



# Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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## Historic documents of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Visit to Punjab in 1951

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's visit to Jalandhar on October 27, 1951 on the invitation of Punjab wing of SCF and his historic address at Ramdaspora, popularly known as Bootan Mandi (Jalandhar) Punjab (India), where thousands of his ardent followers had gathered to have a glimpse of their savior, left an indelible mark not only on the minds of the those who were present but also became a cultural heritage for their generations to come. The place where Dr. Ambedkar made his eloquent speech, currently houses a huge Ambedkar Bhawan, and library. Every year, it is at this very place organisational and literary functions are being organised in the memories of Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar to celebrate his anniversaries. This year on October 27th, a special function was organised to commemorate the historic visit of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar. On this auspicious occasion, the original Welcome Address presented in the honour of Babasaheb, which was prepared in Urdu by Mr. K.C. Sulekh, the then General Secretary of SCF, got translated into Punjabi and English, and was printed along with the Welcome Address prepared by Ad Dharm Mandal and the printed copies of the same were distributed among the audience. Both the historic documents meticulously preserved by the ardent followers of Babasaheb and his mission are in fact a very valuable cultural capital of the mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R Ambedkar.

## Welcome Address presented to Dr. Ambedkar on his maiden visit to Punjab

The Ad Dharam Mandal Punjab presented the following Welcome Address to Dr. Ambedkar, M.A., Ph.D., Bar-at-Law, M.L.C., Member of the Indian Franchise Committee (Lord Lothian Committee):- (March 30, 1932)

"We, the members of the Punjab Ad Dharam Mandal and the Managing Committee, extend a hearty welcome to you on your maiden visit to our Province. We are extremely grateful to you for the services rendered to the Depressed classes as a delegate to the Indian Round Table Conference London from the Bombay Legislative Assembly and as a member of the Indian Franchise Committee (Lord Lothian Committee). You will be surprised to learn that the High castes are denying our existence in our Province. Untouchability is being practiced in our Province like that in other Provinces. A high caste person gets defiled by our mere touch. We are not allowed to take water from the public wells. The Brahmin priest cannot conduct religious recitation and worship for us. The Washerman does not wash our clothes. The barber cannot dress our hair. The water carrier does not supply water to us. We cannot pass through the village with a palanquin on marriage and other festival occasions, nor can we play a band.

We can neither conduct common business nor can we move around together with them. In short we have no commonality with the high castes. The Land Intiqal (Aarji) Act has worsened the condition of the Depressed Classes. To promote education, the Education Ministry has declared some concessions vide its resolution No. 20181 - G, dated 19-11-1929. This is for the first time in the history of Punjab that a member of the Depressed Classes has been appointed on the permanent Franchise Committee. We are heartened to believe that our rights are safe in your hands. We hope that you will bestow your kind attention on the Depressed Classes of Punjab because even our existence is being denied. The coming generation will engrave your name in golden letters as champion of the Depressed Classes. We pray for your long life.

Courtesy: C. L. Chumber (Editor-in-Chief: Kaumi Udarian, Jalandhar) Punjabi to English translated by Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar Chief Postmaster General (Rtd.) Additional Secretary Government of India

## October 27, 1951 - Ambedkar Visited Bootan Mandi Jalandhar

The Ambedkarites living in and around Bootan Mandi at Jalandhar commemorated the historic visit of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on October 27 at Ambedkar Bhawan situated at Dr. Ambedkar Marg (Nakodar Road) where the iconic, Babasaheb addressed a mammoth public rally on October 27, 1951. It is a matter of great pride for us that we the Bootan Mandians hosted that visit led by our forefathers namely; Seth Kishan Dass, Seth Sunder Dass among others and the youth of that time which included K.C. Sulekh, Pritam Ramdasspuri, Kartara Ram Madhas, inter alia.

I happily joined the function at the Bhawan thoughtfully arranged by Ambedkar Bhawan Trust to commemorate the visit of our icon, Babasaheb. On the occasion, a Free Medical Camp for the benefit and advantage of the residents of the area was arranged with the help of professionally qualified doctors and Medicos led by Dr. Charanjit Singh. The Chief Guest of the solemn function was a staunch and scholarly Ambedkarite, Dr. Surinder Ajnat. Speaking



on the occasion, Secretary of the Trust, Dr. Gian Kaul gave a brief resume of the visit of Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1951 and a thought provoking address he delivered at the huge public meeting. Dr. Ajnat paid handsome tributes to Babasaheb and recalled his immense contribution to make India a land of democracy in spite of all odds in doing so. President of the Trust, Sohan Lal thanked the guests and the attentive audience and also the Medical Team for joining them in commemorating the historic visit of the Leader. The high-light of the function was the release of the 'Citation of Honour - MaanPatra' read by K.C. Sulekh the then General Secretary of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation from the podium of the function on October 27, 1951. It is a rare and historical document. It is a matter of gratification to know that this document was thoughtfully obtained and preserved by one of my close friends, Ram Lal Dass. At such occasions, Chief Editor of the Desh Doaba and the Ambedkar Times of the US, Prem Chumber always and as usual remained handy to help. Prem Chumber very kindly and thoughtfully got the Citation transcribed into Punjabi and translated

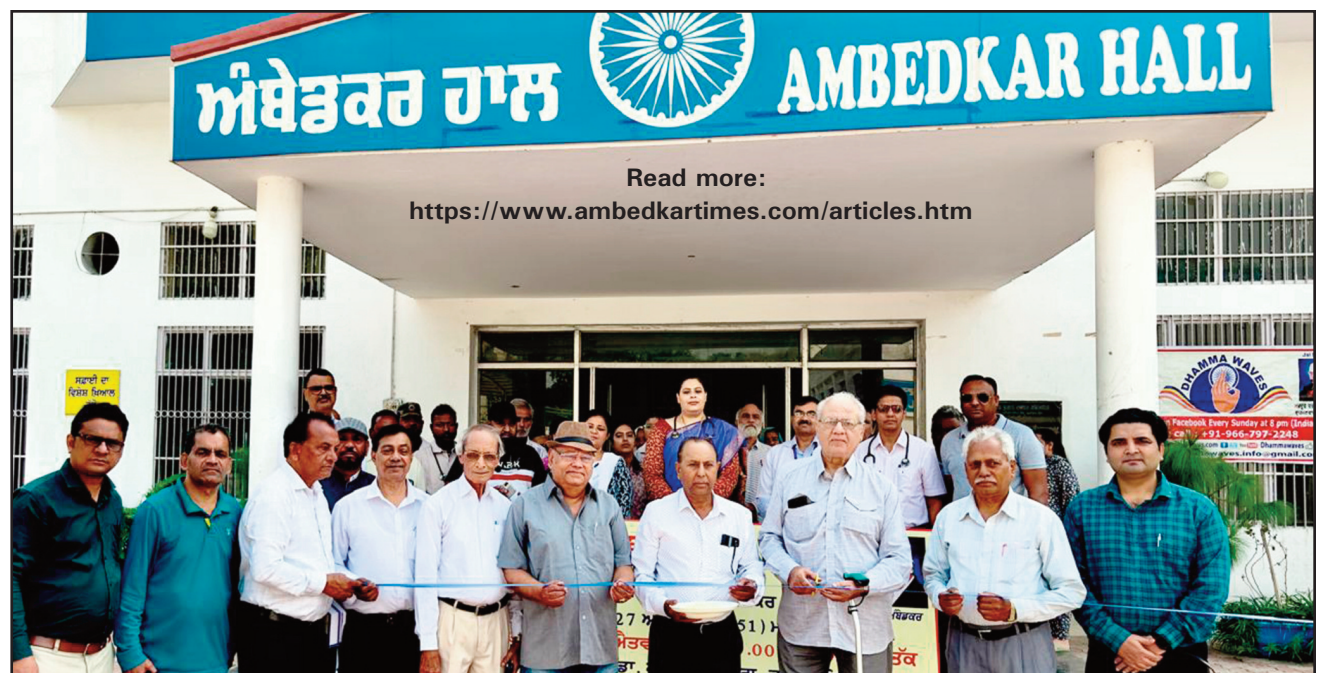
into English and published it in his esteemed papers, the mouth-pieces of the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar and Babu Manguram Mugowalia of the Ad-dharam Mandal. I was told by Editor Prem Chumber that an erudite scholar of Ambedkar Thought, Dr. Ronki Ram took special interest in getting the Citation translated into English too for wider circulation. Ambedkar Bhawan Trust with the help its fully involved and dedicated vol-



Ramesh Chander Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired) 91-99885-10940

unteer, Finance Secretary of the Trust, Baldev Bhardwaj got the Citation of Honour printed and framed and presented to the Hon'ble Guests and the Doctors who conducted the Free Medical Camp. I take this opportunity to thank K. C. Sulekh Sahib, Ram LalDass, Prem Chumber and Ambedkar Bhawan Trust for doing their part in preserving and protecting the history. I am reminded of the poem of Gurdass Ram Alam which he recited at the Public Rally in the presence of Babasaheb on October 27, 1951:

ਬੜਾ ਸ਼ੌਰ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਗਰੀਬ ਦੇ ਡੇਰੇ; ਇਹ ਅਜ ਕੌਣ ਆਯਾ ਸਵੇਰੇ ਸਵੇਰੇ, ਲੱਖਾਂ ਲੋਗ ਜੁੜ ਬੈਠੇ; ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਚੁਫੇਰੇ; ਅਜ ਕੌਣ ਆਯਾ ਸਵੇਰੇ ਸਵੇਰੇ।। close this brief narration with a bit of more information with regard to the visit of Babasaheb Ambedkar to Bootan Mandi in October, 1951. With the visit, the stretch of the Highway - Dr. Ambedkar Marg - Nakodar Road has become 'Ambedkar Hub' - Starting from Ambedkar Chowk to KabirChowk (Wadala Chowk), it entails important sites and institutions pertaining to Babasaheb namely; The Head-office of the Bheem Patrika (Office and Residence of its Chief Editor Lahori Ram Balley at Abadpura), Ambedkar Bhawan, Chobara of Seth Kishan Dass at Bootan Mandi where Babasaheb visited and had the Punjabi meal of Saag and Makkiki Roti, Ambedkar Municipal Park, Ambedkar Community Center at Sidharath Nagar, Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar Degree College. It goes without saying that these sites occupy an important place on the map of the City of Jalandhar.



# Future of Parliamentary Democracy

This speech was delivered by Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar at D.A.V. College, Jalandhar on October 28th, 1951

I am indeed thankful to you for the great honour done to me of asking me to address the special session of your parliament. During my whole life I have been, so to say, a wanderer from subject to subject, from profession to profession. I began my career as a Professor of Political Economics in the Government Commerce College, Bombay after my return from England. But I soon felt that the Government Service was no good for a man who was bound by rules of discipline. He is hampered at every stage in his work of public service. I then went back to England and qualified for the Bar. After my return I rested for a short period and then accepted the post of the Principal of the Law College at Bombay. I came back to the profession of teaching. I worked as the Principal of the Law College for five years. Then the 1935 Government of India Act came into being which brought the popular legislatures into being for the first time. I then thought of taking a jump into politics and I left the service and took to politics. Since then I have alternatively been doing legal practice and serving the public. Legal practice and public service are thus the alternating currents in my life, and I do not know on which current my life will end, whether A.C. or D.C.

I am very fond of the teaching profession. I am also very fond of students. I have dealt with them. I have lectured them in my life. This is the first opportunity I have got to address students since my resignation from the Cabinet. I am very glad to talk to students. A great deal of the future of this country must necessarily depend on the students of this country. Students are an intelligent part of the community and they can shape public opinion. I, therefore, take special pleasure in addressing you the members of the Parliament and I am really thankful for the opportunity given me.

When your principal wrote to me requesting me to address you, he did not indicate any particular topic on which I shall speak to you this morning. But suddenly, as usually happens in my case, in the flash of a moment the subject became clear to me and I have decided to speak a few words to you on the subject of parliamentary government. The time at my disposal is very short and I will therefore be able to give only a brief analysis of the subject.

During the discussion in the Constituent Assembly there was a variety of opinion as regards the nature of the Constitution that we should have. Some preferred the British system; some the American system. There were others who did not want either of these two types of government. But after a long discussion, a large majority of members came to a conclusion that the system of the Parliamentary Government as it is in Britain is best suited to our country.

There are some sections of people who do not like Parliamentary Government. Communists want the Russian type of government. The socialists are also against the present Constitution of India. They are agitating against it. They have declared that if they come to power, they will modify it. Personally speaking, I am very attached to the Parliamentary system of Government. We must understand what it means and we must preserve it in constitution. What is meant by Parliamentary Government? There is a book on the English Constitution written by Walter Baggot; it

are innumerable references in our literature to prove that the Parliamentary system of Government was not unknown to us. There are many rules about Parliamentary procedure. May's parliamentary practice is generally followed. One rule that is invariably followed everywhere is that there can be no discussion without a motion. That is why there is no discussion on a question. The rule was also practiced in our land in ancient times. The system of secret ballot now in vogue is also not new to us; it was followed in Buddhist Sanghas. They had the ballot papers which they called Sala-

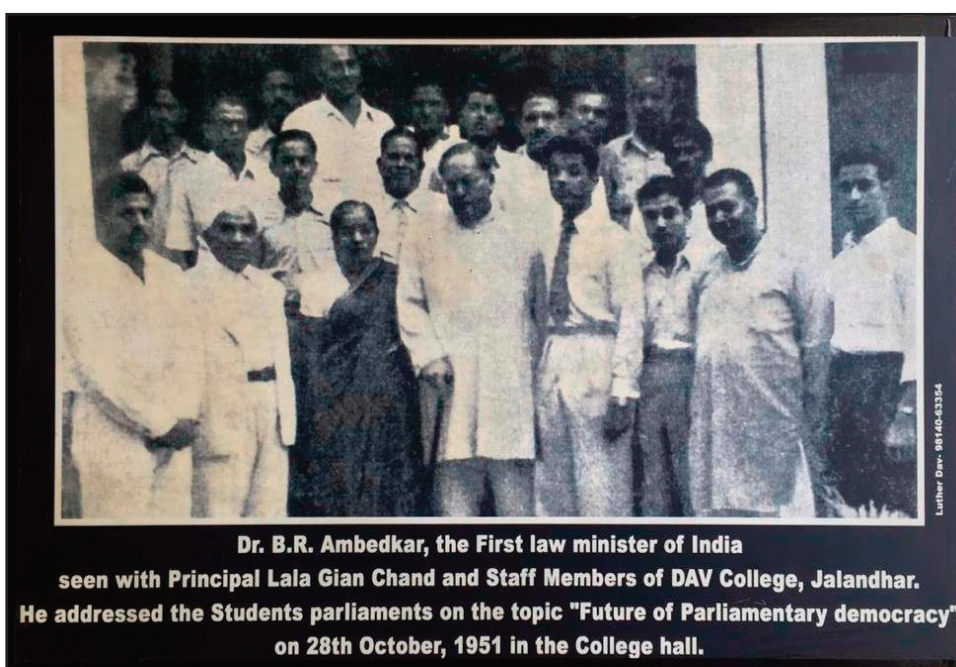
rule must be elected by the people from time to time. He must obtain the approval of the people. Hereditary rule has no sanction in the Parliamentary system of government.

Secondly, any law, any measure applicable to the public life of the people must be based on the advice of the people chosen by the people. No single individual can presume the authority that he knows everything, that he can make the laws and carry the government. The laws are to be made by representatives of the people in the Parliament. They are the people who can advise the men in whose name the law can be proclaimed. That is the difference between the monarchical system Government and the democratic system Government. In monarchy, the affairs of the people are carried on in the name of the monarch and under the authority of the monarch. In democracy the affairs of the public are carried on in the name of the head of state but the laws and the executive measures are the authority on which the government is carried on. The head of state is the titular head; he is merely a symbol. He is consecrated 'Murti'. He can be worshipped but he is not allowed to carry out the government of the country. The government of the country is carried out, though in his name, by the elected representatives of the people.

Thirdly and lastly, the Parliamentary system of government means that at a stated period those who want to advise the head of state must have the confidence of the people in them renewed. In Britain, formerly, the Parliament were carried out every seven years. The Chartists agitated against this; they wanted annual elections. The motive behind this agitation was very praiseworthy indeed. It would have been best in the interests of the people if annual elections were held, had it been possible, of course. But Parliamentary elections are very costly affairs. So some sort of compromise was arrived at and a five year period was supposed to be the responsible period at which the legislators and the ministers were to go back to the people and obtain the fresh renewal of their confidence.

This is also not enough. The Parliamentary system of Government is much more than government by discussion. There are two pillars on which the Parliamentary system of Government rests. These are the fulcrums on which the mechanism works. Those two pillars are an opposition and free and fair elections. For the last 20 or 30 years we acclimated to one single political party. We have nearly forgotten the necessity and importance of opposition for the fair working of Parliamentary Democracy. We are continuously told that opposition is an evil. Here again we are forgetting what the past history has to tell us. You know that there

(Contd. on next page)



**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the First law minister of India**  
seen with Principal Lala Gian Chand and Staff Members of DAV College, Jalandhar.  
He addressed the Students parliaments on the topic "Future of Parliamentary democracy"  
on 28th October, 1951 in the College hall.

is indeed a classic treatise. It was later expanded by other authorities on constitutional government like Laski and others. He has put the conception of the Parliamentary Government in one sentence. He says Parliamentary Government means government by discussion and not by fisticuffs. You will always find in the British system of Government that they hardly ever resort to fisticuffs when taking any decision. The decision is always taken after discussion. Nobody introduces the element of disturbance in the British parliament. Look at French Politics. Decisions are arrived at more than often by knocking knockout blows. You will find that this system is hardly adequate to those not born in that system. It is an alien institution to them. We must learn, understand and make it a success.

Parliamentary democracy is unknown to us are present. But India, at one time, had Parliamentary institutions. India was far more advanced in ancient times. If you go throughout the Suktas of Mahaparinirvan, you will find ample evidence in support of my point. In these Suktas it is stated that while Bhagwan Buddha was dying at Kusinara (Kusinagara) a message to the effect was sent to the Mallas who were sitting in session at that time. They were decided that they should not close the session but would carry on with their work and would go to Kusinara after finishing the business of the Parliament. There

patrakagrahakas. Unfortunately, we have lost this entire past heritage that was good. Historians of India must tackle this question as to why these parliamentary institutions disappeared from our land. But I find that they cannot or do not want to find out the reasons for it. Ancient India was the master of the world. There was such intellectual freedom in ancient India as was nowhere else to be found. Then why was it that this ancient civilization went to the dogs? Why was India subject to autocratic monarchies? We were familiar with parliamentary institutions, we knew about votes, voting, committees and other things related to parliamentary institutions. Today the Parliamentary system of government is alien to us. If we go to a village, we will find that the villagers do not know what it is to vote, or what a party is. They find it something strange something alien. It is, therefore, a great problem as how to preserve this institution. We will have to educate the public; we will have to tell them the benefits of Parliamentary Democracy and of the Parliamentary system of Government. We know what Baggot means by Parliamentary government. But today his definition is of no use, it is utterly inadequate. There are three main things inherent in the Parliamentary system of Government. Parliamentary Government means negation of hereditary rule. No person can claim to be a hereditary ruler. Whoever wants to

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# Sahib Kanshi Ram and Dalit Emancipation

**Prem Kumar Chumber**  
Editor-in-Chief:

**Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba**

Sahib Kanshi Ram devoted his life for the eradication of caste from the domestic structures of Indian socio-religious realm. The sole aim his life-long struggle was to facilitate the Bahujan Samaj to acquire power through the medium of ballot. He was a firm believer in the nonviolent power of democracy that he inherited from the teachings of Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar. A chance reading of one of the numerous valuable writings of Dr. Ambedkar transformed his vision and he did not only prefer to live unmarried but also renounced his family life once for all. After he plunged into social struggle for the acquisition of political power for his people he did not look back at all toward his home in village Khauspur in Rupnagar district of Punjab. He did all this for helping his people to stand on their own feet to get rid of centuries' old slavery and blind faith in the Chaturvarna system of social hierarchy, which deny them their bare minimum human rights. He ingrained among his people that the political power is the only key to Dalit emancipation and empowerment in the real sense of the term.

Sahib Kanshi Ram Ji was an innovative thinker and a charismatic mass leader who coined new political vocabulary for the mobilization of downtrodden. The slogans he chiseled adroitly caught the imagination of all and sundry throughout the length and breadth of India. He told

his people unless and until they formed their own social and political organizations, no upper caste political party will allow them to come to rule India. And he was confident that given the 85 percent strength of Bahujan, if the latter joined hands no one in the world can stop them reach Delhi. His untiring efforts and firm faith in his people brought success though in some parts of the country. But as far as awareness among the Bahujan is concerned his was a great success. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba weekly newspaper pays sincere tributes to Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji on his 11th death anniversary and solemnly resolve to continue struggling following into his footsteps. Posted at [www.ambedkar-times.com](http://www.ambedkar-times.com)

**Some points from**

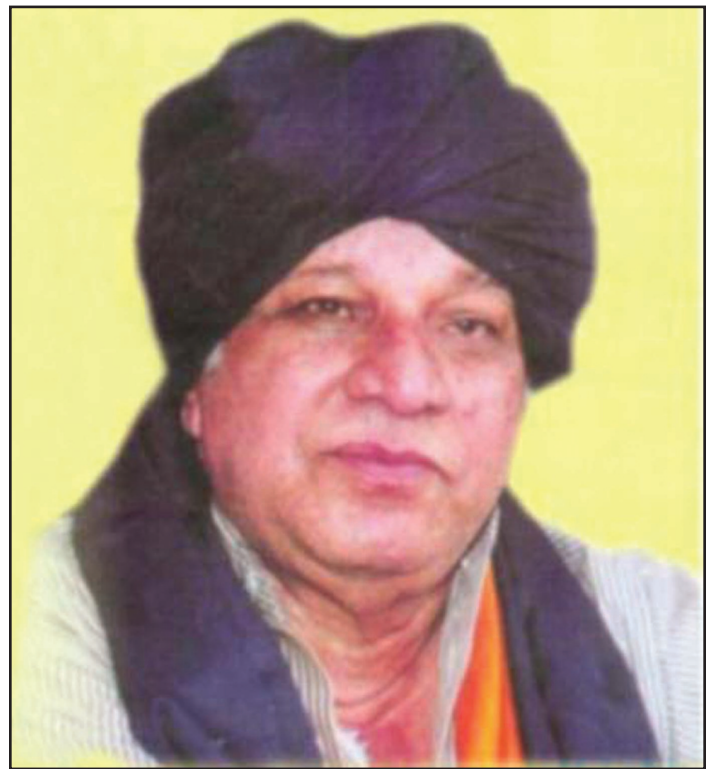
**Sahib Kanshi Ram's Speech –**

- The Ad-Dharm movement was the movement of rebellion against the Hindu religion. It was the movement against the Manuwad.
- Ad-Dharm movement was the revolt against the Manuwad.
- We as a community must understand what Ad-Dharm movement was and 75 years ago what movement was started by our forefathers, how Ad-Dharm movement ran for 75 years, what next needs to be done and what future holds for us, for the movement.
- One thing I know is that if Guru Ravidass Ji's teachings were not included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, no one would have ever known about Guru Ravidass.

• BSP is a party of weakest (section of the society) but its fight is with those who are powerful. How to fight these powerful parties? By developing the right thinking/mentality.

**We need to become ruling class if we want to form a casteless society**

Sahib Kanshi Ram said– In 1936 Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was invited by the "Jat Pat Todak Mandal, Lahore" to present his essay on the subject of caste. But the organizers of the conference did not allow Babasaheb to present the essay. Later on, Babasaheb published the essay in a form of book titled as "Annihilation of Caste". When I first read this book in 1962-63, I felt that annihilation of caste is certainly possible. But later on, when I started thinking deeply and began to study the subject of castes, caste system and behavioral patterns associated with the caste system, my understanding of caste began to change. My study of Caste is not merely based on reading books but it has emanated from my real life experience with the castes. There are millions of people who leave their



villages and migrate to metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and other big cities. These people do not bring anything else with them; the only thing they bring with them is their caste. They leave behind in their villages their small huts, a small plot of land, etc.

But they cannot leave behind their caste in the village; the caste invariably accompanies them to the cities where they begin to stay in dirty shanties along the side of railway tracks and nallahs. If the caste is so dear to the people then how can we annihilate the caste? Therefore I have stopped thinking in the direction of the annihilation of caste.

# Future of Parliamentary Democracy

(Continue from page 2)

were Nibandhnars to interpret the Vedas and Smrities. They used to begin their comments on Slokas and Sutras by stating firstly the ParvaPakshs, the one side of the question. They used to follow up by given the Uttar Paksha, the other side. By this they wanted to show us that the question raised was not an easy question, it is a question where there is dispute, discussion and doubt. Then they used to give what they termed as Adhikaran where they used to criticize both the Pakshas. Finally, they gave the Siddhant, their own decisions. From here we can find that all our ancient teachers believed in the two party system of Government.

One important thing in the Parliamentary Democracy is that people should know the other side, if there are two sides to a question. Hence a functional opposition is required. Opposition is the key to a free political life. No democracy can do without it. Britain and Canada, the two exponents of the Parliamentary system of Government, recognize this important fact and in both countries the Leader of the Opposition is paid a salary by the Government. They regard the opposition as an essential thing. People of these countries believe that the opposition should be as much alive as the Government. The Government may suppress the facts; the government may have only one-sided propaganda. The people have made provision against these eventu-

alities in both these countries.

A free and fair election is the other pillar on which Parliamentary Democracy rests. Free and fair elections are necessary for the transfer of power from one section for the community to the other in a peaceful manner and without any bloodshed. In older times, if a king died, there was at least one murder in the palace. Revolution used to take place in the palace resulting in murders before the new king used to take the reign of his country into his authority. This has been the history of India. Elections must be completely free and fair. People must be left to themselves to choose those whom they want to send to the Legislatures.

Now the question arises as to whether there is any desire on the part of the party in power to permit any opposition to be created. Congress does not want any opposition. Congress is attempting to gather people of sundry views under one canopy. I ask you whether this is a desirable trend in the Political life of this country. What about free and fair elections? We must not lose sight of the fact that Big Business is trying to play a great part in the political life of this country.

The amount that is being contributed to Congress on behalf of Big Business is a very dangerous thing. If moneyed people try to influence the elections by contributing to the election fund of any political party, what will be the result? If the party which

they have supported financially comes into power, they will try to extract concessions for themselves either by modifying the present legislation or by influencing the party in power to legislate in such a manner as would be beneficial to their interests. I ask you, gentlemen, whether under these circumstances there is any hope left for the Parliamentary system of Government to do any good to the country. I would like to refer to the Mahabharat. During the battle between the Pandvas and the Kaurvas, Bhishma and Drona were on the side of the Kaurvas. The Pandvas were in the right and the Kaurvas were in the wrong. Bhishma admitted this. Whensomebody asked Bhishma as to why he was supporting the Kaurvas if he found the Pandvas to be in the right. Bhishma replied in the memorable sentence. I must be loyal to the salt if I eat the food of the Kaurvas. I must take their side even if they might be in the wrong.

Today the same thing is happening. Congress is accepting the financial help of the Banias, Marwaries and other multimillionaires. Congress is eating their food and it follows therefore naturally that Congress will have to take the side of these Big Businesses at all crucial times. We also find that the government servants are influencing the elections in favour of the party which is feeding them and their dependents. No less a personality than Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, at the inaugural session

for the Bhartiya Jan Sangh at Delhi recently, openly charged government servants of helping the Congress and thereby nullifying the elections from being free and fair.

Under these circumstances, do you, gentlemen, think that there is any hope for Parliamentary Democracy to succeed?

If Parliamentary Democracy fails in this country, and is bound to fail for the reasons mentioned by me, the only result will be rebellion, anarchy and Communism. If the people in power do not realize that people will not tolerate hereditary authority, then this country is doomed. Either Communism will come, Russia having sovereignty over our country, destroying individual liberty and our independence, or the section of the people who are disgruntled at the failure of the party in power will start a rebellion and anarchy will prevail.

Gentlemen, I want you to take note of these eventual certainties and if you wish that the Parliamentary system of Government and Parliamentary Democracy prevail in this country If you are satisfied that we cherish the inherent right of individual liberty, then it is your duty as students, as the intelligent community of our country, to strive your utmost to cherish this Parliamentary system of Government in its true spirit and work for it. Gentlemen, I have done. I thank you for having given me this opportunity to address this august gathering.

## Harmony in Diversity

# Exploring Guru Nanak's Vision of Intercultural Dialogue

In India at the time of Guru Nanak, there were societal divisions and religious intolerance. Nevertheless, Guru Nanak envisioned a society in which individuals belonging to various socio-cultural and religious backgrounds might live in harmony despite the socio-religious and cultural conflicts. He primarily focused on the value of intercultural dialogue, respect for one another, and the intrinsic equality of all people. The bigotry and prejudice that were common in his era were powerfully offset by his eternal teachings. He emphasized that all people, regardless of their cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, are equal in the sight of God and he outrightly condemned the man-made divisions and social barriers. He encouraged people to raise above religious identities and acknowledge the common spiritual nature in everyone with his teachings, which are based on the idea of "Ik Onkar" (One God). The idea of Ik Onkar, or the existence of a single, formless, universal creator, is fundamental to Guru Nanak's eternal teachings. He promoted spiritual openness and mutual

understanding by bridging religious gaps with his message of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Mankind. The social divisions caused by caste discriminations, gender injustice, and dogmatic behaviors were harshly denounced by Guru Nanak. His teachings encouraged masses to lead an ethical and truthful life based on service, humility, and compassion—values that were universally accepted in many nations and religions. The bedrock for a more open, fair and peaceful society was prepared by his emphasis on intercultural dialogue and respect for social, religious and ideological differences.

Guru Nanak's universal teachings still motivate people all around the world to work for equality, peace and mutual understanding. It is commonly acknowledged that Guru Nanak was a pioneer in interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Guru Nanak's divine teachings offered a distinctive and significant viewpoint on cultural and religious diversity. His focus on universal brotherhood, equality, and social unity influenced a variety of individuals, particularly those who were marginalized or subjected to social discrimina-

tion. His teachings promoted a feeling of unity and inclusivity in society. Beyond the theological, social and cultural boundaries of his era, his divine teachings placed a strong emphasis on equality, unity, and respect for all religious and knowledge traditions. His teachings transcend religious, caste, and ethnic boundaries and emphasize the unity of God and humanity. He espoused the values of religious unity and intercultural dialogue. He traveled widely throughout South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond during his lifetime. He met people from a wide range of religious beliefs during his long travels and conversed philosophically with spiritual leaders from various religio-cultural traditions during his journeys (Udasis). During his four main Udasis, he visited areas where different religious groups predominated. He promoted mutual respect and understanding amongst individuals of other religions by conversing with religious leaders, scholars, saints, and common people throughout his divine journeys. His relationships with Hindu ascetics, Muslim Sufi saints, and others were founded on discourse rather than argument or conversion. In Mecca and Medina, he discussed the unity of God with Muslim scholars. He challenged Hindu customs in Haridwar and prioritized inward devotion as compared to outward religious ceremonies. His strategy of polite interactions and looking for common ground rather than conflict was evident in his interactions with representatives of various religions.

The Sikh religious traditions are based on the pluralistic traditions established by Guru Nanak. Guru Tegh Bahadur's effort to protect Kashmiri Pandits from forced conversion is a classic example of how later Sikh Gurus upheld religious freedom and interfaith dialogue. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture, contains divine hymns of saints from a variety of religious traditions, including Bhakti and Sufi traditions. This is in fact in line with Guru Nanak's philosophy of respecting and embracing all spiritual ways. His teachings are still applicable to cross-cultural dialogue today. His focus on compassion, human dignity and common spiritual principles provides a framework for fostering har-

mony in multicultural societies. His life and teachings serve as an example of how constructive intercultural dialogue based on respect for one another may eradicate social divisions and promote harmony.

The rigid caste structure and meaningless ceremonial customs that divide masses were severely criticized by Guru Nanak. Instead of focusing on outward religious symbols, he promoted constructive, meaningful and positive discourse that emphasized universal human values like humility, compassion, and honesty. He established the institution of Langar, which represents his ideas of fraternity and equality. It encourages unity and dismantles societal structures by inviting people from different walks of life, castes, and religions to sit down and eat together. People of all castes, genders, and creeds gathered to pray and share meals in the Sangat (congregation) and Langar (community kitchen) institutions that Guru Nanak created. In order to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity and to remove social hierarchies, people from all walks of life, castes, and religions are motivated to sit down together and enjoy a meal. By encouraging dialogue, these institutions dismantled hierarchical social structures and promoted social equality.

Although religious differences can cause conflict in today's society, Guru Nanak's teachings pave a way to promote peaceful cooperation. His message of peace and mutual understanding in a multicultural and multireligious society is still extremely significant today. He emphasized that the truth could not be monopolized by any one religion. In today's world, which is marked by an increase in socio-religious, cultural, ethnic, and political conflicts, Guru Nanak's teachings—particularly his focus on the equality of all people and the unity of all creation—remain crucial for the entire human race. For tackling the various cultural conflicts, his idea of



intercultural dialogue provides a potent framework. His focus on compassion, common spiritual ideals, and human dignity promote religio-cultural harmony in multicultural society. His life and teachings show how peaceful coexistence may be fostered and social divisions can be healed through genuine dialogue based on respect for one another. In order to counter today's social, religious, cultural and political issues, his teachings encourage harmony, empathy, and understanding between people. His teachings promote equality—a prerequisite for harmonious coexistence in heterogeneous environments—by encouraging people to get rid of parochial mindsets. Since ideological disputes are frequently intensified in the modern period, his vision of intercultural dialogue emphasizes the value of respect for socio-religious and cultural diversities. The teachings of Guru Nanak inspire people to respect equality, have compassionate conversations across cultural boundaries, and act with kindness. In order to promote harmony and peace while negotiating the intricacies of contemporary multicultural societies, his spiritual legacy offers a ray of hope. Presently, Guru Nanak's idea of intercultural dialogue is still potent and timeless. By adopting his teachings on equality, service, interfaith understanding, and togetherness, we can endeavor to create a world that is more just, peaceful, and harmonious.



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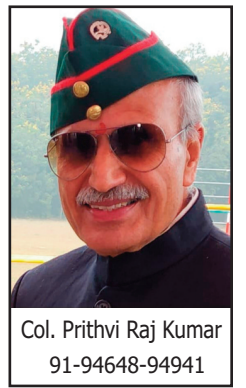


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# Valmikiya Ramayana – The Unanswered Questions



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A bird's eye view of the Valmikiya Ramayana published in the Ambedkar Times on 16th October 2024 must have been gone through by the readers. This and some other related texts on Ramayana give rise to many questions which call for dispassionate answers. Some of the probable questions are outlined below, and many more may be striking the minds of the sensitive, sensible and curious readers.

(1) As per Matasya Purana, Brahma is said to have expanded Ramayana into 100 crores (one billion) slokas (hymns) and narrated it to one of his Manas Putras (mind-born or psyche sons) Narada who further narrated it to Valmiki. Brahma is said to have been born from the lotus stem sprung from Vishnu's navel when bedecked with jewelry and fine clothes he was lying underneath waters. Brahma is said to have been created for the purpose of further creating and expanding the mortal world which was non-existent prior to his birth. The question is how Brahma could be created from the lotus stem springing from Vishnu's navel? How could the lotus stem spring from Vishnu's navel? How could Vishnu be self-created in the physical, and how was he lying and surviving underneath waters? If there was no mortal world existing prior to the creation of Brahma then who and in which language he wrote and preserved the Ramayana which was expanded by Brahma? Who and how manufactured jewelry and dress of Vishnu? How could the children of Brahma be Manas Putras (mind-born)? Where is the original and its expanded version of Ramayana containing one billion Slokas?

(2) Swayambhu (self-created) and Omnipotent Vishnu is said to have incarnated himself as Rama for the purpose of annihilating the Rakshasas (demons) such as Ravana etc. who were said to be the source of constant trouble to the gods or Brahmins. Ravana was said to have been blessed with a boon by Brahma that he would not be killed by anyone except by a mortal human being. The question is as to why the Omnipotent Vishnu could not handle Ravana without causing huge bloodshed? Why could not the boon given to Ravana by Brahma, son of Vishnu, be annulled or dispelled by the Almighty Vishnu?

(3) King Dashratha is said to have ruled for over 60,000 (sixty thousand years) years. His queens are said to have conceived by eating divine kheer (rice pudding) offered to them by a jet black giant person who had appeared from the Yajna Kunda (sacred fire pit) with a salver filled with the delicacy. The question is how could a giant person appear from the fire pit, and disappear in it? How could the queens conceive just by eating kheer? How could one live for 60,000 years?

(4) The sage Shringa, who performed the Putareshti Yajna (Yajna for begetting son) for Dasaratha is said to have been born from a doe who had conceived by consuming semen of a sage Vibhandaka. How could a doe

conceive by drinking water containing human semen, and give birth to a human baby?

(5) Brahma is said to have commanded gods to produce Rama's associates in the form of monkeys, bears and chimpanzees equal to him in valor and strength. Accordingly, gods and sages such as Indra, Surya, Agni, Pawan, Brahaspati, Vishwakarma and Varuna etc. produced large number of monkeys, bears and chimpanzees from Gandharva, Yaksha, Naga, Kinnari, Vidyadhari, bear and monkey females. They were extremely giant like elephants and mountains. They could fly



high in the sky, catch the clouds and cross over the seas, and hold vast kingdoms. The question is how could the animals be produced from the human females? How could the gods or natural forces (!) like Surya, Agni, Pawan etc. produce animals by cohabitation with human and animal females? How could the animals be trained in human warfare involving chariots, elephants, horses and a variety of weaponry? If they could fly high in the sky and cross over the ocean then why was a bridge constructed over the ocean to reach Lanka? Why were animals instead of men produced as Rama's army to fight against Ravana? The questions are galore.

(6) There are different versions of the origin of Sita. In her previous birth, she is said to have committed suicide by jumping into fire as she did not want to marry Ravana who had proposed to her in his previous birth. She was born from a lotus in her next birth and Ravana took her in his possession. On learning that she would be the cause of his death, he threw her in the river. She was found subsequently in a furrow by the king Janaka when he was ploughing the land in preparation for a Yajna. The question is as to how Ravana was there in his previous birth also? How could a child be born from the lotus flower? How could a

child thrown in the river be found buried in the ground, and found alive?

(7) The story of origin and life of Hanumana is also mystical. His mother is said to be an Apsara or mermaid named Punjlika originally who was metamorphosed into a she-monkey by the curse of a sage and was blessed by another sage to assume occasionally at will the form of a beautiful woman. She was married in her monkey form to the monkey king named Kesari. She was mentally impregnated by the air God, Pavana, when she had assumed the form of a woman of bewitching beauty. She gave birth to a male child who as a baby flew up in the sky to catch and eat the sun, taking it to be a fruit. Lord Indra hit him hard on the chin and the baby fell down on the earth with an injury mark on his chin (hanu). He was thus named Hanumana, one with a mark on the chin.

In another version, Hanumana is said to have been born as Shiva's son to Anjani, daughter of sage Gautama. The story goes that Shiva expressed desire to see the Mohini form of Vishnu. On seeing the voluptuous Mohini form of Vishnu, Shiva lost control over his senses and started chasing Mohini. He lost his seed in the process.

The semen was injected into Anjani's ear by the sages. She conceived and delivered Hanumana.

The question is as to how an Apsara could be metamorphosed into a she-monkey by word of mouth, and assume the form of a woman at will? How could air (Pawan) assume the form of a human being and impregnate her mentally? How could a woman conceive with semen injected into her ear? Why could not god of gods Shiva control himself on seeing the Mohini form of Vishnu? One can raise many questions in this regard.

(8) Ravana, Kumbhakarana, Shoorpanakha and Vibheeshna are said to be the great grandchildren of Swayambhu Brahma, born to Kaikisi, the daughter of Rakshasa (demon) named Sumali. Ravana is said to have been born as a jet black ten-headed and twenty-armed child. He performed rigorous austerities and remained on fast for 10,000 (ten thousand) years. He would chop off one of his heads at the end of each one thousand years and offer it as oblation in the Yajna kunda. He was granted a boon by Brahma that he would not be killed by anyone or anything except by an ordinary human being. The question is as to whether the story of origin of Brahma, his mind-born sons and their future generations can stand the test

of natural and scientific process of evolution and procreation? How could a child born with ten heads and twenty arms survive? How could

Ravana survive without food for ten thousand years? How could Ravana chop off his own head and survive? The questions can be endless.

(9) A person named Vishwakarma is said to have built Lanka of gold for the Rakshasas at Trikoot Mountain. The population of the Rakshasas in Lanka then is said to be more than one lac crores (1,00,000 crores) i.e. more than 120 times of the world population today which is around 820 crores. Total geographical area of Sri Lanka today is 65,612 km<sup>2</sup>. The question is as to how could the population of this magnitude (one lac crores) be accommodated and sustained on an island of this small size? Where were the gold mines and factories producing such amounts of gold to build Lanka? What happened to those gold mines and factories, and how did they disappear? Where has all the gold of the then Lanka gone?

(10) Vishwakarma is said to be the master of all trades i.e. an architect and a builder of palaces, forts, cities and countries, a mechanic and a manufacturer etc. of chariots, airplanes, all kinds of instruments, weaponry and machinery in all the ages on earth and in heaven. How could one person be a master of all trades and why and how such an advanced science and knowledge disappear from this land? A large number of questions in this regard boggle one's mind.

(11) The size of Rama's army consisting only of monkeys, bears and chimpanzees or gorillas ran into numbers beyond human computation. For instance, the army of Angada alone, son of Vali consisted of ten Shankhas and one Padma i.e. 10, 010 crore crores. There were many such monkey and bear kings supporting Rama. The total army consisting of monkeys, bears and chimpanzees of all such monkey leaders and kings ran into numbers beyond human calculation. How could an army of such a magnitude be accommodated in a small place called Kishkindha? How could it be fed, sustained, disciplined, armed and trained in human warfare? The list of questions can be endless.

(12) Ayodhya is said to have been built by Manu. He is said to be the first biological son of Brahma who had divided his body into two halves of a male and female. Manu is said to have been born from the male part of Brahma's body. Similar stories of Manu's origin with some variation here and there are found in multiple shastras. That being the origin of Manu, how could then the story of building Ayodhya by him be accepted as true? If Ayodhya was built by Manu on creation of the mortal world by him, how is it that it exists even today after the

(Contd. on next page)

## Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji and the Birth of Dalit Movement in Punjab

Prem Kumar Chumber  
Editor-in-Chief:

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Punjab has the distinction of being the only state in India where caste based social exclusion was diluted because of the long spell of Muslim rule on the one hand and the most appealing egalitarian philosophy of Sikh faith and its grassroots impact on transformation of the life of downtrodden, on the other. However, caste and its resultant social negativities never ceased to torment the major section of the society. Caste discriminations in Punjab were/are more material in nature than social as in other parts of India. Prejudice takes precedence over pollution in Punjab. However, absence of pollution does not mean that Brahminism Social Order (BSO) is alien to it. On the contrary, it thrives under new structures of social subordination entrenched in material deprivation of Dalits in the state. Material depravation of the downtrodden in the state was reinforced by the customary laws of Razat-Namaas and the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900. Along with many other nonagricultural castes, Scheduled Castes people were historically deprived the right to own land. This restriction made them absolutely landless. It was because of this legal restriction that when Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji after his return to Punjab from the United States of America (USA) asked his father to buy some land to evade social oppressions at the hands of landlords that he came to know that social subordination of the Scheduled Castes people was also rooted in the law of the land. This has led him to organize his fellow beings to form a movement for the emancipation and empowerment of downtrodden what eventually termed as Ad Dharm Movement. This movement was the first of its kind that became suddenly popular because of its grassroots appeals. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji devoted his entire life for the cause of total transformation of his country and the socio-economic and political uplift of his people who were relegated to the periphery since centuries. He exhorted his people to come over a common platform to challenge the forces that subjugated the Dalits. He waged a long battle and finally able to unite many communities among the Scheduled Castes to work for their upward social mobility. Scheduled Castes of Punjab, particularly of the Doaba region, consider him the pioneer of Dalit movement in the state that played a leading role in strengthening the mission of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar not only in Punjab but in the whole of the country.

# Valmikiya Ramayana - The Unanswered Questions

(Continue from page 5)

expiry of a period of over millions of years whereas no trace of human civilization on this land is found prior to that of Indus Valley civilization?

13) There are multiple versions of Valmiki's birth and lineage. Valmiki himself says in the Ramayana that he is the 10th son of Pracheta (Varuna). He is referred to as Bhargava and Pracheta in the Matsya, Vishnu, Padama, Bhagawata, Koorma and Skandha Puranas etc. and Mahabharata (Shanti, Vana, Udyoga, Drona and Anushasana parvas). Skandha Purana gives different stories of his birth. In Vaishnava Khanda of this Purana he is said to be a Brahmin named Stambha having adulterous relations with a prostitute in one of his previous births. Consequently he was born as a hunter in next life. A sage named Shankha asked him to chant the word 'Rama' more powerful and beneficial than the Veda, and equal to thousand names of Lord Vishnu. He does that and as a result takes birth as Valmiki in the house of sage Valmeek in the next life, and he authored Ramayana (pp.375-381). In another version given at page 708-710 of the same Purana, he is shown as the son of a Bhrigu Brahmin named Sumati. His name then was Agnisharma, and he had joined a gang of robbers for the sustenance of his parents and family. The Saptrishi (seven sages) advised him to chant the Mahamantra to achieve super-consciousness, when he tried to rob them. He performed austerity and chanting of the Mahamantra for thirteen years unconscious of the huge mound of termites (Valmeek) having deposited on his body. The Saptrishis happened to pass through that place after thirteen years and dug him out of the termite mound. They gave him the name 'Valmiki' - born out of Valmeek. He composed the epic Ramayana with the blessings of Shiva.

In yet another version recorded at page 1024-1027 of the same Purana, he has been shown as a robber named Vishakha, son of a Brahmin, named Shamimukha. Rest of the story with minor changes is similar to that of Agnisharma. He authored the epic Ramayana with the blessings of Goddess Saraswati. A similar story is found in the Nagara Khanda of the same Purana. In altogether a new version given in the Bhakhtmaal of Nabha Das, a contemporary of Tulsidas, Valmiki has been shown as a Shvapacha (Chandala - Untouchable), a devotee of Krishna. He was performing menial jobs at Yudhishtira's place. Why are there such different versions of the origin of the person who is said to be the author of the great epic Ramayana? Which of the versions should be accepted as true? How could a person survive for thirteen years in a mound of termite? Let the readers meditate and find answers to the questions that may arise in this regard.

14) Why Bhagwan Rama - the incarnation of Lord Vishnu and a mighty king killed Vali surreptitiously by hiding behind the trees?

15) When Shoorpanakha, sister of Ravana, proposed to Rama, he told her that he was already married and that she should propose to Laxmana who was also married? Why did he ask Laxmana to disfigure her by chopping off her nose? How did she cross over the ocean

and land up there from Lanka?

16) Rama was a Kshatriya king and Ravana and his family were Brahmins from Brahma's lineage. Killing a Brahmin is the greatest of the sins and crimes (*Brahma Hatya*) entailing the death penalty as per Hindu scriptures. Why Rama and others, who killed Ravana and his clan, were not penalized for the crime of *Brahm Hatya*?

17) Why could God Rama not trust the integrity of Sita during her custody of Ravana? Why after the war and killing of Ravana, he told her that he had fought war not to rescue her but for his own self-respect? Why did he tell her that he still suspected her character and she was free to go anywhere she liked? Why did he make her suffer the ordeal of passing through the fire to prove her chastity? When she had successfully passed the fire test, why did he believe the rumor later on in Ayodhya that she had conceived while in custody of Ravana? Why did he desert her clandestinely in a wild forest when she was in the family way? Why did he want her to pass the fire test again when Valmiki brought her to him after her sons had grown into budding young men? How could a throne appear from the earth and take Sita down into the earth on her refusal to undergo the fire test yet again? Is it not the case of Sita having committed suicide?

18) A Brahmin's son is said to have died because some Shudra was performing tapasya - tough penance somewhere in Rama's regime? If such an act of a Shudra could cause death of the son of a Brahmin, why only the son of a particular one Brahmin died, and not of all Brahmins? Why did God Rama kill Shambooka, the Shudra, who was performing tough penance for attaining the heaven? How come, the dead Brahmin boy came into life the moment Rama killed Shambooka? How could a dead person become alive by an act of killing a Shudra at a distant place by God Rama?

19) Rama is said to have himself fixed the period of 11, 000 years for his rule over the mortal world. How could a person live for such a long period in the mortal world? Why could not the Omnipotent God Rama turn the evil into good by his godly act rather than killing enmasse the mortals for protecting Brahmins? Why did God Rama need 11000 years to kill Ravana?

20) The society of Rama's period practiced and promoted Varna and caste system and suffered from the common evils and weaknesses such as rivalry, jealousy, envy, greed, dowry, theft, dacoity, poverty, social discrimination, blind faith, superstition and myth. In the face of such conditions of the society, how could the regime of Rama be said to be 'Rama Rajya' or the age of truth and morality where no evil or evil doers existed?

21) At the conclusion of period of 11000 years fixed by Rama himself for his regime in the mortal world, the death god is said to have visited him and had dialogue with him on the condition that if someone heard their dialogue or came in their presence during the conversation, Rama would be under obligation to kill him. The condition was broken when Laxmana came to see Rama during the

dialogue. Instead of mortally killing Laxmana, Rama simply disowned him. The question is as to how could disowning or deserting a person be the substitute of killing? Laxmana is said to have gone to the river Saryu to take jal samadhi (death by immersion in water), but he is said to have been taken physically to heaven by Indra. How could a person be taken physically to heaven? Is it not the case of committing suicide by Laxmana by jumping into the river?

22) When Rama decided to leave the mortal world, he took along his brothers and their families except their children, most of the residents of Ayodhya and a large number of monkeys and bears etc. They all entered the river Saryu and finished their mortal life. Why did not Rama leave the mortal world alone?

23) Crores of divine airplanes (*Vimanas*) are said to have been waiting on the bank of river Saryu for carrying Rama and his companions to heaven. Rama along with his brothers entered the river and merged mortally into the form of Vishnu. All others also dived into the river and boarded the airplanes for heaven leaving behind their bodies and souls. The question is as to by whom and where these airplanes were produced? Who flew them to and fro Ayodhya? How many airports were constructed at the river bank landing and taking off the planes? Where did these airplanes land in heaven? If the body and soul of the dead were left behind then who and boarded the airplanes.

24) Having dived into the river, all the vanaras, bears and chimpanzees that were produced by gods as army of Rama are said to have merged themselves into the original form of their respective creator gods. How could the animals merge into the original form of their creator gods after death?

This is just a list of only a few questions. Many more questions may arise in the minds of readers after they go through the Valmikiya Ramayana. These questions must be answered by the author or the followers of Ramayana and Rama, or the curious can themselves find answers testing the facts on the touchstone of their intellect and reason. The question of all questions is as to who is the genuine and authentic author of the epic? Why has his true identity been kept

under cover? Why does the epic contain astonishing contents and what is the real aim behind the epic? Has the epic been helpful in bringing about spiritual, moral, social and economic uplift of the people, and development of the country as a nation?

**Source:** *Valmikiya Ramayana, Geeta Press Gorakhpur, 16th edition; (Shivpurana, Geeta Press Gorakhpur, first edition, Shat Rudra Samhita, pp. 315,316); BAWs, Vol. 4, pp. 324-331; BAWs, Vol.3, pp. 243, 252, 253; Sankshipta Skanda Purana, Geeta Press Gorakhpur, 4th edition; Bhakhtmaal, Tej Kumar Press, Lucknow, 1962, Kavittas 74-82 as quoted in Maharishi Valmiki: Ek Samikshaatmak Adhyayana, 1980 by Dr. Manjula Sachdev, pp. 79-81; Matsya, Vishnu, Padama, Bhagawata and Koorma Puranas and Mahabharata (Shanti Parva, Vana, Udyoga, Drona and Anushasana parva).*

# The Twilight Zone

## Life Turns Full Circle



Ambesdor V.B. Soni

A day's journey starts at dawn, with hope and aspiration in the life of a family. It takes generations for a family's matriarch to earn a good name, reputation and prestige. Traditions are set through hard entrepreneurial skill and tenacity of character. Once the foundation is laid, the path is set for the subsequent generation to carry on the work and build upon it.

Decline in traditional families over generations, is the law of the nature. But consider the prevalent culture today – movies, mobile phone/video games and music that celebrate drugs and binge drinking. Tradition is belittled. Selfishness and greed define our age, exemplified by social media, u-tube videos, and selfies. All because the joint family system of the yore has given way to other descriptions like extended, nuclear, single parent, reconstituted and childless family.

The status of an old-style traditional Delhi family makes a fascinating study. After the high noon and many generations down the line, the inevitable downward slide starts. The concluding pieces capture that process through a fictionalised version. Two situations and characters have been used as props, to capture the decline and denouement, before the curtain falls.

### Scene 1- A legacy betrayed

Manmohan (MM) was brought up in a business family. He learnt tricks of the trade from his father, taking load off his shoulder. In due course, he was married off to Ram Pyari, who after giving birth to Utpal and Jagdip, did not survive. He himself stepped in to take charge of the family business, after his father's premature death.

With riches and luxury around, it was time to indulge in good things of life. Manmohan was fond of dressing up well, moving around in style. After his wife's death, he started frequenting a dancing girl of Chawri Bazar in old Delhi, as per the normal pastime to indulge in, for a rich family of that era.

Once, after attending birthday function of a friend, where he had taken his brother-in-law along, the party moved for a 'mujra' dance session at a 'kotha'. Wanting to make the special guest happy, he signaled the girl to play a teasing game during her dance routine. As in a formula Hindi film of those times, currency notes were thrust in the guest's breast pocket, inviting the dancing girl to grab the amount, with provocative movement. The debutant shy person was too conscious to play along to the allurements in public gaze, out of embarrassment. To look after the growing up process of the boys, the need for a wife to look after them, was felt by MM's mother. A girl,

Ratna was identified for the purpose and a date fixed for the ceremony. The age was exaggerated, to avoid losing out the potential rich bridegroom.

Just as the marriage party could start journey to the bride's place, an ominous incident took place. No horse, trained for such ceremonial oc-

casions for the bridegroom to ride on, was available. In a hurried make shift arrangement, a horse plying a commercial horse drawn tonga was commissioned to fulfill that role. Not used to be surrounded by a crowd in close proximity, with the accompanying musical band blaring cacophonous sound, the animal seemed hesitant to allow any body to ride on it. When force was applied, it became unruly and started jumping around, throwing off the mount. There was no choice but to give up the idea of a horse led procession and resort to an alternative arrangement, for reaching the bride's home for the ceremony.

The nuptial rituals were gone through, amidst snide remarks from the neighbours about the mismatch, because of wide disparity in the ages of the couple. The 'gauna' (consummation) ceremony had to be deferred for that reason, for some time. MM felt betrayed by not being told about the true age of his new bride. He had to contend with 'performance anxiety', finding it difficult to cope with the need and desire of a much younger wife. Psychologically, he started suffering from inadequacy, low self-esteem and lack of confidence. He started frequenting Indian ayurveda medicine man (vaid) for advice and treatment, taking potency increasing drugs and rejuvenation pills. Heavy dose of strong medicines was bound to take its toll. He became a chronic diabetic, resulting in heart related complications. Ratna, being a new age bride, did not want to be confined by age old custom, like covering head and ghungat (veil), as a mark of respect, on arriving at the conservative family. Her mother-in-law's rigid control made her uncomfortable, though she could not defy the set norms.

MM underwent a business misadventure at this point. He was offered electricity fans for his business establishment, at a price considered low, even during the depression hit era. He fell in to the trap. Without checking credentials of the party, a deal was struck with a conman and consignment delivered.

Within a couple of days, the police came knocking at his door, enquiring about the questionable deal. It came to light that the items were stolen. After cross examination during overnight detention, the police found no complicity on MM's part, who agreed to be a prosecution witness. He was let off, after the real culprit accepted his guilt. But the harrowing experience scarred him.

In Utpal, MM had a bright son, a university graduate, landing up with a prestigious job. Then one fine day the father received a strange hand written note from the son, whose intended meaning he could not fathom. So, he turned to a close relative to interpret it for him. In effect it said words to the effect: "...I feel

so guilty and bad for harbouring something horrible (without specifically mentioning the object) for which I cannot forgive myself... can't tell you in

appropriate words. Please forgive me." The relative interpreted the purport of the message, as something to do with the young man possibly entertaining unnatural feelings about a close relative. He explained it away by suggesting that youngsters do silly things at that age. One should not read too much into such stupidities. He advised him to leave the matter at that.

Utpal's job involved being located to stations outside Delhi. During a prolonged period of loneliness there, he took to drinking, turning him into an alcoholic. On transfer back to Delhi, he was married off to a girl Saloni, much younger than him in age. The story of incompatibility was repeated, compounded by alcoholism, making the situation worse. Two incidents involving his offsprings shattered the father. Utpal's close friend from college days, gave him a cheque to encash at a Bank. On presentation, it was detected, on scrutiny, to carry forged signatures. Police was summoned. He was marched handcuffed to his home for search of the premises. Nothing incriminating was found. Documents of his handwriting and signatures collected, could not be matched with the impressions on the cheque. He was set free without a charge. The guilty friend was apprehended for criminal action. The family went through an unnecessary trauma for Utpal's poor judgement.

The younger son Jagdip, under the influence of friends, stole money from the father and ran away with them to Bombay for good time. Luckily one accomplice, who had backed out of the escapade plan by train at the last minute, gave away the game. With crucial details provided, MM rushed by air to Bombay, nabbing the runaways at the Bombay Railway Station and brought them back to Delhi.

MM's health suddenly took a turn for the worse. His chronic diabetic condition obliged him to take daily dose of insulin injection, to keep sugar level under control. Then one evening, soon after the injection was administered, he had a massive heart attack and died on the spot at his workplace. A sad end of a dynamic person.

After MM's death, situation in the family started falling apart. An acquaintance got on friendly terms with Ratna. Their stealthy relationship took an adventurous turn, when one fine morning she went missing from home, along with her young son. Nobody had any inkling about her whereabouts. But when the friendly neighbour stated to be involved with her in an affair, too was found missing, people put two and two together, about their elopement. Their destination could not be traced. It was only after a gap of a few months that their location was traced to a hill station, where they had acquired a small hotel property to run.

Without any previous experience, the hotel venture was bound to fail. With all the money blown up in no time, Ratna returned to Delhi, initially staying at a nearby guest house, from where a word was sent about her pres-

ence in Delhi. In due course, she returned home, behaving normally, as if nothing had happened.

She was least bothered about any ignominy or stigma attached to the disappearing act, in questionable circumstances.

Jagdip was married off soon thereafter to Kirita. The relationship became complex, when the newly wedded wife got to know that, not only was the husband following the elder brother in drinking but that he was in relationship with his widow. The triangular relationship continued despite difficulties. Jagdip by now had started hitting the bottle hard. He became abusive, physically beating up the suffering wives. When soon thereafter he passed away, vital support came from a relative who proved to be the family's anchor. MM's comfortable business assets ensured that the survivors were never hard up for cash. The sad part is that in her advanced old age, Ratna was virtually abandoned to fend for herself. Those over whom she lorded, and the others whose existence depended on her, left her high and dry. Finance was not the issue but she lay all by herself lonely and miserable, with nobody to communicate with, far less take care.

What a fall for the family with such prestige and reputation! Nothing is permanent in life. Good name and standing, unless carefully nurtured will pass into oblivion. On the next generation depends the family name being continued to be held in high esteem, through their good deeds and action. But in this case the forefather's prestigious reputation, name and tradition was besmirched and tainted by the succeeding generation.

### Scene 2- End of the road

Continuing with the fictional segment, the character here is Shamsher (Shammi), born in a well-off business family. He joined the father's expanding business and learnt the way the market place functions. He was handsome in appearance. By nature, he was an extrovert, with a sense of humour. He loved the company of friends, regaling them with repartee and risqué jokes.

Shammi got along well with his siblings. With his younger brother he did things in unison, consulting each other on issues of common concern. Their day would start sitting in the open courtyard at home, discussing social and family matters and issues arising from the day's newspapers. Visiting relatives would join them in their sessions, for catching up with developments in the family.

Shammi was a loving husband to Neelam. As a doting father he provided his offspring with all that they aspired for. His sons did their bidding

(Contd. on next page)

# The Twilight Zone

(Continue from page 7)

in business or their chosen professions. The pretty daughters were married off to well-placed matches. At family get together grandchildren would gather around him, pestering for gifts/pocket money. He provided them with all that, in addition to regaling them with jokes and anecdotes in his typical boisterous spirit.

Not long after his father's demise, Shammi decided to seek out an independent vocation for himself. He invested the inherited share from ancestral business, in what turned out to be profitable venture. It was the fast-developing showbiz. To keep pace with the new innovation, the industry needed to build up the infrastructure and a supply chain. For this, financial investment opportunity was on offer, with decent return.

After gaining entry into influential circles, Shammi met with success when some items, for which he obtained distribution rights, did well commercially. The glamour world of showbiz meant more socialising, winning and dining, at the happening joints. He adapted to the life style like a fish to water. Indulgence in luxuries became a part and parcel of his life.

With cronies and hangers on, Shammi used to hold regular drinking bashes/bouts. Many suckers catered to his whims and fancies, which he relished with delight. To top it all, the 'mujra' sessions were on offer for the decadent class. The location was around Chandni Chowk, where bulk of agency offices were based. This was also the time when the seeds of de-

cline took roots. One unwittingly gets sucked in that whirlpool of lust, craving for the flesh, greed and selfishness.

Shammi found another avenue to make money, the easy way. Loaning out money at a high compound rate of interest, in the manner of the money lenders in the countryside of the Hindi films. It was plain loan sharking. It paid dividends instantly, fetching him handsome returns.

Fringe benefits came in the form of free booze, kebab and shabab, in good measure. Before setting off on drinking sessions, his practice was to line up the stomach wall by spoonful of ghee. His belief was that this would increase capacity to imbibe considerable amount of the freely available alcoholic drinks, with the chance of hangover minimised. With such frequent binge drinking and escapades, something had to give. Tragedy struck when Shammi's wife was involved in a freak accident around this phase. She succumbed to the injuries sustained. That shattered him. He started slipping down the vortex. His health continued to decline, aggravated by hypertension, diabetes and age-related illnesses. Tragedy struck when one morning he suffered a massive stroke, from which he could not survive. He passed away when he reached the mid-70s.

Shammi had provided well for the children, in terms of assets and bank balance. He ensured that they would not be hard up for their material requirements. On the other hand, not all of them were doing all that well professionally on their own, to carry forward the family name and reputation

to the next level in a meaningful way.

The sad part is that it was he who had set the declining trend. The next generation was closely observing the decadent life style and habits he was getting sucked into. After his passing away, the family was destined to disintegrate. It became a house divided. Pride in and commitment to age old family name starts losing its adhesive binding power. Kaliyug syndrome manifesting itself out, until it self-destructs. Till the next cycle starts afresh.

## Epilogue: The road ahead

Humans fight hard to achieve their set objectives. Those who succeed do so after facing heavy knocks and frustrations on the way. The next generation gets the privileges on a platter, without having to shed sweat and blood, the hard way. They let slip their inherent advantage from their comfort zone. Easy come, easy go. With that lost inheritance, succeeding generations have once again to restart their challenging journey, all over again.

As the curtain comes down on the family chronicle, the cathartic experience happily ends on a positive note. The prestigious institution and name bequeathed by Nanig Ram is here to stay. The seed he had sown, has flowered full bloom, into a sturdy, sprawling tree. It is well spread out with overarching branches, providing shade, shelter and bearing fruits.

The gene pool he left behind, has started germinating/mutating with positive results. New healthy species have started appearing. Not every bud can flourish, as per the law of nature.



Nanig Ram (1878-1929)

But the ones that are emerging, show promise to brighten up the firmament, emblazoning in golden letter, the name of Nanig Ram, on the horizon.

While concluding, it would be relevant to quote a recent social media rhetorical response of a rich Arab Sheikh ruler, when asked about future of his country: "My father rode on a camel, I'm on a Mercedes, my son on a Lamborghini, and so would be the next generation, but my great grandson will be back on a camel".

**Why is that, he was asked?**

His prophetic response: "Tough times create strong men. Strong men create easy times. Easy times create weak men. Weak men create tough times. Many won't understand, but you have to raise warriors, not parasites".



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