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May Day Celebrations & Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar's Contributions for Labourers in India

Prem K. Chumber
(Editor-in-Chief)

Bharat Ratan Bodhi Satav Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ramji's contribution towards the emancipation and empowerment of the working class in India both during the freedom struggle as well as after India's independence is worth remembering on the historic May Day: celebrated worldwide as International Workers' Day, also known as Workers' Day and Labour Day. It was chosen to be International Workers' Day at the International's second congress in 1891 to commemorate the 1886 Haymarket affair in Chicago wherein on 1 May workers of various industrial units observed general



strike for the eight-hour workday. On 4 May when the Chicago police tried to disperse a public assembly in support of the general strike an unidentified person threw a bomb, which led to police firing resulting in the death of seven police officers, at least four

civilians and wounding of sixty police officers and unknown number of civilians. This was led to the arrest of hundreds of labour leaders and their sympathers. Later on, four of the arrested ones were executed by hanging. It was coincidence that Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar was born in 1891 and came to acquire higher education in the United States of America in 1913. What he learnt during his three years (1913-16) stint at Columbia University in New York City in the class room sessions of his great professors - John Dewey, James Shotwell, Edwin Seligman and James Harvey Robinson - made him struggle for the emancipation and empowerment of the labourers on his return in his own country during the British as well as after India's independence. During his tenure as a Labour Minister and as the Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council between 1942 and 1946, he worked hard for the reduction of working hours from 12 to 8 Hrs a day. His contributions towards granting the rights of the labourers are manifold: establishment of Employment Exchange, Employees State Insurance (ESI), Indian Statistical Law, Compulsory Recognition for Trade Union, Indian Factory act, Dearness Allowance (DA), Paid Holidays, Health Insurance, Extra pay for Overtime, Legal Strike Act, Provident Fund (PF), Labour Welfare Fund, Technical Training Scheme, Mines Maternity Benefit Act, Women Labour Welfare Fund, Women and Child-Labour Protection Act, Maternity Benefit for Women Labour, Equal Pay for Equal Work irrespective of the Sex, Restoration of Ban on Employment of Women on Underground Work in Coal Mines.

As far as the public domain of working class activism is concerned, Dr Ambedkar was always acted as front soldier for the rights of workers. His contribution in highlighting the plight of Dalit workers access in the highest paid textile mill weaving departments is well known. Dalits were not allowed to work in these textile mills for the fear of pollution caused by their saliva to wet the thread during the weaving process to tie the knot, each time the weft bobbin required a replacement. Dr Ambedkar brought this issue in the public during the famous 1928 Bombay Textile Strike. He threatened to dissuade Dalit workers from joining the strike if his demand for Dalits' access to all kind of jobs in the mills was accepted. His contributions towards the bill to abolish the Mahar Watan and Khoti abolition bill were among the several prominent labour welfare measures undertaken by him. Abolition of Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 was yet another legal relief to the non-agriculture classes, including Dalits, to overcome their exclusion from the land ownership rights.

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weekly newspapers congratulate all on the May Day Celebrations the world over and also fondly remember the rich contributions made by Bodhi Satav Bharat Ratan Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar towards the emancipation and empowerment of workers in India!

Obituary Prem Gorkhi: Writer of the Wretched of the Earth



Prem Gorkhi, who has died aged 74, was a prolific Punjabi story writer of the downtrodden. During all his working career, he was associated with the Punjabi Tribune as a proof reader. After his retirement he worked as such with Lok Geet

publishers. He also edited a short lived quarterly journal *Kumbh*. Against all odds, Gorkhi was the only one among his four siblings who was able to acquire education. Before his entry into the prestigious Punjabi literary circle, he was known as Prem Nimana (humble) as recalled by the Punjabi writer and poet Amarjit Chandan, who watched Gorkhi evolving into an accomplished story writer. Prem took the surname 'Gorkhi' from a Nepali girl known as 'gorkhi', for whom he had an unspoken liking while he worked at a petrol pump. Chandan encouraged Gorkhi to write about his

own people. He remembers how several so-called high caste writers were jealous of the rising graph of Gorkhi's literary fame. Some of them, Chandan also told me, used to make fun of his being a dalit and a small time roadside bicycle repairing worker. Gorkhi worked for sometime as a peon too at the library of Layallpur Khalsa College Jalandhar. He wrote about his life in his autobiography appropriately titled *Ghair Hazir Aadmi* that made him distinctly present not only in his own Dalit neighbourhoods but also in the mainstream literary circles.

Gorkhi cut his literary teeth in the backdrop of the radical literary tradition that emanated from the ultra-left naxali movement of the mid 1960s Punjab. He was groomed by Amrita Pritam through her magazine *Nagmani*. His entry into *Nagmani* brought him closer to its wide readership and many young writers found his idiom of narrative quite fascinating. 'Kunda', 'Bachna Bakkar Vaad', 'Arjun Safaidi Wala' are a few among his widely read stories. He wrote for the socially excluded and lowest of the low who often remained outside the canvass of the writers of the mainstream. In the words of Waryam Sandhu, one of major Punjabi literary fig-

ures, after Sujan Singh, Gorkhi was not only the first writer who made the socially neglected people the living themes of his subaltern writings, but also opened the way for many new writers to write about them. Davinder Mand, Sohal, Des Raj Kali, Bhagwant Rasulpuri, Gurmel Virk among others followed into the footsteps of Gorkhi. Rasulpuri recalled that Gorkhi often reiterated in his many letters to him on the vital points of the narrative that should have explicated more apparently in a meticulous literary style. He wrote the foreword of the joint story collection book *Chanan di Leek* of Des Raj Kali and Bhagwant Rasulpuri published in 1992.



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Rasulpuri in his Facebook tribute to Gorkhi

laments the denial of the due share to this reputed writer of the unsung people who often remained at the margins of the literary works of the mainstream writers. Nirupama Dutt in her obituary-titled 'Prem Gorkhi breathed life into characters pushed to the margins' wrote: "While many say that regular Nagmani writers like Kirpal Kazak and Baldev Singh Sarhaknama made it to the Sahitya Akademi awards, Gorkhi was ignored. This perhaps because he lacked management skills, but he leaves behind a strong body of work" (*Hindustan Times*, April 27, 2021). While commenting on Rasulpuri's Facebook post, Waryam Sandhu wrote: "Every year, I keep on shouting to give respect to neglected writers. Gorkhi wrote so much...but he was neglected by big institutions and a lot all those who wrote only one book were awarded with honours."

His most referred books include *Mitti de Rang*, *Jeen Maran*, *Arjan Safedi Wala*, *Dharti Puttar*, *Kunda*, *Ukki Akko*, *Bheti Bande*, *Vith*, *Dheean*, *Aakhari Kaani*, *Aukhe Vele'*, *Jadon Hambh Gia Hukmi*, *Moh Dian Tandan*, *Munshi Allahbadia*, and *Pala Isai*.

Whenever I met Gorkhi, it occurred to me that I was meeting him for the first time. He was an unassuming person. He was full of energy, love and sympathy. He always carried a balanced mind within his very self. He never made efforts to show his presence.

(Prem Gorkhi, Punjabi writer, born Ladowali, Kapurthala; June 15, 1947; died Chandigarh, April 25, 2021)



Prem Gorkhi releasing the joint book (Chanan di Leek) of Des Raj Kali and Bhagwant Rasulpuri. Devinder Mand is on the right of Kali.

Remembering Prem Gorkhi - Writer of the Downtrodden

Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum pay its sincere and heartfelt tribute to Sh. Prem Gorkhi (June 15, 1947-April 25, 2021). A well-known story writer who adroitly highlighted the sufferings, hardworking-life-conditions and struggles of the socially neglected, economical backward and politically marginalized people, Prem Gorkhi

set a new standard of story writing. He always raised his voice for the empowerment of the downtrodden. We pray for the eternal peace of the departed noble soul and resolve to follow his commitment to the cause of the downtrodden!

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Jiwan Singh – An Obituary

Jiwan Singh, a dedicated social and community activist succumbed to the deadly virus corona in the intervening night of April 20-21. I posted my heartfelt condolences on the timeline of my Facebook account which instigated many comments from cross sections of the society which further established his standing in the society. Last night, Editor in Chief of the esteemed Ambedkar Times and my friend, Prem Chumber asked me if I could do a brief Obituary piece on Jiwan Singh as a tribute to the departed soul and to recognize his services to the community. I agreed as an associate of Jiwan

(LIC). It was a matter of satisfaction for me that in the process we joined hands, me as an advisor or patron and he as a performer for many activities viz. my proposal on April 14 as International Day of Equality, Scheduled Castes Entrepreneurs Empowerment Forum (SCEEF) among others. Jiwan Singh who used to call me as Uncle ji virtually became my 'Sarthi' as he will ferry me from home to the venues of functions with regard to our activities even outside Jalandhar like Delhi to meet the Mahamhim Rashtrapatiji, NSIC/SC HUB meetings in Ludhiana, community activities in Chandigarh. Jiwan Singh

my humble abode to discuss matters of concern and interest to the community. On my suggestion, Jiwan Singh hosted a Page on Facebook on International Day of Equality which attracted good attention. He would invariably host my blogs pertaining the community interests on his the LIC channels of information with a view to make it reach to the wider audience. Jiwan Singh was liberal and considerate as a follower of GuruMaa of a Dera in Haryana and even appended 'Gurumurat'-always immaculately dressed in white flowing Kurta -Pajama, to his name. Jiwan Singh always remained a handyman.

tion with their proposal to start the dream project Babasaheb Ambedkar - School of Politics to train youth to learn the nitty gritty of politics and governance as an essential ingredient of democracy. They needed some accommodation to stay. I re-



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Singh in many of his activities pertaining to the society and here is, a hurriedly written piece to catch up with the deadline of today's, April 28 issue of the Ambedkar Times as my humble tribute to Jiwan Singh.

First we were co-residents for the last about 8 years at Silver Residency Apartments in Jalandhar. We would often meet on social and community functions. Later, as President of the Managing Committee of the resident's society, he would often drop in for some consultation and advice on matters pertaining to the society. During the course of my social and community interaction, I found that Jiwan Singh was fully involved as a dedicated foot-soldier as a staunch Ambedkarite while working as a professional executive with Life Insurance Corporation of India



also drove me to Khuralgarh Sahib to meet Sant Satwinder Hira and was good enough to bring Sat Hira ji to

Some years ago, Dr. Kshipra Uke and her husband Dr. Shankar Das, JNU scholars were in Jalandhar in connec-

tioned Jiwan Singh and he arranged a good and cozy accommodation at the LIC guest house. Jiwan was a never-tiring personality. He was instrumental, along with his associate and friend, Prem Domeli in giving a much needed facelift to the Ambedkar Chowk in Jalandhar in cooperation with the Jalandhar Municipal Corporation.

As I said, Jiwan Singh was not a fanatic or narrow-minded. The last visit of Jiwan Singh to my humble new residence at Deol Nagar, a month before his sad demise, was again an exercise to underline 'Sam-rasta' and cohesiveness in the society. He accompanied and brought some of our friends belonging to the Ram Janam Bhoomi for 'Chanda' – donation. We will greatly miss Jiwan Singh.

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Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD



Goodie Takhar, PhD

A Testing Time for India – Self Introspection

India is passing through a difficult time along with the world at large on account of Covid pandemic. With all the restraints and constraints, it was felt by the beginning of the year that by and large India had coped well in dealing with Covid 19. We are a large country with poverty and underdevelopment and resultant difficulties. Moreover, India being a democratic polity and an open society, it was difficult to deal with the situation sternly or arbitrarily as could, perhaps be done in countries like China. The lockdown was lifted and other restrictions were eased out slowly. Economy and economic activity was slowly coming to rails. schools and universities were gearing to enter the new academic sessions to make up for the lost classes and lectures. Life was coming to normal slowly but steadily. The governments both at the centre and in the states were upbeat and thumping their

tion of lockdowns to check the spread of the disease. It seems the government at the centre has, of late, woken up. PM Narendra Modi addressed the nation the other day and apprised the people about the emerging desperate situation. But people were expecting more and a concrete plan which was missing. On April 23, PM has had a meeting with some of CMs to address the issues of immediate attention and concern. It was a matter of regret that by the evening the ruling outfits and the media now a days popularly called Godi Media were busy in the blame game and taking to task CM Arvind Kejriwal for telecasting his meeting with PM Narendra Modi rather than discussing the crux of the matter as to how do we about to meet the challenge. The challenge is really big with – 1.65crores infected, 1.9 lakh deaths, daily addition of 3.5 lakh infected. The redeeming aspect is the

position parties and other stakeholders like doctors, scientists, pharmaceutical companies, media both electronic and print, civil society and the common man at large.

It is a matter of concern and worry that our autonomous and constitutional institutions like the Election Commission, NHRC, Niti Aayog among others have not shown and exercise due authority to respond to the situation in the interest of the country and the people. These institutions have failed and wronged the people of India and the constitution. They were found lacking in their assigned job. Just one example would suffice – Why could the Election Commission not stop public rallies and road shows in the ongoing elections even till the end in spite of public hue and cry? Canvassing could have been done through the media, newspapers, TV, Radio and other audio-video modes and also social

leader Dr. B . R . Ambedkar in his last speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949:

Referring to historical events such as the invasion of Sind by Mohammed-Bin-Kasim, the invasion by Mohammad Ghor to fight against Prithviraj Chauhan, as well as disunity among Indians in the fight against the British colonial rule in 1857, Ambedkar has noted that, "...not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by



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chest to show case their achievements and success in controlling the deadly pandemic. The central government to gain some brownie points in diplomacy even donated/exported Covid vaccines to a few countries. But the euphoria was short lived and complacent India, both the governments and the public at large were caught unprepared and ill equipped to deal with the furry of the second wave of the pandemic. Today, we are in total mess and it appears we have lost the direction. In the blame game, governments, particularly the central government are at loss to understand what to do. People are desperate for their lives. It appears the medical system of the country has failed miserably to handle the situation. It is regrettable to say that no national action plan seems in sight. The capital city Delhi, among others, is the worst hit. It is the mockery of the system and often quoted and bragged 'high moral values' of our culture and tradition which the ruling outfits tend to encash to make them distinct from others. The highest judicial authority, the Supreme Court has taken a suo motu contingency of the situation, rightly so, and asked the central government to immediately take care of certain important aspects of the situation viz. supply of medical oxygen, essential medicines, method and manner of vaccination and declara-

mortality rate is not very high in the second wave though even now there are more than 2200 deaths daily. About 7 crore has been vaccinated and with effect from May 1, anybody above the age of 18 will be eligible for the vaccination. We are a nation of more than 130 crore people. Vaccination itself is huge task. We are to get ready for the difficult situation which would need quick and effective responses. Are we ready? Not yet, I think.

The situation is really scary as the Hindustan Times of April 23 bannered it as "National Emergency" The government is afraid of using the word 'Emergency'. We need to come out of this mindset and address the issue right earnestly keeping aside the narrow considerations of political gain or loss. It is a real national emergency. The central government should come up with a concrete plan to meet the situation, engage the op-

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media. But it was not to be. All players in the field flouted all norms, protocols and restrictions to arrest the spread of Corona pandemic. The central government could not see the danger as it is said 'power cor-

rupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Why the Kumbh and other spiritual gatherings could not be stopped and kept on hold? Why the political rallies and Shobha Yatras could not be abandoned? Both the governments and public tended to take things lightly and ushered ourselves in to the "Grammar of Anarchy" as termed by non other but Ambedkar. We are to sit and think rather than finding excuses and resorting to blame games. A real danger is lurking at our nation. We should ward of these dangers of 'placing the creed over the nation' as warned by father of constitution and a visionary

the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people."

In this context, he goes on to remark, "Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds.

Will Indian place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country?

I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood."

We are to defeat Corona Virus with a resolute united effort. If we fail to do this, there is no future and India will come to the margins which nobody likes to see and face. I recall Allma Iqbal to conclude this note: *Rulata Hai Tera Nazara Ae Hinduston! Mujh Ko Ke Ibrat Khaiz Hai Tera Fasana Sub Fasanon Mein* (Your spectacle makes me shed tears, O India! Your tales are admonitory among all the tales)

EVALUATION OF CLIMATE SUMMIT

Summit on Climate hosted by United States President Joe Biden has come to a successful conclusion. It was attended by leaders from 40 countries. In his inaugural address to the summit, Joe Biden said that the average global temperature is rising so fast that we now have very little time to control it. So we need to act quickly without any delay. To combat this problem, Joe Biden has taken the initiative to almost double the carbon emissions reduction targets (26-28 per cent) committed by the United States in the Paris Climate Agreement. The United States will now cut carbon emissions by 50 to 52 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030. In addition, Biden has said that his government plans to zero carbon emissions from the power sector by 2035 and from the entire economy by 2050. In the United States, \$2 trillion has been earmarked for infrastructure transformation, of which \$174 billion will be spent on electric car infrastructure. "Even though we are all in a crisis right now, we must turn it into an opportunity because we still have time to control the rise in the average temperature of the earth," he said. All countries must work together to do this, an increase in the percentage of carbon emission cuts committed as per the Paris Climate Agreement requires an increase.

In the face of rising natural disasters caused by rising temperature, the European countries have planned to reduce their carbon emissions by 55 per cent by 2030. These countries have also reduced their carbon emissions by 24 per cent between 1990 and 2019 from 1990 levels. Great Britain has taken this issue more seriously than any other country in the world and has pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 68 per cent from 1990 levels by 2030 and by 78 per cent by 2035. Canada has also agreed to increase its carbon emission reduction from 30 per cent to 40-45 per cent, based on 2005 levels.

Japan ranks fifth in the world producer of carbon emissions. It had set a target of reducing carbon emissions by only 26 per cent by 2030 from 2013 level. There are many problems with the Japanese target. Firstly, the base year used by Japan is 2013, which for the European countries is 1990. Secondly, at the 2021 Climate Summit although Japan has promised to increase its carbon emissions cuts to 46 per cent, it has again set the base year at 2013. It has also pledged to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050. The Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who had demanded \$1 billion from the United States administration for discontinuing deforestation before the Summit on Climate change and threatened to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement, also backed small measures. He has pledged to end illegal deforestation by 2030 and zero carbon emissions by 2050. South Korea said it

would stop public financing of new coal-fired power plants, potentially an important step toward persuading China and other coal-reliant nations to curb building and funding of new coal-fired plants as well.

Apart from these countries, China, India, the Russian Federation and Australia, knowing and understanding the critical situation of the time, have not announced concrete commitments in carbon emissions. China, which is the world's largest carbon emitter, accounting for 28 per cent of total carbon emissions since 2006, reiterated its goal to reduce carbon emissions by 2030 after meeting its economic growth target. China has announced that it will 'strictly limit' the increase in its consumption of coal during the next five-year economic plan period (2026-2030), which means it will do little for another five years.

the 2005 emission levels. This target is much lower as compared to many other countries and the base year is 2005.

The promises and plans of Great Britain, the European countries, the United States and Canada are commendable. Great Britain and the European countries are expected to deliver their promises as these countries have already cut their carbon emissions by 24 per cent during 1990-2019 from 1990 levels. Only time will tell whether the United States will live up to its promises, as this is the second time in this century when the US returned to the Kyoto Protocol under President Obama and most recently the US has returned to rejoin Paris Climate Agreement under President Biden's leadership. It is also important to note that the United States has been the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases upto 2006 and although now it is

should start cutting carbon emissions from local to national levels to save the country and lives of its people from natural disasters. The countries should make every citizen aware of

this serious problem so that they do not use high carbon emission products and turn off non-essential lights in their homes, make a switch from a high non-vegetarian diet to a vegetarian rich diet, use public transport instead of using private



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India, the second largest coal-fired power producer after China, said that it will not only meet the Paris carbon emissions targets by 2030 but will likely exceed those goals as it ramps up use of renewable energy. The Russian Federation, world's fourth-biggest emitter of climate-damaging fossil fuel fumes, said it is ready to cooperate internationally to find effective solutions to climate change as well as to all other vital challenges related to it. Australia has the third highest per capita carbon emissions in the world after Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison at the 2021's Virtual Summit on Climate hosted by the United States claimed that his country is making significant progress in tackling climate change, which will reduce total carbon emissions by 70 per cent and per capita carbon emissions by 50 per cent by 2030. However, he has not given the roadmap for carbon emission cuts. It is also pertinent to mention here that 'Investors Group on Climate Change' has challenged Scott Morrison's claim made at the Summit on Climate. The group said that Australia would have the highest emissions intensity release the most heat-trapping gas for every 1 Dollar of GDP, among the G20 countries if others delivered on the new commitments to tackle the climate crisis. Besides, Australia's carbon emission reduction targets by 2030 are only 26-28 per cent from

the world's second largest carbon emitter, however, it has so far made only promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

China, the United States, and India are the countries in the world that have been the hardest hit by natural disasters caused by rising temperature. Between 2000 and 2019, there were 577 natural disasters in China that affected 173 crore people and killed 113,000 people, while 321 natural disasters in India affected 108 crore people and killed 80,000 people. Despite the damage, the two countries have not implemented any concrete actions to reduce carbon emissions and have not pledged to implement them in the near future. China is still pushing for a plan to reduce carbon emissions after 2030 and start reducing coal energy use from 2026. India, instead of trying to save the country and its people, is claiming a high rate of economic growth, while every year one or the other region of the country is hit hard by some natural calamity due to unplanned economic growth. The coldest part of the Russian Federation, Siberia has been plagued by heatwaves and wildfires during the past year due to rising temperature. Australia has also been hit by devastating wildfires in 2020, followed by droughts and severe floods earlier this year (2021).

The government of each country

private vehicles to reduce carbon emissions. The tropical forest area has declined by 12 per cent during 2019-2020 which is a matter of concern as the dense forests of these areas absorb more carbon dioxide than the other areas. A simple solution to this problem is planting species of locally found trees and there should be complete restriction on the cutting of old trees. The government of every country should also make the means of public transport more efficient so that people can automatically start using public transport instead of private vehicles. Every country should cooperate and act

in the same way as the European countries have done and are doing to reduce carbon emissions. Although the European countries had historically emitted large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, they are now realizing their responsibility and rapidly reducing it. If the United States succeeds in putting Biden's planned reduction of carbon emissions into practice now, then perhaps the rest of the world, which is still emitting large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere in the name of economic growth, would begin to reduce carbon emissions. This is a good move initiated by the United States and followed by the other countries to protect the planet and its people from rising temperature and natural disasters, but it requires concerted efforts to make it work. China and India also need to work together to reduce carbon emissions, while keeping their narrow interests at bay, in order to save the planet and its people from global warming. Realizing the fact that air pollution kills around 7 million people every year, while the COVID-19 pandemic that has frightened countries and its people worldwide resulted in the death of 31,12314 people by April 25, 2021. Looking at the data, the people and governments of all the countries must put their serious efforts to reduce carbon emissions because currently it poses higher risk than COVID-19.