



# Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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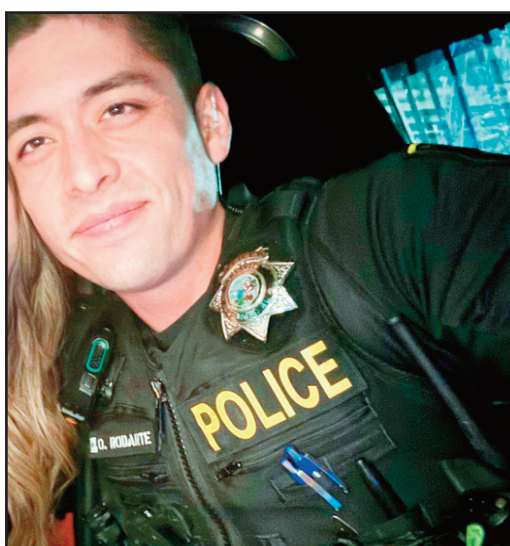
[www.ambedkartimes.com](http://www.ambedkartimes.com)

[www.deshdoaba.com](http://www.deshdoaba.com)

## Punjabi American Festival Honors Fallen Police Officer Osmar Rodarte and Celebrates Community Achievements

Yuba City (Bureau) - The Punjabi American Festival, organized by the Punjabi American Heritage Society, paid a heartfelt tribute to the family of Police Officer Osmar Rodarte, who tragically lost his life in the line of duty. Officer Rodarte, a distinguished veteran of the United States Army, was remembered for his unwavering dedication and service to the community. During a solemn ceremony, a \$2,500 Cheque was presented to his family as a token of support, with several of officer Rodarte's colleagues from the Marysville Police Department in attendance to honor his memory.

Founded in 1993, the Punjabi American Heritage Society has been at the forefront of fostering friendship, cultural understanding, and helping children connect with their roots. This year's festival saw the participation of over 200 local children and drew an enthusiastic audience of approximately 6,000 attendees. The event featured performances by renowned artists including G. Sidhu, Ishmeet Narula, and Harjit Harman, highlighting the vibrant cultural heritage of the Punjabi American community.



In recognition of academic excellence, seven local students were awarded scholarships. The festival also honored journalist Prem Kumar Chumber Editor-in-Chief "Ambedkar Times" (English) and "Desh Doaba" (Punjabi) weekly newspapers for his outstanding contributions to promoting the Unity within the community. Dr. Kuldeep Singh was recognized for his exceptional work in teaching the Punjabi language at UC Davis and Stanford University, further strengthening the cultural ties of the next generation. This year, the festival was made accessible to all with free entry, thanks to generous sponsorship from community members and local businesses.

The Punjabi American Festival continues to serve as a beacon of unity, remembrance, and cultural pride, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate and honor the values of service, education, and community spirit.



### Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum congratulate Punjabi American Heritage Society

Prem Kumar Chumber

(Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba)

Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba forum congratulate Punjabi American Heritage Society, founded in 1993, for organizing this year's 29th festival for fostering friendship, cultural understanding, and helping children connect with their roots. This meaningful event brought together over 200 local children and approximately 6,000 people from near and far places. The society also paid a heartfelt tribute to the family of Police Officer Osmar Rodarte. Many awards were conferred on local students for their academic excellence. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba Forum feel humbled by the honour showered by the society during the event recognizing its outstanding contributions to promoting the Unity within the community.







# SRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA

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## Sri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg - Upcoming Programs



**Guru Piyari Saadh Sangat Ji:**

**Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji KI Fateh!**

The following programs will be celebrated  
at the Gurdwara Sahib:

**June 27-28-29, 2025**

**Pittsburg Gurughar's 40th Anniversary**

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha will be celebrating 40th anniversary of Sri Guru Ravidass Temple Pittsburg on Sunday, June 29, 2025, with great enthusiasm.

Akhand Path will start on Friday 6/27/2025 at 10:00 AM and will be concluded with Bhog ceremony on Sunday, 6/29/2025, followed by Kirtan Deewan. Jatha of Bhai Kapoor Singh ji - Kanne Wale, along with Jatha of Giani Balwinder Singh ji will delight Sangat with Shabad Kirtan.

Nishan Sahib Chola Sewa will be hosted by S. Balbir Singh ji on Saturday, June 28, 2025 at 11:00 AM. Kirtan Deewan will be from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Saturday.

There will be a health camp on Sunday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Doctors and nurses will be available to help with any health questions or issues. We are always looking for medical professionals to help with this free community service. Please contact Ramesh Suman at 925.366.3618 or Dilbag Singh at 209-834-4641, for information.

Path and Langar Sewa will be hosted by Guru Ki Sangat. For stalls or any langar Sewa, please contact Chairman Vinod Kumar at 408-718-2506 or President Sunita Singh at 415-233-3319. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer for Langar Sewa, Jorha Sewa, maintenance or any other Sewa.

We are extremely thankful to our founding members for creating this wonderful place of worship for the community. We are also thankful to Sangat and all the Sewadars, this could not have been possible without their continued, tireless Sewa and support. With Guru Sahib's blessings and guidance, this Gurughar has been continually making progress since June 2, 1985, the grand opening day. This is a testimony of the love and unity of our community.

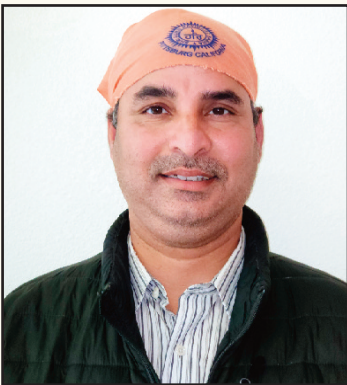
We look forwards to celebrating this major milestone with all of you. May Guru Sahib bless His Sangat with peace, love and unity.

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

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

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# In pursuance of the proposal on International Day of Equality

Though I am not fond of too many rituals yet one ritual which I religiously do over the years since June, 2015 is reminding the GOI and other stake holders of the proposal on April 14, birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar as International Day of Equality. Keeping in line with the increasing stock of Ambedkar and his Thought, rightly so, the proposal has been taken seriously by the people of foreign countries and has declared the day as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Day of Equality but GOI is still shying away and keeping quite due to reasons not under standable. Let it be and I do my bit in doing the ritual as usual. I last wrote on the subject in March, 2025 which may be seen at: <https://diplomatictitbits.blogspot.com/2025/03/indias-soft-and-cultural-diplomacy.html>

Having tried to cajole all the possible centers

aegis of the UN yet I don't know whether you are aware of the matter or no. Since I find and appreciate you and your position that can carry forward the proposal to its logical conclusion being a competent and vocal leader of India who may understand the importance and desirability of the proposal pertaining to Babasaheb Ambedkar. By supporting the proposal you would not only be justifying your position and involvement in the empowerment of the marginalized sections of the society and their icon, Babasaheb but also be doing a bit in following the legacy of your worthy father, Ram Vilas Paswan, an ardent follower of Babasaheb Ambedkar, one of the biggest sons of contemporary India.

The proposal on International Day of Equality is resting with the GOI (MEA/PMO) since June, 2015

and Canada among others, supporting the proposal, have proclaimed April 14, birthday of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, as Day of Equality in their respective areas. It could be possible because of whole hearted support and persuasion of the Indian Diasporas and followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar throughout the world. Why the GOI is blissfully silent on the proposal? It is difficult to understand.

All said and done and to cut the story short, it



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



of powers who can and should help the matter, I thought of writing to the young blood of the NDA Government who, I understand, professes to be an Ambedkarite, Minister Chirag Paswan to fall in the shoes of his worthy father, Ram Vilas Paswan. Ram Vilas Paswan did many positive things to honour Baba saheb, to pay his debt of gratitude, during his life time which, inter alia, include; Bharat Ratan to Baba saheb, Baba saheb's statue at Parliament Complex and Holiday on Babasaheb birthday on April 14 among others. It is not a partisan issue. I solicit all round support to the proposal and urge the GOI spearheaded by PM Narendra Modi to understand the importance and sensitivity of the matter. There is writing on the walls of the Indian households which I can read clearly - Nobody can ignore Ambedkar for long.

I append below my humble letter of May 29, 2025 to Hon'ble Minister Chirag Paswan with copies to EAM, Dr. S. Jaishankar and Principal Secretary to PM, Shri P. K. Misra for the benefit of the people at large.  
IK Tarze Tagafil Hai So Woh Unko Mubarak  
IK Arze Tammana Hai Woh Hum Karte Rahange

Text of the letter dated May 29, 2025  
May 29, 2025

Respected Minister ChiragPaswan Sahib,

Though I wrote to you earlier too with regard to the proposal on April 14, birthday of Baba saheb Ambedkar, as International Day of Equality under the

when GOI decided to observe and celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar. It was duly acknowledged by the UNEP Division of MEA vide their letter date August, 2015, attached for ready reference. The proposal was taken by the Forum of SC MPs under the leadership of then Punjab Speaker, Sardar Charanjit Singh Atwal to PM NarendraModi in a Memorandum submitted through a delegation, of which your honourable father Ram Vilas Paswan was a member in November, 2015. Accordingly, for the first time, birthday of BabasahebAmbedkar, April 14, was celebrated at the UN in New York. Sardar Charanjit Singh Atwal headed a specially assembled delegation to the celebrations in New York in April, 2016. He raised the matter for the consideration of the international community in his speech which was overwhelmingly supported and endorsed by the UN and other countries. On return SardarAtwal wrote to PM Modi in May, 2016 and urged him and the GOI to make an official and diplomatic demarche to UN with regard to the proposal on International Day of Equality, attached for ready reference. Since then, I have been following up the matter religiously with the MEA/PMO and others including the high-ups in the BJP and RSS hierarchy. But nothing much has moved visibly except yet another acknowledgement from MEA in September, 2024, attached for ready reference.

I may add that it is a matter of gratification to note that many states and cities in the USA, the UK,

is my gut feeling that the proposal on International Day of Equality is hanging fire only because of political considerations. So far, I have tried my best to avoid making it an issue of political rivalry and slugfest. My basic arguments in favour of the proposal have been – empowerment of the marginalized sections of the society (dalits and women), strengthening of India's Soft and Cultural diplomacy like the International Day of Yoga and International Day of Non-violence (October 2, birthday of Mahatma Gandhi) and realization of the lofty ideals of the UN in bring about an Equitable World Order.

Kindly look into these submissions and consider for taking an appropriate view and take up the matter with PM Narendra Modi and other stakeholders in the GOI. I am confident, Sir, you would honour the legacy of your father, Ram Vilas Paswan in getting due and honourable space to BabasahebAmbedkar which he deserved in anyway.

With my highest considerations and regards,

Yours truly,  
(Ramesh Chander)  
ShriChiragPaswan,  
Minister for Food Processing,  
New Delhi

Copy: -

1. Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM, New Delhi
2. Principal Secretary to PM, New Delhi



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Goodie Takhar, PhD



# WRITE IT ON THE WALLS OF YOUR HOUSES

## OUR AIM AND ASPIRATION IS TO BE GOVERNING COMMUNITY

Dr. Ambedkar, then Mr. Bhimrao R Ambedkar, appeared on the political scene of the country in 1919 when he was called upon to give evidence before the Southborough Committee on Franchise. He was examined on 27 January 1919. His evidence and written Statement exhaustively covered various aspects of the Franchise highlighting the conditions of the Untouchables and need for their special treatment and empowerment in the new Constitution. He pointed out that the Untouchables, besides being very backward, were suffering under a great social tyranny. They had been ignored in any political scheme on the score that they had no interest to protect. He contended that though they had no large property to protect from confiscation but they had their very persona confiscated. The interests of property were nothing before such primary human interests. He stressed that they must have their own men in the Council Hall to fight for the redress of their grievances as it was not enough to be electors only, it was necessary to be law-makers; otherwise those who could be law-makers, would be masters of those who could only be electors. Instead of leaving the untouchables to the mercy of the higher castes, the wiser policy would be to give power of governing to them who were anxious, not like others to usurp power but only to assert their natural place in society<sup>1</sup>.

Born in a family of the lowest strata degraded and treated as untouchables under the tyrannical iniquitous socio-religious and economic Hindu Social Order, Dr. Ambedkar had suffered agony of the draconian stings of its inhuman social code from childhood itself. He endured the indignities with a stoic cool but steel resolve to liberate his community from the age old thralldom, and establish an egalitarian order with the invincible weapon of education and truth. During his interview with the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad, for scholarship for higher study in Columbia University, New York (U.S.A.) in June 1913, his resolve was conspicuously revealed when he said that by studying Sociology and Economics, and specifically public Finance, he could improve the condition of his backward community and practice social reform. He set out on this holy mission of his life never to look back<sup>2</sup>.

His M.A. degree in Economics with Sociology, History, Political Science, Anthropology, Moral Philosophy, French and German languages as ancillaries; Ph.D in Economics from Columbia University, New York; M.Sc (Economics) and D.Sc (Economics) from London School of Economics; and Bar-at-Law from Grays Inn London bear the testimony of his weaponry of vast study to relentlessly pursue his mis-

sion. His thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce' and 'Administration and Finances of East India Company' (M.A), 'National Dividend of India - A Historic and Analytical Study (published subsequently under the title 'The Evolution of Provincial Finances in British India) (Ph.D)', Paper on 'Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' presented before the Anthropology Seminar of Dr. Goldenweiser (1916), 'Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finances in British India' (M.Sc), 'The Problem of the Rupee, its Origin and Its Solution' (D.Sc) and a paper on 'Responsibilities of a Responsible Government in India' read before the students' Union show his

ety was just like a tower which had several storeys without a ladder or an entrance. One was to die in the storey in which one was born. In his view the backwardness of the non-Brahmins was due to lack of education and power<sup>4</sup>. He launched his social movement for the uplift of the Untouchables by establishing an institution named 'Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha' on July 20, 1924 with its vow "Educate, Agitate and Organize"<sup>5</sup>.

A firm believer in the divine principle that self-help is the best help, he exhorted his people to rise up and fight for self-elevation and self-respect at their own. It was the noblest mission of his life that aimed at adding to

pouring into it a mixture of cow dung, cow urine, curd and water contained in one hundred and eight earthen pots<sup>7</sup>.

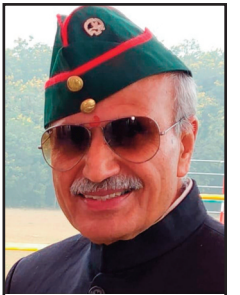
Dr. Ambedkar started a fortnightly Marathi paper "Bahishkrit Bharat" on April 3, 1927 as the "Mooknayak" had stopped publishing in 1923. As the Municipality revoked its resolution to open the Tank to the Depressed Classes on August 4, 1927, he decided to resume the "Satyagraha" on December 25 and

26. But it was postponed on the intervention of District Magistrate on the ground of law and order situation. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ambedkar said, "...The aim of abolishing untouchability alone without trying to abolish the inequalities inherent in the caste-system is a very low aim. Let us remember 'not failure but low aim is a crime'. Not only the untouchability and restrictions regarding inter-caste dining must be removed, but inter-caste marriages must be made common. This alone will lead to the establishment of true equality. If we achieve success in our movement to unite all the Hindus in a single caste we shall have rendered the greatest service to the In-

dian nation in general and to the Hindu community in particular". The Hindu scripture 'Manu Smriti', containing draconian anti-human, anti-Shudras and anti-women laws was ceremoniously burnt by Dr. Ambedkar and his followers on December 25, 1927. It is a red letter day in the annals of India as it marked the beginning of social and political movement by Dr. Ambedkar for the liberation of his people, and to actualize the ideals of egalitarianism<sup>8</sup>.

Another historical movement (Satyagraha) launched by Dr. Ambedkar was 'Kalaram Temple Entry Movement' at Nasik on 02 March 1930. The purpose of the movement was to make an appeal to the Hindu mind, and to test whether the Hindus were willing to treat the untouchables as human beings and grant their humanitarian rights. He said millions of people might have visited the temple and have had a glance at the God made of stone but who would say that their basic problems were solved by this act. Their problem was social, political, religious, economic and educational etc. They were treated even worse than cats and dogs by the Hindus. The historic movement commenced on March 03, 1930. But the Hindus indulged in violence resulting in death of a protester. The Hindus did not allow them the entry, and the temple remained closed and guarded for the whole year. The

(Contd. on next page)



Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar  
91-94648-94941



extensive research and width and depth of erudition intended not only to provide solution to the socio-economic problems of his people, but also to bring about socio-economic reforms in the country to achieve the ideals of 'one India one people'.

A Barrister reinforced by multiple Doctorates on the subjects directly impacting the human life, Dr. Ambedkar was fully equipped as a lawyer and an authority to challenge the scholars of Economics and Sociology, and to storm into the Indian citadel to open the gates of socio-religious and economic liberation for his people and translate the idea of an egalitarian Indian State into reality. Speaking at the Conference of the Untouchables presided over by Ambedkar at Manggaon (Kolhapur State) on March 21, 1920, Shahu ji Maharaj declared in a prophetic vein: "You have found your savior in Ambedkar, I am confident that he will break your shackles. Not only that, a time will come when, so whippers my conscience, Ambedkar will shine as a front-rank leader of All India fame and appeal<sup>3</sup>."

He started a fortnightly paper Mook Nayak, leader of the dumb, on 31st January 1920 with the help of Maharaja. In the first issue of the paper, he brilliantly propounded its aim as awakening the Depressed Classes to their disabilities saying that India was a home of inequality. Hindu soci-

the nation's strength, health, wealth, honor and culture by relieving these dumb millions who crawled in the dust with hunger and thirst in their eyes and perished in hovels and dunghills. His messages of self-respect and self-elevation, unity and mass struggle started gathering force. He was so firm in his resolve and dedication to the cause of his people that the loss of his three sons and a daughter couldn't deter him from the mission<sup>6</sup>. Two momentous events in the life of Dr. Ambedkar and the Depressed Classes took place in 1927, namely his nomination as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and launch of the 'Mahad Satyagraha' for establishing their right to take water from the 'Chowdar Tank'. A conference of the Depressed Classes of Colaba District was held at Mahad on 19-20 March 1927. In his presidential address on 19 March he brought out the importance of self-respect and higher education to achieve equal human rights. Multiple resolutions were passed including introduction of inter-caste marriages as a measure to abolish the distinction of caste and establish egalitarian society. It was on 20th March that Babasaheb led the vast multitude of men and they all drank water from the Tank and vindicated their right. However, the evil-minded orthodox caste-Hindus indulged in violence against them after the incident. They purified the Tank by



# WRITE IT ON THE WALLS OF YOUR HOUSES

(Continue from page 4)

movement continued but the Hindu mind remained fossilized. Dr. Ambedkar made it clear that the movement was not for making the Depressed Classes worshippers of idols, but it was considered to be the best way of energizing and making them conscious of their position. As the purpose was achieved, the movement was, therefore, withdrawn in 1934. He advised the people to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education<sup>9</sup>.

While his relentless efforts to awaken, energize and inspire his people continued on social front, his fight for their political safeguards and power, and egalitarianism for the country also went on with back to the wall. Be it the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance (1925); Simon Commission (1928); three Round Table Conferences (1930-1932); Joint Committee of both Houses of British Parliament (1933) resulting in Government of India Act 1935 (Constitution of India till 26 January 1950); Bombay Provincial Legislative Assembly (1927-1939); Cripps Mission (1942); Governor General's Executive Council (1942-1946); Cabinet Mission (1946), he fought every inch to accomplish his mission. He firmly believed that problem of the downtrodden was political and their political empowerment and education were the answer. He set up a printing press and launched five news papers namely, *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, *Samata (Equality)*, *Janata* and *Prabuddha Bharat* to share his vision and philosophy. With the message of "struggle and more struggle; sacrifice and more sacrifice", "Do or die", "now or never", "unity" and "fearlessness and truth" for his people, he led them by example to prepare their heads, hearts and hands to achieve the mission of social liberation and political empowerment.

In his historic inspiring speech delivered at the meeting of untouchables at Madras on September 24, 1944, Dr. Ambedkar shared his life journey of struggle and sacrifice, and explained as to how mountains of hurdles were created in his way by the

Hindu orthodoxy and the Congress leadership but nothing could stand before his rock determination and steel resolve. Whenever any public question came up in the Round Table Conference (R.T.C), he proudly proved that he was a patriot far ahead of the gentlemen such as Mr. Gandhi and host of others in the conference who were supposed to be the patriots India. Mr. Gandhi attended the second R.T.C. (7th September - 31st December 1931) with a mandate to demand nothing short of Independence. But he was content with a most

extraordinary thing of recommendations of the Simon Commission and Provincial Autonomy only. The British Government found it to be a God-sent opportunity to close the Conference at that point. But he (Babasaheb) was one of those who opposed Mr. Gandhi's stand and saved the situation. He said that Mr. Gandhi knew very little of politics. In view of his immaturity in political knowledge and the fact that he was not present at the first R.T.C. he managed to speak in the Conference before Mr. Gandhi to expose the whole business and let him know what the situation was. He spoke for one and half hour which was probably his longest speech in that country. When Mr. Gandhi spoke, he counteracted everything that had been said by him. The first sentence of Mr. Gandhi's speech was; "My heart is with Dr. Ambedkar but my head is not with him." This was nothing but a declaration of war by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress against the untouchables<sup>10</sup>.

Dr. Ambedkar further said that he and his people had thousand excuses to adopt the attitude of Mr. Carson, the Irish leader, who said "Damn your safeguards; I do not want to be ruled by you" but it was patriotic and generous on their part to ask for reasonable safeguards only in the interest of the country as a whole. They were forgetting the Brahmanical rule under which they had been suffering for the last 2,000 years in the hope that if they were given safeguards, they might with the help of the other generous elements in the country be able to build up a system in which this

country would grow to its fullest manhood and nationhood. Unfortunately, there was no adequate response from the Hindu Community. When the Lothian Franchise Committee went to investigate and ascertain the total number of Scheduled Castes people in the different States in 1932, all Hindus joined together in a conspiracy to tell the Committee that there was no such thing as Depressed Classes or Scheduled Castes in the country. This was done to defeat the project of separate electorate for the Scheduled Castes. When the British Government said in 1944 that it was prepared to grant freedom at the end of the war, it insisted that the Constitution should have the consent of all the important elements in the national life of India. He projected Scheduled Castes as an important element<sup>11</sup>.

Referring to the ongoing talks between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi on the communal issue, he said that the communal problem was a wider problem involving not only Muslims but also Christians, Scheduled Classes and probably other minorities. Consequently, the wisest and safest and the most honest course would be for all representatives of the different minorities to sit together, place their cards on the table, and get in common consultations and arrive at an agreed decision. The sectional settlements and arrangements between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi appeared as deals between the two men who had decided to rob the third man and better their position. If Mr. Gandhi gave Mr. Jinnah something more than he was entitled to, that was going to someone out of his (Ambedkar's) share. It was most important policy of Mr. Gandhi somehow to acquire strength for the Congress by getting help of the largest party in the country and to intimidate the British Government to force it to come to terms without being obliged to grant the demand of the Scheduled Castes. Ever since the communal problem loomed large, Mr. Gandhi in his entire public career had done only one thing and that was to neglect the Scheduled Castes. At the R.T.C. Mr. Gandhi tried to isolate him (Dr. Ambedkar). He

failed for a long time and ultimately he used a weapon which no honest man would have used. He went to the Muslims and told Mr. Jinnah that he was prepared to grant his 14 demands provided he did not agree to "this dirty dog of Untouchables (Dr. Ambedkar)." Fortunately, Muslims did not agree to Gandhi's proposal<sup>12</sup>.

Concluding the historic speech, Dr. Ambedkar said; "You should realize what our object is. Our aim and aspiration is to be a governing community. Let all of you bear that in mind and let all of you write it on the walls of your houses so that every day you should remember that the aspirations which we cherish, and the cause, which we are having is not a cause of a petty character. It is the biggest cause that we ever cherished in our hearts. That is to see that we are recognized as the Governing Community. If you realize that, you will recognize what tremendous effort we have to make in order to carry it into effect. Mere words will not count, mere resolutions will not count. We must build up our own strength. We must remove other causes. You could never gather strength by carrying on your local activities in a local manner and with local spirit. You must all learn to come under one banner; one association; and a single political body<sup>13</sup>".

Source: 1. (BAWS, Vol.1, pp. 251,255, 268); 2. (Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, struggles and Message by Dr. M.L.Sahare and Dr. Nalini Anil, pp.72, 73.) ; 3. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.42); 4. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.41); 5. (BAWS, Vol.17, Pt. 2, p.395); 6. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, p.66); 7. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, pp. 69-74, 79); 8. (Keer, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Life and Mission, fifth edition, 2016, pp.80, 90, 100, 103, BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt. 1, pp. 22-24); 9. (Keer, pp.136-138, BAWS, Vol. 17, Pt.1, pp.181-185, 189, 202); 10. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 322-328); 11. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 329, 330); 12. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 330-332); 13. (BAWS, Vol. 17/3, pp. 332, 333).

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**V.B. Soni**  
Ambassador (Retd.)

# Gentleman Bureaucrat: Vimal Chandra

**S**ome great personalities, out of modesty, shun limelight while doing their bit to help humanity. Their contribution accordingly goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. Vimal Chandra was one such person, belonging to that rare breed. He gave wise counsel, guidance, help and support to countless people, from modest background and victims of high caste prejudices. He understood their predicament well, as he himself came from such a milieu and identified and empathized with them. He authored a publication entitled: "Handbook on Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe" (S.C. & S.T) in 1968 based on lifetime work in the office of Commissioner, S.C. & S.T. It became a useful reference material for researchers and scholars.

There is scanty material in public domain about Vimal Chandra's background, family history, official positions held and contributions made. To collect the material, there was no better source than the man himself. Accordingly, with questions and note book in hand, I picked his brain at length, in half a dozen sessions with him.

I found him gracious, patient and generous with his time to have granted those marathon sessions in January/February 1996, when I visited Delhi on midterm home leave, from my posting in Jamaica. With his photographic memory, he recounted events dating back to more than 60 years back, not leaving even minor detail. What follows was a fascinating account of what came out from him.

Vimal Chandra's family hailed from Village TANDA, UNA District, Hoshiarpur in Punjab. The only son of Labbu Ram and Nandi Devi, he had three sisters Malawi, Ram Pyari and Vidya. The family surname Bhatia transformed to Bhatia in due course of time. Born on 6th November 1915 he was a bright student from the beginning. He graduated from D.A.V. College, Lahore, Punjab University with Honours in Philosophy in 1936. One of his lifetime close associates, Ishwar Das Pawar, was pursuing LLB course, while being employed as Clerk/translator at Lahore High Court. From then on they forged a lifelong close family bonding.

Around that time a well-established builder Nanig Ram's family was on the lookout for a suitable match for the daughter Shanti, (born 10th September 1923). The eldest son Mohan Lal, who had taken charge of the family affairs, after his father's death, visited Lahore in 1935 to check out on Ishwar Das. His name had been recommended, by an associate. The latter's response to the proposal was that his priority was to complete his LLB degree first. So

the matter was not pursued.

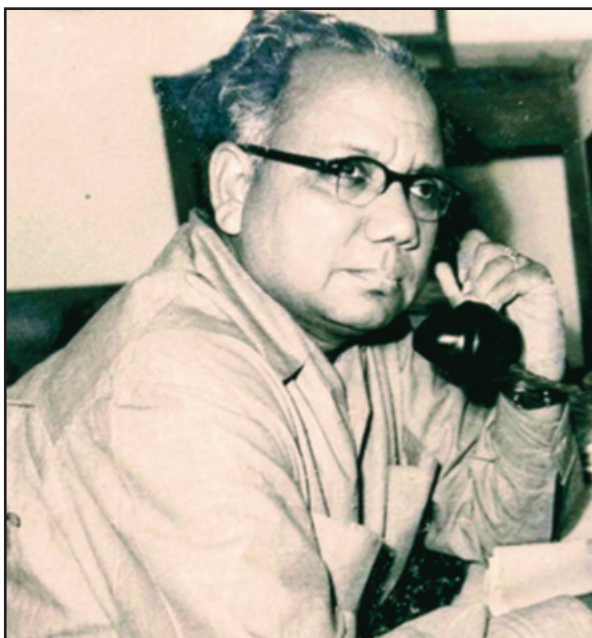
After graduation in 1936, Chandra qualified as Lower Division Clerk (LDC) but could not join, on account of lack of proficiency in typing. That proved to be a blessing in disguise, giving him an opportunity and time to prepare for a higher post. Sure enough he qualified for Assistant level position advertised by the Public Service Commission. In 1938 Vimal Chandra joined Government service in the office of Accountant General in Shimla. From there he was asked to proceed to Delhi. As he did not know anybody in the city, he sought the help of Mohan Lal in finding residential accommodation. (He had met him during the latter's Lahore visit.) A modest flat from amongst the family property in Paharganj, not far from Imperial Talkies was offered, which is where he initially started life in Delhi.

In the meanwhile, search for a match for Shanti was still on. In response to a matrimonial ad in a local newspaper, somebody claiming to be close to a Royal family in Jammu region, offered to be the facilitator for the match. Through correspondence, family details and photos were exchanged, resulting in quick engagement. The date of the proposed marriage was fixed in November 1937 and invitation cards distributed.

When a family friend received the wedding card he enquired if a background check had been done on the prospective bridegroom. He alerted that the groom may be suffering from some serious disease. Shocked by this disclosure, its veracity was checked out. Sure enough, the rumours turned out to be true! The proposal was immediately withdrawn. The groom's side refused to accept it and threatened to bring the

baraat on the fixed day anyway, leading to much tension. Mercifully that did not happen and a disaster was averted.

Fortuitous circumstances put Vimal Chandra in a position to be the right choice at the right time for Shanti. A suitable approach was made and the marriage proposal was accepted by both sides. The wedding date was fixed for January 26, 1939. Preparations got under way in the right earnest. Just a day before the date, unexpected complications developed. Without the knowledge and approval of Vimal Chandra, a close relative of his, approached the bride's



side exploring possibility of some 'consideration'. This was turned down with the response that the girl would be given gifts and presents out of love and affection, which could not be the matter of discussion/negotiation.

This unforeseen development made Shanti's brothers nervous. They were unsure if the baraat would actually turn up at the appointed hour for the ceremony! Youngest brother Bankey Lal was sent to discreetly check out, if preparatory activity at the place, where bridegroom's party was lodged, were going on as per schedule. Much to everyone's relief, no let-up in the proceedings was reported there. In the event the bridegroom's party did arrive at the fixed time. The marriage was solemnized normally, as per Vedic rites, much to everybody's relief. That's how the couple's life's inseparable life journey started.

Shanti proved to be a perfect life partner, as proudly commented by Vimal Chandra himself. She blended well within the family. Facing a challenging domestic situation, she proved more than a match because of her affable personality, warm and af-

fectionate nature. She was a perfect hostess and entertained constant stream of official and family guests' graciously. She had a good knowledge of religious and social customs and rituals. Her attribute as a match maker was impeccable, advising people on a whole range of issues. A very popular person and a favourite of relatives and friends, she was a noble soul.

One of the earliest influences in Vimal Chandra's life was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In 1936 Baba Sahib had visited Punjab for a discussion with Sikh leaders, to examine the option Scheduled Caste community could consider to escape from the clutches of deep rooted caste prejudices, rampant in the Hindu society. Could conversion to Sikhism be the answer? He started with a visit to Lahore, during which the student in Chandra got drawn to his magnetic personality, becoming his early follower.

Vimal Chandra's official career got off to a grand start with posting to Ministry of External Affairs, South Block in 1938. He worked for varying periods of time in the Northern and Eastern Division, followed by General Section. He rose to be Resident Clerk in Central Registry in South Block, which meant he was on duty from the close of office at 4.30 p.m. till the following morning at 10 a.m. The important job involved sorting out incoming important Dak, dispatch of classified telegrams to higher ups, overlooking smooth and efficient movement of communications to various Government departments. His stint in that Ministry lasted till 1946.

All India Scheduled Caste Welfare Association (SCWA) was formed at Dr. Ambedkar's initiative in 1942. Up and coming earliest graduates from Punjab, Vimal Chandra and Kartar Singh, who had taken up Government jobs, became two of its office bearers. At the height of the World War II in July 1942, Ambedkar was appointed to the prestigious Executive Council of Governor General, as its Labour Member. His priority was to fight for a fair deal for his people. Even before the demand for reservation, his unrelenting fight was for adequate representation for the downtrodden in various official positions. He was aware of the standard excuse that there were no qualified people among the community, to be considered for the purpose. He immediately swung in to action to address the issue.

Baba Sahib got together a group of promising young members from the community, to personally mentor and guide for the leadership role. Vimal Chandra was in regular touch with him, in connection with the activities of SCWA. He became a trusted confidant of Ambedkar and helped him putting together an informal study group, taking responsibility for logistical arrangements for their meetings. The tea and snacks on the occasions used to be brought by the

(Contd.. on next page)





# Gentleman Bureaucrat: Vimal Chandra

(Continue from page 6)

individuals voluntarily. Baba Sahib used to give important lessons on various aspects of life. His main emphasis was on importance of education and books, as tools to uplift his people. He was at pains to underline the importance of the world of knowledge and the study of relevant academic material.

Other achievers among Dr. Ambedkar's protégés included Munshi Ram Bhardwaj, Prakash Chander, Nanak Chand Rattu, Bhonsle, DG Jadhav, Meshram, Devi Dayal, Bankey Lal, Dr. K.L. Muir and Rai Sahib Puran Chand. Later Sohan Lal Shastri, joined as an important collaborator. Baba Saheb brought him as a senior draftsman, helping in the Hindi translation of important legal documents. As the Law Minister Dr. Ambedkar was busy drafting the Constitution of the new Republic of India, and later the Hindu Code Bill. S.L. Shastri, provided a helping hand, in many ways.

It was common knowledge that Vimal Chandra had gained confidence of Baba Sahib and his family. The latter's only son, Yashwant Rao disappointed the father no end, showing no inclination for academic pursuits. Even at the age of 31 years, he had not settled in life. At that stage he fell in love with a girl but did not dare approach his father for permission for marriage. Using Vimal Chandra's proximity, he tried seeking the father's permission through him. With great trepidation when the subject was broached, Baba Sahib flared up, dismissing in a brusque manner the proposition aside by a remark: "I am against marriage just for the heck of it. People should become useful to the society before considering marriage. The purpose in life should be to acquire knowledge by reading books. Anybody who does not read at least a book per week has no right to exist."

In 1946 in Labour Ministry, which was under the charge of Dr. Ambedkar, as Member in Viceroy's Executive Council, a vacancy at the level of Superintendent became available. With his recommendation Vimal Chandra was appointed on that post on transfer from External Affairs Ministry. He worked there for some years before he found his rightful place in the newly created Office of Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (S.C. & S.T.), building its architecture virtually from inception. Having carved a niche for himself on the subject, he rose from positions of Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner going on to the rank of Director. Even after attaining the age of superannuation, which then was 55 years, he was given extension for three years, keeping in view his competence and thorough knowledge of the subject. From a modest dwelling at 54 Foch Square, Gole Market, he moved in March 1956 to the sprawling green Lutyen's Zone Bungalow at 56, Ashoka Road near Bangla Sahib, where he stayed

on till his retirement from Government service on November 5, 1973. The Independence of India was accompanied by a traumatic partition of the country on August 15, 1947. One of the biggest mass migrations in human history, uprooting millions of people on either side of the newly created border, resulted in millions from West Punjab on the Pakistan side of the border descending on Delhi. Majority of people were given temporary shelters in camp conditions. Vimal Chandra's sisters, along with their families were accommodated in the cramp condition at his Government accommodation at Foch Square. For months the residence was teeming with scores of occupants. There was uninterrupted 'lan-

came to the fore pertains to her nephew. In 1954 his youngest bhabhi Kishan Devi, after delivery of the youngest son Bharat, underwent a medical emergency. In her stomach a ball like foreign element developed, growing in size, causing anxiety. She had to be operated immediately, before it became cancerous. During the period Shanti came forward to take care of the baby voluntarily. She nursed Bharat like her own offspring, till the mother got out of the hospital. Such was the care, maternal affection and dedication she showered on him. November 1984 would be the saddest month in Vimal Chandra's life. The country was reeling after the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31 1984

ent could not hide the smirk on their faces. The candidate, who was unprepared for such a question, recovered quickly enough to give the right reply!

Vimal Chandra enjoyed the reputation of being a balanced and a fair person. He never showed undue favour to anyone. It was for this reason that the families of his wife's three brothers approached him for help in deciding on contentious issue of property division. It was a complex matter but he took it on as a challenge. He listened to the claims and counter claims, examined the intricate issues involved carefully and came up with fair division formula, acceptable to the three parties. If such a matter had been brought before a court law for arbitration, it would have dragged on for a prolonged period of time, entailing a huge cost, creating bitterness among the contending parties. His constructive approach and deft handling saved the family honour.

I was privileged to have been mentored by him, when I was preparing for All India Civil Services Examination. Result of that was to be announced in May 1967, through a press release by Press Information Bureau's (PIB) office, then located in the Annex to All India Radio building on Parliament Street. A day before its formal announcement I went to that office to check and could not believe that I had made to the IAS/IFS. Before rushing home, I decided to take a detour through 56, Ashoka Road residence of Vimal Chandra and broke the good news first to him. And from there, on reaching home at 53, Hanuman Road, I learnt that he had already informed my father about it on phone, depriving the surprise element. He just could not contain his happiness at my achievement and became the harbinger of good news to my father.

Vimal Chandra and Shanti proved to be the perfect match makers for our family. Three of my sisters got married to the bridegrooms, selected by them. In my own case also, they came up with proposal for the daughter of his old friend Chaudhry Ishwar Das Pawar settled in Chandigarh, Kamlesh. That's how the two of us got married on May 13, 1968.

Vimal Chandra was a great family man. After the passing away of his wife he took over the responsibility to bind the family together. He was a doting and caring grandfather. On a visit to his home one would find his grandchildren rallying around him to listen to his stories and fascinating anecdotes. He had the interest, patience and time for them. In fact he could sit in a group of any generation or age group and be connected with them all, as if he was one of them. He used to derive immense pleasure by asking out of context questions to test their knowledge. A grandchild of his fondly recalls, that at times sitting beside him, a subject was given to him to compose a poem. He would

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Daughter Shashi and Darshan Nafri Reception. 6.2.1966. From left Khub Singh, Nafri, Renu, Santsoh, Bishan Lala

gar' in operation at all hours of the day. Food used to be cooked not just for the newly arrived guests but also for refugee camps, especially for the orphan girls traumatised as rape victims, while fleeing Pakistan. Not for a moment did the hospitable couple show any exasperation, while voluntarily undertaking this humanitarian gesture, in spite of the great personal discomfort: ample proof of their large heartedness and generosity.

Wife Shanti proved to be an anchor and a rock-solid support system, Vimal Chandra was fully devoted and dependent on her. He never tried to hide their special bonding in public. While going out together, he would often lovingly hold her hand swinging it gently, as they walked along in the manner of young lovers! Shanti was an accomplished singer. The song everyone wanted to hear her sing at private family gathering was "Yehzinda giusiki haijokisi kahogaya" from the blockbuster film 'Anarkali'

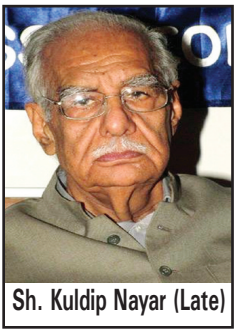
Eldest son Vinod joined Government service and Ashok migrated to Canada after finishing his College. Deepak got his engineering degree and after working for a public sector undertaking, he too shifted to Canada. Chandra's eldest daughter Shashi married Darshan Ram Nafri, who retired as an I.A.S. officer, while the younger one Manjula married a banker Surinder, who rose to a high position in the Reserve Bank of India. An incident worth mentioning about the motherly instinct of Shanti that

and the resultant mayhem. One evening Shanti had gone for some errand on foot near the bustling market place of Hauz Khas, where a retirement home was built. While trying to cross a busy street she was knocked down by a speeding vehicle. She suffered multiple fractures on the torso and the body from hip downwards was cast in plaster. It was one of the most excruciatingly painful week or ten days. Vimal Chandra was shattered and felt helpless for not being able to alleviate the suffering of his life partner. And then on November 10, 1984 she passed away, leaving her husband desolate and lonely, after nearly 45 years of blissfully wedded life.

Vimal Chandra continued to serve the society, even after retirement, in various capacities. He was Adviser to several Government departments and a consultant in the selection board of Public Sector Undertakings like NTPC, PNB, LIC, EPI, Indian Airlines, EIL. He had a tremendous sense of humour. An incident recalled by his son Deepak's friend, interviewed for the post of Junior Project Engineer in Engineering Projects India Ltd. (EPI) would bear that out. At the interview he was answering competently the questions put to him by Board members, which included Vimal Chandra. To put him at ease, to check his reflex, Chandra out of the blue asked him: "How many buttons are there in the shirt you are wearing?" The atmosphere in the cabin lightened up, as those pres-



# Dalits, Durban and a Lost Chance



Sh. Kuldip Nayar (Late)

**T**he news is that New Delhi has been successful in keeping out caste by descent from the final U.N. resolution at Durban on racism. I do not think it is a matter for celebrations, which the unthinking Ministry of External Affairs is doing.

The Government's stand on caste is political. Otherwise, it is not understandable why it should have been a party to block the discussion on Zionism at Durban. People in India support Jews but not the thesis that Israel can go on expanding its frontiers. What has New Delhi proved? Does it mean that India knows of no discrimination by birth, or does it mean that the non-recognition of such ills will make them disappear? True, caste is not racism. But the difference is technical. How does it matter when the end product of caste and racism is the same, discrimination and degradation? Even the National Human

Rights Commission, otherwise tilting towards the Government, has said that the nomenclature is of little importance when caste-ism and racism do not treat men and women as human beings. The series of legislative steps against the Dalits are impressive on paper. But the reality is that they continue to live in separate habitations, draw water from separate wells and get the worst chastisement if they ever dare to raise their head. They are hanged if they marry out of caste. They are murdered if they dare to be equal to the upper caste. Official figures show that one Dalit woman is raped every six hours and one Dalit killed every three days.

## Wounded People

No democratic system should be ashamed of discussing at any forum its practices, which disable its own people. A free society owes its existence to the tenets of freedom. The Dalits have never had a breath of freedom in the suffocating Hindu society. They are wounded people, battered and broken. India is strong enough democratically to admit that it has failed somewhere, despite all the guarantees in the Constitution, to pro-

vide the same glow of freedom, which the upper castes enjoy.

In fact, India has lost at Durban yet another opportunity to explain to the international community the country's shame. The Government could have admitted before the world that despite its legal efforts it had failed to remove untouchability and that it wanted the international community to discuss the case and suggest remedies. It would have been New Delhi's moral success.

It was at Durban that Mahatma Gandhi embarked on his agitation against racism and intolerance. It is at Durban that the Government of the country for whose freedom he fought has shut out from discussion caste, which was one of the targets of his agitation. New Delhi, happy over its victory, feels elated that even the U.N. Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, refused to include caste on the agenda when NGOs from India accosted him. But it is Pyrrhic victory. The world expects something better from the land of the Mahatma.

The blame is not that of the upper caste alone. The politics of votes has become ingrained in the

Dalits. Their leaders, belonging mostly to the creamy layer, have come to enjoy the spoils of office, without articulating the cause of the lowest in real terms.

While piloting the Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the tallest among the Dalits, was able to incorporate in it the numerous safeguards for the untouchables. Untouchability is also banned. But this has made Hindu society no better in its treatment towards untouchable. The upper caste has not changed, neither in its attitude of hide-bound superiority, nor in its refusal to admit the Dalits in the social structure. Caste is denounced but not the cast system.

But what annoys me is the patience and stamina of the Dalits who have stayed part of the Hindu society in spite of the cruelties they have undergone for untold years. Dr. Ambedkar aptly described the situation by borrowing a phrase from Shakespeare: "It may be your interest to be our masters but how can it be ours, to be your slaves?"

**Courtesy: Durban 2001  
CASTE AND WORLD CONFERENCE  
AGAINST RACISM**

## Definition of Scheduled Castes

### Vimal Chandra

(Ex-Deputy Commissioner)

for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes, Ministry of Home Affairs

Ex-Director of parliamentary form for Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes

**Intention** to leave a religion sect born of disgust with current practices or injustice does not sever one's connection with the religion which he is normally believed to profess.

"Surely, not all the present day Christians are true Christians. What about the Sunday parades in Europe where people who do not believe in Christianity or are indifferent or are rationalists demonstrate in front of Churches on Sunday morning? They, too, are nevertheless Christians in the eyes of the state." "you may call me a statutory Hindu if you like," said Dr. Ambedkar humorously, "but I will insist on my political rights irrespective of the depth of my religion fervour."

To support his contention Dr. Ambedkar cites two instances from the Punjab, where two section of depressed classes have been classified as "Scheduled Castes" in spite of the proved fact that they are not Hindus. The instances mentioned are those of Ad Dharmis and Ramdasis. The first of these have gone out of their way formally to intimate to Government that they are not Hindu, and yet they have been classed under "Scheduled Castes" in the general constituency. "The Punjab Census Report of 1931 says":

"The most notable feature of the present census from the standpoint of return of religion has been the adoption of the term 'Ad-Dharmi' by numerous Chamars and Chuhras and other untouchables. A new instruction to the religion was given this year, namely, persons returning themselves as Ad- Dharmis should be recorded as such.

"The Punjab Ad-Dharm Man-

dal had petitioned the Punjab Government before census operation started in 1930, representing that the depressed classes should be permitted to return in Ad-Dharm as their religion at the time of the census, as they were the aborigines of India and while the Hindus kept them at a respectable distance, they did not believe in the Hindu religion. The president of Punjab Ad-Dharm Mandal was informed that a clause was being provided in the census code requiring that persons returning to their religion as Ad-Dharma would be recorded as such. Ad-Dharm literally means original or ancient religion.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the dispute over the Ad-Dharmi agitation became so serious that several murders were committed. However that may be, the Ad-Dharmis have been classified as "Scheduled Castes" in the general constituency, notwithstanding their unequivocal declaration that they are not Hindus.

In the case of himself and his followers, Dr. Ambedkar points out; the attitude is negative in respect of Hinduism and not yet positive adherence to any other faith.

Similarly, the Ramdasis are Sikhs by religion, but they have been classified under "Scheduled Castes" in the general constituency. All of which, according to Dr. Ambedkar, goes to show that religion has nothing to do with electoral classification have gone exactly contrary to the religious grouping.

Thus, while Dr. Ambedkar does not recognize the Hindus right to complain or challenge the 'Depressed Classes' privileges by virtue of the Poona Pact, he affirms that his community's political rights are unaffected by intended or even impending renunciation of Hinduism.

**Courtesy: Babu Mangu Ram  
Mugowalia 99th Birth Anniversary 1985  
(Published by Mr. C. L. Chumber)**

### (Continue from page 7)

close his eyes and, on the spot, come up with a verse that rhymed perfectly.

To ward off the scorching sun, overhead sola hat which was an Indian sun helmeted cap, made from pith material, was popular during the colonial period. Vimal Chandra used to wear it. To amuse the children, he devised a 'magic' trick by standing with his back against the wall with the hat touching it. While whistling and letting off air from his inflated mouth, he would simultaneously press the hat against the wall lifting it from the front and gradually bring

his heel down making it look like a magic. Then again he used to make mouse origami with his white handkerchief, putting it in his palm and making it jump off by suddenly closing his fist, to the excitement of the children. The game was for the kids to catch the mouse.

And then after almost 20 years following his wife's departure, Vimal Chandra decided to join her in heaven on February 21, 2004. He left a void in the lives of his family, friends, former colleagues and admirers.

Vimal Chandra was a cultured man with a fine taste. He was a

straight forward person with simple habits. He dressed elegantly, a trait he no doubt learnt from Dr. Ambedkar. His use of Brylcream gel to keep his hair in place was his trademark style! His hobbies included solving cross word puzzles. He enjoyed watching movies and saw 'Anarkali' about 20 times. He attended International Film Festivals regularly. His favourite TV show was "The Bold and The Beautiful". No one could disturb him during the programme.

Chandra's family says that he was a discerning foodie and enjoyed exotic dishes, particularly non-vegetarian. He consumed raw bulbs of

garlic daily with relish, stating that it was the best medicine for heart. He had fondness for namkeen Bhajia mixture and would sneak into the kitchen and locate the carefully hidden jar containing his favoured item. He was often troubled by a blocked nose. His constant companion to counter that problem used to be Vicks nasal inhaler.

Vimal Chandra was a gentleman bureaucrat. He was never arrogant nor haughty. Nobody ever saw him losing his temper. He never drank nor smoked. He had no extravagant habits. In short, an exemplary personality, a role model.