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An Eminent Scholar: Prof. (Dr.) Ronki Ram

Born on 14 April 1961 in village Sahri of Hoshiarpur district, Prof. Ronki Ram, an exalted scholar, is currently Dean Faculty of Arts & Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Professor of Political Science at Panjab University.

research work. With persistent zeal to learn more, he got selected for the prestigious Swedish scholarship to participate in 'An Advanced International Programme in Peace and Conflict Resolution' at the Uppsala University, Sweden in 1993. In 2016, he participated in the Warwick International Programme in Higher Education at the University of Warwick, UK. His fields of specialization include Identity Politics, Social Mobility, Dalit Politics, Indian Political Thought, Political Sociology, Peace and Conflict

an ICCR Chair Professor of Contemporary India Studies. He was twice President PUTA (Panjab University Teachers' Association). He visited many countries viz. U.S.A., U.K., Canada, Sweden, Netherlands, France, Belgium, German, Estonia, Lithuania, Bahrain, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Denmark, Japan and Poland. During his 2008 visit to the United States of America on the 117th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at the invitation of Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha of NY INC, he also visited the office of Ambedkar Times (California) and was guest of Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief of Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba Weeklies.

large number of book chapters, his two books in Punjabi: 'Dalit Chetna: Sarote Sarup' (Dalit Consciousness: Sources and Form) published by Chandigarh Lokgeet Prakashan, 2010, and 'Dalit Pachhan, Mukti ate Shaktikarn' (Dalit Identity, Emancipation and Empowerment) published by Punjabi University Publication Bureau, Patiala, provide in-depth background to the rise of Dalit consciousness in Punjab and its varied critical perspectives.



Dr Avtar Singh Machaki
91-83603-42500



Dr. Ronki Ram
in his office at
ICSSR (NWRC),
PU, Chandigarh

He is also member of Senate (PU and NIPER Chandigarh), UNESCO-Indian Social Science Commission, and Higher Education Council, UT, Chandigarh. He served as Honorary Director, (ICSSR-NWRC), member of the Syndicate and Board of Finance of Panjab University, Chandigarh. After completing his M.A. in Political Science (Government College Hoshiarpur), and M.Phil. (Panjab University), he earned his Ph.D. in International Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 1992. While sharing his experience in a lecture, he narrated his relentless efforts on the way to acquire higher education. By noticing his zeal to excel in the field of research, Professors Sushil Kumar and Dr K.P. Mishra of CIPOD/SIS, JNU enrolled him for Ph.D. He was awarded Punjab state scholarship for completing his Ph.D research work at the School of International Studies, JNU. His Ph.D. thesis was selected by ICSSR as an excellent research work and awarded Rs. 10000/- for publishing it in the form of a book. But he did not publish it, as he told that it still required more

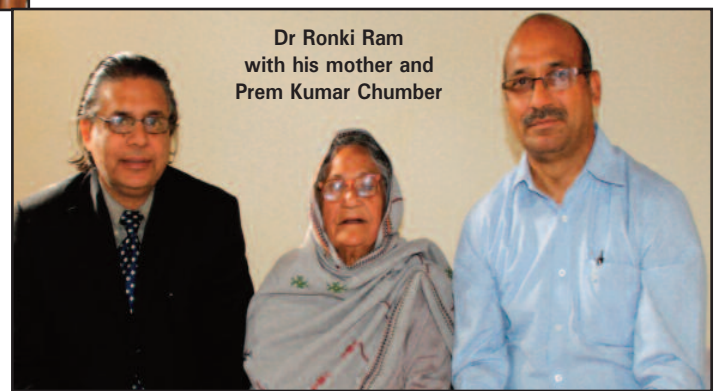


Dr. Ronki Ram
with his wife

Resolution and International Relations Theory. Starting his academic career as Research Associate at The Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, which is one of the oldest as well as largest Centers of The School of International Studies, JNU, he served as Lecturer in Political Science in Goa University, Goa, Gandhian and Peace Studies at Panjab University. Since 1988 he has been associated with the Dept of Political Science of PU. He also taught at the prestigious Leiden University Institute of Area Studies & International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands and at the Faculty of International Studies, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan as

tures on the life and teachings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, he contributed towards the public awareness about mission of a nihilation of caste and social justice. He deeply explored the unheeded legacy of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's Ad Dharm Movement and its immense contributions in bringing Dalit consciousness at the grassroots. Many of his research articles have been published in Peer-reviewed International and National Research Journals and leading newspapers. Apart from a

This article is excerpted from his detailed profile. His contribution towards humanity and social studies cannot be illustrated in limited words. Being such a great personality, he never exhibited an inflated feeling of pride and superiority over others. By surrendering his self, he believes in the ultimate grace of God. He is ever most loving and an amazing pathfinder for the research scholars. He has a tremendous capability to critically explore his areas of research. He devoted his entire aca-



Dr Ronki Ram
with his mother and
Prem Kumar Chumber

ademic life towards scholarly works in the field of Dalit studies.

Treasure of humanity, ever smiling, kind, humble and generous character, Prof. Ronki Ram is a jewel in the crown of Panjab University, Chandigarh.



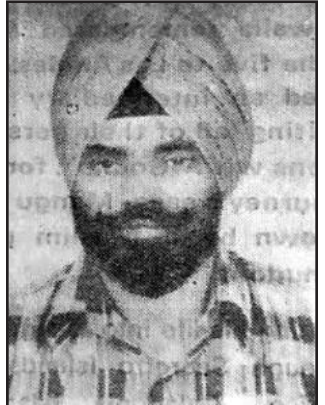
At Dera Baba Isser Das of Vill Kahri where Dr. Ronki Ram used to study along with Marh and Jiwan Das Mandir during his College time. With Bharat Lal (brother) son & daughter.



Dr. Ronki Ram honoured at Head Office of Ambedkar Times in California (USA) at the residence of Prem K. Chumber, Editor-in- Chief: Ambedkar Times



BABU MANGU RAM MUGOWALIA - A PROFILE



Prof. G.S. BALL (Late)
M.A., M.Phil.
President, Ambedkar Mission Society, Punjab (Regd)

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia combined in his personage the qualities of a fierce revolutionary, a staunch patriot, a devoted crusader against social evils and above all a true humanitarian through. Born among the lowliest of the low, he crossed all social barriers dauntlessly and suffered all sorts of indignities of life and made his way to reach the pinnacle of greatness.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia represents a rare example among the revolutionaries Ghadarite philosophy. In those dark days, it was rare for an untouchable to understand the essence of revolution against imperialism. But he rose to the occasion and proved his mettle. He joined the Ghadar Party when he went to California (U.S.A.) in 1909 A.D. as its active member. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, it appears desired an establishment of society which must be based on Equality. And he saw one being fought for by the Ghadarites as they had abolished all social distinctions among themselves first which, perhaps, is not the practice with the modern community or who profess change of the sort. As Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia spoke of the Ghadar Party, "It was a new society, we were all treated as equals".

As a Ghadarite, he took part in the organizational activities at first but in 1915 A.D. an occasion came when he volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites in a dangerous mission involving smuggled weapons shipped from California to the Punjab. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was chosen by the leader of the Ghadar Party at that time. Mr. Sohan Singh Bhakna, the Secretary of Ghadar Party, whom Babu M.R. Mugowalia remembered as "Godha" sent the five to Los Angeles, where they boarded an intermediary boat, after depositing all of their personal identifications with "Godha", for the rest of the journey's saga. Mangu Ram would be known by a pseudonym, "Nizamuddin".

Putting his life into danger and travelling through Secorro Islands and halting at Mexico, Caladonia Islands, Manila, Singapore and again to Manila where he stayed for sometime and finally to India where he reached in 1925 A.D.

It is after 1925, that his career as a crusader against untouchability and casteism began. As he travelled from Ceylon to Punjab through Madurai, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Sitara, Nagpur and Delhi, he observed the condition of the untouchables on route and was dismayed to see these people being treated so badly. In Madurai, when Babu Mangu Ram visited the Meenakshi Temple, he was told to be careful not to touch Achhut (Untouchables) since they assumed by his dress that he was of a decent caste. By the time Babu M.R. Mugowalia had reached the Punjab, he was convinced that there was need for social change.

Babu M.R. Mugowalia wrote to the Ghadar Party headquarters in

San Francisco about the difficult conditions of the Untouchables in India. He wrote them that their freedom was more important to him than Indian freedom. According to Babu Mugowalia, leaders of the Ghadar Party then disengaged him to work with Scheduled Castes (Untouchables), and wrote him that they would support him in his tasks. Thus, in a new context, the old revolutionary from Fresno continued the Ghadar spirit. This clearly shows that even Ghadarites had realized the need to awaken these slaves of Indian Society - the then Untouchables.

When he started his task of social reform i.e. establishing schools for untouchables poors, he began to look for an alternative

which may provide a lever for the unity of the untouchable poors and then to demonstrate through that alternative the political presence of the untouchables in the politics of Punjab of those days. It must be remembered that Punjab was already witnessing political upheaval and each class was trying to reap at political harvesting. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, along with other conscious men from his class, then founded on June 11-12, 1926 A.D. at his village Mugowal Ad-Dharma as the alternative.

Ad-Dharma's main aim was to create a feeling of identity among the untouchable class which numbered at that time about one fourth of the entire population of India. Babu M.R. Mugowalia and the early leaders of the Ad-Dharma perceived their first task to be the creation of a new religion. In their initial meetings, even before they developed an organisational structure, they labored over a basic ideological theme upon which they could build a system of religious ideas and symbols. Its central motive was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a quaum, a distinct religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and that the quaum had existed from time immemorial. It was a myth of power addressed to the people without power. It was intended to communicate the sense of strength that Babu M.R. Mugowalia felt belonged to his caste fellows by right. As he explained, "The untouchables have their powers: communal pride (qaumiat), religion (mazhab), and organisation (mazlis)". The hope was that these powers could be fostered and splintered

through force of ideology.

Ad-Dharma was almost Babu M.R. Mugowalia's show. It inspired the lowliest of the low to fight for equality, economic, social and political in a converted way. The Ad-Dharma, under the dynamic leadership of a true revolutionary like Babu Mugowalia, was an aggressive and autonomous movement or compared to similar movements that took birth in other parts of the country. Within a short span of time, it jolted the 'haves-not' through its rallies, publications, deputations and demonstrations to demand new government policies or to protest upper caste discriminations. The most influential political action of the movement that

can be listed as one of its great achievements, was to get Scheduled Castes registered as a followers of new religion. In 1931 A.D. census, almost half a million of them registered as "Ad-Dharmi" rather than Hindus or Muslim or Sikh. Mr. Mark Juergensmeyer writes as, "Later in the 1930, their political influence turned towards electoral politics, in alliance first with the predominantly Muslim Unionist Party and then with the Congress. It was the logical consequence of the political awakening created among them by Ad-Dharma Movement in Punjab, whose undisputable leader was Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia.

Thus through several means, then, the Ad-Dharmis presented to its followers a vision of a world which both confirmed and transformed the rude experience of untouchables. And in doing so it implied that a different sort of world was coming into being, for the separate identity so defined signaled hope for a society in which social groups carried no inherent mark of judgment and in which the benefits of progress could be shared by all.

Cultural and humanistic aspects of the personality of Babu M.R. Mugowalia were even more glaring. As a humanist his vision of the world was near to rationalist view of the universe (we can even say materialistic as well though in rudimentary form), he believed in the inherent equality of all human-beings; he was against all sorts of exploitations of man against man; and he earnestly devoted his bodily energy and financial resources in founding a new society based upon the gospel of equality. His ideas about the universe and equality of all men are echoed in

the Ad-Dharma Mandala (1926-1931) report in the preparation of which Babu Mugowalia had played a big role. It reads as follows:

"Nature (Qudrat Ka Mela) created human beings from original source (Adi) at the time that it created all beings in the earth. The knowledge of moral behaviour (karm-dharm) was also given to them at that time by Nature. Nature made humans superior to animals, but among humans all were equal.

In the beginning, when Nature created human beings, there was no discrimination. There were no differences and no quarrels. In particular, there were no such concepts as high or low caste. God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony. Everyone believed in one dharma which Nature had given then through intellect and knowledge". Babu M.R. Mugowalia did not mean by the word 'God' as something supernatural beings who is said to have created the world and since then regulating it as is believed in theology. Mark Juergensmeyer makes it quite clear in his work, Religion As Social Vision, thus: "Occasionally there is mention of God in a more formal sense". "God (Ishwar) was meditating; all was in harmony". And Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia made a practice of using the name Adi-Purkh for the divine - literally "the originator", or the "Original Being". All these designations, although they are theistic terms, are impersonal in intent.

He, all his life, stood like a rock against social evils such as untouchability, caste-system, women slavery, exploitation etc. His life in cultural side symbolized with the creation of new social virtues such as women's rights, the value of education, abstinence from alcohol and drugs - which were 'nothing less than a new concept of moral order'. Thus Babu M.R. Mugowalia, a Ghadarite revolutionary, social crusader, political activist and strategist and as a humanitarian fought for the establishment of an ideal society till he breathed last. The noble way of commemorating celebrating the 99th Birth Anniversary (for that matter every birth anniversary) of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - who desired his movement to coincide with Ambedkarite Movement to give the movement of depressed classes a country-wide stature, is to emulate him. Therefore, let us resolve to emulate the great Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia - patriot, social revolutionary, a successful strategist and, above all, a humanist.

Courtesy: Souvenir Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia 99th Birth Anniversary published by MR. C. L. Chumber



UNPUBLISHED PREFACE THE BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA

Source Courtesy: Columbia University
www.columbia.edu

April 6, 1956

[Text provided by Eleanor Zelliot, as prepared by Vasant Moon]

A question is always asked to me: how I happen[ed] to take such [a] high degree of education. Another question is being asked: why I am inclined towards Buddhism. These questions are asked because I was born in a community known in India as the "Untouchables." This preface is not the place for answering the first question. But this preface may be the place for answering the second question.

The direct answer to this question is that I regard the Buddha's Dhamma to be the best. No religion can be compared to it. If a modern man who knows science must have a religion, the only religion he can have is the Religion of the Buddha. This conviction has grown in me after thirty-five years of close study of all religions.

How I was led to study Buddhism is another story. It may be interesting for the reader to know. This is how it happened.

My father was a military officer, but at the same time a very religious person. He brought me up under a strict discipline. From my early age I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi, though his father was Ramanandi. As such, he did not believe in Murti Puja (Idol Worship), and yet he performed Ganapati Puja--of course for our sake, but I did not like it. He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house to hear the Katha. This went on for a long number of years.

The year I passed the English Fourth Standard Examination, my community people wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a public meeting to congratulate me. Compared to the state of education in other communities, this was hardly an occasion for celebration. But it was felt by the organisers that I was the first boy in my community to reach this stage; they thought that I had reached a great height. They went to my father to ask for his permission. My father flatly refused, saying that such a thing would inflate the boy's head; after all, he has only passed an examination and done nothing more. Those who wanted to celebrate the event were greatly disappointed. They, however, did not give way. They went to Dada Keluskar, a personal friend of my father, and asked him to intervene. He agreed. After a little argumentation, my father yielded, and the meeting was held. Dada Keluskar presided. He was a literary person of his time. At the end of his address he gave me as a gift a copy of his book on the life of the Buddha, which he had written for the Baroda Sayajirao Oriental Series. I read the book with great interest, and was greatly impressed and moved by it.

I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist lit-

erature. After this, I was determined to ask my father this question. One day I did. I asked my father why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and repeated the stories of the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "You must not ask such silly questions. You are only boys; you must do as you are told." My father was a Roman Patri-

ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana."

I could see that there was some force in my father's argument. But I was not satisfied. I told my father that I did not like any of the figures in [the] Mahabharata. I said, "I do not like Bhishma and Drona, nor Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did quite the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. His life is nothing but a series of frauds. Equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine



arch, and exercised most extensive Patria Pretestas over his children. I alone could take a little liberty with him, and that was because my mother had died in my childhood, leaving me to the care of my auntie.

So after some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had evidently prepared himself for a reply. He said, "The reason why I ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana is this: we belong to the Untouchables, and you are likely to develop an inferiority complex, which is natural. The value of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana lies in removing this inferiority complex. See Drona and Karna--they were small men, but to what heights they rose! Look at Valmiki--he was a Koli, but he became the author of [the] Ramayana. It is for removing this inferiority complex that I

his conduct in the Sarupnakha [= Shurpanakha] episode [and] in the Vali Sugriva episode, and his beastly behaviour towards Sita." My father was silent, and made no reply. He knew that there was a revolt.

This is how I turned to the Buddha, with the help of the book given to me by Dada Keluskar. It was not with an empty mind that I went to the Buddha at that early age.

I had a background, and in reading the Buddhist Lore I could always compare and contrast. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and His Dhamma.

The urge to write this book has a different origin. In 1951 the Editor of the Mahabodhi Society's Journal of Calcutta asked me to write an article for the Vaishak Number. In that article I argued that the Buddha's Religion

was the only religion which a society awakened by science could accept, and without which it would perish. I also pointed out that for the modern world Buddhism was the only religion which it must have to save itself. That Buddhism makes [a] slow advance is due to the fact that its literature is so vast that no one can read the whole of it. That it has no such thing as a bible, as the Christians have, is its greatest handicap. On the publication of this article, I received many calls, written and oral, to write such a book. It is in response to these calls that I have undertaken the task.

To disarm all criticism I would like to make it clear that I claim no originality for the book. It is a compilation and assembly plant. The material has been gathered from various books. I would particularly like to mention Ashvaghosha's Buddhavita [= Buddhacharita], whose poetry no one can excel. In the narrative of certain events I have even borrowed his language.

The only originality that I can claim in [=is] the order of presentation of the topics, in which I have tried to introduce simplicity and clarity. There are certain matters which give headache[s] to the student of Buddhism. I have dealt with them in the Introduction.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to those who have been helpful to me. I am very grateful to Mr. Nanak Chand Rattua of Village Sakrulli and Mr. Parkash Chand of Village Nangal Khurd in the district of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) for the burden they have taken upon themselves to type out the manuscript. They have done it several times. Shri Nanak Chand Rattu took special pains and put in very hard labour in accomplishing this great task. He did the whole work of typing etc. very willingly and without caring for his health and [=or] any sort of remuneration. Both Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Mr. Parkash Chand did their job as a token of their greatest love and affection towards me. Their labours can hardly be repaid. I am very much grateful to them.

When I took up the task of composing the book I was ill, and [I] am still ill. During these five years there were many ups and downs in my health. At some stages my condition had become so critical that doctors talked of me as a dying flame. The successful rekindling of this dying flame is due to the medical skill of my wife and Dr. Malvankar.

They alone have helped me to complete the work. I am also thankful to Mr. M. B. Chitnis, who took [a] special interest in correcting [the] proof and to go [=in going] through the whole book.

I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism. The other books are: (i) Buddha and Karl Marx; and (ii) Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.

B. R. Ambedkar
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Punjab Dalit Women Entrepreneurial Dreams Destroyed As Pandemic Pushes Them To Debt; No Govt Support

Since the first lockdown in March, Dalit women working in hosiery industry in Punjab who took loans to start their own business haven't got a single order. Facing humiliation for non repayment of loan, they have started protests across Punjab. The Logical Indian brings the ground report.

Situated in a maze of lanes in Sukhpura village of Barnala district in Punjab, Sarabjit Kaur sits with at least four elderly women of the same village in the veranda of her house to discuss how to go ahead with knitting sweaters and woolens of children during current circumstances. Sarabjit Kaur, a Dalit woman like many others like her in Punjab had dreamt of making it big by starting her own small business of knitting after availing loan from a micro-financing company.

While she started knitting woolens 10 years ago, she took loans from private financing companies to make additions including machinery and manpower. Loans are also given to self-help groups by these finance companies.

Sarabjit tells how she and five other women who work with her in the knitting business used to earn their living by taking up orders from the Ludhiana hosiery industry. "We knit sweaters and other woolens and earn our living but soon after the lockdown was imposed in March, our dreams have dashed to the ground. The business has so far not been recovered and there is not even a single order from hosiery," she lamented.

Despite any season, orders for woolens keep coming as the hosiery industry, concentrated in Ludhiana, starts getting orders for woolens from across the country in June. While most of the material is prepared in high-tech machines in Ludhiana, some goods are prepared by women like Sarabjit in different cities of Punjab.

With no sale, Sarabjit and many other Dalit women like her have become helpless in re-paying the loans to the micro-financing companies. "Staff from the finance company visits our home every now and then and humiliates us to repay the

instalments. When there is no sale, how will I pay back the loan," she said to The Logical Indian.

Many Dalit women who have an entrepreneurial spirit avail loans from private companies to add to the family income. Dalit population in the state is predominantly rural and found in high concentration in Malwa region or Southern Punjab. Majority of the Dalit men are employed in informal sector while the women do menial jobs.

As a large number of men lost



their jobs or were not able to get work due to Covid-19 pandemic, it were the Dalit women who were taking care of the families by doing menial works in Punjab. Many women had availed loans from private companies to buy cows and buffaloes to earn an additional income apart from working at the homes of high caste 'Jat' Sikhs.

As per the census of 2011, Dalits form 88.60 lakh individuals out of total 2.77 crore population of Punjab. The total population of Dalit women is 42.20 lakh. Out of the total 5.23 lakh families Below Poverty Line (BPL), Dalits form 3.21 lakh families meaning that Dalits are the major victim of poverty in Punjab.

Another Dalit, Paramjit Kaur from Barnala who had availed a loan to purchase a buffalo has to sell the animal during lockdown as she was not able to repay the instalments. "I again availed a loan to buy a cow at

a cost of Rs 25,000 during the lockdown period but can sell milk at a cost of only Rs 20 – 25 a litre in the village. This has created difficulty for me as the finance company sends their employees to recover the loan even during this time when some relaxations should be extended to the poor," said Paramjit.

Dalits to protest

Dalit and workers organizations have now decided to raise their voice against the finance companies and have demanded not to pressurize

"The government neither helped them financially nor were their loans waived off due to which thousands of families are under stress," said Ramgarh.

"Like so many farmers have committed suicide when they were unable to repay the loans in Punjab, we are afraid that these women may follow the same path as the finance companies were harassing them to get the instalments. In some cases women were asked to sell their household goods to pay instalments" said Makhan Singh Ramgarh.

However, experts believe that taking loans from micro-financing companies becomes necessary for Dalit population of Punjab as they do not own any property to be mortgaged with the government agencies or banks. "Institutional agencies issuing loans demand guarantee before providing loans.

These poor Dalits have small homes in which they live and are left with no option but to take a loan from micro-financing companies," said Prof Gian Singh, economist and retired professor of Economics department, Punjabi University, Patiala.

He said that despite many promises, successive governments in Punjab have failed to do justice with the Dalit population of the state due to which their condition is still deplorable. "Government should enter the scene and rescue the Dalit women who are trapped in the net of loans by ensuring minimum income and providing jobs under MGN-REGA," said Gian.

Dalit women were now even threatening the government to face consequences if their issues are not resolved. Kiranpal Kaur, a resident of Barnala says that political parties come to them every five years and forget them after elections. "We will ensure that those political parties who do not fulfil their promises are called out and their leaders boycotted during elections," said Kaur who had availed a loan for a sewing machine.

**Source Courtesy: The Logical Indian
Arjun Sharma (Contributor)
21 August 2020**

K. C. Sulekh Congratulates Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor's mail

I am deeply touched to see the message of good wishes you have so warmly sent to me on my 93rd birthday via your esteemed paper "Ambedkar Times" of 22 July 2020. Again, I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude to read the illuminating piece penned by my friend Dr. Ronki Ram who, besides wishing me well on this occasion, has gone eloquently descriptive to put on record my long walk of life I have traversed so far on the path of Ambedkar Mission.

It was really an exhilarating experience for a budding youth like me at that stage to come into contact and work whole heartedly for several years under the benign guidance of the great Sav-

our in the service of downtrodden masses.

Here I also wish to put on record my full throated appreciation for the all-out help adding strength to my elbow in collating and compiling my staggered thoughts and experiences into a book- my autobiography "Mera Jivan Safar, Ambedkar Mission Di Rah Te" that was released in the Punjab University Chandigarh on February 5 2020 this year. Your own contribution by way of financial backup cannot be scaled down and forgotten.

I have received so many messages from my dear and near ones and also from friends wishing for my well-being.

With that, I really feel heartily elevated.



I thank them all and wish them well to carry forward the mission of Baba Saheb in right spirit.

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Not Free to Choose: Restrictions on the Freedom of Conscience of India's Dalits

A section of Indian society is being forced to choose between religious beliefs on one hand and protections and special benefits under the law on the other.

Seventy years ago this month, India as a young nation passed a presidential order to ensure fundamental freedoms and rights for Dalit people. However, the same order also prevented them from exercising their freedom of conscience and belief.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 identified the caste communities – also referred to as Scheduled Castes or Dalits – who have experienced extreme social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the traditional practice of “untouchability.” They were provided with affirmative action benefits under various government policies, including education and jobs, political representation and even protection under special penal provisions.

However, paragraph 3 of the presidential order limited the classification of Scheduled Castes initially only to Hindus. Subsequently, the order was amended to include Sikhs in 1956 and Buddhists in 1990. This means, if a Dalit converts to Sikhism or Buddhism, his or her protections will remain. But

if they choose to adopt Christianity or Islam, they will no longer have access to the affirmative actions and other benefits.

This clause presumes that the suffering of a Dalit ends after they convert to Islam or Christianity.

The rationale seems to be that Islam and Christianity are more egalitarian religions and, therefore, a Dalit would not face the same discrimination in their new-found faith. Sadly, Dalits converting to Islam and Christianity have found that their “dalitness” clung to them and followed them, even after their religious conversion.

In May 2018, a young Dalit Christian, Kevin Joseph, was murdered by his wife's relatives in Kerala. His only crime was that he had dared to love and marry an “upper-caste” woman. Principal sessions court judge C. Jayachandran noted in the judgment that the motive of the murder was caste prejudice. This was one of many incidents that newspapers routinely report on.

“Though Christianity does not acknowledge caste system, the evils of caste system in some States are as

prevalent as in Hindu society especially among the converts,” noted the Supreme Court of India in 1992 in a landmark judgment in *Indra Sawhney and Others v. Union of India and Others*. “In Andhra Pradesh, there are Harijan Christians, Reddy Christians, Kamma Christians etc. Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, there are Pillai Christians, Marvar Christians, Nadar Christians and Harijan Christians etc. That is to say all the converts to Christianity have not divested or set themselves off from their caste labels and crossed the caste barrier but carry with them the banners of their caste labels. Like Hindus, they interact and have their familial relationship and marital alliances only within the converted caste groups,” the judgment added.

In a petition before the Supreme Court of India, two apex bodies of the church in India – the National Council of Churches in India

and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, together representing close to 20 million Christians – have expressed their deep dismay at how the church in India continues to struggle with caste practices.

Even otherwise, Dalit Christians do not live in isolation. While they may interact with other Christians on Sunday mornings, their weekdays are filled with social interactions with all sections of society. Their names still betray their caste. And they are marked as both Christians and Dalits – neither of the two identities helps them, as the Christian minority has also been subjected to political targeting and propaganda.

“Non-Hindu minorities living in pre-dominantly Hindu India could not escape from its dominant social and cultural influences. Thus, both from within and without, caste amongst non-Hindu communities received continuous sustenance and stimulus,” stated the report of the Mandal Commission (the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission).

“Caste is in fact a social phenomenon shared by almost all In-

dian communities irrespective of their religious persuasions,” noted the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM), under the chairmanship of Justice Ranganath Misra, in its report in 2007. “Many of the particular castes are found simultaneously in various religious communities, equally facing problems of social degradation and mistreatment both by their co-religionists and the others.”

This stranglehold continues because the entire premise of the caste system is not about how individuals view themselves, but rather how the society does so. The prevalent prejudice and bias against them are based on the traditional work undertaken by them or due to their birth into a particular family. The caste system is deeply entrenched into the Indian mind, governing many areas of social interaction.

This results in double vulner-

ability for Dalit Christians without the protection of the law. According to MapViolence, a violence-tracking website, Dalit Christians have reported frequent social boycotts and violence on account of their caste and faith identity.

The problem is so acute that the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution observed in 2002, “In view of the fact that in some parts of the country, particularly in the south, converts to Christianity from specific SCs are subjected to crimes and atrocities as their exact Hindu counterparts are (difference of religion making no difference in this regard).” The Commission recommended that the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 be amended to include “converts to Christianity from Scheduled Castes.” But the act was never amended.

Dalit communities had been told for centuries that they had no agency, they could not make the most fundamental decisions freely about where they work, who they marry and how they worship. They were denied entry into homes, schools and places of worship.

In an insidious manner, paragraph 3 of the presidential order works in the same way even today. It penalizes Dalits for choosing a religion or rejecting a faith tradition. It forces them to continue to operate in a religious tradition by failing to allow them the ability to make a free choice.

It is unjust to be forced to choose between one's religious beliefs on one hand and protections and special benefits under the law on the other. The State should never force any person to compromise on their religious beliefs. This is a clear violation of the protections under the Consti-

tution of India and numerous international conventions.

Religious conversions are an act of human agency. The ability to change one's religious beliefs or to express one's deeply held belief lies at the core of what it means to be human. The conversion of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit man who oversaw the framing of India's Consti-

tution, to Buddhism was as much a political act as an expression of his religious beliefs.

Freedom of conscience is the bedrock of any democratic society. Freedom of religion is entwined with the freedom of association, the freedom of speech and expression, freedom of equality and the right to life itself.

The NCRLM is right in recommending that the government “completely de-link the Scheduled Caste status from religion and make the Scheduled Castes net fully religion-neutral like that of the Scheduled Tribes.”

The 1950 Presidential Order was meant to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of Dalits, but sadly operates to limit the freedom of conscience and belief.

The government should remedy this at the earliest so that all persons are able to enjoy the rights protected under the Constitution of India.

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Tehmina Arora is a journalist
with Stories Asia**



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Dalits have to pay a heavy price if they choose to exercise the most basic of freedoms – the freedom of conscience and the freedom to follow the religion of one's choice. They lose protections and benefits.

Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings) - Volume V

Wednesday, the 27th August 1947

REPORT ON MINORITY RIGHTS

Shri K. M. Munshi : (Bombay : General) : Mr. President, Sir, I move the following amendment to the amendment of Pandit Bhargava :

"That in amendment No. 19 of List I, dated 25th August 1947, for the word 'seat' the word 'representation' be substituted", the following words be substituted: -

"after the word 'schedule' the words 'and the section of the Hindu Community referred to in paragraph 1A hereof' be inserted."

The words of the proviso are these-

"Provided that as a general rule, there shall be reservation of seats for the minorities shown in the schedule."

and if my amendment was adopted it would read as follows:

"reservation of seats for the minorities shown in the schedule and the section of the Hindu Community referred to in paragraph 1A hereof."

I have also moved an amendment to No. 85 whereby the item of Scheduled castes is going to be removed to a separate para. No. 1A and not included in the schedule.

The object of this amendment is to clarify the position of the so-called, Scheduled Castes. The word 'minorities' so far as international treaties and international law is concerned, is only restricted to racial, linguistic and religious minorities. The Harijans, generally known as Scheduled Castes, are neither a racial minority nor a linguistic minority, not certainly a religious minority. Therefore in the interest of exact phraseology this amendment was found necessary. It was only, as members of the House will remember, when the Government of India Act was moved that the definition of 'minorities' was so extended by Sir Samuel Hoare as to include every minority which the Governor thought fit to consider as minority. This is a very-very mischievous extension of the term and my amendment seeks to clarify the position that so far as the Scheduled Castes are concerned, they are not minorities in the strict meaning of the term; that the Harijans are part and parcel of Hindu community, and the safeguards are given to them to protect their rights only till they are completely absorbed in the Hindu Community.

Another reason is this, and I might mention that that reason is based on the decisions which have already been taken by this House. The distinction between Hindu Community other than Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Castes is the barrier of untouchability. Now, by the Fundamental Rights which we have accepted, untouchability is prohibited by law and its practice is made a criminal offence under the law of the Federation. We have also accepted in the Fundamental Rights that no public place should be prohibited to anyone by reason of his birth. So far as the Federation is concerned, we have removed the artificial barrier between

one section of the Hindu Community and the other.

In view of those facts, any safeguard as a minority, so far as the Scheduled Castes are concerned, is illogical and will possibly prevent their complete absorption in the Hindu fold. I therefore submit that the amendment which I am moving clearly defines the position.

Mr. H. J. Khandekar (C. P. & Berar: General) : * [Mr. President my amendment is very simple, and it is:-

That in Appendix 5 wherever the word "population" has appeared in the proviso to para. 1 at the end of para. 3 (C), and in para. 5 the following words should be added after that ward:-

"In the case of the Scheduled Castes according to 1931 census". I want to tell the House my special reason for moving this amendment. India's population is increasing day by day. If we review the period between the census of 1911 and that of 1941, we discover that India's population has reached the figure of 40 crores. I want to place before you a fact which you all know that the Scheduled Castes belong to the lower strata which is in no way behind higher classes, in respect of increasing its numbers. If one child is born to a caste Hindu then four are born to a Scheduled Caste Hindu but it is very sad and surprising that the Population of Harijans has been decreasing since 1931. I do not know why it is so. When we sought the reason for it we discovered that in 1941 Census in the provinces of Bengal and Bihar. some of our Muslim brethren got the Scheduled Castes registered as Muslims on the one hand and Caste Hindus got them registered as Hindus on the other. And this is the reason why ever since the 1931 Census our population has been continuously declining and in 1941 census the strength of Scheduled Castes was less than in the 1931 Census by 2 crores. Therefore I have to place this amendment before you, because the minorities are getting their rights in the provincial and Central Assemblies according to their numerical strength, and if we get our rights according to 1941 census Man our representation will be much less. The reason is that according to 1931 census we are few but even that is tolerable as compared to the 1941 census, when the latter was taken the war was on and it is possible that the census might not have been taken correctly, especially of the Scheduled Castes. Caste Hindus got Scheduled Castes registered as Hindus and the Muslims got them registered as Muslims. Therefore, I suspect that the 1941 census is absolutely wrong. Not only I but the whole Harijan community throughout the country loudly proclaimed that our strength as shown in the 1941 Census was wrong and that our representation should not be based on that figure. Now there is no way out except that the mover of this resolution may give us an assurance that

census will be taken again, in which case I will be Prepared to withdraw my amendment. If the census had been taken fairly then our strength would have been much more, but as regards 1941 census, I suspect that it is not a correct census so far as we are concerned. From this standpoint I put this amendment before you. I am aware that every member of this House has great sympathy for Scheduled castes. I have heard many speeches. Many leaders sympathise with us, but that is of no use, if it is merely verbal. People say and I also affirm that we are a part and parcel of the Hindu community. If you oppose this amendment of mine, it will only mean that you are not prepared to give us anything more than what we are getting according to the 1941 census. When you say that they are Hindus and that a few seats less or a few seats more does not make much difference, then I will request that if under the 1931 census we get a few seats more, the House should not hesitate to give us those seats. Therefore, I request the Honourable Mover that he may accept my amendment and give to the Scheduled Castes rights according to 1931 census. With these words I hope the Honourable Mover Will accept my amendment.]*

Shri V. I. Muniswami Pillai : Sir, my friend Mr. Munshi made it clear that the Scheduled Castes form a minority. Still they are not considered to be a minority in view of the fact that they do not come under the three categories of the minorities mentioned. I may tell this House, Sir, till the 16th of May the Scheduled Castes were considered to be a minority in this respect, but later on when the Cabinet Mission came, by an unknown process they have eliminated the Depressed Classes,

I mean the Scheduled Castes, and have taken only the other communities into account. But my friend, Mr. Munshi made it clear that since there is the disability for Scheduled Castes, they will be given all the advantages as a minority and they will on no account be deprived of the facilities that are required by them. In that view, Sir, I think my amendment can be accepted. I move.

An Honourable Member: Mr. President, Sir, I would like to know how an amendment to an amendment could be moved unless the original amendment has been moved.

Mr. President: It is a consequential thing. Therefore I have allowed this opportunity of moving it now.

Shri S. Nagappa: Sir, Amendment No. 88. My friend Mr. Khandekar just now moved that the Census of 1931.....

Shri K. M. Munshi: I rise to a point of order. This is with reference to para. 3. Now we are on para. 1 in the schedule.

Shri S. Nagappa: That was moved.

Shri K. M. Munshi: That was

an amendment to para. 1. The House is debating at the moment para. 1.

Shri S. Nagappa: I am saying it is a similar amendment.

Mr. President: When we come to that, you can move it.

Shri K. M. Munshi: Sir, I have got another amendment. My amendment No. 2 relates to para. 1. It simply carries out the scheme of the first amendment that I have moved.

Mr. President: That is consequential.

Shri K. M. Munshi : Yes, carrying out the same idea. if you will permit me, Sir, to move formally. The amendment which I move is this:

"That the words '7. Scheduled Castes' be deleted from the schedule and the following para, be added after it:

'1A The section of the Hindu community referred to as Scheduled Castes as defined in Schedule I to the Government of India Act, 1935 shall have the same rights and benefits which are herein provided for minorities specified in the Schedule to para 1'."

This is consequential to Harijans being removed from the category of minorities and placed as an independent category as a section 'of the Hindus. I move the amendment.

Mr. B. Das : Sir, I wish to move an amendment to the amendment moved by Mr. K. M. Munshi. He said, "The section of the Hindu community referred to as Scheduled Castes as defined in Schedule I to the Government of India Act, 1935". I wish to move this amendment: Instead of "defined in Schedule I to the Government of India Act, 1935", the words "to be defined in the Scheduled to the Union Constitution Act."

I do not wish the Government of India Act to be repeated. The Committee has gone into the Schedule of the Government of India Act which is referred to, and we can accept it as a Schedule of the Union Constitution Act.

This is the amendment I move. The words "Government of India Act, 1935" be dropped and the words "to be defined in the Schedule of the Union Constitution Act" be inserted. That is the amendment I wish to move.

Shri K. Santhanam (Madras: General) : Sir, I may offer one remark with regard to the latest amendment moved by Mr. B. Das. If we had prepared a Schedule, then it would have

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been relevant. Without a Schedule, to refer a matter to a non-existent schedule, I do not think is quite regular. Reference to Government of India Act, 1935 is proper because it gives a concrete reference.

The points which I wanted to make are three. First, in this provision there is the word "legislatures". I want to know if it is meant that this reservation should be both for the Lower and the Upper Houses. assume that the reservation is meant only for the Lower House, because, under the constitution which we have adopted, the Upper Houses in the case of the provinces are to be elected on the Irish model while in the case of the Federation, it is to be on the model of the American Senate, elected by the provincial legislatures. I do not think that reservation should have an application to the Upper Houses of the legislatures and I think it may be clarified by saying "various Assemblies"

Another point which I would like to point out is that this clause should not be made applicable to East Punjab and West Bengal. The conditions there are peculiar as a result of the partition. We do not know, exactly what is the distribution of population there today. Unless we know the distribution of population, any such principle as reservation of seats on the basis of population would have unpredictable effects and therefore, until we know exactly the distribution of population in these two provinces, I think this clause should not be made applicable. I think, as a general rule, these two provinces should be treated as exempted from the present Report.

Another point which I would like to impress upon the mover of this amendment is that if in a constituency, a minority community for which reservation is provided is in a majority, that constituency without any reservation should be treated as a reserved seat. Suppose for instance, in a District, Muslims, are in a majority and that is a constituency. There are one or two seats. There is no reason why there should be a reservation in that constituency. I think for all practical purposes it should be included. in the number of seats reserved. Unless it is done, it may lead to untoward consequences. Suppose in the whole District there is a Muslim majority and you have got three or five seats to that District. Are you reserving Muslim seats in a constituency where they are in a majority? I think it will be absurd. If you do not reserve, then their seats may not be counted in the reserved seats this contingency must be duly provided for especially when this principle is to be applied to West Bengal and East Punjab. This will also become very material in certain parts of Bihar and in certain parts of the United Provinces. Therefore, my simple suggestion is, if in any constituency the minority community for which any reservation is made is in a majority,

that constituency must be treated as already reserved by the very fact of the majority of the electorate and then the number of seats allotted to that constituency should be deducted from the total reservation. I think this is a detail which has to be worked out with reference to each province, but the point deserves to be remembered.

There are many other considerations which arise from the fact of reservation on the basis of population into which I need not go now, and I shall deal with them when dealing with other matters. I suggest that these three points, namely whether reservation is to be made applicable to the Upper Houses, whether this principle is applicable to West Bengal and East Punjab and how the constituencies where the minorities for which reservation is made are in a majority are to be dealt, with, all these matters should be clarified or at least should be left over for future consideration and decision.

Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena (U. P.: General) Mr. Munshi moved an amendment to the schedule but the schedule has not yet been moved. I think his amendment can come only after my amendment has been moved.

Mr. President: What Mr. Munshi did was to move an amendment to the proviso in the first clause and he has not touched your amendment.

Rev. S. J. Jerome D'Souza (Madras: General): Mr. President, I should like to make a few very brief general observations on these provisos just presented to this House by Sardar Patel. Before doing so, let me also, though somewhat belatedly, express, my very great gratification at the way in which these minority questions have been handled, the skill and tact with which a consensus of opinion has been secured in this report and the great kindness and spirit of understanding shown by Sardar Patel in dealing with these questions here and elsewhere in discussions.

I know that this question of reservation is something which has troubled the minds of a good many among us here, now that separate electorates have to be given up; and if there were doubts about giving them up, the extremely cogent and powerful exposition which we heard this morning should set all doubts at rest and should bring even the hesitators that there might be in general agreement with the thesis that separate electorates must go. But, on the other hand, it is not absolutely clear and many here are not convinced that reservation is the happiest substitute for them. This is a compromise and like all compromises there is bound to be an element of illogicality in it. I say this not because reservation itself is something wrong. There is an impression that reservation is anti-democratic and that it should: somehow be got rid of in the course of the next ten or fewer years. I beg to say that I do not agree with this. Reservation in it-

self is one way of securing a satisfactory working of the electoral principle. Sir, after all we ourselves in this very House and in our Provincial circles are providing for upper Houses in which there will be functional representation. In its own way functional representation is nothing else than reservation of a very special kind. You reserve seats for particular interest. The misfortune here is that reservation is made on communal lines and secondly, the reservation being made, the elections to the reserved seat are not made exclusively by those on whose behalf the reservation is made, but by a general constituency by a mixture in the electorates. Therein comes the difficulty and I beg this House to understand that the few misgivings that may have been expressed on this head are due to this and not to any other consideration. Nevertheless I believe that his principle of reservation with general electorates is a bold experiment though fraught with some risks, nonetheless worth making at this juncture for the satisfaction of all. It cannot be given up, because, if I may venture to remind the majority party in this House, for years together the Congress party has been associated with the demand that there shall be joint electorates with reservation. At this stage to give up reservation as some of my friends wish to do would be in contradiction to the promises held out, if not tactly at least by implicit agreement. That is one reason why we cannot go back on this and I am most happy once again to say that the way in which the feelings of the minorities have been interpreted in this matter by Sardar Patel have filled us with satisfaction and reassurance and our thanks are due to him. As I said, we should all be happy if a day would come when reservation could be taken away and I am sure if that other opening, which has been left before this House and before this country, namely that general seats might be contested by members of those classes for whom, reservation has been made, if that yields a certain amount of satisfaction, if a certain number of prominent and accepted people are elected on that basis, I am sure that the minorities will be encouraged at the end of a certain period to give up this reservation. This would dispel whatever fears they may have that under present arrangements people might be chosen to represent them who do not really represent them or who would not interpret their minds as they wish them to be interpreted. I would therefore conclude by appealing to this House to make this great experiment a success by working it in such a way that it satisfies minorities on whose behalf it has been placed here, that the men chosen may be men who would have the courage of their convictions and that the expression of their courageous convictions may not offend or in any other way displease the majority communities and that they would

be taken as courageous and sincere people. Such an attitude would provide a safe Outlet for feelings which might otherwise be suppressed and go underground, and thus prove an effective safeguard for the working of democracy.

We know that, though democracy of the parliamentary type has succeeded and succeeded remarkably well in England, it has failed elsewhere and it has failed precisely because majority parties or groups have known how to master the machinery of elections, they have known how to dominate public opinion. Formidable reactions against such method developed in certain European countries, and the ugly monster of fascism reared its head. But even Fascism, ugly as it was, sought to obviate the difficulty of possible suppression of individual or minority opinion by thinking of a scheme which really comes to functional representation, namely, the forming of what they called a corporative State, a device which has fallen into unmerited disrepute, because of its association with Fascism. If, Sir, these things are bone in mind and if a very fair trial is given to this scheme of joint electorates with reservation, it is possible that our country in making this innovation, this bold experiment, might save democracy from one of its obvious dangers and might perhaps set an example for a solution of minority problems which may be accepted elsewhere. I say this knowing well that the chances are not very abundant as to complete success in the sense that I indicated but I do hope that this will not be looked upon as an unpleasant and forced concession made to minorities but that will be worked in the spirit in which it is given in order to give to those minorities the satisfaction for which they have pleaded before You.

Pandit Chaturbhuj Pathak (C. I. States) : * [Mr. President, my colleague Mr. Khandekar has desired in his amendment that they (Scheduled Castes) should be given representation according to 1931 Census. In this connection I want to say a few words. If instead of 1941 census we give representation to the minorities on the basis of 1931 census, it will have its repercussions on other minorities as well. He has stated that there have been mistakes in the taking of Census because in some places they have been registered as Muslims and at other places they have been registered as Caste Hindus. Because the Muslims have increased their numbers, in this way, they would also like to increase their representation according to 1941 Census. And if the forthcoming census which will take place after 4 years is correct and according to it the strength of the Scheduled Castes increases, Mr. Khandekar will be tempted to suggest that they (Hajians) should be given representation not according to 1931 census, but

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DEPRESSED CLASSES CONVERSION TO SIKHISM

"If they cannot be persuaded to stay, the Hindus must help if they cannot lead them, to embrace a faith which will be least harmful to the Hindus and to the country." - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Regarding conversion, "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar consulted his colleagues from different provinces in the matter of choosing the proper religion for conversion. He had now decided to embrace Sikhism. His friends and colleagues felt that Dr. Ambedkar should seek the support of the Hindu Sabha leaders in their conversion to Sikhism; for, the Hindu Sabha leaders believed that Sikhism was not an alien religion. It was an off-spring of Hinduism and therefore the Sikhs and the Hindus intermarried and the Sikhs were allowed to be members of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Accordingly, Dr. Moonje, the spokesman of the Hindu Mahasabha, was invited to Bombay. In the presence of two other friends, Dr. Ambedkar had a talk with Dr. Moonje at Rajgriha, on June 18, 1936, at half past-seven that night. Dr. Ambedkar cleared all issues and had a free talk with Dr. Moonje. Next day the purport of Dr. Ambedkar's views was reduced to a statement and was given to Dr. Moonje who approved of it personally."

The following is the statement:

The Hindus cannot afford to be indifferent to the movement of conversion which is gaining ground among the Depressed Classes. It would undoubtedly be the best thing from the standpoint of the Hindus if the Depressed Classes were to be persuaded to drop the idea of conversion. But if that is not possible, then the Hindus must concern themselves with the next move which the Depressed Classes will take, because their move is bound to have serious consequences upon the destiny of the country. If they cannot be persuaded to stay, the Hindus must help if they cannot lead them, to embrace a faith which will be least harmful to the Hindus and to the country.

It seems very unlikely that the Depressed Classes will formulate a new religion. Most probably, they will embrace one of the existing faiths. At any rate the Hindus can well proceed on that assumption. The first question is what is the faith that the Depressed Classes are likely to embrace? Obviously, the one most advantageous to them.

There are three faiths from among which the Depressed Classes can choose. (1) Islam, (2) Christianity



and (3) Sikhism. Comparing these three, Islam seems to give the Depressed Classes all that they need. Financially, the resources behind Islam are boundless. Socially, the Mohammedans are spread all over India. There are Mohammedans in every Province and they can take care of the new converts from the Depressed Classes and render them all help. Politically the Depressed Classes will get all the rights which Mohammedans are entitled to. Conversion to Islam does not involve loss of such political rights as the right to

special representation in the Legislatures, right to services, etc. Christianity seems equally attractive. If Indian Christians are too small numerically to provide financial resources necessary for the conversion of the Depressed Classes, the Christian countries such as America and England will pour their immense resources in if the Depressed Classes show their readiness to embrace Christianity. Socially, the Christian community is numerically too weak

and as far as the majority of the Depressed Classes are concerned, the Sikhs can give them no social support. Politically, Sikhism is at a positive disadvantage as compared with Islam or Christianity. Outside the Punjab, the Sikhs are not recognised for special representation in the Legislature and in the services.

The second question is, looking at these three alternative faiths purely from the standpoint of the Hindus, which is the best—Islam, Christianity or Sikhism? Obviously Sikhism is the best. If the Depressed Classes join Islam or Christianity, they not only go out of the Hindu religion but they also go out of the Hindu culture. On the other hand, if they become Sikhs they remain within the Hindu culture. This is by no means a small advantage to the Hindus.

What the consequences of conversion will be to the country as a whole is well worth bearing in mind. Conversion to Islam or Christianity will denationalise the Depressed Classes. If they go to Islam the number of Muslims will be doubled and the danger of Muslim domination also becomes real. If they go to Christianity, the numerical strength of Christians becomes five to six crores. It will help to strengthen the hold of the British on this country. On the other hand, if they embrace Sikhism they will not harm the destiny of the country but they will help the destiny of the country.

They will not be denationalised. On the contrary they will be a help in the political advancement of the country. Thus it is in the interest of the country that the Depressed Classes, if they are to change their faith, should go over to Sikhism.

Passages are from: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol.17 Part-1

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according to 1951 census. I fall to see how this will be appropriate.]*

Shri H. J. Khandekar : *I only suggest that a Census should be taken before allocation of seats or the allocations should be deferred till the census of 1951, or that our numerical strength be fixed according to the 1931 census. For my community, I will accept representation on the basis of the 1951 census or on one that may be taken now. But the census of 1941 is utterly wrong. Any division on that basis would be grossly unjust to the Harijans]*

Pandit Chaturbhuj Pathak : *[Mr. Khandekar has said that the birthrate amongst Achchuts is high enough but at the census their number has not been recorded as High. The reason for this is that happily they have been enumerated amongst Caste Hindus. Mr. Khandekar has admitted this. It is good. The Caste Hindus themselves have pleaded for good treatment of Harijans and that they should be treated as Caste Hindus. Mr. Khandekar should have no objection to it.]*

Shri H. J. Khandekar : *[The Harijans have been counted amongst Caste Hindus only to increase the number of the Caste Hindus. This device has caused no change in the social life of Harijans. Those Harijans

who have been classified amongst the Caste Hindus are still in the same deplorable state. Their standard is not the same as that of the Caste Hindus.]*

Shri Chaturbhuj : *I do not think that when Achchuts are enumerated amongst the Caste Hindus they (at once) acquire the standard of Caste Hindus and they ipso facto get all the rights of Caste Hindus.

I have only to submit that I oppose Mr. Khandekar's resolution to adopt representation on the basis of the 1931 Census. Even in the report submitted no mention of number is made. It is written there; "On the basis of their population"; i.e., they would get representation according to their population. I support this (the report)]*

The Honourable Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel : Some amendments have been moved to this. One is by Mr. Munshi in which after the word 'schedule' he wants to say 'and the section of the Hindu community referred to in paragraph 1A hereof'. It is only intended for clarity and it makes no substantial change and therefore I propose to accept, that amendment.

So far as Mr. Khandekar's amendment is concerned I do not think we can accept it because it would not be proper to make a special exception for the Scheduled Castes, that their reservation should be on

the basis of one census and that reservation for other minority communities should be on the basis of another census. It would not be proper and it would be an invidious distinction. I do not understand why he wants to do that. Probably he wants to exclude some of those who have been included in the Scheduled Castes in 1931. I do not think it is proper to do so at this stage. In the resolution that I have moved, there is no mention of any census. We have simply said 'on the basis of their population'. Therefore it should be kept as it is. No injustice is being done to any community, and uniformity is also desirable and necessary.

Then Mr. Santhanam has moved an amendment and made two or three suggestions. One is about reservation of seats for the minorities in the various Legislatures. He says it should be 'various Legislative Assemblies'. I have no objection to accepting that amendment.

He made another point that East Punjab should be excluded in Clause 3.

Shri K. Santhanam: And West Bengal also.

The Honourable Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel: I do not think it is necessary to accept that amendment as they are specifically excluded in clause 3.

His third suggestion was that in a

constituency where a minority Community are in a majority the seats must be from the reserved seats. I do not consider the suggestion a proper one. The seats are on the basis of population reserved as a whole and not on a particular constituency. Therefore I do not propose to accept it.

To sum up, I propose to accept Mr. Munshi's amendment and Mr. Santhanam's suggestion about putting the words 'Legislative Assemblies'. I commend the resolution for the acceptance of the House.

Mr. President : I will now put the first amendment, which has been accepted by Sardar Patel to vote.

The question is :

"That in amendment No. 19 of List I, dated 25th August 1947 for the word 'seats' the word 'representation' be substituted". The following words be substituted:-

"after the word 'schedule' the words 'and the section of Hindu community referred to in the paragraph 1A hereof' be inserted."

The motion was adopted.

[Complete Text of the Debate Proceedings is available in Constituent Assembly Debates (Proceedings), Volume-V (14th August to 30th August 1947)]