on return from New York, Speaker Atwal submitted a report to PM Narendra Modi and requested him to consider and officially take up the matter with UN. Since then, we have been regularly reminding the GOI but the central government is blissfully silent on the subject. On this account, there is a considerable resentment and anguish in the community particularly among the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is a matter of gratification to note that in 2020, City of Burnaby in Canada declared April 14 as 'Ambedkar Day of Equality' again in 2021, the Province of British Columbia of Canada made a similar pronouncement. GOI is yet wake up though they profess to own the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar. The community, I believe, is not oblivious of the action to be taken to awake the sleeping authorities. Perhaps the time has almost come. Since the matter falls in the preview of the Central Government, we expect the state governments to support the proposal and pass a resolution in the newly formed assemblies by the incoming state governments in this regard and forward it to Mahamahim Rashtrapati ji at the first instance. It will not only be a befitting tribute to the great leader, Babasaheb Ambedkar but also a good gesture to add to the emotional empowerment of dalits by way of cultural diplomacy like India's initiatives in declaring International Day of Non-violence in 2007-08 and International Yoga Day in 2014-15. With these humble submissions, I take this opportunity to wish all the best to all political parties and players in the festival democracy, Elections, 2022.

Punjab. It is surprising that all political parties and their leaders are calling on Dera Sachkhand Ballan of Jalandhar for getting their blessings in the elections but nobody is interested in addressing the subject. It may be mentioned that Sant Niranjana Dass ji Maharaj of Dera Sachkhand Ballan is the Chairperson of the Committee formed by the authorities and BJP to oversee the re-construction of the Tughlakabad Guru Ravidass Dharamasthan and in spite of their disagreement and objections to the new demands of DDA under the administrative control of the Central Ministry of Urban Development in Delhi. Dalits are furious over the matter which must be addressed, the sooner the better. The followers of Guru Ravidass silently watching the response of political outfits and would respond appropriately in the forthcoming electoral slugfest.

ii) **April 14, birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar as International Day of Equality** – While observing and celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of the greatest son of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar in 2015-16, it

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[The following extracts are from the Debate with reference to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar]

Shrimati Dakshayani

Velayudan (Madras: General) Mr. President I find that for the Motion four Members have given their names and first comes the name of the Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. I am surprised to find that a Member who came in as result of a joint electorate came forward to move this amendment whereas a member who, was all the while standing for separate electorates and for the so-called percentage is not to be seen in the House to-day. If there was any sincerity in moving this amendment we could have found the person who headed the list and I do not know why another member took up that responsibility. There may be some reason behind the scene. The Mover of the amendment, Mr. Nagappa, said when they come to the Assemblies as a result of joint electorates they may not be coming with the votes of the community and so they are not entitled to represent the community. If Mr. Nagappa thinks that he has come here as a result of such an election, the wisest and the best thing that he ought to do would be to withdraw his candidature or his membership from this Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies (Hear, hear). If anybody thinks that he is unfit to speak for the community when he comes on the vote of the community or the vote of the people in general, the best way to do service to the community is to disappear from the scene and not to take part in any political activities whatsoever and I think Dr. Ambedkar was wise enough to be absent on the occasion because he knew that this is not going to be carried in the Assembly today or on any day. As the Chairman of the, Minority Committee spoke yesterday these things were passed in the committee by majority of votes and, whatever reasons that he may bring forward here, it may not be carried out. So without wasting his time, he has gone for his work as he is engaged in Cabinet work. Somebody has come forward with an excuse that if this form of electorate exists, the real representatives of the people will not be able to come. If we analyse the demand for a percentage of the votes of the community, we will come to the conclusion that it is nothing but unadulterated separate electorates (Hear, hear). I must ask the Honourable Members who moved the amendment whether they are giving any meaning to the votes that will be cast by the members of other communities. In practice, we have to take into account only the votes that will be cast by the community. If a candidate gets 34 per cent. and another date 35 per cent. of the votes of his community, if the first candidate gets 200 votes from the general public and the next candidate gets

100 votes from the general public, and if we take into account the percentage of votes cast by the community, certainly the second candidate Should be elected. Then it comes to this that there will be no meaning to the votes cast by other communities though it amounts to double the number of votes which the second candidate gets from the general people. Then there is another reason for my opposing this amendment. Even if the Harijans are given this percentage of votes, and this kind of electorate system, the Harijans are not in a position



and because when the system is put into actual working it will be standing in the way of Harijans, getting a correct ideology. It is lack of correct ideology among Harijans that has led them to bring this sort of amendment here. If they think that they can better their lot by standing apart from the other communities, they are in the wrong. They can do better by joining with the majority community and not depending on the votes of their own community. I must assure the Mover of the amendment that the Harijans are not going to gain anything if you get this sort of electorate system. So I oppose I this amendment and I hope that nobody in this House will support the amendment. (Cheers.)

Mr. H. J. Khandekar :

*[Mr. President, Sir, I stand to oppose the amendment which has been placed before you by my friend Mr. Nagappa. This amendment stands in the name of four Members. The first name is that of Dr. Ambedkar, and you all know that from the time of the Second Round Table Conference till the Minority Sub-Committee, of the Advisory Committee assembled, he relinquished the demand for joint elec-

torates and continued the demand for separate electorates. On the question of this demand his message to all Harijans of his country, who belonged to his party, went to the extent that they were not even Hindus that they wished to have a colony separate from the Hindus, that they were not within the fold of Hindu religion, and it was for this reason that they desired separate electorates. This thing has been going on in the country for the last fifteen years with the result that a sort of discord has been created between Caste Hindus and Harijans of Ambedkar party do not wish to converse with Hindus. But I feel happy to state that when this matter relating to joint and separate electorates came up before the Minority Sub-Committee, Dr. Ambedkar did not press the claim further but withdrew it on the ground that he had no argument in support of the principle.

Along as the Scheduled Castes, or the Harijans, or by whatever name they may be called, are economic slaves of other people, there is no meaning demanding either separate electorates or joint electorates or any other kind of electorates with this kind of percentage. (Cheers). Personally speaking, I am not in favour of any kind of reservation in any place whatsoever. (Hear, hear). Unfortunately, we had to accept all these things because the British Imperialism has left some marks on us and we are always feeling afraid of one another. So, we cannot do away with separate electorates. This joint electorate and reservation of seats also is a kind of separate electorates. But we have to put up with that evil because we think that it is a necessary evil. I wanted to oppose this amendment because it will be standing in our way

which the plea for percentage could be pressed. Speaking plainly it means that he desires separate electorates in a different form. I may explain to you the effects of separate electorates in this country. It was because of Lord Morley Minto that Muslims got separate electorates and the result was that our country was divided into two. The same separate electorates are being brought before us in the form of percentage. If this is accepted either for Harijans or for our Muslim brother, then it would mean the fulfilment of what my friend Mr. Jinnah has always said "Muslims of India and Muslims of Pakistan"--which means the preparation for Pakistan within India. Much suffering, has been caused already. India has been divided into two. Brother Muslims have got what they wanted and was for their benefit. Having got that, they should be good enough not to try to create Pakistan within India and should not bring an amendment of this sort in this House. It has come to my notice that our Muslim brothers, who in this country are about 3 crores, have got and are going to get on the report of the Advisory Committee all the facilities which they should get. Even then they say that they should get percentage of votes in order to enable them to elect their representatives. Once again, my friend Mr. Nagappa too, who is an ally of Dr. Ambedkar and is dancing to his tune on some expectations, says the same thing, i.e., that it is in this way alone that our true representatives will be chosen. I want to ask these brothers, what is the meaning of a true representative ? I want to cite the example of this Assembly. If my friends are not true representatives of Harijans, if Kazis are not here as true representatives of Muslims then, what will happen to this Assembly ? If these honest Muslim brothers shout "Jinnah Zindabad", we shout "Bharat-Mata-ki-jai"; or other slogans and such sort of pin pricks continue, what will be the result ? I would like to ask Mr. Nagappa and Kazi Sahib, who will suffer then, the majority or the minority ? Any declaration of this sort is most improper and therefore I do not agree with the amendment of Mr. Nagappa. The other thing which I have just pointed out is that this percentage of votes is through the medium of separate electorates. Even after the present amendment, a few more are coming before you (in support of the percentage of votes) which is in fact a child of separate electorates. It is improper to bring amendments of this kind within this House. It is merely wasting the time of the House. I wish to state that whatever has happened as a result of percentage of votes is before us. I am very to say that the result of separate electorates and the Poona Pact has been that in Nagpur and in Bombay, there

For the last 15 years, I have listened with interest to the speeches of Dr. Ambedkar and read them in newspapers too, but there was no argument in them in support of the demand for separate electorates. In this way, as the demand did not stand to reason, he did not press it but withdrew it. It is a great victory for us. Having withdrawn the demand, separate electorate was thought of by

(Contd. on next page)

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is considerable agitation today against the Hindus and there are differences between one caste and another. The Poona Pact provided for primary election and cumulative voting which indirectly meant separate electorate. Do Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Nagappa want to aggravate or eliminate this mutual conflict? If they want to eliminate they should withdraw the amendment. If the tension between the caste Hindus and the Harijans is aggravated the latter would be the loser not the gainer. Because of this mentality of Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Nagappa the Harijans will permanently remain Harijans and their position would gradually deteriorate. There are sub-castes within castes. There are several sub-castes among Harijans. In fact Harijans are not a part of any community but are spread throughout India in 132 sub-castes. If percentage of 35 is passed, the 3 per cent. "Chamars" who live in Nagpur will not come within the orbit of this election. If election is fought community-wise then "Mahars" who are 80 per cent. will get 35 per cent votes. Therefore "Chamars", "Bhangis" and the other sub-castes will not be able to return their representatives in elections because they are in minority among Harijans. In that case only the 'Mahars', to which section Dr. Ambedkar and I belong and which has a predominating majority in Bombay and Nagpur, will capture all the seats of the Harijans in those provinces and other Harijans will get no seat at all. Besides, I have to request Mr. Nagappa to withdraw the amendment. The reason being that contrary to his belief the percentage of votes is not in favour of Harijans. Harijans will not benefit by it, in fact it would be very bad (for them). Today we have achieved freedom for this country. We the inhabitants of this country have become its masters. Under than circumstances, if we do not take the majority community into confidence, and if the majority community does not take us to its confidence, then the government of this country cannot go on. For preserving peace in the country I have to request Mr. Nagappa to kindly withdraw the amendment.

Friends, only a few days back we the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Christian, the Parsis and the Harijans all acclaimed with one voice that we are one nation. We all gave our respectful salute to this tricolour. It would be a pity, if today we put in this amendment which seeks separate electorates.]*

The Honourable Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel : Sir, I am sorry to see that so much time has been taken on this amendment which I thought

was going to be withdrawn and on which there would not be much debate. So far as the Scheduled Castes are concerned, I do not think very much has to be said on this amendment, because I got a representation from a large majority of the Scheduled Castes representatives in this House, except one or two or three, that they were all against this amendment (Hear, Hear), and Mr. Nagappa knew about it. But Mr. Nagappa wanted to move his amendment to fulfil a promise or undertaking or at least to show his community that he was not purchased by the majority community! Well, he has done his job, but other people took him seriously and took a lot of time.

So far as the amendment moved by the representative of the Muslim League is concerned, I find that I was mistaken in my impression and if I had believed this, I would certainly not have agreed to any reservation at all. (Hear, Hear). When I agreed to the reservation on the population basis, I thought that our friends of the Muslim League will see the reasonableness of our attitude and allow themselves to accommodate themselves to the changed conditions after the separation of the country. But I now find them adopting the same methods which were adopted when the separate electorates were first introduced in this country, and in spite of ample sweetness in the language used there is a full dose of poison in the method adopted. (Hear, Hear). Therefore, I regret to say that if I lose the affection of the younger brother, I am prepared to lose it because the method he wants to adopt would bring about his death. I would rather lose his affection and keep him alive. If this amendment is lost, we will lose the affection of the younger brother, but I prefer the younger brother to live so that he may see the wisdom of the attitude of the elder brother and he may still learn to have affection for the elder brother.

Now, this formula has a history behind it and those who are in the Congress will be able to remember that history. In Congress history this is known as the Mohammad Ali Formula. Since the introduction of separate electorates in this land there were two parties amongst the Muslims. One was the Nationalist Muslims or the Congress Muslims and the other the Muslim League members, or the representatives of the Muslim League. There was considerable tension on this question and at one time there was a practical majority against this joint electorate. But a stage was reached when, as was pointed out by the Mover of this amendment in Allahabad a settlement was reached. Did we stand by that settlement? No. We

now have got the division of the country. In order to prevent the separation of the country this formula was evolved by the nationalist Muslims, as a sort of half-way house, until the nation becomes one; we wished to drop it afterwards. But now the separation of the country is complete and you say, let us introduce, it again and have another separation. I do not understand this method of affection. Therefore, although I would not have liked to say anything on this motion, I think it is better that we know our minds perfectly each other, so that we can understand where we stand. If the process that was adopted, which resulted in the separation of the country, is to be repeated, then I say : Those who want that kind of thing have a place in Pakistan, not here (Applause.) Here, we are building a nation and we are laying the foundations of One Nation, and those who choose to divide again and sow the seeds of disruption will have no place, no quarter, here, and I must say that plainly enough. (Hear, Hear.) Now, if you think that reservation necessarily means this clause as you have suggested, I am prepared to withdraw the reservation for your own benefit. If you agree to that, I am prepared, and I am sure no one in this House will be against the withdrawal of the reservation if that is a satisfaction to you. (Cheers.) You cannot have it both ways. Therefore, my friends, you must change your attitude, adapt yourself to the changed conditions. And don't pretend to say "Oh, our affection is very great for you". We have seen your affection. Why talk of it? Let us forget the affection. Let us face the realities. Ask yourself whether you really want to stand here and cooperate with us or you want again to play disruptive tactics. Therefore when I appeal to you, I appeal to you to have a change in your heart, not a change in the tongue, because that won't pay here. Therefore, I still appeal to you : "Friends, reconsider your attitude and withdraw your amendment". Why go on saying "Oh, Muslims were not heard; Muslim amendment was not carried". If that is going to pay you, you are much mistaken, and I know how it cost me to protect the Muslim minorities here under the present condition and in the present atmosphere. Therefore, I suggest that you don't forget that the days in which the agitation of the type you carried on are closed and we begin a new chapter. Therefore, I once more appeal to you to forget the past. Forget what has happened. You have got what you wanted. You have got a separate State and remember, you are the people who were responsible for it, and not those who remain in Pakistan. You led the agitation. You got

it. What is it that you want now? I don't understand. In the majority Hindu provinces you, the minorities, you led the agitation. You got the partition and now again you tell me and ask me to say for the purpose of securing the affection of the younger brother that I must agree to the same thing again, to divide the country again in the divided part. For God's sake, understand that we have also got some sense. Let us understand the thing clearly. Therefore when I say we must forget the past, I say it sincerely. There will be no injustice done to you. There will be generosity towards you, but there must be reciprocity. If it is absent, then you take it from me that no soft words can conceal what is behind your words. Therefore, I plainly once more appeal to you strongly that let us forget and let us be one nation. To the Scheduled Caste friends, I also appeal: "Let us forget what Dr. Ambedkar or Ms group have done. Let us forget what you did. You have very nearly escaped partition of the country again on your lines. You have seen the result of separate electorates in Bombay, that when the greatest benefactor of your community came to Bombay to stay in bhangi quarters it was your people who tried to stone his quarters. What was it? It was again the result of this poison, and therefore I resist this only because I feel that the vast majority of the Hindu population wish you well. Without them where will you be? Therefore, secure their confidence and forget that you are a Scheduled Caste. I do not understand how Mr. Khandekar is a Scheduled Caste man. If he and I were to go outside India, nobody will find out whether he is a Scheduled Caste man or I am a Scheduled Caste man.

There is no Scheduled Caste between us. So those representatives of the Scheduled Caste must know that the Scheduled Caste has to be effaced altogether from our society, and if it is to be effaced, those who have ceased to be untouchables and sit amongst us have to forget that they are untouchables or else if they carry this inferiority complex, they will not be able to serve their community. They will only be able to serve their community by feeling now that they are with us.

They are no more Scheduled Castes and therefore they must change their manners and I appeal to them also to have no breach between them and the other group of Scheduled Castes.

There are groups amongst themselves, but everyone tries according to his own light. We are now to begin again. So let us forget these sections and cross-sections and let us stand as one, and together.

Created by Neeraj Paul



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DHAN DHAN SRI GURU RAVIDASS JI

Bole' So Nirbhay! Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai

645th Gurburb of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji



ਤੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਤੋਹੀ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੈਸਾ ॥ ਕਨਕ ਕਟਿਕ ਜਲ ਤਰੰਗ ਜੈਸਾ ॥੧॥
 ਜਉ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤਾ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ ॥ ਪਤਿਤ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੰਤਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
 ਤਮਹਹ ਜ ਨਾਇਕ ਆਛਹ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਪਰਭ ਤੇ ਜਨ ਜਾਨੀਜੈ ਜਨ ਤੇ ਸਆਮੀ ॥੨॥
 ਸਰੀਰ ਆਰਾਧੈ ਮੋ ਕਉ ਬੀਚਾਰ ਦੇਹੁ ॥ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਸਮ ਦਲ ਸਮਝਾਵੈ ਕੋਉ ॥੩॥

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg will be celebrating the 645th Parkash Utsav of SATGURU RAVIDASS JI on Sunday, February 20, 2022 at the Gurughar, The entire Sangat is humbly requested to participate in this Gurupurb . Sri Guru Ravidass ji was born in 1377, in Kanshi, in India, in a humble family of Pita Santokh Dass ji and Mata Kalsa Devi ji. Guru Ravidass Ji was a great religious and social reformer. Guru Ji dedicated his whole life for the welfare of the humanity. He preached social harmony and equality among all human beings. He stood against caste based discrimination.

ARAMBH SHRI AKHAND PATH - February 18, 2022 (Friday) 10:00 AM

BHOG SHRI AKHAND PATH - February 20, 2022 (Sunday) 10:00 AM

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony - February 19, 2022(Saturday) at 11:00 AM.

(Nishan Sahib sewa by Bhai Sucha Singh Bangar and Bibi Sunita Bangar)

We need **volunteers** to help with this event to prepare and serve Langar, keep Gurughar clean and organized, directing traffic/parking, kitchen and other Sewa. For **STALLS** or any **SEWA**, please contact President Jagtar Singh Bhatia at (925)487-9624 or Secretary Abhishek Pal Narabut at (925) 695-4637.

KIRTAN DIWAN

SATURDAY: Gurughar Jatha will start Shabad Kirtan at 5:30PM

Bhai Rachhpal Singh ji start Shabad Kirtan at 6:00 PM

SUNDAY: **Giani Gurnam Singh ji / Giani Ompal Singh ji** will start the Shabad Kirtan at 11:00 AM

Prominent Jatha of Bhai Onkar Singh ji, Una Sahib Waley will delight the sangat from 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM with Guru Ka Kirtan.

Kirtani Jatha of Bhai Jagjit Singh ji will begin Shabad Kirtan at 1:00 PM



"NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA"
Sangat Sewadars

Chairperson
Kulwant Kaur Banga

President
Jagtar Bhatia

General Secretary
Abhishek Pal Narabut

Treasurer
Sunita K Singh

Pease visit Gurughar website for information: WWW.SriGuruRavidassTemple.com