



Ambedkar Times

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BRIEFING ON CASTE DISCRIMINATION

It is a brief we sent to all 647 Members of Parliament before the debate on caste discrimination took place in the House of Commons on 16th April, 2013. It was essential as the people opposing the anti-caste discrimination legislation were already lobbying them to reject the amendment. Majority of the members of Parliament didn't know much about this issue.

If some knew, they were considering it an Asian matter which was nothing to do with British. Hence they were not interested in this legislation. There were certain constituencies where there was no Asian's

presence. To make aware of the lawmakers about the need of the legislation, we thought it was absolutely necessary to give them full information so that at the time of voting, they make their minds on the basis of facts before them.

We also requested our people living in various towns to approach their MPs and ask for their support. Other organisations such as Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance and Caste Watch UK also wrote to various MPs for their



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support.

On 16th April, House of Commons voted against the amendment and we lost by 63 votes and the bill was again referred to House of Lords. Again this brief was sent again to the members of the House of Lords. House of Lords again voted in favour of the amendment on 22nd April. This bill was to be discussed again in the House of Commons again on 23rd April. But the government changed their position and accepted the amendment and caste discrimina-

tion went through without vote. 23rd April became an historic day for Dalits in UK.

The supporters of the bill against caste prejudice gathered on 4th March, 16th April and 23rd April in front of Parliament and made their presence felt to the law makers. Consequently their voice was heard.

Now there is a two months consultation period. The final order will be issued after this consultation period. The opposing groups are still trying to delay or dilute this legislation which we are watching very carefully. All the people involved deserve our deep appreciation.

Special on foundation day of Ad Dharm

AD DHARM: A WAY OF DALIT EMANCIPATION

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-In-chief
Ambedkartimes.com

Ad Dharm movement was founded formerly on June 11-12, 1926 in village Mugowal near Mahilpur, District Hoshiarpur (Punjab, India) under the dynamic leadership of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, a famous Gadhrite. Sarva-Shri Basant Rai, Thakur Dass and Shudranand were equally other powerful lieutenants of the Ad Dharm movement who joined hands with Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, to organize this indigenous "Dalit Movement", the first of its kind in the history of Dalits of north India.

Ad Dharm is a name of the indigenous religion of the Dalits of the region who are the natives of this land (India). The invading Aryans subjugated them and established their rule over the natives. They see to it that the culture and religion of the natives had to be wiped out fully so that they could not stage a revolt. A Geat Gadhrite Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji thought it appropriate to relocate the lost native religion in order to re-establish sovereign Dalit Raj once again. He named his movement deliberately after the name of the religion of the natives: "Ad Dharm". Thus Ad Dharm is both 'Religion' as well as 'Movement'.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia made concerted efforts in the direction of laying solid ground for the revival of Ad Dharm in Punjab. He was of the opinion that if the ex-untouchables have to live a dignified life they had to revive their gurus, religious scriptures, festivals and religious places as well. He approached Sant Sarwan Dass Ji Maharaj at Dera Sachkhand Ballan for concretizing the Bani of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj and the proliferation of his mission. Ad

Prakash, a holy Granth containing the Bani of Sahib Shri Saturu Ravidass Ji Maharaj and other Dalit Satgurus was prepared. Baba Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji expressed his will among close circle that his last rites should be performed amidst the chanting of the holy Bani of Ad Parkash.

The real force which made the Ad Dharm movement surging ahead was provided by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia who transformed it into a household name in the whole big province of pre-partition Punjab. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia set a clear agenda for Ad Dharm movement. The agenda was to create a new religion for the lower castes. The Hindus who for political motives considered them as part of their religion treated them shabbily. Arya Samaj was making frantic efforts to bring the Shudras back into the Hindu fold who had proselytized into Islam, Christianity and Sikh religion. Arya Samaj and the Christian Church were not the only organizations, which were trying to win over the lower castes. Sikhs and Muslims were equally interested in bringing them into their respective religions. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji thought it appropriate to intervene at this juncture to espouse the cause of Dalits by carving out a separate identity of their own. The issue of separate Dalit identity is very much in vogue even today. In the Ad Dharm Mandal approach, it is clearly mentioned that every Ad Dharmi should live his/her life according to the tenets of Ad Dharm and should not believe in any other religion. He said our Gurus are Guru Nam Dev Ji, Guru Ravidass Ji, Guru Kabir Ji, Guru Valmiki Ji and all other Dalits Saints. Thus Ad Dharm move-

ment has very early shown the vision for the establishment of a separate Dalit identity based on distinct Dalit native religion: Ad Dharm. In its detailed report the following is worth of taking note of rather more closely.

The basic principles listed in the Ad Dharm Mandal Report are: (1) The essential teachings of the Ad Dharm will always be the same: no

one can change them. They can stay alive and persist only through the help of a guru. (2) Every man and woman belongs to the faith, but they may not know it. To live without a guru is a sin. (3) A guru should be someone who truly and rightly knows the teachings of the previous masters. He should be able to

(Cont.. on page 4)



Tribute

"Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba" pay floral tribute to US Marine's Shaheed Corporal Gurpreet Singh (21) of Antelope, California who passed away (Shaheed) on Wednesday, June 22, 2011. He wounded conducting combat operation in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Shaheed Gurpreet Singh was the only son of Satnam Kaur (Mother) and Nirmal Singh (Father), brother of Manpreet Kaur and grandson of Nasib Kaur (Grandmother) and Ajit Singh (Late Grandfather).

According to his father (Nirmal Singh) Corporal Gurpreet

Singh was born on September 28, 1989 in his native city Hoshiarpur (Punjab) India where he spent ten years of his life & came with them to the United States of America in April 2000. Finally, the Singh family settled in Antelope (California). He graduated in 2007 from Oakmont High School in Roseville (California) and he joined the Marines shortly after graduation.

Recently Corporal Gurpreet Singh awarded a Bronze Star Medal with "V" Valor on May 30, 2013 for his action in Afghanistan, after his death, this award was received by his family.

In the memory of Shaheed Corporal Gurpreet Singh on his 2nd death anniversary his family is going to Arambh Shri Akhand Path on Friday, June 14, 2013 & Bhog of Shri Akhand Path will be on Sunday, June 16, 2013 at Sikh Temple, 1090 Main St., Roseville (California) 95678 For more information, you may contact Nirmal Singh (916) 521 8278.

Once again "Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba" pay floral tribute to Gurpreet Singh on his 2nd death anniversary.

- Prem Chumber

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International Bahujan Organization California, USA



J. B. Phule



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Shahu Ji



Mangu Ram Ji



Kanshi Ram Ji



Mayawati Ji

Media Partner :- 





BRIEFING ON CASTE DISCRIMINATION AND THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Ambedkar Mission Society, Bedford **Arun Kumar**

What is Caste Discrimination?

Caste is an institutionalised social discrimination rooted in religion. It was based on division of labour and the concept of who was pure and polluting and who was not. It took birth in India in a particular religion. It is from India that this abominable practice spread to other religions and countries. Regardless of their religion, today there is nobody in South Asia who was able to escape from this practice. Therefore, it is no more a problem of one particular religion. Despite leaving the Indian subcontinent, many UK citizens from the 'South Asian Diaspora' continue to experience the effects of the caste prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives.

2. Number of affected people in the UK- There are a reported 4,303,978 South Asians in the UK (2011 census report for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 2001 reported figures for Scotland). If a conservative estimate of 20% is applied to that figure, it is estimated that 860,976 are so-called Dalits. So therefore, even if a small 5per cent of estimated numbers of Dalits in the UK is discriminated against because of their Caste in the workplace, we are looking at minimum of up to 43,049 potential victims, and they deserve to be protected.

3. Why is the legislation needed?

Caste Discrimination affects citizens in ways beyond personal choices and social interaction and occurs in employment, education and in the provision of goods, facilities and services. At present, if someone is discriminated against or harassed in places of employment because of their Caste, education or if they are in receipt of public services like health and social care for example, there is no legislation in place in the UK to protect the victims of caste discrimination. Currently, the lack of legal protection and prevention of Caste-based Discrimination is not consistent with other protected characteristics.

National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) in its report 'Caste discrimination and harassment in Great Britain' published in 2010 concludes, "The study found evidence of caste discrimination and harassment in Britain in areas relevant to the Equality Act 2010, namely in work and the provision of services. It also found evidence of caste discrimination and harassment in other areas, namely education (pupil against pupil bullying), voluntary work (dismissal), worship and religion and public behaviour (harassment in public places). The consequences of these could be severe for the victims". The Government also concedes that caste discrimination ex-

ists in the UK, but says they are not convinced that legislation is the best way of dealing with it.

NIESR recommended that "extending the definition of race to include caste would provide further, explicit protection" and that "non-legislative approaches are less likely to be effective in the private sector and do not assist those where the authorities themselves are discriminating. Relying on the Indian community to take action to reduce caste discrimination and harassment is problematic."

Adding 'caste as an aspect of race' in the UK will establish an absolute clear order to protect people from discrimination on the basis of their Caste, because there will be a clarity of law. This in turn will help bring about the change in behaviours, as Equality Law has done in the other areas in the past (for example on race and sex).

4. Legislative process

'Clause 9(5)(a)' of Equality Act 2010 says that a minister of the crown may by order amend this section so as to provide caste to be an aspect of race. Despite the inclusion of caste as a factor of discrimination in the 2010 Equality Act, the lack of Ministerial activation of Clause 9(5)(a) has prevented access to recourse and justice to those who have faced caste based discrimination.

An amendment moved by the Liberal Democrats, indicates an intention for "caste to be an aspect of race", and therefore protected. The Labour government had every intention of using the Ministerial power once the research was completed and published by NIESR and confirm the evidence of caste-based discrimination in the UK. NIESR's report published in December 2010 acknowledged the severe discrimination Dalits face in the UK. The Government's intentions:

On 1st march, in her ministerial statement on caste, the minister, Helen Grant spelled out the government intention for not including caste legislation into the law. Instead she wants to bring some educational programme for the perpetrators and the victims of caste. The government is also intending to do another research to ascertain the existence of caste through the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. It reflects that they don't trust the previous research done by the independent body, the Institute of Economic and social Research commissioned by their own Equalities Office.

On 4th March, 2013, the House of Lords voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new amendment clause on caste to the

'Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill'. This will activate 'Section 9(5) a' of Equality Act that makes caste an aspect of race. Even after the overwhelming majority in favour of the amendment pertaining to the caste discrimination in the 'Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill', the coalition government remains strongly opposed to the bill, having already announced its planned opposition in a forthcoming vote set to take place in the House of Commons.

In the eyes of the government, anti-caste discrimination will do little to abolish caste-discrimination amongst British Asians. Instead, the government relies on widespread educative measures to eradicate caste-discrimination in the UK. Education program will explore all the issues, not just those covered by discrimination legislation and in their view it is an appropriate and targeted way of dealing with incidents related to caste.

Talk for a Change

Government is intending to engage a consultancy body 'Talk for a Change' (TFAC) which will produce material for use by public and private sector. On the other hand, NIESR states that "non-legislative approaches are less likely to be effective in the private sector and do not assist those where the authorities themselves are discriminating.

Relying on the perpetrators to take action to reduce caste discrimination and harassment is problematic. Furthermore,

TFAC in its 2012 report 'Can discussing controversial issues strengthen community relations?' states 'There is anecdotal evidence that talking about controversial issues can strengthen community relations. there is little actual evidence of the impact of dialogue around controversial issues and its benefits on community relations'.

Government have earmarked £25,000 to educate the people. How many people will they be able educate with this meagre amount when the problem is huge?

Education alone is not the solution

Other discrimination legislation did not change hearts and minds overnight but in the case of race nothing was more effective in reducing racial prejudice than the law.

It has had a most powerful educative effect. Education can only be effective if it is backed by law. It is the only way to change behaviours and attitudes. We urgently need to include caste based discrimination into the law as a protected characteristic.

If Caste Discrimination is not treated in the same way as other forms of unacceptable discrimination in the UK, it will continue to flourish because it will have been left unchecked.

In the long term this would hinder the creation of the much fairer and cohesive society to which the Government says it is committed.

SHAHEED SANT RAMA NAND – A TRIBUTE

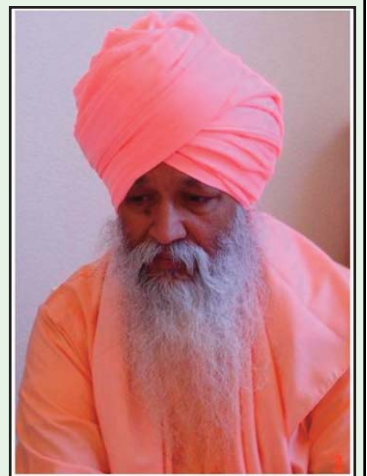


Ramesh Chander
(Ambassador, IFS Rtd.)

Sant Rama Nand of Dera Sachkhand Ballan's death anniversary was on May 25, 2013. He was assassinated by fundamentalists in a mindless and tragic shoot out in Vienna in May, 2009. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan's followers consider him a Shaheed of the community and rightly so. Sant Rama Nand was the leading light of Dera Sachkhand Ballan which was increasingly becoming the nerve center of the Dalit community in the recent years. He was instrumental in adopting the agenda of social and educational upliftment and awakening among the Dalit youth while spreading the lofty philosophy of oneness and equality of Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji. He attained the position of reverence and acceptability in the community with his relentless efforts to provide a sense of confidence. It was not a small job. Sant Rama Nand will be remembered for his sterling contribution in this regard.

In the aftermath of Sant Rama Nand's death, it was felt that the Dalit community will understand and get united. The immediate fall out of the Shaheedi of the Sant was an outburst of pent up feelings of the community against the treatment and high handedness of the upper castes against the poor Dalits. The Dalit community clearly demonstrated that they were in no mood to tolerate any longer the snobbish and unbecoming behavior of the so called Thekedars of the society. But this reality was short lived. Alas!

The leadership could not rise to the challenge. The opposite social and political forces succeeded in their nefarious agenda in dividing the community. It was unfortunate, to my mind, Dera Sachkhand Ballan which enjoyed unprecedented support and following, could not lead from the front to channelize the energy of the community. The Dera got bogged down in matters which added to further confusion. The issue of Granth 'Amritvani' as counter to "Shri Guru Granth Sahib" and establishment of 'Ravidassia Dharam' as counter to Sikhism, to my mind, is the two acts of the Dera which were taken without debate and thought. Though the Dera and the proponents of "Amritvani" and "Ravidassia Dharam" would not admit that these two steps were taken as 'counter' measures to establish separate identity of the dalits yet the reality remains and speaks loud and clear. These steps proved counterproductive. The community got divided. The Deras got divided. The unity got shattered. It is confusion all around. It seems that we are traveling in a rudderless ship. I am writing this with a heavy heart with all humility and have no intention to hurt the feelings of anyone. My humble request is to kindly sit and ponder over the existing sorry state of affairs of the community, with a view to find out some way out. Otherwise, things would get more difficult in the years to come. The soul of Sant Rama Nand may not be in peace. He wanted unity. He strived for a strong and enlightened community. Let us think and shed false ego and work for much needed unity and sense of purpose.



AD DHARM: A WAY OF DALIT EMANCIPATION

distinguish between falsehood and truth. He should be able to bring peace and love within the community. (4) Everyone should be instructed by the lives of previous masters; progress comes from following the masters' examples. The practices of previous masters should not be abandoned. This leads to progress. (5) There should not be any discrimination in regard to eating with other castes.

(6) Ad Dharmis should abstain from theft, fraud, lies, dishonesty, looking at someone else's wife with bad intentions, using anything which brings intoxication, gambling, and usurping other persons' property or belongings. All of these things are against the law of nature and therefore the law of Ad Dharm. (7) Every Ad Dharmi has the duty to teach his children current knowledge and also to teach them to be obedient to the present king. (8) Every Ad Dharmi should read the Ad Prakash and act upon it.

This is a foremost duty. (9) Ad Dharm does not believe in the caste system or any inferiority or superiority of this sort. (10) To learn and seek knowledge,

and to learn and seek progress is compulsory for every man and woman.

The twelve duties mentioned in the Report are: (1) To publicize and propagate Ad Dharm. (2) To take pride in Ad Dharm. (3) To promote the use of name of the community and to use the red mark, which is its sign. (4) Ad Dharmis should try to retrieve any property of fellow Ad Dharmi that has been usurped. (5) We should distinguish among Hindus, Ad Dharmis, and other communities of India. (6) Those books, which have created the problem of untouchability and led to discrimination - books such as the Laws of Manu and other Shastras - should be completely boycotted and abandoned. (7) We should celebrate the festivals of our gurus and follow our faith to the utmost. (8) Abandon idolatry. (9) Receive education for ourselves and others in the brotherhood. (10) Boycott those who curse us as "untouchables" or discriminate against us. (11) Bring all demands of Ad Dharmis before the government. (12) Abandon expensive marriage and practice of child marriage.