



# Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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## Babu Jagjivan Ram Former Deputy PM A True Democrat and Savior of Downtrodden

Prem K. Chumber Editor-In-Chief:  
Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babu Jagjivan Ram (April 5, 1908 – July 6, 1986) was known for his patriotism, straightforwardness, and concern for lower castes and poor. When in 1937, the Britishers wanted to set up a puppet government in Bihar, Babuji was approached with an offer of a large sum of money and a Ministerial berth and many other similar benefits to shake hand with them, but he simply refused to be on their side. Rather, he stood like a rock with his people who were to tally committed to lay their lives for the liberation of the motherland. He earned the love of the people and leaders of the Indian freedom movement for his patriotism and integrity. Showering praises on Babu Jagjivan Ram for his bold stand on to be remained with his people, Gandhiji said that he 'had emerged as pure as gold in the test of fire'.

Babuji was a born fighter and a crusader for freedom, dignity and social justice. During his middle school education, he refused to avail scholarship meant for Scheduled Castes students and earned it by appearing in open competition and becoming successful on the basis of his meritorious academic performance. It was also during his Arrah Town School days that he smashed twice separate pitcher meant drinking water for Scheduled Castes students and forced the principal to withdraw his discriminatory decision of segregated water arrangement at the premises of the school. He proved his exceptional talent by excelling in studies despite extreme poverty at home as his father (Sobhi Ram) passed away (1914) while Babu Jagjivan Ram was still in his village primary school. He and his mother (Vasanti Devi) fought boldly against poverty and social exclusion all around.

Despite such an oppressive social environment and poor economic conditions at home, Babuji acquired proficiency in Hindi, Bengali, English and Sanskrit besides Bhojpuri – his native Bhasha. It was his command over Hindi and English that attracted the attention of Pt. Madan Mohan Malviyaji during the welcome address by him that finally took him to study at the prestigious Banaras Hindu University. It was at the Banaras Hindu University that Babuji organized, for the first time, Scheduled Castes students to protest against the denial of basic services like meals for Scheduled Castes students in the hostel and haircuts by local barbers. After qualifying his Inter Science examination at BHU, Babuji left BHU and completed B. SC. degree from the Calcutta University in 1931. It was during his stint at Calcutta University, Babuji organized Mazdoor Rally at Wellington Square in 1928. This mammoth rally in which approximately 50,000 people participated brought Babu Jagjivan Ram closer to Netaji Subash Chandra Bose who got convinced of his organizing skills and political acumen.

Babu Jagjivan Ram devoted his entire life strengthening India and empowering poor and lower castes. He was a great inspirer and organizer of people against oppression. He was an eloquent orator, a distinguished parliamentarian and a talented administrator. From his school days to the celebration of freedom at midnight, he remained in the forefront of various struggles (including the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and the Quit India Movement in 1942) launched during the historic freedom movement of India. On the national political platform, he established himself as the savior of lower castes and poor people. He became the youngest minister in the interim government of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946, Labor Minister in the first cabinet of India as well as member of the Constituent Assembly of India. He played a constructed role in the meeting of the Constituent Assembly of India for promoting the cause of the Scheduled Castes and poor people. He served as a minister of various portfolios at the level of Central Government exceptionally for more than forty years as a member of the Indian National Congress. In 1977 and joined the Janata Party alliance, along with his Congress for Democracy. He also served as Deputy Prime Minister of India (1977-79). In 1981, Babuji formed Congress (J). Till his passing away in 1986, he remained active in the service of the nation and the downtrodden.

"Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" Weeklies fondly remember Babuji on his Death Anniversary and pay him floral tribute!

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## BABU JAGJIVAN RAM REMEMBERED

**O**n the occasion of 37 Death Anniversary of Babu Jagjivan Ram, former Deputy Prime Minister of India, we, on behalf of Supreme Council Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA, pay our homage to this dynamic leader. Babu Jagjivan Ram dedicated his entire life for the upliftment of the socially suppressed and exploited segments of society. Some of the glimpses of his struggle and accomplishments are shared as under.

Babu Jagjivan Ram was born in Chandwa, near Arrah in Bihar State, on April 5th, 1908 in a former untouchable (Now Dalit) family. Babu Jagjivan Ram, being a very bright student attained his BSc degree from Banaras Hindu University. He, himself, being a Dalit, grew up in the midst of harsh and severe social disabilities of untouchables at that time. He stood like a

successfully led the "Green Revolution in India. It was during his tenure as Defence Minister that Bangladesh was liberated from Military rulers of Pakistan and established as an independent country with the help of India.



O. P. Balley

In deference of his adorable accomplishments his birth Anniversary is celebrated as "SAMTA DIWAS" (Equality Day) in India and his cremation place has been made into 'SAMTA STHAL'. The states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana observe regional holidays on his birth Anniversary



rock against social discriminations and segregation.

In 1935 he contributed to the establishment of All India Depressed Classes League and Akhil Bhartiya Ravidass Mahasabha in Calcutta (Kolkata). Through these organizations he mobilized the depressed classes in the Freedom struggle.

Because of his intellect, wisdom and patriotism, Netaji Subhash Chander Bose, was attracted to him and drew him into the field of politics at a very young age. He became an active participant in the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi including the Quit India Movement in 1942 for which he had to go to prison many times. He remained as a distinguished and uninterrupted parliamentarian for fifty years from 1936 to 1986. He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly and advocated impassionately for the rights of the exploited and the voiceless sections of society.

He joined the interim cabinet of Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1946 as the youngest member of his cabinet and held many key portfolios in his long political career.

Due to his astute political acumen and administrative skills he was dear to stalwarts like Jawahar Lal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. As Food and Agriculture Minister, he is best remembered to have

day. His illustrious daughter, Shrimati Mira Kumar, a five-time member of parliament, is accredited to be the first woman speaker of Indian parliament during the tenure of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Though Babu Jagjivan Ram was an iconic figure in the entire political spectrum of India with all the deserving qualifications, he, because of in-built caste distinctions and political maneuvers, he was obstructed twice from becoming the Prime Minister of India.

Babu Jagjivan Ram is overwhelmingly remembered as an ardent freedom fighter, an undaunted champion of human rights, an able Administrator, crusader for social justice and an exceptionally gifted orator. It is worthwhile to mention that on December 6th, 1956, when the funds collected privately to pay for flying Babasaheb's body to Bombay for cremation fell short of the required amount, Babu Jagjivan Ram, the then Communication Minister arranged a special chartered Dakota of Indian Airlines with whatever collection in hand and to pay the balance later.

Persons with the magnanimity of Babu Jagjivan Ram are destined to live forever in the hearts of those who know and adore him.

**O. P. Balley, General Secretary  
Supreme Council,  
Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas, USA**

# Exchange of Diplomatic Gifts – The Bits and Pieces

**A** diplomatic gift is a gift given by a diplomat, politician or leader when visiting a foreign country. Usually the gift is reciprocated by the host. It's an important diplomatic gesture of any visit.

The immediate instigation to write about diplomatic gifts is the recent exchange of gifts during PM Narendra Modi's State Visit to the USA and exchange of gifts. Renowned columnist Karan Thapar wrote in his usual Sunday article in the Hindustan Times – Frost, Nehru, Modi and a book of poems, "Frost was, probably, Jawaharlal Nehru's favorite poet. One of the poems in the collection gifted to Modi is Stopping by Woods on a Snowing Evening. It ends with evocative lines - The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to Keep, And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep." Commenting on the selection of the gift, Karan Thapar added, "It is hard to believe they (selectors of the gift) aren't aware of the Nehru-Frost connection or the Nehru-Modi discord."

Let us leave it to diplomatic analysts to break their head to dig and get the motive of the diplomatic gesture of the US host. PM Narendra Modi was, a few years ago, was gifted a costly horse but the gift was not brought to India because of advise of the concerned authorities of environment and forestry. But I, as Director of the Central Asia Division in the MEA, distinctly remember that sometime in 1999-2000, EAM Jaswant Singh brought a Horse from Kazakhstan gifted him by his counterpart. The Google Guru gives many details of the gifts from lions leopards, elephants etc. exchanged among dignitaries as diplomatic gifts. Some gifts become fine occasions to celebrate and commemorate. PM Jawaharlal Nehru gifted an Indian elephant, named Raja, to his then Ceylonese (Sri Lanka) counterpart in the 1950s. Raja ultimately found his abode at the Dalada Maligawa (House of the Tooth Relic of Gautama the Buddha) in Kandy. Raja carried the Tooth Relic at his back every year in the annual event called Perahera and toured the major streets of Kandy in a procession. Raja was declared a 'National Treasure' by Sri Lanka. Raja died at a ripe age sometime in 1986-87. On advice of High Commissioner JN Dixit in Colombo, it fell on me as the Acting Assistant High Commissioner of India in Kandy to lay the wreath on the dead-body of Raja, kept at the majestic Dalada Maligawa, on behalf of the High Commissioner and the GOI. India gifted an elephant to Turkey sometime in 1998-99 during the visit of President K.R. Narayanan. I handled this hefty gift as Director of the Central Asia Division under the guidance of the then Joint Secretary (CA) in MEA, Aloke Sen, in locating and transporting an elephant from one



of sanctuaries in Assam.

Being one from the diplomatic career, I personally saw and witnessed the game or art of exchanging diplomatic gifts in the process of work. I remember some of the fine nuances of gift diplomacy of legendary diplomat, Ambassador Kanti Shankar Bajpai in the late 1970s. He gifted the best of Indian mangos to the Chinese dignitaries and his counterparts in the diplomatic corps in Peking, a much appreciated diplomatic gesture. On move from Peking, I was appointed as Protocol Officer dealing with gifts in the MEA in early 1980s and witnessed many occasions of selecting and handling exchange of diplomatic gifts under the stewardship of then DCP, Ambassador Navrekha Sharma and the COP, Vice President Hamid Ansari, both among the finest diplomats of India. Some of the anecdotes, pertaining to diplomatic gifts, of that time may be of interest – PM Indira Gandhi was very particular and interested in

selecting a few top level gifts to be exchanged both for outgoing and incoming visits. I personally got entangled, though a junior functionary, in the process for a couple of occasions. On a coup in Bangladesh, the new leader, General Hussain Mohammad Ershad along with his wife, Begum Rowshan, decided to come to Delhi all of a sudden. PM Indira Gandhi was very busy as the parliament was in session. It was decided to give a suitable gift to General Ershad already selected and approved by PM Gandhi for some other Head of State of an Islamic country. Gift for the spouse of the guest posed a small but serious problem as nobody was inclined to ask PM Indira Gandhi. COP directed me, because of my earlier stint as Protocol Officer in the GHO of PMO, to somehow solve the problem. I could do it with the help of my connections in the PM's House. PM came for lunch and one of her Aides informed her that I was there for the purpose. After washing her hands and a small towel in her hands came to a small room at the entrance. I showed her a few Banarsi Sarees spread on a sofa, collected from the Cottage Industry Emporium. She appreciated it, perhaps, to relieve me of palpable tension on my face. PM enquired from me about the complexion of the guest, Begum Rowshan and without waiting to listen from me herself answered "Bangladeshi sambale rang ke hi hote hain" and nodded to gift a Banarsi Silk Saree. I cherish the memory of those

couple of minutes of personal interaction in the process of selecting a diplomatic gift – Once the gift to Arafat Yassar posed a bit of problem because of paucity of time. PM Indira Gandhi advised to give a pistol/revolver to Arafat Yassar (he used to carry the weapon on his waist) from one of India's own ordinance factories. It was found that the weapon was not readily available in Delhi. It resulted in some running around and with the help of Ministry of Defense a pistol was obtained from Meerut and gifted along with a couple of boxes of juicy alphonso (Mangos) which I personally collected from a shop in Connaught Place and delivered at the airport – Yet another occasion, Pakistani High Commissioner in a day or two of presenting his credentials to President Giani Zail Singh was indisposed and was admitted in the AIIMS. It was decided to send a bouquet of flowers to the High Commissioner on behalf of President Giani Zail Singh to wish him speedy re-

presentation boxes were got made through the Cottage Industry Emporium to present Oudh to the Saudi dignitaries. Gift presentations may create, sometimes, avoidable fox pauses. Generally diplomatic gifts are not exchanged in person and not opened instantly. Our Embassy in Stockholm (Sweden) was concurrently accredited to Latvia, a newly breakaway country from the erstwhile USSR sometime in 1992-93. I, as the First Secretary of the Embassy in Stockholm, joined an official delegation headed by the then Joint Secretary (EE) in the MEA, Nalin Surie. It was decided to handover our usual gifts, HMT watches, to the Latvian counterparts immediately after the conclusion of the signing ceremony of documents as Nalin Surie Sahib was to move directly to airport to catch up with his travel schedule. Our hosts happily decided to open their



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covery. The honours again fell on me. On presenting the bouquet, I could feel that how these small gestures do a lot of good in developing and smoothening relations – Protocol Division of the MEA occasionally used to arrange a sort of 'Meena Bazar' at PM Residence and Rashtrapati Bhawan for picking up gifts for the outgoing and incoming High level Visits with gift item from Cottage Industry Emporium and the State Emporiums to expose traditional Indian art and culture in foreign countries. President Giani Zail Singh was to visit the USA and a Meena Bazar was arranged at the Rashtrapati Bhawan with a prominent slot to the Punjab Emporium. Punjab Emporium, obviously, came with traditional Phoolkari work etc. Giani ji came and saw the Meena Bazar and, off the cuff, remarked that why were we taking this kind of stuff rather than something new and of utility? Being the one from the Protocol Division of MEA, I humbly responded and said, Sir, it was the laid down policy right from the days of PM Jawaharlal Nehru to gift things to showcase Indian traditional skills. President Sahib was a sharp man with an earthy sense of understanding, he simply nodded in silence – PM Indira Gandhi desired to carry incensed wood "Oudh", one of costly timbers, for her Saudi hosts during one of her state visits to Saudi Arabia. We had work overtime in sourcing 'Oudh' from Dehradun, if my memory does not fail me. Especially hand-crafted wooden

gifts there itself. It was found that one of the gifted watches was not working due some technical glitch. It was a somewhat embarrassing situation. Luckily, I was carrying in my briefcase an additional gift (HMT watch). Before anybody commented on the situation, I immediately replaced the gift attracting the attention of Nalin Surie Sahib who appreciatively commented 'see, our boys can do it'. The pleasantness of the occasion remained intact.

Diplomatic gifts carry a considerable emotional and professional value. A painting, personally painted by the Dean of Diplomatic Corp, was gifted to me at a farewell function hosted by us at the India House in Minsk (Belarus) which was signed by all the resident Ambassadors, still adorns one of the walls of the sitting room of our humble home in Jalandhar. I still carry on my wrist, occasionally, a self winding locally made watch with the photo of then President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov which was gifted to me sometime in 1999-2000 as a member of an official cultural delegation headed by the our Minister Ananth Kumar for the Indian Cultural Days in 1999-2000 to commemorate Bairam Khan. Bairam Khan and Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khana animated the historic relations between India and Turkmenistan during the Mughal period.

With this, I conclude this impromptu effort to register some oral history.

# A HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO MR. LAHORI RAM BALLEY A TORCH BEARER OF BABASAHEB'S CRUSADES

Mr. Lahori Ram Balley, a house -hold name among the followers of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, departed from this mortal world on July 6th, 2023, leaving behind a long trail of his unrelenting efforts in carrying forward the legacy of Babasaheb for the emancipation of the depressed sections of society.

Prof: Ronki Ram and Ambassador Ramesh Chander (Retd) have also paid their glowing tributes to the memory of Mr. Balley, appearing on the front page of the last edition of Ambedkar Times which bears ample testimony to his life-long struggle for social justice. While Mr. Balley was well known for his mighty pen and fearless convictions, he had also a gift of gab with persuasive skills to influence his audience with the logic of his assertions.

**SETBACK TO CANDID JOURNALISM:** - Mr. Balley lived a long, abundant and a very meaningful life relating to social justice and his sudden demise at this juncture strikes a big jolt to the domain of unbiased and candid spirit of journalism, as evidenced in his popular publication "Bheem Patrika" established in 1958. "Ambedkar Times" (English) and "Desh Doaba" (Punjabi) are the only other weeklies published and edited by its owner and Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, portraying the truth of the multiple challenges confronted by so called lower segments of society.

Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber has also assigned a specific file(folder) in "Ambedkar Times" www.ambedkartimes.com portfolio in the name of Mr. L. R. Balley, recording the details of his articles and other related writings available

for general information and knowledge of all.

**FAMILY BONDS:-** Mr. Lahori Ram Ji and myself were born in the same family as cousins at Nawanshahr. Though I was behind him in age by about five years, but we grew up together inheriting our ancestral values from our forefathers. Mr. Balley's father and my father had very intimate family bonds way back in 1930s' and 1940s'.

I vividly remember his father who was respectfully called, Mahasha Bhagwan Dass with his two younger brothers, Mr Har-nam Dass and Hakeem Gursaran Dass who instilled in Mr. Balley the spirit, mission and philosophy of Babasaheb. Mr. Balley had two older brothers and three younger brothers and the only sister, Satya. We all grew up together at Nawanshahr as intimate members

of the family in an enlightened environment.

Mr. Balley moved to Delhi in search of a job in 1947 after passing his Matriculation Exam. to join his older brother, Mr. JaganNath Bali who later retired as Deputy Secretary from Government of India. Mr Balley got a job in Government of India Press,

New Delhi where he also learned the printing skills which later helped him in starting his Magazine "BHIM PATRIKA" a very popular and highly circulated publication

in the dissemination of Babasaheb's crusades.



O. P. Balley

**COULD NOT**

**MEET FOR LONG:** - Because of my permanent move to USA in 1977 we could not keep up the frequency of our contacts. But I did meet him off and on while visiting India and kept myself informed about his devoted services towards the vision of Babasaheb.

**IMMORTAL MEMORIES**

**LINGER ON:** - I very well remember that I even attended his wedding ceremony way back in 1947 at village Hakeempur near Mukandpur a few months after his father's demise in 1946 and he also attended my wedding ceremony at Nawanshahr in 1957.

**INTRODUCTION TO**

**BABASAHEB:** While staying in Delhi Mr. Balley was introduced to Baba saheb, inspiring him with an enlightened zeal and spirit to join his caravan launched for the emancipation of the down trodden and he promised to serve this noble cause as a devoted soldier for the rest of his life and he kept it up till his last breath and I salute him for that dedication.

**BALLEY AS LAST NAME:-**

Mr. Lahori Ram Balley persuaded me in 1952 to spell my last name as "Balley" instead of "Bali" used by everybody else in the entire family.

While conveying my heartfelt condolences in this irreparable loss I would like to mention that there is an inexhaustible treasure to write about my respectable brother and inspirer, Mr. Lahori Ram Balley, but the essence of reality is that everyone born in flesh and bones has to go sooner or later but the immortality of soul is eternal.

The void created by this loss is huge but "what cannot be cured must be endured" Praying for peace and tranquility of his departed soul ; solace and strength for the bereaved family, especially his worthy sons, Mr. Anand Balley and Rahul Balley to bear this great loss and carry on the lofty ideals cherished by their worthy father.

With sympathies.

## Floral Tribute to Sh. L R Balley Ji: A Versatile Ambedkarite

"Ambedkar Times" pays floral tribute to the departed soul of reputed Ambedkarite Sh. Lahori Ram Balley, who dedicated his entire life to furthering the mission of Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar. His sterling contribution is many folds: in the field of missionary literature, journalism, Samata Sainik Dal, SCF, RPI, social activities, Bhawan construction, forming Buddhist organizations, holding/participating in international conferences, seminars, study circles and celebrations of Babasaheb's anniversaries both within the country and abroad. His seminal contribution will be remembered fondly for times to come.

Jai Bhim!

Prem Kumar Chumber  
Editor-in-Chief



## Remembering "Babuji"

Jayaprakash Narayan and Jagjivan Ram (right), former Deputy Prime Minister of India, at a Janata Party rally in New Delhi on 06 February 1977(N Thyagarajan/HT Photo) Babu Jagjivan Ram holds the world record for being a parliamentarian for 50 uninterrupted years, from 1936 to 1986.

Babu Jagjivan Ram, popularly known as "Babuji", was a national leader, freedom fighter, and advocate for social justice.

Read more:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/babu-jagjivan-ram-remembering-babuji-on-his-116th-birth-anniversary-101680673723096.html>



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Goodie Takhar, PhD

# Remembering Babu Jagjivan Ram

**T**oday, July 6, is the death anniversary (Punia Teethi) of Babu Jagjivan Ram. He died in 1986 after contributing a great deal to the politics, governance, and social transformational aspects of the country and the society at large. Babu Jagjivan Ram was a leader with his own position and stature both in the polity and society of India with about 5 decades of parliamentary life and many important positions in the governments since the interim government of Jawaharlal Nehru. As a young student in Jalandhar in the 1960s, what I knew about him was that he was a propped up nominee of the Congress Party to counter and undermine the influence and position of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Good or bad, it was a hard reality also.

feat of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh by our valiant armed forces. My first hand visual encounter with him pertains to that time in 1971-72. My office in the Interpreter's Cell of the MEA was located in South Block (Defense Ministry/Army Hdqs. side where the offices of Defense Minister and Chief of the Army Staff are located) and many a times I got the chance to see him from a close distance. Meanwhile, my mental faculty was getting, gradually, a wide view of the things on ground. The stock of Babu Jagjivan Ram went high in my mind and thought and rightly so. More was yet to come. On my career progression in the MEA, I was posted in the PMO in April 1974 as Protocol (Hospitality) Assistant to work closely

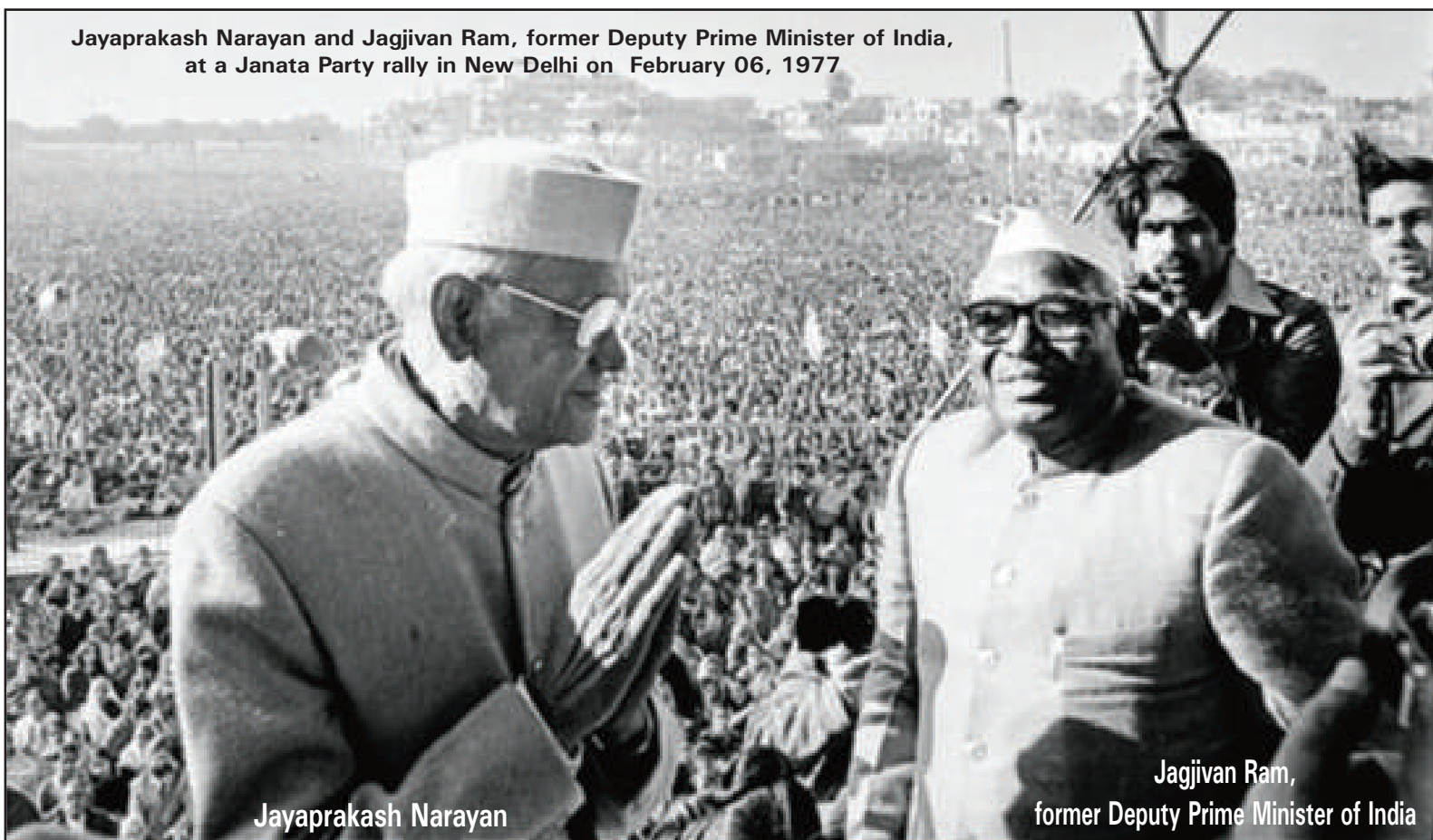
events pertaining to emergency and movement of leaders like Babu Jagjivan in the corridors of the PMO and the ante-rooms of the personal office of PM Indira Gandhi in South Block. I vividly remember Babu Jagjivan Ram's coming to meet PM Indira Gandhi sometimes in February/ March, 1977 before he parted company with her and forming Congress for Democracy and joining hands with the opposition to contest historical elections which defeated PM Indira Gandhi. The rest is history. Babu Jagjivan Ram was an astute politician. In spite of his administrative acumen and political standing, he was still a dalit leader. There was no light at the end of the tunnel for him. He aspired to occupy the top slot in the hierarchy and rightly so and played his

to the M a n u w a d i mindset - "Shoe is meant to be worn on the foot and not kept on the head" and "How come a brick meant for the gutter would be fixed in the gallery" - came to the fore and spoiled the chances of Jagjivan Ram to occupy the top slot which he richly deserved. Babu Jagjivan Ram felt cheated but what could be done. He was defeated politically by forces of status quo. Again when Charan Singh government could not face the parliament and seek vote of confidence in 1979-80 and fell, Jagjivan Ram made yet another bid and was ready to prove his majority in the Lok Sabha but again President Sanjiva Reddy, it seemed, preferred to settle old scores against Jagjivan Ram rather than upholding the constitutional provisions and values and denied that due chance to Jagjivan Ram to hold the coveted post of PM of India. It would have been a game changing development, had Jagjivan Ram become the PM of India in 1977 and again in 1980. The contemporary political history of India would have been different. But that was not to be and Jagjivan Ram died a dejected man, sadly. Before I end this narration, let me add yet another fact which is generally not mentioned. It goes to the credit of BJP (then



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Jayaprakash Narayan and Jagjivan Ram, former Deputy Prime Minister of India, at a Janata Party rally in New Delhi on February 06, 1977



Jayaprakash Narayan

Jagjivan Ram,  
former Deputy Prime Minister of India

But at the same time, it is also a hard fact that Ambedkar remained what he was and stood his ground in spite of all odds against him created by the machinations of his opponents. Nevertheless, today is the day to remember Babu Jagjivan Ram. He was an alumnus of the Presidency College of Calcutta (Kolkata) and Banaras Hindu University in the good old days. Babu Jagjivan Ram made it to the interim government of PM Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946 as the youngest Minister. Ever since, he remained an important member of all the governments with coveted portfolios and positions till his death in 1986. Obviously, after Babasahib Ambedkar's demise in 1956, Babu Jagjivan Ram became the sole leader and voice of dalits in the country. He was an able and competent politician and an able administrator and got due space and recognition both in the government and otherwise with considerable mass appeal and base. With the challenge of feeding millions amidst food scarcity, Babu Jagjivan Ram played an important role as Minister of Food and Agriculture to bring about the Green Revolution. He was the Defense Minister of India in 1971 who oversaw the resounding de-

with the office of PM Indira Gandhi and the Committee/Conference Rooms where important meetings, including Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings are generally held. There I got more acquainted with the demeanour and persona of Babu Jagjivan Ram, as a junior official hanging around the corridors of power, where he came often and regularly to meet PM Indira Gandhi and participate in the Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings. I found him a man of quite charm and confidence. He was a much respected Minister not only with his colleagues but also with the elite bureaucracy. His weight in the government was clearly visible. PM Indira Gandhi respected him with due reverence. As oral history, I may narrate here what I personally saw. Indira Gandhi would not come from her office to the Cabinet meetings in the Conference Room without checking whether Babuji, as she usually called him, had come. I also saw many a times in the Cabinet meetings, when Babu Jagjivan Ram came late somehow, PM Indira Gandhi would get up and make Babuji sit. She always extended and observed these sweet niceties to Babu Jagjivan Ram being a senior and able colleague. I witnessed the momentous

cards accordingly. Babu Jagjivan Ram very well knew that nobody can or will recognize his experience and talent and would offer him the top job. It was to be done by him alone. He did his best with the strategy to hold the balance in his hands with 30-35 odd seats in the Lok Sabha. It was a well considered and thought of strategy to join the election campaign under the leadership of Jay Prakash Naryanan and other leaders in the opposition. The forces of change got a much needed boost with Babu Jagjivan Ram's plunge against PM Indra Gandhi. During the election campaign and just before results, it was almost evident that Jagjivan Ram will be the next PM of the country. His whirlwind tour of the breadth and length of country set the direction and the Congress Party led by Indira Gandhi was squarely defeated. Jagjivan Ram could get about 30 seats, as expected, for the Congress for Democracy, his newly floated political outfit but Jagjivan Ram never thought and imagined that Congress will be defeated that badly. The overwhelming support to the bandwagon of change with a huge majority in the Lok Sabha disturbed and changed the scenario. Charan Singh and company, belonging

Janta Party) leadership like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishan Advani, Nana Deshmukh among others that they did not oppose, rather supported Jagjivan Ram's unannounced or unproclaimed bid for the top job of the country. Historians will analyse and record these events in the right perspective.

I did not intend to be lengthy in this narration but oral history tends to be lengthy. It is said Babu Jagjivan Ram was a jovial and confident man. One interesting anecdote narrated by an army General in a social event may suffice to register that fact. Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram was hosting a dinner for his visiting counterpart from a friendly country. Tandoori chicken came as a snack/starter. Jagjivan Ram started eating with his hand while the foreign guests were struggling to eat with knife and fork. Seeing this, Jagjivan Ram observed, in a lighter vein, Excellency, please see how we eat Tandoori chicken and enjoy and added "Eating Tandoori chicken with knife and fork is like making love through an interpreter" It added to the bonhomie on the dining table. My humble tribute to the memory of a leader - Prime Ministerial stuff - who could not become PM, Babu Jagjivan Ram

# Remembering Babu Jagjivan Ram Ji

**B**abu Jagjivan Ram was a prominent freedom fighter, social reformer and a champion of human rights. He worked tirelessly throughout his life to promote equality in society. During his student years, he successfully organized a number of Guru Ravidas Sammelans and had started celebrating Guru Ravidas Jayanti in the different districts of Calcutta. He was among the Founding members of the All India Depressed Classes League which worked for attaining equality for untouchables. In 1946, he became the youngest minister in the interim government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. He became the Labour Minister in the first ever Cabinet of independent India. He laid out several policies and reforms that dealt directly with the welfare of the labourers. He also represented the country in the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization that was held in Geneva in 1947. He was also instrumental for the successful implementation of the Green Revolution during his tenure as the Union Minister for Food and Agriculture. He was the Defence Minister of India during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. He was the Deputy Prime Minister of India between 1977 and 1979.

The official positions held by Babu Jagjivan Ram in his political tenure are:

\* Member of the Central Legislature for over thirty years consecutively.

\* He holds the record for being the longest-serving cabinet minister in India.

\* Union Minister of Labour, from

the year 1946 to the year 1952.

\* Union Minister for Communications from the year 1952 to the year 1956.

\* Union Minister for Transport and Railways from the year 1956 to the year 1962.

\* Union Minister for Transport and Communications, from the year 1962 to the year 1963.

\* Union Minister for Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, from the year 1966 to the year 1967.

\* Union Minister for Food and Agriculture from the year 1967 to the year 1970.

\* Union Minister of Defence for the following terms: 1970-1974, 1977-1979.

\* Union Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, from the year 1974 to the year 1977.

\* Deputy Prime Minister of India, from the 24th of March, 1977 to the 28th of July, 1979.

\* President of the Bharat Scouts and Guides from September 1976 to April 1983.

Babu Jagjivan Ram was posthumously awarded with the Friends of Liberation War Honour by the Government of Bangladesh for his contribution in the 1971 War. He was honoured as 1971 war hero. He was India's Defence Minister during the 1971 war, and was instrumental in the creation of the 'Joint Command' of Bangladesh and Indian Forces for the final assault which led to victory.

In his historic parliamentary statement on December 16, 1971 he announced the emergence of Inde-

pendent Bangladesh:

"I have an announcement to make. The West Pakistani forces have unconditionally surrendered in Bangladesh... Dacca (now called Dhaka) is now the free capital of a free country."

The then Chief of General Staff in Eastern Command Lt. Gen. (Retd.) JFR Jacob described him as "perhaps the best Defence minister we (India) have had":

"He had an excellent grasp of military strategy. Being an able administrator, it was Jagjivan Ram who made sure that the requirements of the three Services, in terms of manpower, weaponry, equipment and infrastructural facilities were provided, as far as possible".

Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir, Bir Protik and Swadhinata Padak Awardee, Historian and Author in Bangladesh, exclaimed:

"Babu Jagjivan Ram's role was fascinating. He used to visit training camps set up for Mukti Bahini fighters in Northeast India. He was solely responsible for co-ordinating between the then Prime Minister's Office, Home Minister and the Defence Forces."

**He added:**

"Reception centres were set up all across East Pakistan; people who possessed the will to take on the challenge of fighting for the Liberation of Bangladesh were screened by the Indian Armed forces and the civilian administration. This task too was overseen by the indomitable Babu Jagjivan Ram"

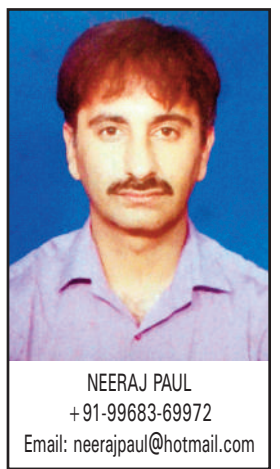
**The London's Sunday Times had then reported:**

"It took only 12 days for the Indian Army to smash its way to Dacca, an achievement reminiscent of the German blitzkrieg across France in 1940. The strategy was the same speed, ferocity and flexibility."

In his work on the liberation war of Bangladesh, The Blood Telegram, Gary Bass has called Babu Jagjivan Ram the most "hawkish" Defence Minister, owing to his role in the victory of India in the war of 1971. India observes Babu Jagjivan Ram's birth anniversary as 'Equality Day' or the 'Samata Diwas' to commemorate his continuous battle against caste discrimination and various forms of social oppression and his endeavour to promote a society of welfare and equality.

Babu Jagjivan Ram National Foundation is established in the memory of Babu Jagjivan Ram and to propagate his ideology, philosophy of his life and mission and services rendered for the sake of the underprivileged and the country.

In the near future, detailed information about Babu Jagjivan Ram Ji would be shared, and as and when new sources of information would be discovered/researched, these would be made known.



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# Mr. Jagjivan Ram- New Defence Minister



Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Union Minister for Food and Agriculture, will take over as Defence Minister from Sardar Swaran Singh on June 29, according to a communique issued by Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Mr. P.C. Sethi is the new Minister of State, Defence Production and Mr. N.S. Mahida, Minister of State in Ministry of Defence.

Born on April 5, 1908 at Arrah in Bihar, Mr. Jagjivan Ram was educated at Banaras and Calcutta. Early in life, he took an active interest in the social welfare of Harijans and was elected Secretary of the Harijan Sewak Sangh, Bihar. In 1936, he presided over the Lucknow session of the All India Depressed Classes League, which was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi. Later he also presided over a number of conferences of the Scheduled Classes in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bom-

bay and Punjab.

In 1937, he was elected a member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Development Minister. He, however, resigned the post in November 1939, in accordance with the decision of the Indian National Congress to quit office. He was elected Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee the same year.

In October 1943, Mr. Jagjivan Ram toured various provinces for strengthening Depressed Classes Organisations. In 1944, he presided over the Conference of All India Depressed Classes League at Kanpur. In 1946, he was elected to the Bihar Legislative Assembly and was invited by the Cabinet Mission to present the views of the Depressed Classes. In September, the same year, he joined the interim Government as Member for Labour. On Au-

gust 15, 1947 he became Minister for Labour. He was elected Chairman of the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference of I.L.O. held in New Delhi in 1947.

He also led the Indian Delegation to the I.L.O. Conferences at Geneva in 1947 and 1950 and was unanimously elected President of the later Conference.

After the first general elections in 1952, Mr. Jagjivan Ram became Union Minister for Communications. It was during his tenure that India's air transport was nationalised.

He relinquished charge of Communications and took over as Minister for Railways and Transport in December 1956, following the resignation of Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri.

He was returned unopposed to Lok Sabha in the 1957 general elections from the Shahabad South (Re-

served) Constituency in Bihar, and was appointed Union Minister for Railways in April 1957.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram was re-elected to Lok Sabha in 1962 general elections from Sasaram Constituency, Bihar. He was again appointed Union Minister for Railways and held that portfolio till April 9, 1962, when he became Minister for Transport and Communications. Under the Kamraj Plan, Mr. Jagjivan Ram relinquished the portfolio in August 1963, Minister for Labour and Employment and Rehabilitation from January 1966. Later in 1967 immediately after general elections he became Union Minister for Food and Agriculture.

**Source Courtesy:**  
**The Sainik Samachar, Pictorial Weekly of the Armed Forces Volume-XVII, Number-26, June 28, 1970**

## Quotes about Babu Jagjivan Ram

"He had an excellent grasp of military strategy. He was also an able administrator. It was Jagjivan Ram who made sure that the requirements of the three Services: manpower, weaponry equipment and infrastructural facilities were provided, as far as possible."

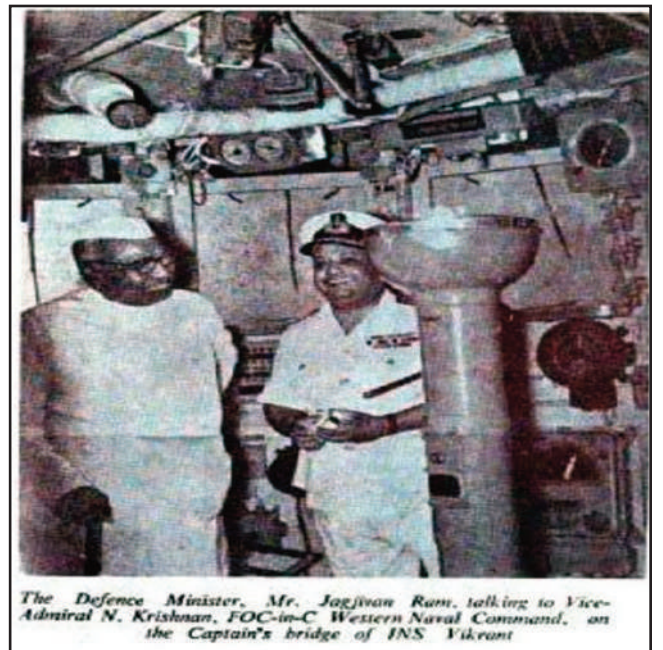
Lt. Gen. (Retd.) JFR Jacob, then Chief of General Staff in Eastern Command describing Jagjivan Ram as "perhaps the best Defence minister we (India) have had".



"Babu Jagjivan Ram's role was fascinating. He used to visit training camps set up for Mukti Bahini fighters in North-east India. He was solely responsible for co-ordinating between the then Prime Minister's Office, Home Minister and the Defence Forces."

- Lt. Col (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir  
Bir Protik and Swadhinata Padak Awardee  
Historian and Author in Bangladesh

# Mr. Jagjivan Ram- New Defence Minister



The Defence Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, talking to Vice-Admiral N. Krishnan, FOC-in-C Western Naval Command, on the Captain's bridge of INS Vikrant



Doctors of the three Services being introduced to the Defence Minister at INHS Asvini



The 110th session of the Governing Body of I.L.O. was declared open by H.H. the Maharaja of Mysore on Jan.3 at the Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore.

Photo shows the Maharaja inaugurating the conference. The Burmese Minister, Mr. Mahu Win Maung, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, India's Labour Minister and Mr. S. Lall, Chairman of the I.L.O. are seen sitting.

Courtesy: The Indian Express, 6th January 1950



(from L. to R.) Mr. K.T. Bhashyam, Labour Minister, Mysore, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Labour Minister, Government of India, Mr. S.Lall, Chairman of the I.L.O., Mr. David A.Morse, Director-General of the I.L.O.

The Indian Express, 6th January 1950



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