



## Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia: Founder of the Historic Ad Dharm Movement

(Invited Editorial cum Article on the 138th Birth Anniversary of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia)

**B** Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia is to Punjab what Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is to Maharashtra. If the Maharashtra Dalit movement owes its origin to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Punjab Dalit movement is similarly indebted to Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine, the famous English-born American political activist, theorist, philosopher and revolutionary of the nineteenth century. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia also learnt his lessons of equality and freedom from the proclaimed democratic and liberal values of the United States of America wherein he came into contact, during his sojourn, with the revolutionary freedom fighters popularly known as Ghadri Babas, of the historic Ghadar Lehar. This further cemented his resolve to fight for a dignified life for the masses by liberating India from the clutches of the British Empire, and to establish in its place democratic and egalitarian home rule with equality and freedom for all irrespective of caste, class, creed, language, gender and regional differentiations.

Like his nineteenth century Maharashtrian counterpart who was also a revolutionary social thinker of the so-called lower castes, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia established the first school of its kind in his native village of Mugowal for the children of those self-same socially excluded sections of the society that later came to be designated Scheduled Castes (SC) under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) order, 1936, which contained a list (or schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces. He also faced stiff opposition, like his predecessor in Maharashtra, from the so-called upper/dominant castes of Punjab in his fierce struggle against oppressive structures of domination including untouchability – the most egregious one among them. Following into the footsteps of his revolutionary Ghadrite leadership in the United States of America, he aspired to both fight against the caste-based social evil of untouchability and to replace it with an all-encompassing social freedom, as well as to join the fight to free the subjugated India and return to it its political freedom.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, a household name among the Scheduled Castes (SC) of Punjab, was the main architect of the formation of Ad Dharm movement in the province of Punjab in the mid 1920s. He literally took the movement to the doorsteps of the untouchables in the region and soon emerged as a cult figure of the lower castes in Punjab. Like the

Satyashodak Samaj movement in Maharashtra, the Ad Dharm movement soon became a household name among the SCs of Punjab. It was for the first time in the forgotten history of the lower castes in the state that a golden opportunity knocked at their doors to get them united on a common and distinct platform under the leadership of their fellow-travellers to fight for the most sought after goal of dignified life and to collectively press their long-pending claim for a

of Guru Ravidass, who was already well known among the lower castes of Punjab, was systematically projected in order to concretize the newly conceived lower caste cultural space in the region. His struggle against the system of untouchability, anchored in an enlightened vision of *Begampura*, at a time when no one could dare to speak for the socially excluded sections of the society, made him a messianic figure of the lower castes. Under the adept leader-

Consequently a total of 418,789 persons registered themselves as Ad Dharmis in the Punjab census of 1931. Eventually, this newly found religion of the lower castes dwindled into a separate



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caste – Ad Dharmi – that now comprised 11.48 per cent of the SC population of East Punjab as per 2011 Census. Since then, Ad Dharmis have organized themselves into various Guru Ravidass Sabhas (societies) and established a large number of Ravidass Deras, which began emerging in Punjab in the early twentieth century. The emergence of Ravidass Deras is often seen as an index of rising Ravidassia identity in the state. There are over sixty Deras in Punjab that have an exclusively Ravidassia identity. A vernacular field study completed in 2003 put their number as around 100. Since then, many more such Deras have come into existence in East Punjab. More than half of the Ravidass Deras are located in four districts – Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala and Nawanshahr of the Doaba region of Punjab lying between two rivers: Sutlej and Beas – also known for highest concentration of SC population. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia belonged to Hoshiarpur district. Seth Kishan Dass of Boota Mandi, another reputed name in the Ad Dharm movement, belonged to Jalandhar district. Hazara Ram Piplanwala, Hari Ram Pandori Bibi, and Sant Ram Azad, the other original founding members of the Ad Dharm movement, were also from Hoshiarpur district.

The phenomenon of Ravidass Deras is equally popular among the SC diaspora as well. They have established Ravidass Deras in different parts of the world. Some of the most prominent among them are in Canada in the cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Brampton, Toronto, and Montreal; in the United States in the cities of New York, Sacramento, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Fresno, Fremont, Houston, Selma, and Austin; and in the United Kingdom in the cities of Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry,



**Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia**

Picture credit:  
Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer

share in the local structures of power. The Ad Dharm movement was the only movement of its kind in the Northwestern region of India that aimed at creating a dignified space for the lower castes by constructing a distinct socio-cultural and political SC identity through religious regeneration, spiritual empowerment, cultural transformation, and political assertion. The main objective of the Ad Dharm movement was to carve out a separate identity for those who were socially excluded from all spheres of mainstream power structures. It was during this movement that the image

of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, the Ad Dharm movement had tactically cashed in on his mass appeal by using his pictures as its emblem, reciting his bani, and narrating legends about him as illustrations of the power, pride, and glory of oppressed segments of society.

Ensnared in the glory of the messianic image of Guru Ravidass, the Ad Dharm movement, despite all sorts of pressures and local resistance, succeeded in prevailing upon the British regime to declare a separate religion (Ad Dharm – primeval religion) for the lower castes in Punjab.

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Derby, Lancaster, Southall, Southampton, Kent, and Bedford. Since 2010, many Ravidass temples/gurdwaras have also been built in Austria, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Holland, New Zealand, Greece and Lebanon.

Different both from the Hindu temples and Sikh gurdwaras, Ravidass Deras provide an alternative religious domain where their followers need not hide their identity and meekly suffer caste-based social exclusion. Their distinctiveness also lies in the fact that they neither take refuge in any of the mainstream religions nor emulate the dominant socio-cultural ethos of upper-castes.

On the contrary, they not only proudly distinguish themselves from the mainstream religious systems, but also contest the long imposed supremacy of other castes. These Deras, in fact, have been functioning as missions to sensitise lower castes and to facilitate their empowerment. The entire array of religious and cultural activities in Ravidass Deras revolve around the teachings and life of Guru Ravidass, and his statues/figures are installed and worshipped in the sanctum sanctorum of almost all such Deras. In some Deras affluent devotees have donated golden *palkis* (canopies) for the purpose of covering statues/figures of Guru Ravidass.

Free food (langar/community kitchen) and state-of-the-art medical health facilities are also provided in some of these Deras. The social developmental reach of Ravidass Deras is not confined to the health facilities alone – some Deras have opened English medium model middle/high schools, complete with modern teaching technology. To underline their separate identity, Ravidass Deras have formulated their separate rituals, ceremonies, slogans, symbols, auspicious dates, customs, *ardas* (prayer), *kirtan* (musical rendering of sacred hymns), religious festivals and iconography.

It was the Ad Dharm movement that paved the way for the emancipation and empowerment of the lowest of the low not only in Punjab, but also became a role model for the radical Dalit movement throughout India. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia stood with Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar like a rock during his struggle for separate electoral status for the Depressed Classes (later designated as Scheduled Castes) at the London Round Table conferences. Again it was this very Dalit movement that gave SC a counter-public in the form of their distinct religion called "Ad Dharm". Another equally great achievement of the Ad Dharm movement was that under the able leadership of the Babu Mangu Ram

Mugowalia, it contested Punjab Provincial assembly elections in 1937 & 1946, which made the SC of Punjab equally an important stake-holder in the state legislature, perhaps for the first time in the history of the political power structure of the colonial India. Ad Dharm had its headquarters at Jalandhar city and was financially supported by Seth Kishan Das of Botan Mandi where Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar gave his first electoral address on October 27, 1951 as a prelude to the first general election in Independent India. The next day Babasaheb held mock parliamentary debate at the campus of DAV College Jalandhar where he addressed the students and the faculty together. In

this country. Liberate the Adi race by separating these seven crores. ... Our seven crore number enjoy no share at all. We reposed faith in Hindus and thus suffered a lot. Hindus turned out to be callous. Centuries ago, Hindus suppressed us; sever all ties with them. What justice can we expect from those who are the butchers of the Adi race. The time has come; be cautious, now the Government listens to appeals. With the support of a sympathetic Government, come together to save the race. Send members to the Councils so that our Qaum is strengthened again. British rule should remain forever. Make prayer before God. Except for this Government, no one is sympathetic

ened under the stewardship of Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar. If one has to make sense of socio-political consciousness among the SC community in Punjab, s/he has to refer to the pioneer work done by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia that he commenced after returning from the United States of America (USA) after going through hard times at places on foreign lands. The story of Ad Dharm and its originator, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, would remain incomplete without acknowledging the seminal contribution made by Mark Juergensmeyer, reputed Social Anthropologist and Political Scientist of the University of California, Santa Barbara, the USA, who did his PhD thesis on this

very movement, which finally culminated into his classic: "Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables". It was after the publication of his field-based study of the movement and its founding father that the people of the region came to know the significant role played by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia towards the upward social mobility of the lower castes in Punjab.

In recognition of his invaluable contribution in the Ghadar movement, Dr. T. V. Nagendra Prasad, the Consul General of India, San Francisco (CA), installed the picture of Babu Mangu Ram Mu-



fact, the tremendous response to the call of Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar from the politically mature land of Punjab was the direct outcome of the fertile political ground prepared by the Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

The Ad Dharm movement began its historic journey on its maiden Conference, organised on June 11-12, 1926 at the ground of the Ad Dharm School, Mahilpur, Hoshiarpur district, Punjab. In the poster announcing the first annual conference of the Ad Dharm movement, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with Swami Shudranand and Babu Thakur Chand, devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the *Moolnivasis* (original inhabitants) at the hands of the caste Hindus. He also made an appeal to the Moolnivasis to come together to chalk out a programme for their liberation and uplift. Addressing them as brothers, he said: "We are the real inhabitants of this country and our religion is Ad Dharm. Hindu Qaum came from outside to deprive us of our country and enslave us. At one time we reigned over 'Hind'. We are the progeny of kings; Hindus came down from Iran to Hind and destroyed our Qaum. They deprived us of our property and rendered us nomadic. They razed our forts and houses, and destroyed our history. We are seven crores in numbers and are registered as Hindus in

towards us. Never consider ourselves as Hindus at all; remember that our religion is Ad Dharm" (*Kaumi Udarian*: 1986: 21-22). Keen readers of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia have observed that he was conflicted on the issue of the British Raj – on the one hand he feared even greater oppression under Hindu majoritarian rule than under the British – whom he also viewed as possible partners in facilitating a more equal Indian society – but on the other hand he aspired for the dignity of national independence, which necessitated the removal of the British. This remained a recurring paradox in his political approach till the achievement of Indian independence in 1947. In his brilliant article entitled *Achhut da Swaal* (Untouchability Question), Shaheed Bhagat Singh supported the Ad Dharm leadership in its tirade against the caste system, but at the same time had cautioned them to keep their distance from the British.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia played a dominant role in chiseling the distinct markers of the separate SC identity in Punjab. He restored the lower castes their lost heroes, gurus – Bhagwan Valmik Ji, Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Kabir Sahib and Satguru Ravidass Ji – rich but lost cultural heritage, and brought forth an urge to become rulers themselves. It was this very urge, which got further sharp-

gowalia, presented by Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief, Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba Weeklies, in the Ghadar Memorial Hall, 5 Wood Street San Francisco (CA) during Ghadar Mela celebration on July 24, 2022. The Ghadar Mela was organised by the Consul General of India, San Francisco (CA), in the memory of the Ghadri Babas and their great vision for the freedom, unity and prosperity of India. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was one of five Ghadri Babas who were assigned the herculean task of taking weapons from North America to India on SS-Maverick Ship to liberate India from the British rule. He was captured on board SS Maverick along with his other accomplices and eventually sentenced to death. However, destiny saved Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia somehow and finally he was able to return to his native village after spending many years incognito at different places. Appreciating the act of installation of the picture of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia in the Ghadar Memorial Hall, Mark Juergensmeyer was of the opinion: "Very nice! It is an appropriate and long overdue recognition of the important role of Baba Mangu Ram in the Ghadar movement, and I'm glad that he is receiving this belated recognition."

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# Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - A Great Freedom Fighter, Revolutionary and Social Reformer

**B**abu Mangu Ram Mugowalia is such a historical legend in the history of Punjab whose contribution in the Freedom struggle of the country and liberation of the depressed sections known as Scheduled Castes and backward appears to have been covered under the dust of time. When the young Ambedkar was engaged in intellectual pursuits in the Columbia University, New York (1913-1916) to take on the irrational and degraded socio-economic system of his country, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was bubbling with revolutionary zeal as a young founding member of the 'Ghadar Party' at Sanfransisco (California) to take on the mighty British Empire to liberate his mother land from the foreign yoke at the cost of his life. When Dr. Ambedkar took up cudgels for liberation of the downtrodden sections through his weekly 'Mooknayak' and social organization 'Bahishkrit Hitkarini sabha' in Maharashtra, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was creating history through his Adi-Dharam or Ad-Dharam Movement in the land of five rivers. While Dr. Ambedkar is shining as a pole star guiding the destiny not only of the depressed and crushed sections of the Indian society but of the humanity as a whole, Mangu Ram Mugowalia's contribution remains almost buried in the history. It is time to dust out the history and show the glittering pages of his struggle and sacrifice to his people as a real tribute to the great Freedom Fighter, Revolutionary and Social Reformer of this land on his 137th Birth anniversary.

Born on 14 January 1886 to father Harnam and mother Attri in a poor downtrodden family of Mugowal village of present Garghshankar Tehsil of Hoshiarpur District of Punjab, Babu Mangu Ram was the youngest of the three siblings. His mother died when he was barely three years. He suffered untold miseries on account of stigma of pernicious Hindu caste system right from his school days as suffered by Dr. Ambedkar. Deprived of the basic minimum human rights, his people lived in ghettos performing traditionally assigned jobs of lifting and skinning the dead cattle and doing other menial occupations mostly as bonded labors. Schools, temples and other public places were out of reach for them. His eldest brother was sent to Dehradun to engage in more lucrative business of hides. As the business required minimum knowledge of three Rs, his father had to face lot of difficulties in getting the supply orders and other correspondence read over to him by upper caste persons, who would do favor only on performing free manual labor for them. Though British Government had opened the schools for them but the caste continued to be their nightmare at the hands of both the Hindus and the Sikhs. His father managed to admit him in a school at Mahalpur on the condition that he would sit at the door outside the classroom; he would receive lessons indirectly through a Muslim student; he would never enter the class room in any eventuality and

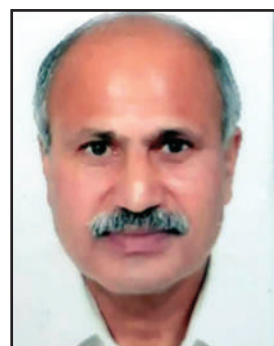
he would carry sitting mat daily with him. He completed his primary education with third position even under those humiliating conditions. He took admission in the High School at Bajwara on the additional abominable condition that he would get lessons standing at the window outside the classroom. One day he took shelter in the class room due to heavy hail-storm outside. He was caned black and blue and thrown out of the room by the Brahmin teacher. When he



reached the school next day, he found the classroom furniture kept outside to wash out the pollution caused due to his entry in the classroom the previous day. The moment his teacher saw him, he shouted at him calling him by the caste name 'Chandala' and shooed him away. Mangu Ram ran away to escape the wrath of his teacher never to enter the school again. He was married in 1905. After assisting his father in the business for over four years, he was sent to America in 1909 for better economic prospects. He worked as a laborer in California (U.S.A) for about four years at the orchard of a relative of a landlord of his village. But he felt ill at ease working as a downtrodden under an employer suffering from the cancerous caste system even in a free democratic country like U.S.A. It was not a different experience for him than working as a landless laborer back home in India. Therefore, he left his caste-minded Indian employer and worked at different places like Fresno, Stockton, Sacramento

and Elcehro etc. in a free and democratic environment. Influenced by the European and American history of independence, some young Punjabi American migrants were charged with aggressive patriotic fervor in the mid 1913 to free their country from the British yoke through violent revolutionary means. Lala Hardyal was their inspiring and motivating force. As a result, a revolutionary outfit with the name of 'Gadar Party' was formed and full time members were

shipment of weapons was sent earlier also by the Party through a ship named 'Karyamaru'. But the ship was captured at Singapore. Therefore, the fresh venture to send the shipment of weapons to India was really a very dangerous proposition. But the brave freedom fighters were not deterred. They reached Secorro Island where the shipment was to be loaded. But they were identified and captured by a Sydney military ship named 'Man of War'. Fortunately, they were released on the intervention of an American War Ship. Thus, escorted by the five lions of Punjab, the ship named 'Maverick' set sail for India from Mexico with the shipment of weapons. It made a brief stopover at Hawaii Island. When the ship reached near Java or New-Kalidonya in the East Indies Islands, it was captured by the Japanese soldiers. Japan being an ally of the British in the War, Babu Mangu Ram and his colleagues were imprisoned for one year. But the British Government ordered instant hanging of the Gadarites at the midnight on charge of treason. As luck would have it, they were rescued by an armed German soldier named Barde and made to escape with the help of Germans. They took different escape routes and Babu Mangu Ram and his two other colleagues found their way to Singapore. Unfortunately yet again, they were identified by the British spies who were the traitors of 'Gadar Party', and handed over to the British authorities. They were ordered to be shot dead with cannon fire. But this time also the lady luck smiled on them. They were once again rescued by the Germans and sent to Manila. It is believed that one namesake of Mangu Ram presented himself before the British authorities as Mangu Ram and sacrificed his life as a patriot. According to another version the local British officers hanged a drunkard person as Mangu Ram to save their skin for dereliction of duty. Babu Mangu Ram came to know from the Newspapers that he was awarded death sentence at Singapore on the charges of treason. Believing the news of death sentence true, his family married his wife to his brother. Babu Mangu Ram went from Island to Island hiding himself and saving himself from the British authorities with the help of his Party. In the meantime, World War came to an end in 1918. Babu Mangu Ram decided to stay in Manila and got a job in an American factory manufacturing shirts for the American market. The secret of his connection with the Gadar Party was revealed during the course of his employment in Manila, but he put the



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blame on the Field Marshal. He continued to work in Manila till early 1925.

The revolutionary activities of Babu Mangu Ram were second to none of the great martyrs and freedom fighters of the motherland. He put his heart and soul in the freedom struggle of the country as a great patriot in the prime of his youth. Fully conscious of the life risk involved in the venture, he jumped into the fray without giving second thought to the consequences. The liberation of the motherland was his obsession that he pursued with passion. He was face to face with death twice but he faced it with courage and fortitude as a gallant soldier rather than seeking apology. As the adage goes "fortune favors the brave", the lady luck stood by him both the times. Alas! The heroics of the great revolutionary are not being remembered what to talk of being honored in the revolutionary history of his motherland! Is it because he was born in a family degraded as downtrodden under the evil-designed and perpetrated irrational and obnoxious Hindu Social Order? Nonetheless, he was destined to pursue a rather bigger cause of liberating his people from the thralldom of scriptures, and to make them live the life of human beings!

Babu Mangu Ram decided to return to his homeland in early 1925. He reached the Indian coast via Lanka and reached his motherland via Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Satara, Nagpur and Delhi. He was moved at the sight of heart rending conditions of the downtrodden people en-route. The continued miserable condition of his people in Punjab shook his soul. He decided to devote rest of his life to fight for the cause of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice for his people instead of the independence of India. He was of the firm belief that the liberation of his people was more important than the liberation of the country. The Headquarter of his erstwhile Organization 'Gadar Party' at San Francisco happily approved of his new venture of social reforms. Though the Gadarites were active in their revolutionary activities in Punjab, but he never met them during his social reform movement. The Arya Samajists were already active in social reform activities in Punjab prior to his arrival on the Punjab scene. The Depressed Classes' people of Doaba region were economically somewhat better off due to their leather business and some land holdings. Their social and political consciousness was better and some of their youth such as Basant Rai, Thakur Chand and Shiv Charan (Shudranand) were actively engaged in social reform activities. It is believed that they talked about Adi-Dharam for the first time in the Conference held at Jalandhar in 1925. The Congress Party was conspiring to convert the downtrodden people between the Hindus and Sikhs to serve their political ends. In the light of what Babu Mangu Ram experienced

and observed, he felt the need of an exclusive and a different organization totally committed to the cause of downtrodden sections of Punjab. His research led to the conclusion that his people were the aborigines of the land and their faith or religion was Adi i.e. original. They were subjugated and enslaved by the Aryan invaders and subjected to draconian and inhuman laws. Hence, they should be identified as a separate faith called Adi-Dharam, and they should liberate themselves from the thralldom of Hinduism. Education was considered to be the first important need of the people. Accordingly, he opened a school in the village with the help of village landlords. It was named 'Adi-Dharam School'. A Conference of all sections of the Scheduled Castes was held in the school on 11-12 June 1926. The Conference issued a declaration containing the features, aims and objectives of the organization. It was declared that the Scheduled Castes were a distinct community of aborigines with its distinct religion-Adi-Dharam. Teachings of the saints such as Ravidas, Kabir, Namdev etc. of Bhakti Movement in medieval India were adopted for spreading among its people. Rishi Valmik was accorded equally respectable place. Dalit saints were accorded the status of Guru instead of Bhakats. The word 'Adi' was picked up from the Arya Samajists' Granths and Guru Granth Saheb. Sohang or Soham was adopted as the religious symbol. Red color was opted for its flag and red turban was prescribed for the members. Jai Gurudev and Dhan Gurudev were adopted the words of greetings among the members. The foundation of Adi-Dharam movement was laid in the special Conference of the community held at Mugowal in November 1926 with its Head Office at Jalandhar. A spacious building with residential accommodation was constructed with the active support of Seth Kishan Das and other wealthy people of the community for the permanent office of the organization. Aims and objects of the Movement and other details as contained in the declaration ibid were adopted for the organization. A Newsletter titled 'Adi-Danka' was launched to propagate the activities of the Movement. All the prominent persons of the Depressed Classes of the region were enrolled as members/office bearers of the Executive/Organizing Committee. Babu Mangu Ram headed the Executive Committee as its President. Seth Kishan Das, Shudranand, Basant Rai, Hari Ram, Hans Raj, Thakur Chand and some others were the office bearers/members of the Executive Committee. Regional Branches were set up all over the State including the hilly areas of present Himachal Pradesh. A Branch was opened at Varanasi, the birthplace of Guru Ravidas. Babu Mangu Ram and his team frequently travelled the length and breadth of the State propagating aims and objects of the organization. Soon the Adi-Dharam Movement picked up and spread fast with its large following all over the

State. It became a force to be reckoned with.

Dr. Ambedkar, on the other hand, was in the thick of his battle since 1917 for the mission of liberation his people from the Hindu thralldom. In the second Round Table Conference (07 September - 31 December 1931) at London, Mahatma Gandhi represented the Congress Party. He made a statement in the Conference that he was the sole representative of the Congress and the Hindus including the Depressed Classes. It was an open challenge and affront to the position and leadership of Dr. Ambedkar who along with Rao Bahadur Srinivasan was representing the Depressed Classes. Reacting sharply, various organizations of the Depressed Classes in the country countered Gandhi's claim and sent telegrams to the British Prime Minister declaring Dr. Ambedkar as their sole representative. Babu Mangu Ram toured the State condemning Gandhi's claim. A large number of telegraphic messages with similar declaration were sent from Punjab also under Babu Mangu Ram's leadership. Hereafter Babu Mangu Ram wholeheartedly supported and followed Dr. Ambedkar. When Gandhi resorted to fast unto death against the Communal Award on 20th September 1932, Babu Mangu Ram took a bold decision and countered Gandhi's action by going himself on fast unto death against him and in favor of Dr. Ambedkar and the Communal Award. He broke his fast on the intervention of Dr. Ambedkar on signing of the Poona Pact. When Lothian Franchise Committee visited Punjab in 1932, about one lac red-turbaned Adi-Dharam followers held a demonstration and Babu Mangu Ram led a twenty member delegation to present a Memorandum to the Committee seeking acceptance of their claim of Adi-Dharam as a separate religion. It sounded an alarming bell for the Hindu organizations particularly the Arya Samajists who indulged in false propaganda against the Adi-Dharam Movement. Their counter-demonstration against the Adi-Dharam Mandal's claim had no effect on the Committee. The Lothian Committee accepted the demand of the Adi-Dharam Mandal. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was present in the Lothian Committee on this occasion. As a result of Dr. Ambedkar's presentation of true facts before the Franchise Committee of the Round Table Conference regarding the Depressed Classes, eight seats were reserved for the Depressed Classes in the Punjab Assembly.

In the first elections to the Provincial Legislatures in 1937, the Adi-Dharam Mandal contested nine seats in alliance with the Unionist Party and won eight seats. It lost one seat by merely seven votes. But the elections laid the foundation of friction and intra-organizational rivalry among the Adi-Dharam leaders. Seth Kishan Das, a prominent face of Adi-Dharam Mandal, contested election from Jalandhar with the support of Adi-Dharam Mandal. But Master Gur-

banta Singh, who was the General Secretary of the Mandal, stood against him on the Congress ticket and suffered heavy defeat. Subsequently, Seth Kishan Das founded the 'Punjab Achhut Federation' which was the Punjabi version of Dr. Ambedkar's 'Scheduled Caste Federation'. He appointed Gopal Singh Khalsa, M.L.A. Ludhiana as its Vice-President without taking Babu Mangu Ram into confidence. Taking advantage of the situation, Master Gurbanta Singh came closer to Babu Mangu Ram and founded a separate organization 'Ravidas Naujawan Sabha'. He contested Punjab Assembly elections again in 1946-47 against Seth Kishan Das and defeated him with the support of Babu Mangu Ram. Babu Mangu Ram won from Hoshiarpur with the support of Unionist Party. The building of Adi-Dharam Mandal which was constructed with the financial support from Seth Kishan Das went under the control of Master Gurbanta Singh. He converted it into 'Ravidas High School' and assumed its chairmanship. Thus, the Adi-Dharam Mandal fell prey to the individual political ambitions of its leaders. Babu Mangu Ram was offered Congress ticket in 1952, which he declined. But the Congress Party, Arya Samajists and the Scheduled Caste people themselves played an important role in weakening and ultimately wiping out the Adi-Dharam Movement. Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar visited Punjab and attended election rallies at Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala from 27 to 29 October 1951. Had the Depressed Classes' people followed the footsteps of Babasaheb and faced the Congress Party and Aryasamajists as one united force, the history would have been altogether different.

Nonetheless, the Adi-Dharam Movement made a significant contribution in social reforms and welfare of the Scheduled Castes in Punjab. An appeal to the people was issued in Punjabi by the organization to project their problems. It resulted in flood of memoranda, proposals and problems concerning mainly the socio-economic issues haunting the marginalized sections. Some issues were within the Government's competence to address and some called for solution through awareness and initiative of the people. Babu Mangu Ram emphasized on the need for education as top priority and he made it incumbent of each Adi-Dharmi to get at least primary education as a minimum requirement. His demand for remission of full or half fees for the students of Scheduled Castes was acceded to by the Government. This facilitated the children of these sections to get admission in the schools and colleges with astonishing results. As per S.C. /S.T. report 1986 -87 (page 292) the literacy rate among these people was as high as 70%. As per the Punjab Alienation Act 1900, purchase of land by non-agriculturist communities was banned with the result that the Scheduled Castes were

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# Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia – A Great Freedom Fighter, Revolutionary and Social Reformer

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confined to their traditional occupation and farm labor. They continued to be the victims of exploitation at the hands of the land owners. But as a result of long struggle by the people, the Act was amended facilitating them to buy land. The Scheduled Caste people were not allowed the facility of drinking water from the public wells, tanks, water sources and hotels since ages. As a result of persistent campaign by the Adi-Dharam Mandal, the public water sources were opened for them and violation of these orders was made punishable offence. Sign boards to this effect were put all over Punjab. Similarly bonded labor was got banned as a result of vigorous campaign against the evil by the Adi-Dharamis. Owing to

the Adi-Dharam Movement, the Government assumed liberal attitude towards appointment of Scheduled Caste people in Government jobs. As a result one Ishar Dass Pawar was appointed in PCS (judicial), thus, opening door for appointments in the lower cadres of civil and police departments for these people for the first time in Punjab. Apart from this, the Adi-Dharam Movement helped in minimizing the social evils such as dowry and extravagance in marriage expenditure etc. It laid thrust of fraternal bonding and moral values in life.

Though there is some visible improvement in the educational and economic condition of the marginalized sections in Punjab, but it is too below par. The demon of caste, social

and economic discrimination continues to haunt. Poverty and social evils are perpetual fate of these people. Farm labor and social boycotts are their everyday nightmare. Illiteracy, unemployment and poverty are their bane. Sweeping, cleaning and other menial jobs are inseparable part of their life. Though their population is more than 35% in the State, their true representation in the State and Central Legislatures is almost zero. Their political representatives are mere play toys in the hands of political Parties of the upper castes. Millions of socio-political groups and outfits of these sections are the evidence of self-interest and ego of the educated and political class standing like a solid rock in the way of their unity. It is over seven decades of

country's independence, but the plight of these sections is grim. Needless to say that it calls for the leadership of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's élan and the light of Babasaheb's beacon to break the glass ceiling.

(Source: Swaroop Chander Boudh, Sher-e-Punjab Babu Mangu Ram; Writings and Speeches of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar, Vol. 1, Vol.3, and Vol. 17, Pt.3; Dhananjay Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission; Mark Juergensmeyer, Religion as Social vision, p-25; , D, C, Ahir, Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, pp. 298, 303)

Read more:

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# MEMORIES OF BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA

**D**uring the younger days of my life, whenever there was a talk in the family about the life struggles of Guru Ravidass Ji or Babasaheb, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the name of Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia also used to be at the lips of our ancestors, with a exciting tone, saying that persons like Mangu Ram Mugowalia are unique and rare and are born once in a blue moon. He was incomparable. Ever since my childhood days the pictures of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's Struggle for the liberation of the enslaved and the down trodden people of Punjab, were engraved on the screen of my delicate mind with great aspirations to have this great person in our lives. With the lapse of time this longing slipped into oblivion (Forgetfulness).

In 1970 the weekly Newspaper "RAVIDASS PATRIKA" published from Jalandhar, revealed the fact that Mangu Ram, lovingly and popularly known as Mangu Ram Muggowalia, was still alive. It was very hard to believe and no one in the family believed either. Anyway, after a while this hearsay turned into reality when this great man was seen hale and hearty in person in the office of Ravidass Patrika. He was a man with a small stature (height) but very fair in facial complexion, looking quite healthy in physical appearance, in spite his advanced age. He was wearing a woolen Kashmiri cap and a round-necked Jacket with a charming personality. Babu Mangu Ram was really sitting in a chair right in front of me, but still I could not believe that the person sitting face to face with me, was the same person, Babu Mangu Ram who was a king without crown of my childhood memories. I was so gratified to see and meet him which can hardly be put into words. Sometimes this first time meeting looked so dreamlike and imaginative, as if a movie was playing on a screen. But, in fact, it was Babu Mangu Ram Ji sitting in front of me and gently answering my questions. Even at the age of about 85 years, I could see a glare of hope in his eyes regarding a bright future of the Dalit community.

After that I had many more opportunities to meet and exchange views with Babu Ji. His life history and his struggles still inspire me to continue my struggle in life. I still feel very anxious to expose the selfish and Fox-walk style people who forced Babu Ji to be helpless into leading a life of anonymity. But our goal was not to expose the futility and hollowness of these selfish leaders driven by hunger and lust for personal power.

In 1925, after return from USA, he undertook the herculean task of consolidating the Dalit community to launch their struggle under the banner of Ad Dharam Mandal.

Babu Ji, with untiring efforts and help of the civilized, self-conscious and farsighted people, ignited a new spark (Flame) in the minds of the untouchables of Punjab to secure their rights, and in a span of few years it assumed the form of a social and a political conflagration.

While the leaders of Ad Dharam Mandal were engaged in transforming the political, social and religious conditions of Punjab, they were also extending their full help and cooperation in the struggle carried on by their Messiah (prophet), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

To determine the magnitude and success of their leading ideology in the contemporary Punjab, the Punjab Ad Dharam Mandal issued its first report in 1931 and some of its salient features are mentioned below.

1. This public organization unanimously makes an appeal to the Gov-



This article Punjabi to English was translated by Mr. O. P. Balley.  
Courtesy: Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Souvenir 1985  
published by Mr. C. L. Chumber

ernment that untouchables should be counted neither as a part of Hindus nor as a part of Hindu religion but, instead, should be treated as a part of Ad Dharam religion. We are neither Hindus nor Hindus are part of us.

2. This public organization makes an appeal to the Government that the Shastras (Vedic scriptures) and Manusmirities of Hinduism which define Untouchables as slaves, prohibited from making any progress and social uplift, should be legally banned.

3. As provided in Ad Dharam Mandal the sons and daughters should have equal rights to claim their ancestral properties.

4. Without any caste discrimination the entire Ad Dharmi Community should cooperate and intensify their mutual love and trust for each other.

5. We should shun idol worship, stop witchcrafts, black Arts and refrain from superstitious beliefs.

A review of the above said proposals shows that our society was

still gripped with these social ills and to think and talk about ending these evils about 60 years ago, was a very significant and a farsighted move for uplifting the society.

Under the dynamic leadership of our great leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Government under the British rule was made to agree to the ideals of Ad Dharam Mandal, admitting that we, who have been suppressed, enslaved and tortured for centuries, were neither Hindus nor Aryans who came from another country, but we are native inhabitants of this land and Ad Dharam is our religion. In 1931 it

was with the efforts of Babu Mangu Ram Ji that we had our separate identity in Punjab. This was not a small achievement on his part. In accordance with the provisions of the Poona Pact agreed to between Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Gandhi there were eight seats reserved for Scheduled Castes for Punjab state Assembly elections,

out of which seven seats were won by Ad Dharam Mandal candidates for Vidhan Sabha Lahore in 1936-37. It was a very marvelous victory for the founder of Ad Dharam Mandal with the help, guidance and cooperation of Babasaheb, Dr. Ambedkar.

Babu Ji made the city of Jalandhar as the center of his activities, where, in spite of financial hardships but, with the help and cooperation of Seth Kishan Dass of Bootan Mandi Jalandhar, he managed to buy a piece of land in Bootan Mandi and set up the office of his organization but some cunning, greedy and selfish politicians who exploited and built up their political muscle through Ad Dharam Mandal, wanted to perpetuate their personal but fallacious leadership thus played fraud and betrayal of trust with the Dalits of Punjab who were loyal to Ad Dharam Mandal, by stabbing them in the back which forcing Babu Mangu Ram to lead a life of anonymity. They even indulged in spreading the fake news of Babu

Mangu Ram's death, to keep the new generation deprived and away from the accomplishments of Ad Dharam Mandal. To sum up, the sacrifices of this brave soldier started to fade into oblivion.

How - ever, in 1970

with the publication of Ravidass Patrika (Weekly) from Jalandhar, Babu Ji once again came out of his death-like life of anonymity. Being the Editor of Ravidass Patrika I had many opportunities for exchange of views with him.

Now when I recall my old memories of my meetings with him I could perceive how much dedicated and loyal he remained till the last moment, with a deep yearning and excitement inside, to stay united under one flag of Ad Dharam.

I remember when on April 14th, 1974, I, accompanied by Mr. Mangu Ram Jaspal (Chief Editor, Ravidass Patrika), went see Babu Ji in Garhshankar to enquire about his health and well-being, he just finished talking about his health in a few minutes but kept talking with me about the regeneration and revival of Ad Dharam Scheduled Caste federation and again on April 23rd, 1974, his statement under the title "APPEAL AND ANNOUNCEMENT" was published in Ravidass Patrika wherein he initiated to reconstitute this organization under an Ad-Hoc Committee at Punjab level.

In 1975, at the time of publishing a Souvenir to commemorate 50th Anniversary of Ad Dharam Mandal, many messages were received from various political leaders in which an attempt was again made to spread the fake news of Babu Ji's death, in spite of the fact that Babu Mangu Ram Ji Mugowalia was physically present at the venue of the function where the Souvenir was being released. Particularly it hurts me to know that in 1980 at the time of performing the ceremony of Babu Ji's last rites, none of these arrogant and self-styled leaders who had exploited various benefits as members of Ad Dharam Mandal, had even the courtesy of showing up to pay their tributes to the departed leader at his residence, though they were specially requested to attend.

But with the release of this Souvenir I feel a sense of satisfaction and a ray of hope that attempts are underway to restore the accomplishments of Babu Ji. In June 1984 during my visit to United Kingdom, I was pleased to note while attending some special gatherings of Ad Dharam brotherhood and Shri Guru Ravidass Ji's functions in Wolverhampton, indicating that Babu Ji was still alive in their hearts.

**"I salute that our great savior."**



Prof. G.C. Kaul  
Former Editor Ravidass Patrika

## "I salute that our great savior." MY PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

While translating the above article from Punjabi to English, written by Prof: G.C. Kaul, I had an opportunity to grasp the social conditions which inspired Babu Mangu Ram Mughowalia to launch a movement for the emancipation of the people, who, inspite of being the original inhabitants of India, were subjected to inhuman treatments and social humiliations for centuries. Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Babu Mangu Ram Mughowalia



were contemporaries and suffered from these social discriminations and prejudicial treatments at the hands of so called upper classes, in their personal lives.

We can very well understand the real reasons which led to the decline of such a vigorous and well organized campaign led by Babu Mangu Ram and it was our own so called leaders who exploited the movement for their personal greed and power and resorted to spread even the false rumors of Babu Ji's death, who, otherwise, was well and alive to lead the caravan to its cherished goals.

Though the movement was established almost a hundred years ago but still it has not lost its authenticity and the vigor, it was started with.

**Our Strong Media:** There is no doubt in affirming the role of our own Media to mobilize a strong public opinion for the success and flourishing of the ideals, originally generated and fostered by a legendary personality like Babu Mangu Ram Ji Muggowalia.

I applaud Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber Editor-in-Chief of "Ambedkar Times" (English) and "Desh Doaba" (Punjabi), the weekly publications for their motivational role in keeping the community enlightened about the historic role played by Babu Mangu Ram Mughowalia in the establishment of our identity as the original inhabitants of India.

Again with best wishes for celebrating the 138th Birth Anniversary of Babu Mangu Ram Mughowalia Ji, just 3 days before, on January 14th, 2023.



**O. P. Balley**  
Founder Member,  
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha,  
Pittsburg (CA) USA

# SUKHRAJ SINGH CHOPRA PASSED AWAY A LEGENDARY ERA COMES TO A CLOSE



**A**s we all are aware, Mr. Sukhraj Singh Chopra, a legendary figure in our community, left for his heavenly abode on January 13th, 2023 after a brief illness, sending waves of shock, grief and sadness among all. The whole community is still reeling under the impact of this great loss not only to the family but to the entire community.

Mr. Chopra was endowed with a rare and an inborn quality of donating his hard earned money, helping in the construction of buildings and in other projects for our Guru Ghars (Sri Guru Ravidass Temples). He was well known in our community for his philanthropic and charitable work for all our Sri Guru Ravidass Temples in USA as well as Canada.

I (O. P. Balley), very well, remember that on June 2nd. 1985, he, being the highest donor with \$25,000.00, had earned a distinguished honor of performing the opening ceremony of SRI GURU RAVIDASS TEMPLE, Pittsburg, California.

Besides being a generous donor Mr. Chopra was always in the forefront alongwith other founder members for fund collection drives for Guru Ghars (Sri Guru Ravidass Temples).

A brief life sketch of Mr. Sukhraj Chopra reveals that he was among the pioneers who migrated from Fiji Islands to USA in late 1960's, carrying with them the cultural and family heritage learnt from their forefathers, kept them attached

to their roots and influenced with the godly teachings of Dhan Dhan Sri Guru Ravidass Ji and Dhan Dhan Sri Guru Granth Saheb Ji.

His late wife Mrs. Roshni Chopra who was also blessed with a generous mind always stood by her husband in his lofty ideals and endeavors for the welfare of the community. Mr. Chopra has left behind a vacuum which can never be filled but his profound and rich legacy will remain as a lasting inspiration for the future generations for years and years to come.

LIFE IS SO UNCERTAIN." Human body in flesh and bones is subject to extinction sooner or later, but immortality of soul is eternal".

Shalok Gurbani:-" KAHO NANAK THIR KUCCH NAHEE SUPNE JI-O SANSAR" (Says Nanak, Nothing lasts for ever;the world is like a dream.)

On behalf of "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" (Weeklies), we offer our heart-felt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family with prayers for peace and tranquility of the departed soul and solace and strength to bear this irreparable loss during this difficult time.

"NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA  
TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA"

O. P. Balley

P. K. Chumber



D. C. Ahir

# The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

**W**hen in 1915 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was giving final touches to his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University in New York, a Punjabi

nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British as Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in absentia, and sentenced to death for taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites. Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake,

for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower. The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangoo Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar Party had broadened his outlook, and sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his

Dharm Mandal were established in Jalandhar city from where the movement was organized in a systematic manner, and the devoted missionaries spread the message far and wide in the Punjab, and even beyond. Since the Mandal had accepted Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji as its spiritual leader, the movement became primarily popular amongst the Chamars, and they readily adopted the nomenclature of Ad Dharmi.

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion. Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiya (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding, the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, if forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever. The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis. This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Juergensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

Courtesy: Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab by D. C. Ahir



however, the ship reached Singapore. Unfortunately for Mangu Ram, here he was recognized by some traitor Indians who had earlier worked for the Ghadar Party. They informed the Police. By now, for running away from Batavia, death warrants had been issued by the British Government to be executed wherever any one of them was found. Accordingly, the Singapore Police began preparing for his execution. Then a miracle happened. Just half an hour before his execution, a gentleman named Barde, whom Mangu Ram had never seen or met, came, caught him by the arm, took him out of the Thana, and putting him on the same ship in which Mangu Ram had come, he asked the Captain of the ship to sail for Manila. By the time the Police swung into action, the ship had crossed the Singapore Port Limits. Having failed to intercept the ship, the police caught hold of some drunkard; executed him to cover up their lapse, and announced that Mangu Ram had been executed. This news was later published in the Indian Newspapers.

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during this period he had no contact with his family as no letters could be written

ideas, Babu Mangu Ram convened a Conference at his village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur on 11-12 June, 1926. Addressing the largely attended Conference, Babu Mangu Ram proclaimed that the Untouchables constituted a separate Qaum, a religious community like the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and those they were the original inhabitants of this country. Hence, the movement was named as Ad Dharm; and its leaders devised distinctive costume, bright red turbans and shashes; coined a new sacred mantra or symbol, "So-hang" and exhorted the people to call themselves as Ad Dharmis.

The primary object of the Ad Dharm was to give the untouchables an alternative religion. Its another object was to reform the society from within. As social movement, the Ad Dharm exhorted the people to abstain from immoral practices; to lead a life of purity and piety; to discard the use of alcohol, drugs, give education to boys and girls, and to treat all men and women equal in the society. On the whole, the movement was aimed at giving the untouchables a sense of pride and dignity as members of the Ad Dharm.

The headquarters of Ad

youth, who had gone to America a few years earlier, was involved in a dangerous mission of smuggling guns from California to the Punjab for inciting mutiny in India. This Punjabi youth later became famous as Babu Mangu Ram, the founder of the Ad Dharm Movement. Mangu Ram was born in a small village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 14 January, 1886 in an untouchable family; his father was a leather merchant. As by then the doors of education had been opened to all by the British rulers, Mangu Ram was sent to the school in the nearby village, Mahilpur, but the treatment meted out to him by the Hindu teacher was far from human. Like Bhim Rao in Satara, Mangu Ram too was made to sit outside the classroom. Not only that, even the teacher would not teach him directly; he was invariably given lesson through a Muslim student. Somehow, Mangu Ram passed his middle examination and joined high school at Bajwara, a nearby town. Here too. He was subjected to the same humiliation, and was made to sit outside the classroom. One day, it rained so heavily that in spite of taking shelter under a tree, Mangu Ram was completely drenched. And when the snow-balls, accompanied by high velocity winds, fell like missiles on him, he was unable to bear it any longer. So, he ran to take shelter inside the classroom. As soon as he had entered the room, the teacher saw him, and instead of showing any sympathy, he started beating him with a stick for having come inside. Weeping and crying, Mangoo Ram went out, and somehow reached his home.

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the mats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again". Fearing another beating, Mangoo Ram hastened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

With his education coming to an abrupt end, Mangu Ram became unemployed, and bit frustrated too. In 1909, he, along with some other young men from the village, went to California, U.S.A. in order to earn some money by working in the Peach Orchards of Fresno and elsewhere in the San Joaquin valley of central California. Instead of earning money, he, however, became involved in the activities of the Ghadar Party, an international network of militant Punjabi



# It is necessary to control the growing economic inequalities in India

The 'Survival of the Richest' report, released by Oxfam on January 16, 2023 at the start of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland has brought to light the ever-increasing economic inequalities between different sections of the society in different countries of the world. This report has also released data regarding some important aspects of the ever-increasing economic inequalities in India. According to this report, 40 per cent of the wealth generated between 2012 and 2021 went to the top 1 per cent, while only 3 per cent went to the bottom 50 per cent. Out of the total GST collected in the country, only 4 per cent came from the top 10 per cent, while 64 per cent came from the bottom 50 per cent. Wealthy people benefit from reduced corporate tax rates, tax breaks and other concessions. During the Corona pandemic, the income and wealth of the bottom 50 per cent of people have decreased. The number of billionaires in India which was 102 in 2020 have increased to 166 in 2022. From the start of the Corona pandemic to November 2022, the wealth of billionaires increased by Rs 3608 crore per day. The report also brought to light the poor economic condition of women workers, scheduled castes, and rural workers.

After the independence of the country, the Planning Commission was formed in 1950.

From 1951 Five Year Plans began. In these plans, the economic progress of the country and the welfare of the people were made the main issue. Monitoring and regulation over private sector units was ensured with priority given to public sector units. The period from 1951-80 is considered as the planning period. During this period economic inequalities between different sections of the society decreased. After 1980, planning was put into the reverse gear. Since 1991, new economic policies have been adopted in favour of the capitalist/corporate world. During 2015, the Planning Commission was replaced by the pro-capitalist/corporate NITI Aayog. Since 1981 till the present time, there has been a continuous increase in economic inequalities between different sections of the society. During the time of Corona pandemic when most of the workers were struggling to make ends meet, the income and wealth of the capitalist/corporate world has increased enormously.

During 1951, about 81 per cent of the country's population was dependent on the agricultural sector for its livelihood, which was given about 55 per cent of the national income. Currently, about 50 per cent of the country's population, which is dependent on the agricultural sector for

its livelihood, was being given only about 16 per cent of the national income in 2018-19. The country's agricultural production depends on the labour of farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural artisans. During the 1960s, when the country was facing a severe shortage of food grains, the government decided to adopt 'New Agriculture Technology' to overcome this problem. This technology was a package of high-yielding seeds, assured irrigation, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides and other chemicals, machinery, and modern methods of farming. As a result of the hard work of the farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans and the excessive use of natural resources, the country's huge shortage of food grains has been brought under control, but due

ers even sell a part of the grains stored for the whole year in the market to meet their needs of clothes, medicines and other products. Some farmers are also compelled to sell their A-grade agriculture products in the market and buy the lowest grade agricultural products from the market for their consumption.

The agricultural labourers and the rural artisans who depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihood, are the two rungs at the bottom of the rural economy ladder that are more worn, more broken and more often abused. As a result of the 'New Agriculture Technology' adopted to overcome the problem of huge shortage of food grains in the country, the ever-increasing use of herbicides and machinery has reduced employment opportunities for

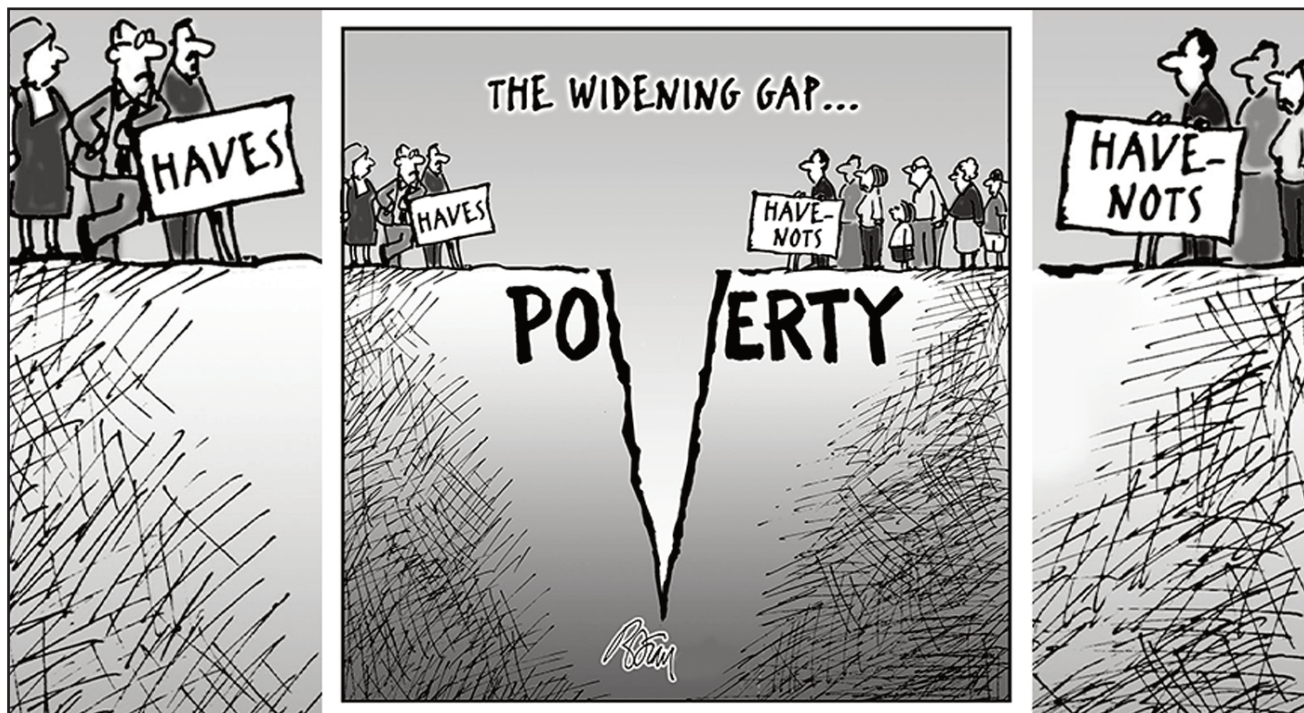
A large number of young people migrate to other countries of the world due to the ever-expanding decline in employment in the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors in India and the low quality of available employment. The migration of young people from India to other countries is creating major problems for the



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to the agricultural policies adopted in the country day by day the economic conditions of farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural artisans deteriorated. According to official data, suicides of farmers and agricultural labourer are continuing in various states of the country. Among the farmers, the suicides of marginal and small farmers are very high and the suicides of agricultural labourers are also increasing. A very sad aspect in this regard is that women and children from marginal and small farmers, and agricultural labour families are also committing suicide. The families of these suicide victims are not even being rehabilitated properly. No data are being collected on the suicides of rural artisans.

According to the 2011 census, there are 11.88 crore farmers and 14.43 crore agricultural labourers in the country. Among the country's farmers, 68.45 per cent are marginal farmers (less than 1 hectare), 17.62 per cent are small farmers (1 hectare to less than 2 hectare) and the remaining 13.93 per cent are semi-medium, medium, and large farmers. Among these different categories of farmers, the economic conditions of marginal and small farmers are very poor. Most of the farmers in these categories have very few commodities to sell in the market. Some farm-

ers all sections dependent on agriculture, but it has hit hard the agricultural labourers, and the rural artisans because both of these landless classes have no other means of production except to sell their labour. The economic conditions of other workers living in the villages are also not good.

With the passage of time there has been industrial progress in the country. Large industrial units are being given more concessions than micro, small, and medium industrial units. Larger industrial units mostly use automated machinery, which results in fewer employment opportunities for the industrial workers. Micro, small, and medium industrial units provide more employment opportunities, but their neglect compared to large industrial units is reducing the employment opportunities in the industrial sector. Rapid privatization of public sector industrial units is also one of the reasons responsible for widening economic inequalities.

From 1991 to the present time, there has been considerable progress in the service sector—education, health care, finance and some others. With this progress, the capitalist/corporate sector has benefited greatly. Common people cannot even dream of availing the services being provided by the capitalists/corporate sector.

the country and the welfare of the common people. The share given to the agricultural sector from the national income must be increased at least to such an extent that all classes dependent on the agricultural sector for their livelihood can meet the basic needs of life in a respectable manner. Adequate concessions for the promotion of micro, small, and medium industrial units should be ensured. Priority should be given to the re-establishment of public sector units in the industrial and services sectors.

Oxfam's 2023 report calls for public education and health services to be prioritized, along with recommending to increase tax rates on the capitalist/corporate world and ensure their collection to reduce economic inequalities. In order to implement these suggestions, where the poverty line needs to be redefined, the prosperity line also needs to be defined. In order to implement the above suggestions, it is necessary to shift towards a mixed economy in which the public sector is the main priority and there is monitoring and regulation over the working of private sectors. To do this, it is necessary to adopt a pro-people and nature-friendly economic development model instead of a pro-capitalist/corporate world economic development model.

# How to save Joshimath?

On 7 January 2023 Joshimath city in Uttarakhand was declared a land subsidence zone. About 60 families have been moved to temporary relief centers from their houses that have become unlivable and another 90 families are yet to be shifted to safer places. Joshimath city has a total of 4500 buildings out of which 610 have suffered major cracks. The number of damaged buildings may increase. People have been accommodated in hotels, colleges and a Gurdwara. The state government has decided to give Rs 4000 per month for six months to those people who want to get a house on rent. The state government has also appealed to people not to stay in damaged houses.

The town of Joshimath is located at an altitude of 6000 feet between Badrinath and Hemkunt Sahib (two religious places) in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand state. Cracks started appearing in the walls of houses and buildings here since the last few months. At first, people ignored these cracks and filled them with cement, but from the last week of December, the size of these cracks began to increase rapidly, the walls of the houses started sliding downwards, a corner of a room in a house collapsed, someone's yard, one's staircase, one house scattered in many places. There were big cracks in the roads due to which people started facing a lot of difficulty even in walking. Electric poles started sliding down and trees also started falling to the ground. Due to cracks in many places, water started to flow out of the earth on its own. Seeing this kind of natural disaster in the city, the people of the city appealed to the administration for rescue efforts. At first, the administration did not pay attention to this tragic phenomenon. When people of the city and the Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Committee started protesting against the administration, they took action.

The government and some people are attributing the phenomenon of buildings and houses slipping in Joshimath city to the increasing human population and the increasing number of buildings in the city as the population has grown rapidly in the last few years. In 1950, only 8719 people lived in Joshimath, but in 2020 their number has increased to 34,188. While the increase of houses and persons may not have added much weight on the land of Joshimath, the main cause of this crisis is the unplanned development taking place in and around Joshimath city.

The state government has recently ordered an immediate shutdown of the construction work of the Helang bypass to the Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project and all other construction work. Along with this, a 14-member committee has been formed to investigate the causes of the landslide in Joshimath city. This committee includes, Geological Survey of India, Wadia Institute and I.I.T. experts from Roorkee. After declaring

Joshimath city as a landslide-prone area, the Uttarakhand government has ordered the demolition of houses and buildings that have suffered major cracks. The demolition of buildings and houses started since January 10.

People say that the Joshimath landslide and the cracks in their houses were caused by the 12-km-long tunnel under construction for the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)'s Tapovan Vishnugad hydro-electricity project, Char Dham road. Helong- Marwadi bypass project, which will reduce the distance from Joshimath to Badrinath by 30 km, and some other plans are underway around Joshimath. Local people want all development activities around Joshimath to be stopped and the Uttarakhand government to arrange permanent resettlement of the residents of Joshimath.

The city of Joshimath hosts the pilgrims of Badrinath and Hemkunt, two religious places. There is a cantonment in this city for the accommodation of soldiers. Apart from this, the city also provides a base camp for mountain climbers and accommodation for tourists visiting the Valley of Flowers. Big hotels have been built in Joshimath for the accommodation and catering of so many tourists and pilgrims. Multi-storied hotels, Tapovan Vishnugad and NTPC hydro-power projects, Char Dham road, 12 km long tunnel, Helang to Marwadi road and other such projects have led to the destruction of Joshimath.

Tapovan Vishnugad and NTPC hydro-power projects is where a large part of the Nanda Devi Glacier fell into the Alaknanda River near Joshimath on 7 February 2021. In this incident, the Rishiganga hydro-power project was badly damaged. Tapovan Vishnugad and NTPC hydropower projects were also heavily damaged. There is a 12 km long tunnel between Tapovan and Vishnugad, through which water from Dhauliganga is to be brought to Selang Power House to save electricity. This tunnel is passing through the same mountain along which the city of Joshimath is situated. More than 200 workers were killed working in this tunnel in 2021. Char Dham road which is 900 km long also passes through Joshimath. The landslides of Joshimath houses, the destruction of hydro-power houses in 2021 and the suffocation of tunnel workers are not the only incidents that the city of Joshimath and the people of Uttarakhand have faced while running in the blind race of unplanned economic development.

Earlier, on 16 June 2013, the people of Uttarakhand suffered a lot

due to unplanned development in the state. If we talk about Joshimath alone, even in 1970 some houses of Joshimath had cracks. So, the landslide in Joshimath is neither a new phenomenon nor has it happened suddenly. In view of the cracks in the houses, on the demand of the people, the administration formed the Mishra committee to find short-term as well as long-term solutions for landslides in this area. In 1976 this committee had recommended a ban on any heavy construction in the area because according to the Mishra committee, Joshimath is already built on land that has slipped from the mountains. Deforestation of natural forests near this area and blasting of mountains with explosive materials can cause severe damage to the sensitive environment here.

Even in 2009, the water started flowing in the city due to the rupture of the aquifer. Aquifers are underground water resources. Due to careless construction in Joshimath, water is leaking at many places in the city and the ground is sinking. Even after the Chamoli tragedy in February 2021, the committee formed on the request of the local residents surveyed the area around the Joshimath and said that the Joshimath could sink with further excavation work. On the recommendations of this committee, the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority constituted a multi-institutional committee for geological and geo-technical survey of Joshimath city in August 2022. This committee submitted its report in September 2022 that the land in this area is in a very unstable condition, so it is dangerous to build more here. At various times in Uttarakhand, governments have formed committees and conducted surveys, but none of the committee's reports have been implemented. Road widening and construction of large hydro-power projects continue unabated despite warnings from geologists and protests by local people. The people of Uttarakhand have been conscious about the preservation of the environment since the time of British rule. These people also strongly opposed the British government's cutting of forests and planting of oak trees in place of oaks.

In the 1970s, when the hydro-power projects started in the state of Uttarakhand, local people strongly opposed cutting of the trees. The Chipko movement started from Raini village in Uttarakhand. It is a pity that the village from where the Chipko movement started has fallen prey to unplanned development. Hydro-power projects have not only sunk Joshimath, before this construc-

tion of Tehri Dam was opposed by Sundar Lal Bahuguna along with his colleagues for many years. Sundar Lal Bahuguna's house had also submerged and the government gave him a house for rehabilitation at a new place.

Joshimath is not the only city of Uttarakhand that is sinking into the ground, there are many other cities that are going through similar conditions. According to some geologists, Karnaparag and Gopishevar located in Chamoli district, Ghanshali in Tehri district, Munshiari, Dharchaula in Pithorgarh district, Bhatwari in Uttarkashi and Nainital in Pauri district etc. can also sink into the earth like Joshimath.

Subsidence houses and buildings in any place (city/village) cause financial loss as well as physical and mental distress to the people. Many people have spent their lifetime earnings on building a house. In their old age, when they lose their houses, it is a big shock. Sometimes the government makes promises but takes years to fulfill them which can be very painful. In the case of Joshimath, the Uttarakhand government has promised to pay the house rent of Rs 4000 to the people for six months. Only the future will tell whether this promise will be fulfilled or not. The Uttarakhand government has ordered the demolition of damaged houses and buildings, but has only temporarily halted the projects that caused the accident, making it difficult to predict what will be decided in the future.

Now the question arises whether Joshimath can still be saved? The remaining houses of Joshimath can be saved if all the construction work going on in the Joshimath area is stopped. A large number of local trees should be planted to bind the soil of the hill slopes. People whose houses have been destroyed should be resettled at safe places. The city plan should be revised with the opinion of geologists keeping the topography of the area in mind. The central government and the state governments should ensure that the areas in which the cities can reach a vibrant state in the future should be well maintained from now onward and should not be delayed in taking measures. Roads and other constructions are required for the economic development of any region, but the development has to be done according to the geographical location of that region and the potential of its resources. Nature must be respected; it is only in its protection and sustainability that humans can survive. If the balance is tilted in favour of fast development and progress, things cannot last long. Development should be done for the people so that people are not deprived of their basic needs in the name of development.



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# Chaudhary Santokh Singh – An Obituary

I have been writing in my blogs about some of the known personalities who had contributed to the society and the polity in one way or the other. With some of them, I have had opportunity to meet and interact and there may be some with whom I did not have personal relationship at all. I do this as a voluntary activity to pay my respect and regard to the concerned person and for information and knowledge of my readers, if of any interest, without any instigation.

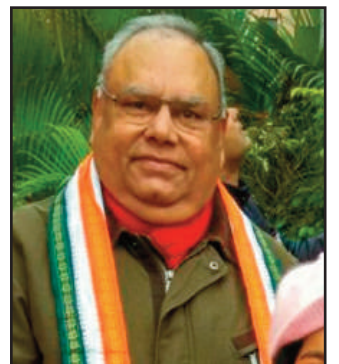
Today I will write about Chaudhary Santokh Singh, 76 years (June, 1946- January, 2023), a social and political personality of Punjab, particularly of the Doaba region, who passed away on January 14, during the call of his duty as a politician in the early morning of cold Saturday, in the ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra of Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi at Phillaur in Jalandhar. Chaudhary Santokh Singh was a suave and gentleman politician with whom I interacted many a times informally mostly on social events particularly on returning to my roots in Jalandhar after my long diplomatic career. I found him a polite but well informed politician particularly with regard to the matters of concern and interest to the community. He was an educated and well groomed face of the politics of have-nots and weaker sections of the society. Chaudhary Sahib, as popularly addressed by peo-

and Chaudhary Santokh Singh who is the subject matter of this write up as a tribute on his demise. The sons of Jagjit and Santokh, Surinder Singh former MLA and current MLA Vikramjit Singh respectively are also budding politicians holding the rich



to write on eminent personalities of the community, I wrote several times about Master Gurbanta Singh, Chaudhary Jagjit Singh and his son Surinder Singh in these columns which may be accessed at: <https://diplomaticititbits.blogspot.com/2015/08/chaudhary-jagjit-singh-tribute.html> and <https://diplomaticititbits.blogspot.com/2017/12/bit-s-and-pieces-as-i-please-10.html>

We have lost a leader of standing in the passing away of Chaudhary Santokh Singh. Obviously, everyone was socked to get the sad news. PM Narendra Modi, Speaker of Lok Sabha Om Birla, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann, Governor Banwari Lal Purohit, President of Congress Party, Malikarjun Kharge in their condolence messages to the bereaved family deeply mourned the death of a worthy son of the soil. Rahul Gandhi in who's Bharat Jodo Yatra Chaudhary Sahib died in harness not only joined at the funeral on January 15, done in his ancestral village Dhaliwal Qadian in the outskirts of Jalandhar to join his father Master Gur-



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ple, was one of the leading and established public figure belonging to Congress Party – MLA and Minister in Punjab in the Governments of CM Beant Singh and CM Amrinder Singh, two times Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) representing a prestigious Jalandhar parliamentary constituency besides adorning the coveted positions in the hierarchy of his Party. The sudden demise of Chaudhary Santokh Singh has definitely left a wide void in the dalit leadership which would take long time to fill.

Chaudhary Santokh Singh, a fellow alumnus of Jalandhar DAV College, a couple of years senior to me, was the scion of one of the premier political and social families of Punjab – his father Master Gurbanta Singh was himself a politician and community leaders of standing right from the 1920s having joined hands with Ghadrte Baba Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia in launching Ad-dharam Mandal and espousing the causes of depressed and oppressed segments of the society as a member of the Congress Party. He was a prominent dalit face in the Governments of Partap Singh Kairon and others and left a strong legacy which was successfully upheld by his sons, Chaudhary Jagjit Singh who also remained MLA, Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Punjab



family legacy. Chaudhary Santokh Singh was the leading light of the socio-cultural and educational endeavors of the family with his gracious wife Karamjit Kaur, an educationist and academic of repute herself in running the reputed institutions in Jalandhar namely; Guru Ravidass High School Kishanpura which also remained Hdqs. Of Ad-dharam Mandal for long years, Master Gurbanta Singh Higher Secondary School at Lambra, Master Gurbanta Singh Janta College Kartarpur and Guru Ravidass Bhawan Trust at Link Road. As I said, I tended

banta Singh and elder brother Jagjit Singh where they were put to eternal rest, paid a befitting tribute in his heartfelt condolence message and said "Shocked by the sudden demise of Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary. He was a down-to-earth hardworking leader, a pious person and a strong pillar of the Congress family, who dedicated his life to public service from Youth Congress to Member of Parliament. I express my condolences to the bereaved family,"

Let me add a bit more on a personal note. Gurburab of Guru Ravidass is coming on February 5. In the connection, my extended family arranges a Langar on the day of Shobha Yatra for almost 30 years on a designated spot on the route of the Yatra in Jalandhar.

The Chaudhary family generally led the Yatra, starting from Guru Ravidass Bhawan at Link Road, Chaudhary Santokh Singh, these days, as head of the family usually led the Yatra. He would invariably be invited to the Podium/Stage of the Langar for a message to the community. We would miss him badly and sadly this year. May Guru Ravidass grant peace to the departed soul of Chaudhary Sahib – The Yatra would go on.

जसि धज से कोई मकतल में गया; वह शान सलामत रहती है, यह जान तो आनी जानी है; इस जान की कोई बात नहीं



# SRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA (CA)

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Tel : (925) 439-2355

ਸਗਲ ਭਵਨ ਕੇ ਨਾਇਕਾ ਇਕੁ ਛਿਨੁ ਦਰਸੁ ਦਿਖਾਇ ਜੀ

January 22, 2023

**Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia  
138th Birth Anniversary**

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA) will be celebrating 138th birth anniversary of Great freedom fighter and founder of the Ad Dharm Mandal Punjab Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji on January 22nd, 2023. He supported and carried on Babasaheb's work in Punjab. He was a member of the Gaddar Party, a revolutionary organization fighting for India's Independence and his contributions to our community are incredible.

January 29, 2023

**Sukhmani Sahib Path and  
Langar Sewa  
by Bhai Ashok Kumar Chauhan**

Sukhmani Sahib Path and Langar

Sewa will be hosted by Bhai Ashok Kumar Chauhan and family for Chardi Kala of their family. May Baba ji bless Chauhan family.

**Parkash Utsav of Satguru Ravidass Ji  
February 3-4-5, 2023**

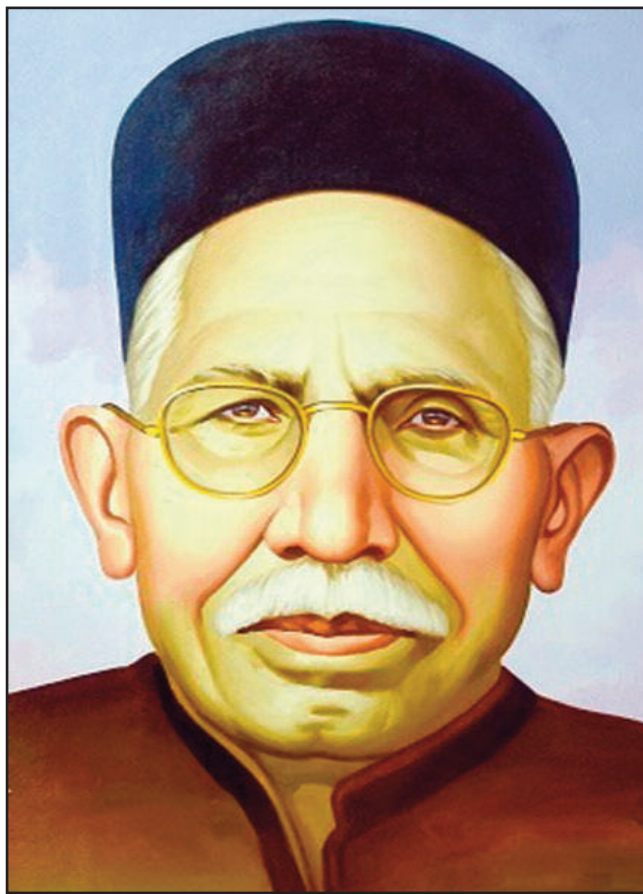
ਸਗਲ ਭਵਨ ਕੇ ਨਾਇਕਾ ਇਕੁ ਛਿਨੁ ਦਰਸੁ ਦਿਖਾਇ ਜੀ

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha (CA) Pittsburg is celebrating the 646th Parkash Utsav of SATGURU RAVIDASS JI on Sunday, February 5, 2023 at the temple as per program noted below:

**"NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA"**

**[www.srigururavidasstemple.com](http://www.srigururavidasstemple.com)**

**Sangat Sewadars**



**ARAMBH SHRI AKHAND PATH**

**February 3, 2023 (Friday) 9:30 AM  
Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony**

**PARBHAT PHERI - February 4, 2023  
(Saturday) at 7:00 AM.**

**Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony  
February 4, 2023 (Saturday)  
at 11:00 AM.**

**(Nishan Sahib Chola sewa by Bhai  
Balbir Bagha and Bibi Manjit Bagha)**

**BHOG SHRI AKHAND PATH  
February 5, 2023 (Sunday) 9:30 AM,  
KIRTAN DIWAN -**

**After Bhog Ceremony until 2:00 PM**

Sangat will perform Langer and Path Sewa for this program. Jatha of Giani Balwinder Singh ji's and other Kirtankars will

enhance this Kirtan Diwan along with distinguished Speakers and community leaders well versed with life and teachings of Satguru Ravidass ji.

Sangat will perform Langer and Path Sewa for this program. Jatha of **Giani Balwinder Singh ji's, Dhadi Jatha of Bhai Sukhwinder Singh 'Bilge-wale'** and other Kirtankars will enhance the Kirtan Diwan.

We need volunteers to help with this event. For STALLS or any SEWA, please contact **Vinod Kumar (President) 408- 718-2506, Kulwant Banga (Chairperson) 925-698-3059.** We need your help and support.

**Chairperson  
Kulwant Kaur Banga  
(925) 698-3059**

**President  
Vinod Kumar  
(408) 718-2506**

**General Secretary  
Dharam Pal Chonkria  
(925) 334-2877**

**Treasurer  
Sunita Bangar  
(415) 233-3319**