



Ambedkar Times Weekly

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Remembering Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji in Contemporary Times

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Dalit Chetna has its roots in the sufferings of its progenitors who never tired in making efforts to wake up their people/Samaj. The beginning was made in a more systematic manner during the life time of revered Jyotirao Phule who with the support of his bold life partner revered Savitri Bai Phule made stringent efforts to educate the lowest of the low while equating education with the milk of Lioness that whosoever drink it will roar like a lion. The flame of this struggle was taken up soon after by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy who founded Justice Party to struggle for long lost Dalit human rights during colonial India.

Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar became the legitimate heir of Phule-Periyar tradition of the generation of Dalit consciousness and took the same to new heights, never witnessed before since the beginning of the raising of voice against social exclusion and justice in the discourses by Tathagat Buddha. Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar remained on the platform of Dalit struggle from the time of his first publication on Genesis of Caste in 1916 till his last breath on December 6, 1956. From 1956 till 1972 Dalits in India experimented with his conversion formula to get rid of untouchability and getting organized under Dalit political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation, Republican Party of India) to fight back social segregation, political marginalization and economic peripheralisation. Conversion somehow could not succeed in throwing off the debris of untouchability even from the confines of their newly embraced religions. The experience with the distinct Dalit political parties also remained quite disheartening as at different electoral intervals Scheduled Castes failed to register victory. Reservation in the legislature both at state and national levels encouraged opportunists from within the rank and file of the low castes to get played in the hands of the upper castes masters in the mainstream political parties to be ready to come forward to defeat their counterparts from the Dalit political parties. That is why Babasaheb used to say that on the reserved seats deaf and dumb low castes are picked up by the shrewd mainstream political party bosses to defeat the genuine Dalit candidates from the Dalit Political Parties. This was the outcome of the failure of Communal Award hard earned by Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar.

A new wave came with the arrival of Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji on the political scene of the Dalit Politics in India as well as with the birth of Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra in the early 1970. Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji also made sincere efforts to stir new consciousness in the minds of Dalit people in Punjab while referring to the various achievements of the glorious Ad Dharm movement. Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji, in fact, had successfully been able to inject a new energy and passion among the Scheduled castes, especially of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, by bringing them together on the platform of BAMCEF, DS4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangarsh Samiti) and Bahujan Samaj Party. He was of the firm opinion that political power is the key to all locks of Dalit empowerment. He wanted to strengthen his own people and Samaj who had been taken for a free ride during centuries.

What Sahib Shri Kanshi Ji said and done for the Dalit Samaj has once again being realized by his followers and scholars of Dalit studies that the current times need him and his style of politics more strongly for the emancipation and empowerment of the Scheduled castes people. "Ambedkar Times" (www.ambedkartimes.com) and "Desh Doaba" (www.deshdoaba.com) forum pay floral tributes to the fond memory and momentous work that Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji had done for his people and Samaj on his anniversary!!

Preserving the Legacy of Ad Dharm Movement

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

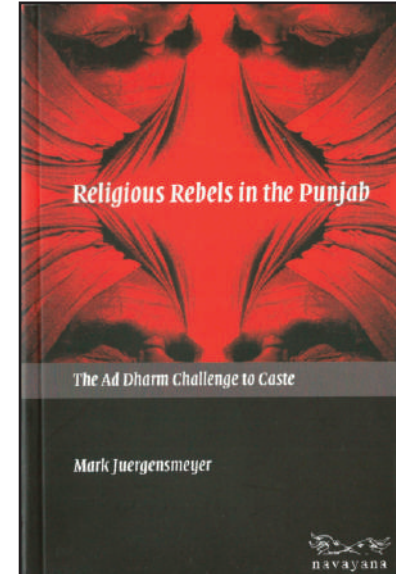
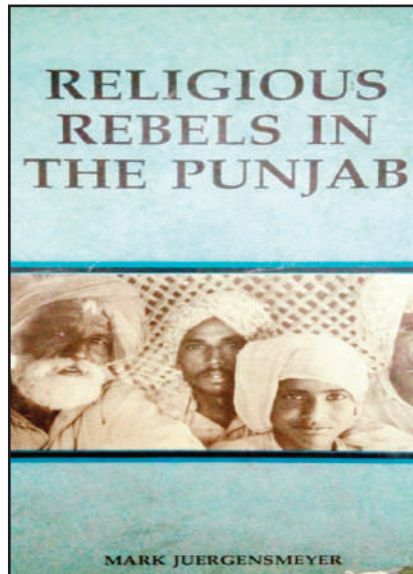
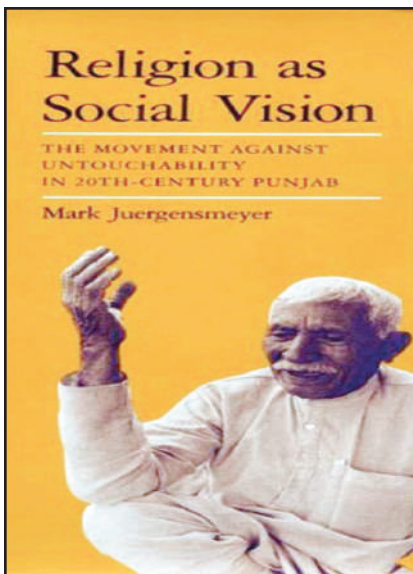
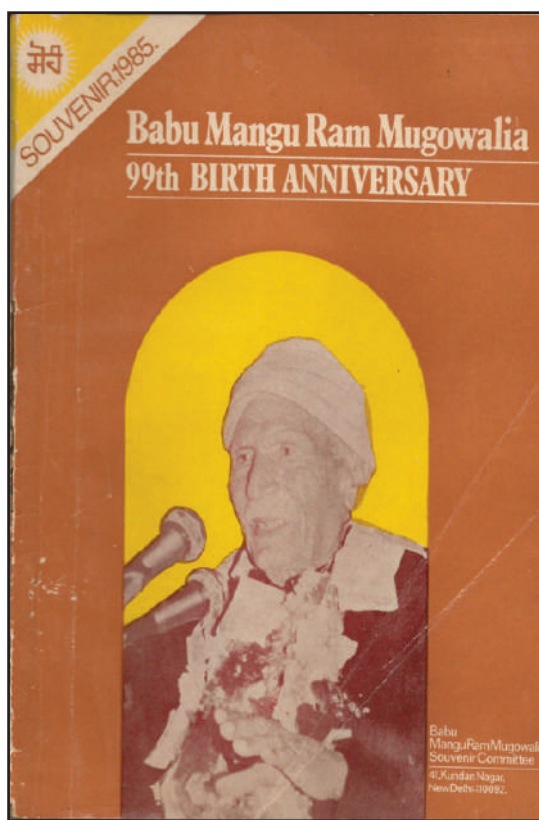
AD Dharm movement brought Dalit consciousness in the undivided vast province of Punjab at a time when varied political organisations (Singh Sabhas, Arya Samajis, Muslim League, Ahmadiyya's, Christian missionary societies) representing mainstream communities, in the regions were making concerted efforts to strengthen their numerical strength for gaining some political space in the promised devolution of political power in the form of limited electoral provisions. Though Scheduled Castes, then addressed as Depressed classes, constituted a significant part of the total population of the Punjab province, they did not have their own exclusive political organisation like that of the other mainstream communities in the province. It was for this reason that all other community based organisations were making best of their efforts to win maximum number of Scheduled Castes towards their fold. All of them were asserting their claim on Scheduled Castes them to include them in the religions of their respective communities. In fact, it was for the first time in 1920s that the leaders of different communities realised to consolidate the numerical strength of their respective communities as a potent factor for the acquisition of some share in the British system of governance. It was precisely during this very time that the historic Ad Dharm movement took roots in Punjab.

The Ad Dharm movement was founded by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia after his return from abroad in 1925. He along with the efforts of Vasant Rai, Thakur Chand and Swami Shudranand called a mega conference at his native village of Mugowal and laid the foundation of the Ad Dharm movement amidst various sub-communities of the Scheduled Castes. Within a short period of five

years, Ad Dharm movement became a household organization of the majority of the lower castes in the province. It had its own Newspaper (Adi Danka), well-organized headquarter (Ad Dharm Mandal) at Jalandhar, separate religion (Ad Dharm) duly recognised by the British government, supported Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during his tie with Mr. M.K. Gandhi on the issue of separate electoral communal award at the London Round Table Conferences, won seven out of eight reserved assembly seats in the Punjab Pradesh Provincial Assembly elections in 1937, and all seats in 1946 Punjab Assembly elections. In 1946, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia got elected from the reserved assembly seat of Hoshiarpur. The Ad Dharm movement, under the stewardship of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, made many petitions to the British government from time to time for the upliftment of the lower castes. Despite stiff opposition from the mainstream communities, the Ad Dharm movement was able to carve a niche for itself and acquired a significant political space for the hitherto neglected segment of the lower castes.

Though after India's independence, the Ad Dharm movement got confined to socio-spiritual domain of the lower castes, its legacy became a rich heritage of the Schedules Castes in the state. Mangu Ram Jaspal, namesake of Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer, Mr. C.L. Chumber, Prof. Ronki Ram, among others played a significant role in documenting the history of Ad Dharm movement and preserving its legacy.

It is matter of great pride for us to put on records that Ambedkar Times (English) and Desh Doaba (Punjabi) Weeklies have been making earnest efforts since their inception in 2006 and 2012 respectively for the wider dissemination of the information about the rich heritage of this historic Scheduled Caste movement across the world.



Historicity of Chamar Women's Contribution in the Ambedkarite Movement: Part -8

Malanbai Waghmare



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Malanbai Waghmare was a very brave woman of the Chambhar community. Her active participation in the Dalit Panther Movement and Namantar movement is seen. The journey of her life is very tough, and she is seen walking very bravely throughout this journey. She has contributed immensely to uplifting Dalit Panthers in Marathwada, especially in the Udgir-Latur region. Information about her is available in some Dalit Panther Movement books. At the same time, the leaflets of some programs and her daughter Kamal Parkhe alias Sudha Jogdand have written her autobiography, there are some references in it. On that basis, the truth of the struggling life of Malanbai Waghmare can be presented.

Malanbai Waghmare's father Shankarao Waghmare was a powerful Chambhar. Therefore, Malanbai did not realize what poverty was. Later she got married to Sayajirao Gaikwad. Malanbai has two sons and a daughter. Today Malanbai is not alive. His date of birth is also not available. Malanbai is seen separated from her husband after having three children. About this, her daughter Kamal Parkhe says in her autobiography, "Our life was happy, but one of our relatives became my stepmother. Her husband had died. She had a son from her first husband. Then my cousin and grandmother betrothed her to my father. A similar argument started in the house." This means that Sayajirao Gaikwad had a second marriage even when he had a wife and three children and this caused constant arguments in the house. This dispute turns into family separation. It follows, "One day ink spilled from my brother's hand. For this reason, my father beat my brother a lot. After a lot of fighting with my mother, that night, my two brothers and my mother secretly went to my maternal uncle's house. My grandfather was happy and rich. There were five brothers and three sisters. My grandfather used to make a loud noise while walking. There were buffaloes, cows and goats in the house my mother used to heat milk on cow's milk. My grandfather used to work in a factory. Although it is easy for a man to live with two wives in the same house, it is very difficult for both women. Their behaviour is consistent with the creation of a constantly hostile environment in terms of rights. In this the man is on the side of the woman; that woman lives in that house and the other one has to leave the house. The same situation happened in the case of Malanbai. There was a fight because of the child's mistake. It turns into beatings and later leaves the house and comes to her father's home. Kamal Parkhe

has described her grandfather. It was a rich and happy family. At the same time, they were working in a factory, so the financial aspect was also strong as they were getting regular salaries. With the support of their parents, the daughter leaves with her father as this support, Malanbai also brought children to her father, But later it appears that she had to leave her father's house too. Kamal Parkhe writes about this, "One by one, buffaloes and goats started dying. It is not known what disease the animals had contracted. A rich family was on the path of poverty. My mother started pouring water on trees and plants at Deshmukh's house. During the drought, there was no food to eat. Grandpa told me not to stay in our house anymore. We don't have to take care of you. She took me and my brothers to live separately. But she didn't hesitate to ask how to get the money. My uncle was a veterinary doctor; he lived next to Deshmukh's farm." This shows that the home situation of Shankarao Waghmare gradually changed and due to a weakening financial situation, he asked his daughter Malanbai to live separately. In the Indian social system, women do not have freedom; this is evident from constant and repeated experiences. A married girl is the husband's responsibility after marriage; her parent's home becomes a guest house for her; therefore, her responsibility is not taken. The child is not asked to leave the home even if the financial situation of the home changes. But, the daughter and her children are the responsibility of the son-in-law, so the parents of the daughter do not take responsibility for them.

Due to the patriarchal culture in Indian society, when Malanbai, who came home tired of her husband's troubles, was unable to support her father; then they were forced to live separately. For a girl who grew up in a luxurious home, coming home with three children; Burglary at strangers' houses; Later the father also refuses to support the very heartbreaking situation. Even in this situation, Malanbai lives separately with her children, this is an example of her firmness. Their life after separation was full of hardships. She used to go to work with her children by her side; later they started getting work gradually. About that, Kamal Parkhe

says, "Dr Dandavate had a clinic in the village; they used to deliver babies there. My mother got a job as a midwife in this clinic. She used to conduct deliveries." After this, his family became a little more stable. After the attack on Malanbai's son Prakash Waghmare, Buddhist, Matang and Muslim children formed an organization against injustice. Malanbai and her daughter actively participated in it. She lived in Sanmitra Colony. There too she built the Mahila Mandal of Dalit Panther Mahila Aghadi. Marching to various places against injustice; When Malanbai was doing



the very important work of supporting people, the movement to change the name of Marathwada University was going on very strongly. There were attacks on Buddhists and other untouchables in Marathwada. The Dalit Panther's job was to try to stop the attacks. Kamal Parkhe says about this, "Panther was an organization that always ran against injustice. Panther used to have boys and girls from many villages; two to three thousand people used to join the march. At such a time, a meeting was going on in Mahila Mandal. It was 9 o'clock in the night; a jeep came. There were four to five people in police uniforms, "Where is Guruji? Come, you have been called to the police station." My mother, Malanbai Waghmare, was very experienced; she said, not only Guruji, but all of us will come in the jeep. Some of the Panther boys peeked into the pav and saw that there were big kerosene cans filled in it. My mother suspected Bhurewar killed the PSI, so My mother said, "You go ahead, we all come to the station." Then the people realized that the jeeps were not coming.

This example shows how consciously Malanbai was doing the movement. It is very important to be

able to recognize the moves of the enemy while moving. This quality is seen in Malanbai Waghmare. Malanbai has contributed in various ways while working with Dalit Panthers in Marathwada but written evidence regarding them is not found. Therefore, they have not been mentioned much in the writings of the Dalit movement in Marathwada.

Dr. Venkat Balade to Marathwada University After receiving the name Babasaheb Ambedkar, the history of the Namantar movement has been written. Venkat Balade has made an important statement about Malanbai in the book 'NamantarSangharshParva'. He says in his book, "Raja Dhale, Namdev Dhasal, Ramdas Athawale, Gangadhar Gade, Prof. Arun Kamble, Suresh Gaikwad, Venkatesh Chaudhary Udgir, Vinayakrao Balade, Ramrao Gawli, Prof. Rajendra Balade, Malu Shinde, Govind Suryavanshi, Nilakant Kamble, Ram Landge Parli, Daulatrao Kharat Aurangabad, Rameshbhai Khandagale, Prakash Javale, Ashok Sable Jalna, Smt. Malanbai Waghmare, Prabhakar Kale etc. raised the Dalit Panther." According to Venkatesh Balade, Mrs Malanbai Waghmare has made an important contribution to raising the Dalit Panther in Marathwada. The list of whose names is given by Balade. Mrs. Malanbai Waghmare is the only woman in it. From this, we can guess how important is the contribution of Mrs. Malanbai Waghmare in the Panther Movement.

Dr Mohan Misal has also confirmed Venkatesh Balade's statement in his book 'History of Dalit Movement in Marathwada'. According to Misal, "Dalit Panthers started the Namantar Movement and fought till the end. Prof. Arun Kamble, Gangadhar Gade, Adv. Pritam kumar Shegaonkar, Daulat Kharat, Ratankumar Pandagale, RamdasAthawale, Prof. Jogendra Kawade, Prakash Nikalje, Smt. Malanbai Waghmare, Prabhakar Kale, Shahir Atmaram Salve, etc. raised the Dalit Panther." Malanbai went to jail during the Namantar Movement. Ramdas Athawale has also felicitated her for her contribution to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Namantar Movement. Malanbai Waghmare was a very brave activist. So the establishment went against her. Her life was also in danger. Kamal Parkhe writes in her autobiography, "At that time, some opposition people poisoned my mother's tea. My mother became very serious. Dr. Mungikar of Udgir Government Hospital immediately asked me to shift to Ambajogai. My mother and my brother Prakash went to Ambajogai. When Ambajogai came to know about this, many people from the Dalit Yuvak (youth) Aghadi came to meet her." This suggests that if a woman plays an important role in a social movement, it was a conspiracy to kill her; But it is seen that Malanbai

(Contd. on next page)

Historicity of Chamar Women's Contribution in the Ambedkarite Movement: Part -8

Malanbai Waghmare

(Continue from page 2)

survived it and even after that she again worked vigorously for the movement. When there was an attempt to kill Malanbai. Then she was brought to Ambajogai Hospital. At that time while returning home Tea was held at, Prof. S. K. Jogdand's house. Later, through the Panthers, Prof. S. K. Jogdandsar asked for marriage to Kamal Parkhe. After much deliberation, this marriage was decided. It was decided to perform the wedding at the groom's village, while the engagement ceremony was held at the bride's place in Udgir. In 1975, a Chambhar woman agreed to give her daughter to a Buddhist boy. This marriage was arranged. This was a very revolutionary event at that time. Kamal Parkhe tells about this, 'during which my mother decides to cook Purnanapoli (staff sweet chapatti) for the program. Went to the Ravidas society and told all the women that the girl's wedding would be tomorrow, bring all your wives with a pail and a bell, Ana said nothing. Nobody liked that a Chambhara's daughter would be given to a Mahara's son. Then, the women said, "If one of us sends us, we will come, if not, we will not." Then Mother said, "If you don't come, I will cook and take the food to the police station. Then, because of caste, you will have to pay a fine of five to five thousand rupees and a

two-month sentence.' Chambhar wives refuse to come because they cannot digest that Chambhar's daughter was given to Mahar. In 1956 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar accepted Buddha Dhamma; in that, all the people of the Mahar community, even those living in the villages, were initiated into the Buddha Dhamma. Some of the Chambhars who worked in the movement with Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar also accepted the Buddha Dhamma, But the entire Chambhar caste did not accept Buddha Dhamma. Therefore, the attitude of the Chambhars and others towards the Mahar community in the village who accepted the Buddha Dhamma does not appear to have changed. There was a change in the attitude towards people who had gone to a humanistic religion that preached the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity; but accepting the Buddha Dhamma, they rejected the village rights imposed on the Mahars by Hinduism; new converts followed the path of the Buddhas, and this anger is felt to be greater. After the conversion, the level of injustice against the Mahars from village to village is seen to increase; it is because of this reason. Even the thoughts of the general Chambhar group in the village are seen to remain within the limits of caste. Even though Malanbai Waghmare is a Chambhar, she participates

in the Dalit movement regardless of her life and decides to reject the caste system and marry her daughter to a Buddhist boy. They face opposition from society. Despite this opposition, the community is forced to attend the girl's engagement program by bringing the people of the community to a standstill. Only a woman of extraordinary strength can do this. We can see from this example that she was an intelligent and shrewd woman Strong pillar of the movement Malanbai Waghmare used to attend events at these places; He used to make speeches. They were not educated; But, they were certainly practical enough to distinguish good from bad. On May 26, 1975, he gave a speech at Ahmedpur on the occasion of Buddhist Jayanti. The Tathagata's-Dhamma, its importance and conduct accordingly is very important. Malanbai Waghmare did the work of sowing good values in society along with the struggle during the movement. On May 26, 1975, Borgaon B., T. The schedule of the program held at Ahmedpur is available.

After 1956, what is the true Buddha Dhamma to inculcate the principles of Buddha Dhamma among common people? Post-Abedkar Republican and Dalit Panther activists also played an important role in promoting and disseminating this. In this, it is seen that many activists like

Malanbai propagated and propagated the thoughts of Buddha Dhamma.

MalanbaiWaghmare worked hard all her life and raised her children. He also worked actively in the movement. She lived this struggle without the support of her husband and father.

His elder son Prakash Waghmare was an active activist of Dalit Panthers. Malanbai's elder son Prakash died on January 15, 2014. At that time Malanbai Waghmare also gave up hope of living. His daughter writes about this, "It has been nine days since my brother died. My mother could not bear this grief. The young boy went missing. On January 24, 2015, at nine in the morning, my mother passed away."

An Common woman like Malanbai Waghmare led the Ambedkarite movement on various fronts; Malanbai Waghmare has all the qualities required to run a movement, promptness, punctuality and perseverance; At the same time, Malanbai, who grew up in a comfortable home as a child, is seen handling the difficult situation that arose after that very efficiently.

They are in the movement. But he also activated her sons and daughters in the movement. MalanbaiWaghmare's contribution to Dalit Panther, and Namantar movement is unique.



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For 09 October about the death anniversary of late Sahib Kanshi Ram founder of Bahujan Samaj Party Sahib Kanshi Ram organized the downtrodden sections to fight for their rights and prepare them for politics

Large section of society in India has been subjected to caste-based social, religious and political discrimination for centuries. Different social, religious and political leaders have campaigned from time to time to end this discrimination. Dalit leader and founder of Bahujan Samaj Party Babu Kanshi Ram campaigned to bring the freedom to the untouchables and backward classes and made history by forming a government in a state like Uttar Pradesh. BabuKanshi Ram also known as Bahujan Nayak or Manyavar Sahib Kanshi Ram was an Indian politician and social reformer who worked for the upliftment and political mobilisation of the Bahujans, the backward or lower caste people including untouchable groups at the bottom of the caste system in India. He founded Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS-4), the All India Backwards SC/ST/OBC and Minorities Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) in 1971 and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984. He ceded leadership of the BSP to Mayawati who has served as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. He was born in Ramdasia caste on 15 March 1934 in Village Pirthipur Bunga District Ropar Punjab. He did his primary education from the Government School of Village Malikpur and Islamic School Ropar and graduated in Science from Government College Ropar in 1956. Meanwhile he was engaged to the daughter of a Congress MLA from Doaba but he refused to get married. In the year 1957 he passed the Survey of India examination and went to Dehradun for its training. For this training all the trainees were asked to fill a bond according to which it was necessary to work in the Survey of India for a certain period of time but he refused to fill this bond and left the training and came back. He joined the office of the Explosive Research and Development Laboratory in Pune Maharashtra. There he experienced caste discrimination and in 1964 he became an activist. He was spurred after reading book of Dr. Ambedkar "Annihilation of Caste" and witnessing the discrimination against a Dalit employee Dina Bhana who wished to observe a holiday celebrating Dr. Ambedkar's birth and BudhPurnima. He was strongly inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and his philosophy. He initially supported the Republican Party of India but became disillusioned with its co-operation with Congress Party. After Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia and Dr. Bhimrao

Ambedkar he made the dream of strengthening Dalits on One Political Platform. He rejected the existing Dalit leadership and said that the Poona Pact which was an agreement between Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and Congress leader Gandhi has produced only spoons. He often opposed the Poona Pact saying that it had deprived the lower classes for centuries of the right to a separate vote granted by the Communal Award. He has described this in detail in his book Chamcha Yuga. He argued that Dalits should work for the interests of their community instead of compromising with other parties. In



Sahib Kanshi Ram

15 March 1934 – 09 October 2006

1971 he founded the All India SC, ST, OBC and Minority Employees Association and in 1978 this became BAMCEF an organisation that aimed to persuade educated members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backwards Classes and Minorities to support Ambedkarite principles. BAMCEF was neither a political nor a religious body and it also had no aims to agitate for its purpose. It appealed to the class among the Dalits that was comparatively well-off, mostly based in urban areas and small towns working as government servants and partially alienated from their untouchable identities. In 1981 He formed another social organisation known as Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti DS4. He started his attempt of consolidating the Dalit votes and in 1984 founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). After forming BSP He said that the party would fight first election to lose, second to get noticed and the third election to win. He fought first election in 1984 from Chhattisgarh. The BSP found success in Uttar Pradesh, initially struggled to bridge the divide be-

tween Dalits and Other Backward Classes but later under leadership of Mayawati filled this gap. In 1988 he contested from Allahabad against V. P. Singh and performed impressively but lost with about 70000 votes. He non-successfully contested from East Delhi Lok Sabha constituency against HKL Bhagat and against Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 and came on third position from both seats. He represented from Hoshiarpur. He was also elected from Etawahin Uttar Pradesh. Bahujan Samaj Party emerged as a major political party in the 1992 Punjab assembly elections and won 9 MLAs and be-

came the main opposition party in Punjab. After Demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 Mulayam Singh Yadav and Kanshi Ram joined hands to keep communal forces out of power by creating unity among the Backward and Dalit castes. After the election a coalition government of Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party was formed in UP under the leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav, although due to some differences this alliance broke up in June 1995. Mayawati became first time Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh with support of BJP. In the late 1990 He described the BJP as the most corrupt party in India and the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal as equally corrupt. Under his leadership BSP won 14 parliamentary seats in the 1999 parliamentary elections. On 18 February, 2001 on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of 'Adi Dharma Mandal' Bahujan Samaj Party organized a rally in Hoshiarpur in which gave a message to follow the principles of Adi Dharma Movement. He wanted to seat the Bahujan Samaj of the country on the chair of the Prime Minister but could not succeed. Late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee once offered him the post of President but he made it clear that he wanted to be the Prime Minister so that he could work for the good of the rest of the people, including Dalits. Kanshi Ram who shouted the slogan of his share wanted to bring the power to the door of the Dalits. He was patient of dia-

betic and suffered a heart attack in 1994, an arterial clot in his brain in 1995, and a paralytic stroke in 2003. He had been virtually bed-ridden for more than two years and died in New Delhi on 9 October 2006 at the age of 72 Years. In his condolence message, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described Kanshi Ram as "one of the greatest social reformers of our time. his political ideas and movements had a significant impact on our political evolution. He had a larger understanding of social change and was able to unite various under privileged sections of our society and provide a political platform where their voices would be heard." There are number of programs and schemes and public institutions named after Kanshi Ram by Government at different places in country. His biography Kanshi ram: Leader of the Dalits is written by Badri Narayan. His speeches are compiled in book Bahujan Nayak Kanshi ram Ke Bhashan by Anuj Kumar. Writings & Speeches of Kanshi ram is compiled by S. S. Gautam and A. R. Akela. The year 2017 saw the release of Great Leader Kanshi Ram, a Hindi language biopic film directed and produced by Arjun Singh. Pammi Lalo Majara has also written the book "Main Kanshi Ram Bolda" in Punjabi. There is a memorial with his statue at his birthplace Pirthipur Bunga. Babu Kanshi Ram Memorial Trust has been created by his family by which a library of items related to Babu Kanshi Ram has been prepared in Nanke village Prithipur-Bunga. The foundation stone of this trust was laid by current BSP supremo Kumari Mayawati on 01 August, 1997 and inaugurated on 15 March, 2013 by PL Punia Chairman National Scheduled Castes Commission. Congress leader Shamsar Singh Dulon has specially built a building in this village. Sahib Kanshi Ram of course remained associated with the Bahujan Samaj Party but now every political party gives him full respect and from time to time the leaders of different political parties take guidance from his struggling life. Today on the occasion of his death anniversary various organizations are paying tribute to him in the country and abroad.



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Profile of icons, my role models



Ambesdor V.B. Soni

A. My hero, my idol: Bankey Lal

There are heroes and there are legends. Heroes get remembered, but legends never fade away. A mother teaches a child love and compassion, while the father toughens him up to face challenges in life. He wants to catch him before a fall but lets him try again before picking up. Father does not tell him how to live life but watches him learn a lesson. A boy goes on from wanting to be just like his father, before coming up with his own personality. An affectionate and supportive father shapes a child's mental and personality development. He instils an overall sense of wellbeing and self-confidence. My father was

to the emerging social mix of New Delhi, he got his rightful place in that august body.

Making entry in Delhi's elite social circles Bankey Lal's two-year stint (1948-50) at DMC came at a crucial period. He actively participated in its deliberations, making useful contribution in debates and decision making. Two important prestigious events DMC hosted during this period were, Civic Reception for the outgoing Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten on 20.6.1948, followed by the one in honour of First President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad on February 5, 1950. He arranged for me to watch the proceedings of the two historic functions in

homes on safety considerations. Some Hindu merchants, switching loyalties overnight to the British, earned huge dividends, grabbing strategically located palatial mansions and businesses at throw away prices. Clothing merchant Chunnamal Seth was one such beneficiary. He bought huge Kartras/shops and houses. His name is remembered till date.

During our tonga ride to pick him up from court at Kashmere Gate, Bauji introduced us to the gastronomical delight of the legendary Chandni Chowk Street food. These included visits to Parathewali gali for kachori, bedvi, puri-aloo and chaat pakodi. At wayside corner stalls we feasted on

balcony and a disaster was averted.

A classic example of his innovativeness. As already indicated, Bankey Lal

was a man of taste, dressing up in smart suits with matching tie and handkerchief. His Swiss Westend Secunda watch with silver chain, could be seen dangling from the waist coat pocket. His favourite Parker Pen would adorn the breast pocket. He had a nice collection of hats. In summer, sola hat would provide protection from the sun. For functions in Chandni Chowk, he would wear well starched Indian style dhoti and kurta with golden buttons and achkan. One would always find his shoes polished and shining. During the late 1940s Bankey Lal obtained an arms license and bought a Webley Scott revolver. It was considered a prestige symbol. After keeping it under lock and key for some time, he felt that there was no need for it anymore and sold it to an Army Captain. He was traumatized to learn afterwards that the buyer shot himself with that same weapon.

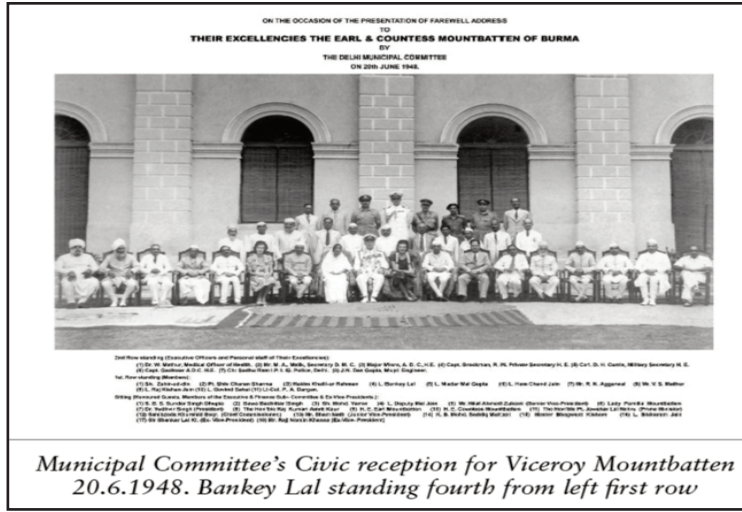
Acquiring a private telephone connection at home, post- Independ-



Bankey Lal



Kishan Devi



Municipal Committee's Civic reception for Viceroy Mountbatten 20.6.1948. Bankey Lal standing fourth from left first row

both a hero and a legend. He is responsible for what I am today in life. Let me enumerate how he helped shape my life from his living example.

Early years

Bankey Lal (Bau ji) was the youngest son, born to Indra Kaur and Nanig Ram in 1908 in Achnera, on U.P.-Rajasthan border. The family moved to New Delhi around 1918, when he was a growing up boy. After Nanig Ram's passing away in 1929, it was smooth transition, with eldest son Mohan Lal efficiently managing family affairs, running the new business of Imperial Theatre in 1932. By 1940s the new family business was running smoothly, as a joint family enterprise. It did not need three hands full time. Mohan Lal managed with controlling supervision. The other two brothers had to find their own calling. Sohan Lal tried his hands at financing/film distribution.

Carving a niche for himself

Dr. Ambedkar recommended Bankey Lal for the position of Honorary Magistrate in 1945, keeping in view the family's contribution to the newly built capital of New Delhi. The latter prepared himself for the position by learning the legal processes involved, through law books and the court's language Urdu, with help of a professional Maulana, in reasonably quick time. Making success of this responsibility, he earned recognition and held the post for 9 years. (1945-1954).

Delhi Municipal Committee (DMC), located in Chandni Chowk had to be constituted in 1947-48 after Independence. The name of Bankey Lal for the post of Municipal Councillor came up for consideration. Having been an old resident of the city since the 1920s, and keeping in view the family's standing and rich contribution

person, from the window of an adjoining building, from a vantage position.

Bankey Lal had made smooth entry in to Delhi's high social circle, attending official Receptions at Rashtrapati Bhawan, Constitution Club, Roshanara Club etc., where he rubbed shoulders with the upper crust of the society. He used to take us youngsters along, to the yearly spectacle of Ramlila shows on the occasion of Dussehra, watching from the VIP enclosure.

From mid-1940s till late 1950s Bankey Lal was deeply immersed in activities around purani (old) Dilli, particularly Chandni Chowk area. He became an intrinsic part of the social milieu there, imbibing part of the prevalent culture ('tehzeeb'). He was a regular invitee at mushairas, qawwalis and kavi sammelans (poetry symposium). He would take me along for exposure to the cultural circuit, whenever possible.

Exposing me to Delhi's old-world charm

It was under these fortuitous circumstances that Bauji made it possible for me to be introduced to the rich heritage of the city of my birth. He emphasized that the charm of the area, the oldworld flavour was imparted to the city by evocative residential buildings in mohallas, katras and kuchas. He exposed me face to face with iconic buildings like the Chunnamal Haveli at Katra Neel, Ghalib ki haveli in Ballimaran, Khazanchi ki haveli in Dariba Kalan and Begum Samru Palace near Bhagirath Palace. During those trips I learnt that, post 1857 mutiny, Chandni Chowk saw a transformation. The colonial rulers were severe on leading figures of the walled city, particularly Muslim community. Many of them abandoned their businesses and

desi ghee ki jalebi, rabri, kulfi faluda and gajar ka halwa etc. Today when I reflect over that nostalgia, I feel privi-



From left Shila, BL, VB, Kishan Devi, Maya with Saroj. On ground RP, SB, Prabha, KB & Asha 1951

leged to have been part of that experience. Simple and straightforward personality Moving on to Bankey Lal's never-say-die spirit, an incident needs recalling. In 1960, daughter Maya's husband, S.K.Chander was posted in Bombay as Income Tax Officer. During summer holidays of 1960 Bauji wrote a post card to inform that he would be reaching Bombay Central Railway Station, accompanied by the family, on a particular day. For some reason, the letter got delayed in delivery and nobody was at the platform to receive him. With large family in tow, he managed somehow to reach Government Colony in Ghatkopar suburb, where the Chanders were staying. But their exact house number, escaped him. Not willing to give up, Bauji hired a porter to carry the luggage and went around the colony around 9 p.m. calling out Chander's name, at the top of his voice repeatedly. Providentially, his voice was heard by the daughter living on the second floor, who responded from the

ence was restricted to privileged few VIPS-Ministers/ MPs, senior civil servants, defence officers, rich businessmen and influential persons, because of the limited lines available. Bankey Lal was granted a connection, out of the special quota, because of the public position he was holding. I still remember that number was 45675. It may have added to his prestige but the neighbours ended up receiving and making calls at odd hours, becoming a nuisance, at the cost of privacy.

Social strappings and life style

This was also the period when a new radio set entered our home and changed the entertainment scene. All India Radio broadcast initially served as mouthpiece of the Government's agenda on socialist policies, Five Year plans and other serious stuff. Classical/folk music and songs dominated the airwave most of the time. Half an hour slot was allotted for light film songs, in the morning and evening.

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This was before Radio Ceylon entered the Indian households.

Bauji's favorite singers of the time were K.L. Sehgal, Pankaj Mullick and Jag Mohan. His all-time favourite numbers, which I constantly heard him humming were Saigal's 'Babul Mora Naihar chhooto jai' (Street Singer) and 'Jab dil hi toot gaya' (Shahjehan) and of course Mullick's 'Piya Milan ko Jana' from the iconic film "Kapal Kundla". Eldest daughter Shila was crazy listening to the morning programme of Hindi songs. She had a

bhalla, chat pakodi, aloo ki tikki, cheela, missi roti etc. all made at home by Amma. Not particularly fond of meat, his favourite dish was mutter-paneer. Sweet dishes of kheer, halwa, sweetened kesar rice served to him had to have a sprinkling of raisin (kishmish), dried coconut flake, almond and pista. On a rainy day urad dal pakoda was a standard item served with his afternoon tea.

Though a strict disciplinarian, Bauji was a caring and affectionate father. He was particular about giving proper education to his children, espe-

Maya (Asha) was the first girl from the family to have joined for graduation studies at Indraprastha College. The remaining three girls all graduated from Delhi University. Two older sons went to Hindu College, K. B. to Hans Raj College and Bharat to St. Stephen's College. They did well not just academically, also representing College/University teams in hockey and basketball.

A caring father

All this came about because Bauji took charge of the children's growing up process, closely following

and affection he showered on us made us cling on to him.

On our respective birthday, apart from welcome gifts, special treats would be ordered from Bangla Sweet House, Gole Market to supplement Amma's specialties. We counted divine blessings about the way our parents indulged in. In the matter of clothing, he ensured that we wore smartly, for which the service of an accomplished tailor from Chandni Chowk was utilised.

Faith in children pays dividend

In the event, the children lived up to the father's expectations. VB became the first one in the family to be selected for the elite All India Service (IFS), SB joined State Bank of India, because of his talent in hockey (selected for the Rest of India team). KB joined the legal profession, Bharat opted for the private sector, settling eventually in the tourism sector.

In the 1970s Bauji was busy sorting out partnership issues with the families of his two brothers. This involved complex joint family properties and running of Imperial Cinema. Luckily these were resolved with the help of Vimal Chandra. Physical demarcation of the prestigious 53, Hanuman Road property, was mutually agreed upon. In effect joint family property



From left Vimal Chandra, Shanti, Kamlesh, VB, BL and SK Chander 13.5.1968



From left Vimal Chandra, K.L. Muir, B.L. S.L. Kanshi Ram and Khub Singh. 1968.



Immersion of Bauji's ashes & pind daan at Har ki paudi, Haridwar 16.12.1989



copy and pencil ready, kept next to the radio set, to quickly write down lyrics of her favourite songs coming live. Her favourite songs of that era were: Geeta Dutt-Mukesh duet: 'Khayalon mein kisike is tarah aya nahin karte' (Bawre Nain) and 'Afsana likh rahi hoon diley bekarar ka' sung by Uma Devi (Tun Tun) from "Dard", among others.

To inculcate fine cultural sense among his children Bauji was keen for us to take interest in music and singing. Despite inheriting genes from our mother's side, Nana and Mama, who were accomplished singers, none of us showed any inclination, preferring instead outdoor sports. One could discern his disappointment, at the lack of our application in fine arts.

An illustration of his loving care, dates back to our early childhood days. The toilet was some distance away, across the open courtyard from the bedroom, at our home. In the wintry nights, instead of exposing us to chilly conditions, he made alternative arrangement for us to relieve ourselves in makeshift pee-pots, without having to trudge the open space.

A connoisseur of gourmet food

Being a connoisseur of gourmet food, Bauji had a fondness for savoury specialties like kachori, dahi

cially the daughters. He tried putting them in the best schools. For his eldest son admission to St. Columba's School at Gol Dakhana was tried but could not succeed because of his lack of knowledge of English. He got him



Barsi havan for Bauji. 2008

admitted to Harcourt Butler School, semi-private with good reputation, next to Birla Mandir. That is where the next two sons studied. Only the youngest Bharat got admission to St. Columba's. All the 5 girls went to R.M. Arya Girls School with traditional Arya Samaj discipline system. His lament used to be:

'Daughters break their parents' hearts, as they leave paternal home to start their own family line. It was a matter of pride for him that daughter

their progress. He instilled in them the importance of knowledge and books for personality development. He was generous to offer to buy teaching aids and books, hinting that, if need be, he would sell his personal assets, to ensure that our requirements were met. He arranged for private tuition to supplement any deficiency.

Good handwriting was his passion, setting high standard with his



own impeccable writing style, using fountain pens. All of us were made to practice writing on wooden tablets (takhti) with multani mitti coating. Traditional wooden reed kalam (pen), finely cut nib, was done by him. He regularly checked our progress and when not satisfied, would chuck the exercise book away, demanding it be improved the next time. That was the only time we were scared to face him. Strict discipline for him was a must. At the same time the personal attention, love



Family function 1985. Amma seated with daughters and babus. Bauji standing with sons and grandkids.

matters can never be resolved amicably. Till today, amicably resolving the issue remains a challenging proposition.

Personal property purchase that went awry Far sighted person as he was, Bankey Lal bought a plot of land in Hauz Khas Enclave and built a two-storey house, with an annexe, in the late 1960s. It turned out to be a faultily demarcated plot from the vastu point of view, with a defective triangular formulation. Too late to do anything and so the place was rented out. His bad luck continued, when the tenant not only defaulted in payment of rent but left a hefty non-paid electricity bill. He could never recover from that trauma.

On my home posting to Delhi in 1974 I shifted, along with Bharat to Q 5 Hauz Khas Enclave. After marriage in 1975, K.B. moved to the top floor with half the portion on the ground floor for his office. SB stayed on at Hanuman Road after his marriage to Sujata on November 22, 1978. Even after shifting to Hauz Khas, Bauji ensured a supply of weekly ration of

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essential items regularly, without our having to ask for. As I was posted abroad, he would deposit certain amount of money to my bank account on monthly basis. This speaks of his quality of fair play.

The family was leading a happy peaceful existence in 1983, when I returned from London posting. After initially staying at Hauz Khas Enclave house, I shifted to Hanuman Road when SB decided to let somebody else take care of the parents. In October 1984, when Indian P.M. Indira Gandhi was assassinated, Delhi went through turbulent times with rioters targeting Sikh community. My wife and I felt privileged to be able to serve them during those challenging times.

Duty call made me move to Sydney as Consul General in mid-1986. Abandoning them was a painful parting. Times moved fast. On completion of the stint in Sydney in October 1989, I stopped over in Delhi on home leave for a few weeks, en route to my next posting. There was a crisis in India's relations with Fiji in the Pacific Ocean, after a military takeover and I was diverted there at short notice in late October 1989. I spent treasured moments with him for the last time. His worldly-wise common refrain that guided me was, 'never identify with the position and power with the chair one occupies. Sab kursi to salam karte hain. The moment you give up charge, nobody would care for you.' An excellent life's lesson for me.

An era comes to an end

As I was in the process of settling down in my new posting in Suva, I got an urgent message, that Bauji had suffered 2 heart attacks in quick succession. Rushing back to Delhi on December 9, 1989 I found his condition unstable. I stayed most of the next 4 days at the Hospital. On the morning of December 14, 1989 Bauji breathed his last. It was the end of an era.

The cremation formalities were conducted as per the Arya Samaj rites. The most poignant moment was when I lit the funeral pyre. At the age of 82 years, his mortal remains were consecrated to the agni devta. On such occasions all kinds of questions come to one's mind: why is one born to die eventually? What is the purpose of life? What was one before birth and what would be one after death? In Hindu philosophy various explanations are available, for which sustained deep study of the scriptures is required. It is only when one's near one departs that one starts dwelling on those issues.

For immersion of the ashes, we brothers made a day trip to Haridwar as per the custom. For the next 13 days prescribed rituals and practices were observed. The final terhavin, 13th Day ceremony involving havan was performed at Hanuman Road situated Arya Samaj Mandir. The pundit explained the meaning of the rituals, about the inevitability of death and afterlife, ending with prayers for eternal peace of the departed soul. The ceremony of Rasam Pagri was then performed.

100th barsi and pind daan at Hardwar and Hanuman Road If he were alive, Bauji would have turned

100 years of age in 2008. During the shradh period on October 6, 2008, we went to Har-ki-paudi, Hardwar. For the pind daan ceremony, the family priest(panda) assisted in invoking our forefathers. The ceremony involved round shaped 'pind' from a particular material, in a thali with pooja items with lighted lamps, flowers, incense (dhoop batti) for offering to our ancestors, going as far back as one can remember. Verses were recited on our behalf, showing indebtedness, seeking blessings for the forthcoming generations. We fed 21 poor and hungry persons. Clothes and woolen items were distributed to the poor.

On Bauji's 100th barsi, the same routine of havan and prayer sabha, was solemnised at Hanuman Road, followed by communal feast (bhog) in 2008. Let me conclude by noting that we got affection, love and tender moments when he was alive. But after his overarching protection was gone, we feel blessed that he shaped our lives, gave us values, and taught us how to face challenges in the manner he did. Bauji would always be the shining light to guide us. Om Shanti.

The old classic look.



B. "A Saint Among Bureaucrats: Anant Ram"

Each year the brigade of 'Swatantrata Sainani' (freedom fighters) who sacrificed for gaining independence for India in 1947, is dwindling in number, becoming part of the folk lore. A freedom fighter is defined as a person, who was engaged in a resistance movement, against an oppressive colonial power. An era came to an end with stalwart Anant Ram, making his transition to the next world, on January 4, 2014.

Anant Ram was a rare breed of human being, with sterling leadership qualities. He was the perfect role model and inspiration for generations to come. The legacy he left behind will be cherished for long. He was the guiding spirit, who gave direction and imparted knowledge to anybody who approached him. He lived life on certain cherished principles and disciplines.

Marg darshak and mentor

The great man's meteoric rise to the senior position as IAS officer, is the stuff of legends. In so many ways he changed my life. He was my philosopher and guide. The wealth of knowledge he had on a wide-ranging field mesmerized me. He was a walking-talking encyclopedia. By discipline, he was a science postgraduate but his knowledge of geography, history, politics, literature, music and languages

was exhaustive. He learnt to speak French and Bengali languages as hobby. It was he who inspired me to prepare for the All-India Civil Services

he recalled to me. The coarse grain became even cheaper. With such poor returns, fortunes of the farmers started dwindling. Some could not even meet



Allahabad University campus and Administrative Building

examination. He made me shift base from Delhi University, where I studied till my graduation, to Allahabad, his alma mater.

I recall his exhorting words: "For preparing for competitive exams, you should withdraw yourself from the activities happening around you. Live like a hermit, while doing

'tapasya'(deep meditation/austerity). Only

with single-minded attention, devotion and focus can one achieve, whatever one has set out to do". His advice was that I should surround myself with serious minded fellow students, who had similar goal, as mine. Even during spare time, I was asked to discuss academic issues and gain

by pooling reservoir of knowledge in the individual's respective filed of specialisation.

The life of this saintly soul makes a fascinating study. Let me delve into his personality traits and the words of wisdom that flowed from him.

Modest beginnings from the outback of UP

Anant Ram's agriculturist father Chiranji Lal (1896-1952), hailed from a small village Umrai, a few kms on the periphery of Etawah in U.P. 28 acres of land was inherited by his father, jointly with brother Hari Lal, a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) in the army. (Mother's name Ladeti Devi). He tilled the land with hired labourers, as his brother was away on active duty in World War I operations, as part of the British Indian troops in Europe. At the conclusion of the war, on his return home, the younger brother demanded and got his share of half of the land (14 acres). Anant Ram was born on 4th February 1921. For some technical reason on school register, the date of birth was recoded as May 20, 1920.

Chiranji Lal's fortune took a knock, when the Great Depression of 1930s hit the world economy hard. It went into a tailspin. In India it had catastrophic effect on landholdings, with the prices of agricultural produce plummeting. One could get the equivalent of 20 kg of wheat for just one Rupee,

the basic irrigation costs. Drought that followed broke the back of the farming community. With such low profit margins, his father was forced to sell land, little by little to make both ends meet. Funds for unforeseen expenditure on social obligations like marriage, birth/death in the family had to be set apart. Eventually he was left with barely 4 acres to till. Poverty was looming large on the horizon for the family.

In 1935, Anant Ram's chacha (Hari Lal) died, leaving behind his 22-year-old widow. The latter's parents were able to prevail over the elder brother to let her cohabit with him, even without legal sanction. This was bound to lead to tension in the triangular set up and complex relationship. His poor mother had to bear the major brunt and had difficulty in bringing up Anant Ram and sister Ram Pyari. His step brothers from the other mother were Ramesh Dayal, Raj Kumar and Kunwar Pal. Sadly, the mother died early, when Anant Ram was still in 8th Class at school. He had difficult growing up years but diverted his attention away from domestic tension, to academic pursuit.

Difficult growing up years, made up by academic brilliance

Anant Ram's school was located at a distance of 8 to 10 km. away, across a river. Every day he had to trudge the long distance on foot, in hot and adverse weather conditions. On many occasions at odd hours, when no boat was available, he would have to cross the river by swimming. Without any wrist watch, it would be difficult to keep track of the time. His guide used to be the position of stars in the open sky, at night time. He taught himself geography and astronomy to be able to work out the positioning of the pole star, from which he determined the approximate time. Then again, in the absence of electricity in his village, he had invariably to read under street lamps or candle light, at the night time.

To encourage meritorious students, top five in the merit list of the U.P. State Board examinations were given token scholarship by the state government. With hard work and dedication, Ram excelled in studies. The first merit scholarship he earned was,

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an amount of Rs 6 per month. More importantly he felt encouraged to work even harder in the higher classes. For High School, he got admission to Etawah Intermediate College. On account of illness near the examination

batch ready to take over, as replacement. As they neared the Senate building, becoming aggressive, the police resorted to firing. About 16 brave students may have been grievously hurt or fallen to the bullets.

Anant Ram was in the final

Anant Ram's life went through an unsettled period at independence of India in August 1947. He worked hard and was selected for the Provincial Civil Service (P.C.S.) in 1949-50.

Around that time, he lost his wife prematurely, leaving behind son

clothes and personal belongings. They failed to lay their hands on the golden ornaments, which were judiciously left behind at mother's home for safe keeping, to ward off precisely such kind of eventuality. Next morning the trunk was found abandoned not far



Newly wedded couple Shial and Anant Ram

time, he missed 1st Division by three percent marks. As a result, he was deprived of the monthly scholarship. He was not deterred and became self-dependent by giving private tuitions. In the second year he not only got First Division but topped in three subjects. This resulted in his scholarship being reinstated. He found Rs 10 just about adequate for his limited requirement, by hiring a small dwelling place, cooking his own food. In the U.P Board Merit list, he got 16th position with 93 % marks, getting distinction in Science, English and Hindi. That increased his scholarship amount to Rs 16. For graduation he could not get a merit scholarship but got Rs 20 stipend, as special case. Anant Ram was married off in 1935, while still at school. People in the neighbourhood, particularly those belonging to higher caste, became jealous of his brilliant academic record, and lodged a police complaint, that being underage, his marriage at 14 years was illegal. To overcome that technicality, his date of birth on school register was recorded a year earlier, 4th February 1920, as against his actual date of birth of 20th May 1921.

At Allahabad University he gets drawn in to India's independence movement

For graduation, Anant Ram moved to Allahabad University, where he joined Sir Sunder Lal Hostel. Those were troubled times, with the fight for independence at its peak. "Quit India" movement had been launched by Mahatma Gandhi, which led to civil unrest throughout the country in 1942. Youngsters rose in revolt to be in forefront, to lead the agitation.

Anant Ram, a young idealist, became active in the freedom movement. He started attending meetings of the Students Union, to consider the course of action to be taken, to put pressure on the colonial Government.

At one such meeting, a decision was taken by the student's body to go on a march to the Vice Chancellor's office, to replace the Union Jack on top of the Senate Building, with the Indian tricolour, which had been adopted by the Congress Party. The police had prior intimation of the brewing trouble. Security arrangements to handle the mob had been made. As the surging crowd neared the Senate Building, the police started lathi charge at them, arresting the front liners. But the students had divided themselves into many batches, with an alternative

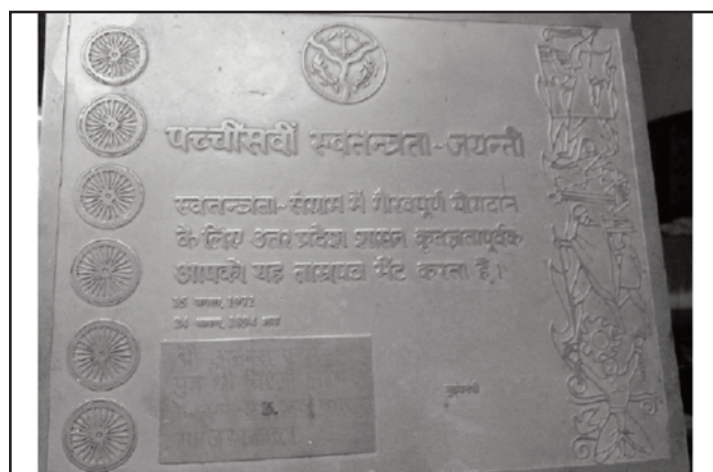
batch for replacing the flag. As he was on way to the top of the Senate building, to reach the flagpole, he sustained injury on the head. He fell on the ground, blood oozing, smearing his body/clothes. Fellow partisans rushed him to University Hospital. Indian doctors attending, hid him from the authorities. Meanwhile the University was closed down sine die because of the disturbances. As hostels were shut down, his luggage at Sir Sunder Lal Hostel room was thrown out in the corridor.

The brave young man had to move surreptitiously around midnight, to collect belongings from his neighbour and leave Allahabad to evade arrest. His destination was Mainpuri, to seek temporary shelter at his sister's home there. The deep wounds from the firing needed urgent treatment, for which the hospital in Mainpuri was hardly equipped. The personal care of the doctors, impressed with his daring act of bravery, made up for the inadequate facilities. After things normalized, he returned to the University, to complete his post-graduate degree in Science (Physics), which he did with distinction.

National recognition through Tamra Patra award

The sacrifice made by the student leader in the fight for independence, was acknowledged by honouring him with 'Tamra Patra' in 1972, as 'freedom fighter'.

English translation of the citation reads:



Tamra Patra awarded to Anant Ram as a freedom fighter

TAMRA PATRA

"25th Independence Anniversary For bravely contributing to the freedom struggle Uttar Pradesh Administration gratefully confers this Tamra Patra to you (Anant Ram)."



Happy couple at anniversary

Ravi (born 1948). He rose to be Bank Manager in Punjab National Bank, prematurely succumbing to cancer in 2002.

Marriage to an ideal life partner- Shila

In Shila Rani (born 16. 8. 1930), the charming and pretty daughter of the well-established Delhi family of Bankey Lal, he found the perfect girl for a wife. She had a traditional education at Arya Samaj run girls' school. It is there that she imbibed Indian social, cultural and Vedic traditions, during growing up years. She took keen interest in musical instruments and singing. From her mother, she inherited rhythm and melody. She used to sing her favourite film songs of the day, "Khayalon mein kisi ke iss tarah aya nahi kartay" and "Afsana likh rahi hoon" with delight.

Shila was groomed by her mother in social etiquette and what it takes to run a household properly. She took keen interest and became adept at knitting, crochet, and stitching clothes, which is what girls of the era were expected to do. A gourmet cook, the culinary skills were acquired from her mother. As a responsible eldest sister, Shila took charge of looking after her younger siblings. She would feed and dress them up for school, keeping their wardrobe in order, ironing their clothes. Shila's marriage to Anant Ram, was solemnised on May 12, 1952.

After marriage, Anant Ram was posted as Sub Division Magistrate, District Muzaffarnagar. As per the practice, at 'bidai', I accompanied the sister for a few days, to settle her in at the new milieu. I remember an incident during the stay at the official Dak Bungalow with them. The area was dacoit infested. On the second night I was woken up around midnight, by shouts of "Chor, Chor". Some dacoits had broken into one of the rooms and carried away a trunk, containing the new bride's



Wild life scene at Bahraich

away, in the open field, with clothes strewn round.

Passion for cars and hunting

Anant Ram was fascinated with automobile cars and bought Hillman 1948 model. It was his constant companion for well over 25 years. He self-taught all about automobile engineering. Even when it started giving trouble after 1978, and with spare parts not locally available, he refused to part with it. For years it was parked in his porch because of this emotional attachment. He was waiting for it to qualify for vintage car status. Its running cost made it a white elephant. Finally, he was prevailed upon to sell it in 2004 for a paltry sum. It broke his heart, when it was taken away, out of his sight.

In the 1950s Anant Ram was posted for varying period of time at Muzaffarnagar, Kanpur, Unnao, Sitapur and Bahraich. It was during his posting to Nanpara, District Bahraich that his passion for hunting grew. The surrounding areas were rich in natural wild life. Back in those days, there was no restriction on hunting big game. So, he started his exploits shooting partridges, deer and wild boar, graduating to big game hunting, involving tigers and leopards.

On one of his outings, he came face to face with a tiger and shot it. The prize catch was professionally skinned, paws with sharp claws in place and the stuffed head with open jaws and fearsome canine teeth. Instead of displaying it as a trophy in his colonial type bungalow, he decided to gift it to his father-in-law. It found a pride of place in the sitting room at our upmarket residence at Hanuman Road in Lutyen's zone, for decades, winning admiration.

Incident that changed his attitude to hunting

Then came an incident that was about to change the course of Anant Ram's passion for hunting. One evening he went for deer hunting. Sure, enough he encountered a herd of deer crossing the path. With rifle in hand, he got out of his jeep to take a pot shot. Being quick legged creature, it was not easy to keep pace but he succeeded in hitting the target. The

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poor creature fell on the spot. As Ram neared the spot, he found a laggard baby deer, helplessly watching his mother dead at the spot, scared with visible tears in eyes. The vulnerability

year of assuming charge, Regional Development Commissioner, Faizabad (1976-78).

As indicated earlier, his date of birth in school was recorded, 11 months before his actual birth. To rec-

along with some drama bazi to amuse us on such occasions. His passion in life was gardening. He devoted time tending to a well-crafted nursery, wherever he lived. Apart from a lush green lawn, varieties of plants, colour-

the end, he kept sending money every month for their needs. He got both her daughters married off, bearing the entire expenditure.

For the 60th wedding anniversary



60th wedding anniversary of Anant Ram & Shila. 2012



Anant Ram family celebrating his 90th birthday



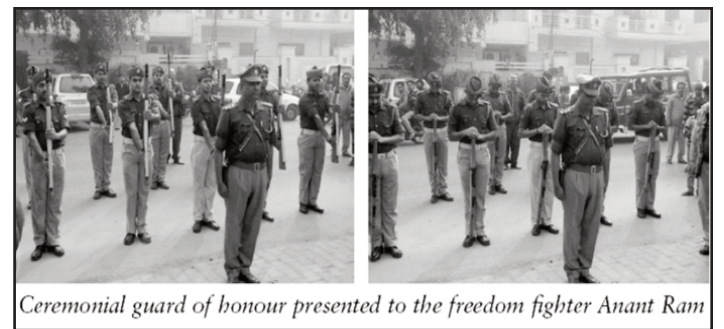
Ranchi media reporting the passing away of a great man. 15.1.2024



Anant Ram family with VBS's 1980



Barsei havan for Bauji. 2008



Ceremonial guard of honour presented to the freedom fighter Anant Ram

of the surviving helpless offspring shattered and traumatized him. Instantly he became a transformed man and gave up hunting for good, turning vegetarian for life.

Career path makes steady progress

In late 1960s Ram was posted to Lucknow, in charge of land reforms and issues like consolidation of holding, to improve upon the size of small holdings, scattered in different areas, to make them viable entities. As Additional District Magistrate, Aligarh Rural (1970-74) and then Meerut (1974-75) he handled development issues in the depressed areas. In the year 1974, keeping in view meritorious service record, he was admitted to all India Administrative Service (IAS), with the seniority of 1974 batch.

Anant Ram's stint as District Magistrate at Ghazipur (1975- 76) was full of action and drama. Those were difficult times in the country, with imposition of Emergency, during which civil liberties, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, were suspended. Anybody opposing the regime or critical of it, was indiscriminately put in jail, without following the due process of law. As D.M., he received, from the state capital Lucknow, a list of people in the area, to be rounded up for alleged antinational activities. Ram was a fair person with an independent mind. He made enquiries and found that some of the names in the list, were being victimized for their political beliefs. He delayed action on such names. For not carrying out instructions, he was transferred to another less glamorous post, in less than a

tify that error, he filed a review petition, for making the necessary correction, in order that his retirement did not come about, before the actual date. Bureaucratic procedures are time consuming and impersonal. Unfortunately, the issue could not be decided in time. The only consideration he got was a three-month extension. He eventually superannuated on May 31, 1978 after a distinguished career span of 28 years.

Anant Ram and Shila made a happy couple, devoted to each other. As per the need of a disciplined simple man, the wife ensured he got what he needed at the right time and occasion. To pursue her hobby of playing sitar, it was not always possible for Shila to get a tabla player for practice session at many places of posting, in remote areas. On such occasions, the husband would gallantly come forward to perform the role of a tabla accompanist. Their devotion to each other was something to be admired.

Portrait of an ideal personality

Anant Ram was a bright and competent officer, strict disciplinarian with exemplary leadership qualities. He identified himself whole heartedly with the cause of the poor, deprived and the underprivileged sections of the society, particularly the farming community. He was a simple, uncomplicated and straight forward person. His honesty and integrity were legendary. He followed the dictum: simple living and high thinking. His tastes were academic and high class. he never imbibed liquor, nor smoked. His hobbies included learning languages. By his bedside one would find books on French language and Bengali literature. He was well versed in Sanskrit. He took keen interest in chess and cricket. Contract Bridge game fascinated him.

His only indulgence in card games was during the Diwali season, when he would agree to play low stake card game of 'flush'(teen patti), only with the family members. He played

ful seasonal flowers kept his nursery blooming and lively, all the year round.

Anant Ram's honesty and incorruptibility was stuff of legend. He would never accept gifts from any quarter. At marriage it is customary to offer gifts. He anticipated that some interested circles from the station of his posting would try to reach out to his wife directly, with gifts in advance. Instructions were sent to his prospective wife not to accept such unsolicited consideration. He was an exercise freak till his last days. He used to alternate, between morning walks for about 5 km one day, and an hourlong physical exercise, combined with yoga on the succeeding day. It was the routine he would never miss. He insisted on eating simple home cooked desi preparation, forsaking spicy restaurant food. Instead of the comfort of an air-conditioned room, he would prefer to sleep out in the open courtyard. Even in winters he would keep windows open in the bed room for fresh air.

A caring family man

As caring and a loving father, he gave the best education to his children. They were all sent to his alma mater Allahabad University. Elder son Narendra became a banker and joined Allahabad Bank. The next son Rajeev made him proud by being selected for All India Police Service (I.P.S.). He rose to the highest position possible in his allotted state cadre of Jharkhand, as Director General of Police of the state, for more than 2 years. It was during this challenging posting that he earned kudos for tackling the sensitive issue of Maoist's terrorism rampant in the state, with his deft handling. His caring and affectionate daughter Rekha was married off to Om Prakash, who handled important jobs in the Central Secretariat before retiring in the rank of Joint Secretary.

Anant Ram looked after his sister, who had been widowed at a young age, with her two daughters. Till

sary of Anant Ram and Shila on May 12, 2012, a grand Reception was organized, much to their surprise, by the son Rajeev. The popular man's many admirers spoke in glowing terms about the great personality on the occasion. Similarly, his 90th birthday was also celebrated with gusto and style on a lavish scale. A video presentation commissioned by son Rajeev, graphically highlighting various landmark events in his professional and personal life, was screened on the occasion.

The passing away of the gentle soul

In late December 2013, son Rajeev Kumar invited the parents to spend some time in Ranchi, where he was Director General, Police. Anant Ram enjoyed the luxurious green ambience of the colonial style bungalow, well maintained garden and plants, flowers with manicured lawns.

On January 3, 2014 Anant Ram complained of some discomfort. A Doctor was summoned but by the time he arrived Ram was already feeling better. In the process, it was the Doctor who got tips on health issues from the knowledgeable patient. The night passed away peacefully. Next morning January 4, 2014 son Rajeev came for his usual cup of tea with the parents around 6 a.m. He chatted briefly, before moving on for his morning exercise on the lawn outside. A guard was kept on standby duty with the father to offer help, if needed.

After reading the newspapers, Ram went to the washroom around 7.30 a.m. by himself. When he emerged from there after 10 odd minutes, he found difficulty in walking. The attendant immediately brought a wheel chair, took him to the bed and lay him down there. All this while, wife Shila was watching news on TV. Within minutes he went motionless and silent. He was gone just like that! He would not react to any stimulation attempt. Rajeev summoned the Doctor but it was too late. Apparently, he had (Contd. on next page)

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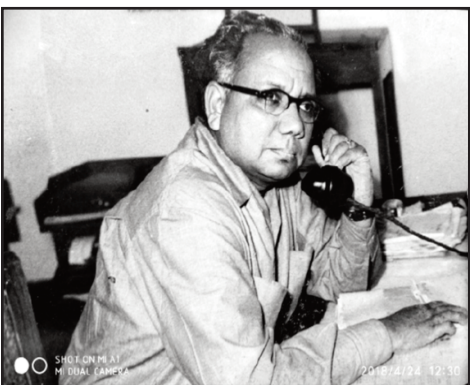
passed away peacefully in the shortest period of time, with no discomfort. The body was immediately embalmed and brought back by the afternoon's flight to his residence in Ghaziabad and kept there overnight.

The next morning, 5th January 2014, a ceremonial guard of honour was presented, befitting a national hero, the brave 'Swatantrata Sainani', with firing of the rifles in the air by the armed guard of the Police. As per tradition, the cortege carrying the body was pulled as mark of respect for the last journey for funeral rites, by the security force.

With Anant Ram's passing away another freedom fighter became part of history. His memory will forever be etched in the memory of his admirers. The country owes him a debt.



C. Gentleman Bureaucrat:
Vimal Chandra



Some 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. He whole heartedly 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 many 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, clearly remembering even minor detail. What follows was a fascinating account 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 law course, while being employed as Clerk/translator at Lahore High Court. 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. The eldest son Mohan Lal, 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 law degree first. So, the matter was not pursued.

After graduation in 1936, Chandra qualified as lower division clerk in Government of India but could not join, on account of lack of proficiency in typing. That proved to be a blessing in disguise, giving him time to prepare for 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, 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 congenital disease. Alerted by this disclosure, its veracity was checked out. 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, leading to much tension. Mercifully that did not happen and a catastrophe was averted.

Fortuitous circumstances put Vimal Chandra at the right place 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.



Shanti & Vimal Chandra 1980s

Preparations got under way in the right earnest. Just a day before the date, unexpected complications developed. Without the knowledge of Vimal Chandra, a close relative of his, approached the bride's side exploring possibility of



From left Khub Singh, Darshan, Shashi Nafri, Renu, Santsoh, Bishan Lal 6.2.1966

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.

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, was going on as per schedule. Much to everyone's relief, no let-up in the proceedings was reported. In the event, the bridegroom's party did arrive at the fixed time. The marriage was solemnized, 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. She blended well within the family. Facing a challenging domestic situation, she proved to be more than a match, because of her affable personality, warm and affectionate 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 that of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar. In 1936, the latter had visited Punjab for discussion with Sikh leaders, to examine the option Scheduled Caste community could consider, to escape from the tyranny 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 good 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 job involved scrutinising incoming Dak, dispatch of classified telegrams to higher ups, overlooking smooth and efficient movement, which 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

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positions. He was aware of the standard excuse that there were not many 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

virtually from the inception. Having carved a niche for himself on the subject, he rose 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 quar-

married Surinder, who rose to a high position in Reserve Bank of India.

An incident worth mentioning about the motherly instinct of Shanti, pertains to her nephew. In 1954 his bhabhi Kishan Devi, after delivery of the youngest son Bharat, underwent a medical emergency. She had to be operated upon. At that juncture, Shanti

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



Shanti at daughter Manjula's wedding function. December 1979



Chandras at Kamlesh, V.B. wedding 13.5.1968



At VBS wedding from left V. Chandra, K.L. Muir, BLS, Inder, Sohan Lal, Kanshi Rm, & Khub Singh. 13.5.1068

from the community, to personally mentor and guide them, for 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. 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.

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 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 helping hand.

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 to that post. 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

ter at 54, Foch Square, Gole Market, he moved in March 1956, to the sprawling green Lutyen's Zone Bungalow at 56, Ashoka Road, behind Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, where he stayed on till his retirement from 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 migration in human history, uprooting mass of humanity, 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 the people were given shelters in temporary camps. Vimal Chandra's sisters, along with their families were accommodated in cramped condition at his government accommodation at Foch Square. For months the residence was teeming with scores of occupants. There was uninterrupted 'langar' (kitchen) in operation, at all hours of the day. Food used to be cooked in bulk, 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 personal discomfort: ample proof of their large heartedness and generosity.

Shanti proved to be an anchor and a rock-solid support system for Vimal Chandra, who fully depended 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, "Yeh zindagi usi ki hai jo kiska ho gaya" from the blockbuster film 'Anarkali'. Eldest son Vinod joined Government service, while the second one, Ashok migrated to Canada after finishing his college. Third son Deepak got his engineering degree and after working for a public sector undertaking for few years, he too shifted to Canada. Chandra's eldest daughter Shashi married Darshan Nafri, retired as I.A.S. officer, while the younger Manjula

came forward to take care of the baby, nursing him like her own offspring. With her maternal affection and care, the child did not miss the mother.

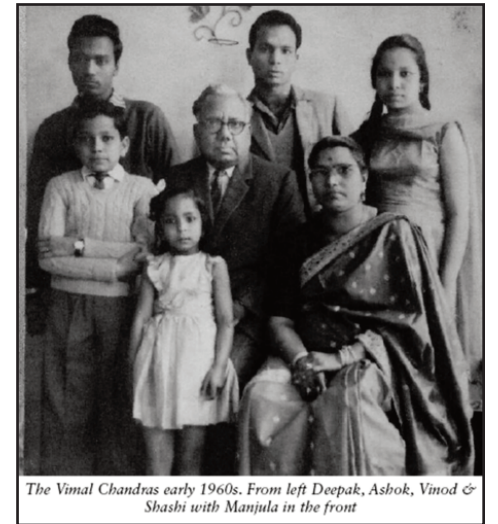
November 1984 would be the saddest month in Vimal Chandra's life. The country was reeling, after the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31 1984 and the resultant mayhem. One evening Shanti had gone on some errand on foot, near the bustling market place of Hauz Khas, where they had built their home. While trying to cross a busy street, she was knocked down by a speeding vehicle. She suffered multiple fractures on the torso. The body from hip downwards had to be cast in plaster, much to her discomfort. 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. On November 10, 1984 Shanti passed away, leaving her husband desolate and lonely, after nearly 45 years of blissfully wedded life.

Vimal Chandra continued to serve the society in various capacities, even after retirement. 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 the 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 present could not hide 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

been brought before a court law for arbitration, it would have dragged on for a prolonged period of time, entailing a



The Vimal Chandras early 1960s. From left Deepak, Ashok, Vinod & Shashi with Manjula in the front

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 Annexe 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 it 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 case also, they came up with proposal for Kamlesh, the daughter of Ishwar Das Pawar. That's how the two of us got married on May 13, 1968.

Vimal Chandra was a perfect
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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 gathering around him to listen to stories and anecdotes. He showed patience and gave them time. He would fit in any generation or age group and be connected with them. He would ask 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. Closing eyes, he would come up with a verse that rhymed perfectly.

To ward off the scorching sun, overhead sola hat, which was a 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.

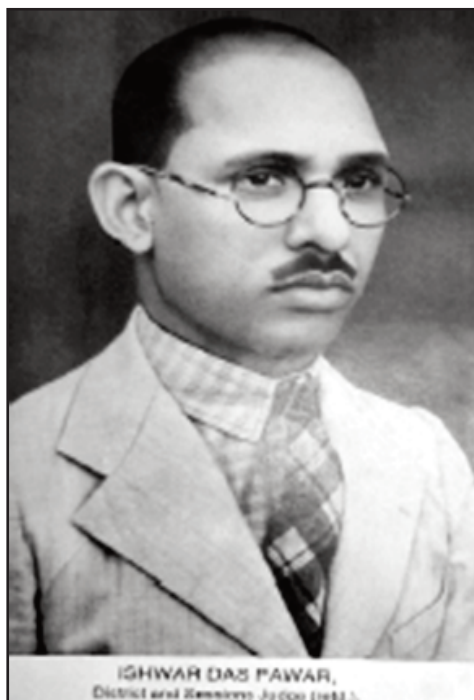
Vimal Chandra was a cultured man with fine taste. He was a straight forward person with simple habits. He dressed elegantly, a trait he no doubt learnt from Dr. Ambedkar. His use of Brylcream gel to keep hair in place, was his trademark style. He was often troubled by a blocked nose. His constant companion to counter that problem used to be Vicks nasal inhaler. His hobbies included solving cross word puzzles. Chandra enjoyed watching movies and saw 'Anarkali' many times. He attended International Film Festivals regularly. His favourite TV show was "The Bold and The Beautiful". No one could disturb him during its screening.

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 favourite item. 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.

D. Legal Luminary & Champion of Social Justice:

Ishwar Das Pawar

Chaudhry Ishwar Das Pawar is one of the tallest leaders, who rose from modest beginning, as son of the



ISHWAR DAS PAWAR,
District and Sessions Judge (left)

soil, in pre-partition Punjab rural setting, to high position in the legal fraternity and establishment. He was the first graduate in the province from the community. His autobiography entitled "My Struggle in Life", graphically captures the challenges he faced during his growing up years. Despite adversity, he became an achiever, no mean task against the deep-rooted prejudices prevalent in the divisive Hindu mindset.

India's caste system is among the world's oldest forms of surviving social stratification. A system of hierarchy was put in place early on, to maintain the individual's ranking, advantage and privileged elevated position, within its grouping. Instead of keeping it flexible, based on one's capabilities, intelligence and caliber, it was made hereditary. One who is born in the lowest rung in the pecking order is condemned to remain in that lowly place forever. It is justified on the irrational ground of past 'karma' (action).

Over millennia, it degenerated in to a moribund system, emboldened by 'Manusmriti', which sought to codify the Hindu law. It contains set of obligations incumbent on each, as member of one of the four social classes. It deals with the definition of the dharma: the sacraments (samskaras); initiation, the study of the Vedas, marriage, hospitality, funeral rites, dietary restrictions, pollution, and means of purification, the conduct of woman and wife, and law of the ruling class.

It was in such a social milieu that Ishwar Das was born, seventh in line of 9 siblings, to Rala Ram and Kirpo on May 9, 1908, in village Sanehra in UNA District. After reorganisation of Punjab, it was taken out of Hoshiarpur, and became part of Kangra District in 1972, of the newly created state of Himachal Pradesh. It is famous for a historical fort(kila), ancestral home of a descendant of Guru Nanak. Father Rala Ram was a small-

time farmer, trying to eke out a living with great difficulty. Not formally literate, he was a man of vision. Early on, he realised the importance of imparting education to his children. His attempt in the case of the elder son proved abortive. Brahmin establishment running the local school, would not grant admission, on ground of caste. He moved out of his in-laws' place to be on his own, to another area.

In the new surroundings, Rala Ram met a Christian preacher, who offered to arrange admission for his son to a missionary school in Ropar. Ishwar Das turned out to be the beneficiary. The closure of that school shortly thereafter, resulted in his move to Ludhiana to continue with his studies. His exposure to the English medium education opened up new avenues. His mental horizons were widened by learning things in an open system. He excelled in his studies but had to move

closer to home for various reasons. D.A.V. school in Una came to his rescue. Arya Semaj founder Swami Daya Nand's vision brooked no caste distinction. Ishwar Das got admission there. There were challenges when the rival Hindu organisations set fire to the thatched class rooms at DAV school, to teach a lesson for admitting a low caste student. In matriculation examination Ishwar Das ranked 5th in the merit list, earning him a monthly scholarship for 2 years.

He had to walk long distance to the school and back. In summer months one needed potable water to quench thirst and freshen, during the journey. The attendant at the only water piao-kiosk on way to the school, knew the caste background of the boy. He would offer him water from an ugly looking, rusty, pouring handle. When he asked to be served through the other two alternatives in sight, the response was that the brass one was reserved for the Hindus and the aluminum one for the Muslims. Take it or leave it. He would get a chance to drink water in his preferred option, only when the attendant was temporarily not on his seat. He experienced similar humiliations on other occasions too, enraging him immensely.

For his graduation, Ishwar Das joined D.A.V. College, Lahore in 1927. That meant staying at a hostel. Here the problem he encountered at the College mess was at the hands of the cooks. Those belonging to higher caste, refused to serve food to a lower caste student, far less scrub his plate. School management took a stand, in conformity with its stated objective of a reformist movement. All boarders

had to be treated equally in the matter of serving food, including Ishwar Das. The cooks decided to defy, by abandoning the kitchen mess. Management engaged a private party to run the mess on a contract basis, a solution that worked. In due course, the original team of cooks realised their folly and returned duly chastened, agreeing to treat the low caste on par with the others.

While at Lahore College, Ishwar Das was witness to some historical happenings. In October 1928, Simon Commission was visiting Lahore to gauge the popular feeling among the population, before coming up with Constitutional reform provision. A public demonstration against it, was led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya. Their slogan: 'Simon Commission. Go Back'. The Police, while resisting their movement forward, resorted to lathi charge, during which Lajpat Rai suffered grievous blows on his chest. He famously warned: "Every lathi blow hurled at me is a nail in the coffin of the British Empire". Shortly thereafter he succumbed to injuries.

Early struggles and tryst with Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh

The resultant public outrage gave an opportunity to a young hot-headed group, led by Bhagat Singh, fired by zeal to build an India, where 'poverty, socio-economic disparity and exploitation would not exist', and it swung into action. It targeted the Police Chief, who had ordered the lathi charge, but ended up shooting the wrong officer. This happened outside the Police Station, situated opposite D.A.V. College. After the daring act, the freedom fighters escaped through the back door of the adjoining Hostel. All the boarders, including Ishwar Das, who witnessed the escape bid, were subjected to search and questioning, though nothing incriminating was found. By that daring act, Bhagat



Ishwar Das Pawar



Pawars with 2 sons.1943

Singh and his partners, emerged as national heroes and household names overnight.

For some time, they were on (Contd. on next page)

Profile of icons, my role models

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the run, escaping arrest. The next plan of daredevilry involved, Bhagat Singh lobbing a crude bomb, with an accomplice, in Central Assembly Hall in session in New Delhi on 8th April 1929, from the visitors' gallery. They shouted: 'Inquilab Zindabad. Down with the British Imperialism'. It was not aimed at causing physical harm to anybody. Some pamphlets were thrown, underlining attention to their cause, drawing inspiration from a French revolutionary who had declared: 'It needs a loud noise to enable the deaf to hear'. Having made their

He warned that they must not accept being relegated to lowly status and put up a spirited fight in unison. The moment their voice was raised, their demand was bound to get due attention.

Joining Judicial Service (P.C.S)

After graduation in 1931, Ishwar Das joined as a translator/Clerk at the High Court. Simultaneously he attended evening classes for his law degree, in which he stood first. He then worked hard and was selected for P.C.S. in 1938. During his first posting that year as Sub-Judge, he got married to Lakshmi, who

and possessions. Young girls and women were dishonoured and raped in the most despicable manner. Overnight they became rootless refugees.

The daunting task before the Government was to rehabilitate them, after making temporary arrangements in refugee camps, where ever possible. They were allotted lands, houses, shops and factories, compensating them in trade, professions and services through grants and loans. The beneficiaries excluded were invariably, the poor, deprived lower caste multitudes, which comprised of the tenants, landless labourers and the small farm agri-

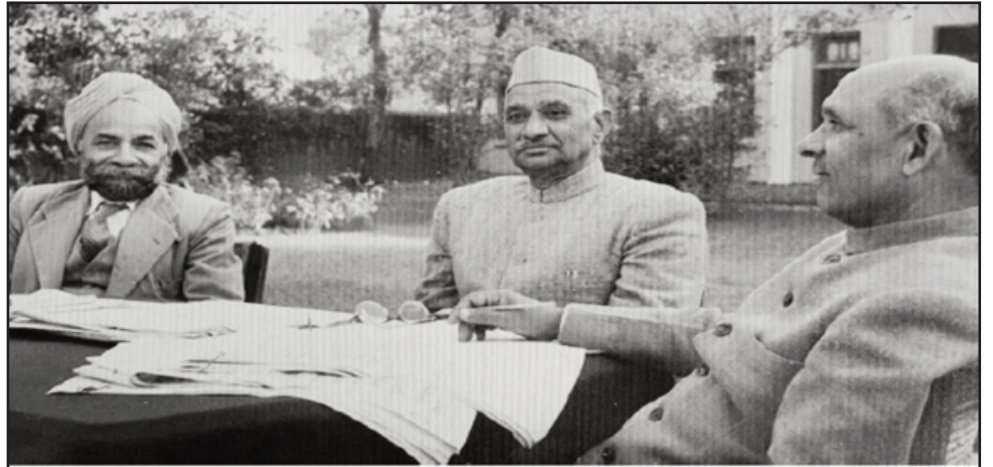
shifted to Pathankot, Sonapat and Delhi in quick succession. In October 1952, there was an interesting twist in his career, when he got posting as Under Secretary in the Departments of Partition, Trade/Industry and Passport Affairs, based in Shimla. On behalf of Punjab State Government, he revisited Lahore, to sort out outstanding issues with Pakistani counterparts. But it was in the passport portfolio that he did some innovative work, that impacted the future of the common person.

Streamlining procedure for issue of passport

In the early 1950s, the overall



Sonapat. Ishwar Das seated fourth from right with Naresh, Ramesh & Kamlesh. To his left Hira and Suresh. 1952-53



Services Selection Board. Chairman Rao Bhim Singh, (middle), Ishwar Das, on right Dr. Atma Singh left. (1953-61)

point, there was no attempt to escape, surrendering without resistance. On being apprehended, they were put on trial, which came to be known as 'Lahore Conspiracy Case'. It became a cause célèbres', creating sensation, extensively covered by the media. People would line up outside Central Jail, Lahore to have a glimpse of the charismatic hero, who had become a symbol of national aspirations. Ishwar Das was among the few to have been allowed to witness trial in the court room. In his autobiography he describes Bhagat Singh as 'a clean-shaven young man, with well-trimmed moustache, wearing khadi clothes, donning a headgear. With his comrades he would sing 'Sarfoshi ki tamanna'.

The trial dragged on for long. To speed things up, the authorities bunched the above two unrelated incidents together, in which Bhagat Singh was the common link. They prepared a fake dossier, ignoring well established procedures, managing to procure a guilty verdict, throwing sense of natural justice, out of the window. Ishwar Das was heartbroken when the trio led by Bhagat Singh, was taken to the gallows and hanged on 23.3.1931, not very far from his hostel.

Around that time, Baba Sahib Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar was emerging on the national scene, to propagate the cause of the deprived community. He visited Lahore and Amritsar for a dialogue with the Sikh Gurus, for a proper understanding of the basic tenets of their religion. Ishwar Das's close friend Vimal Chandra, fondly recalled that visit, and mentioned the deep impression Ambedkar made on young students there. Pawar underlined, that as an emancipator of the deprived and abused section of the society, Baba Saheb's timely message was to step out of ignorance level, urging on importance of education.

turned out to be an ideal lifelong partner. They brought up five children. Eldest son Ramesh was born in Lahore on 26.2.1939.

As Sub Judge he served for eight years, starting from Multan (1940-42), where second son Suresh was born in 1941. Other postings followed in Alipur, District Muzaffargarh (1942-44), where daughter Kamlesh was added to the family, and then Taran Taran (1944-47) where Naresh was born (1945) and finally Batala, District Gurdaspur (1947-49), where daughter Hira completed the tally.

Trauma of partition and rehabilitation of the refugees Batala posting turned out to be traumatic, in the backdrop of partition of the country at Independence. His wife was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. There was ambiguity about Gurdaspur District becoming part of the newly created Pakistan. On August 15-17 1947 communal tension was pervading in Batala, threatening to blow up into major violence. Ishwar Das hurriedly prepared to move out to the safety of a neighbouring district. By the time Police authorities could make arrangements for the movement, came the welcome announcement from Lahore Radio on August 17 that, surrounding areas of Batala and Pathankot would remain with India, while the rest of Gurdaspur surrounding portion, consisting mainly of Shakargarh tehsil would merge with Pakistan.

Partition of the country brought suffering, grief and sorrow of monumental proportion, inflicted on victims of the carnage, savagery and butchery on either side of the border, especially among innocent children and women. Youngest daughter Hira was born under such circumstances on 18.8.1947 in Batala. Millions had to leave behind their wealth, assets, flourishing business, sprawling properties

culturists. At best they were offered barren abandoned rocky unproductive land in rural areas, which nobody wanted. The stated policy of the Government was to allot evacuee land only to those refugees, who were owners of or occupancy tenants in West Pakistan, in exact proportion to their holding there. Requests of those who could not prove ownership, had their claims dismissed out of hand. This was a huge blow to the aspirations of the exploited community, who deserved equitable share. A deliberate effort was on to deny the Harijans, refugee independent status, as that would shatter village economy, in which they played a role, but only as landless labourers.

Ishwar Das was disappointed, that a golden opportunity was lost. Justice was continued to be denied to them. The Congress Government in Punjab and in New Delhi, notwithstanding their pledge to abolish zamindari and landlordism, promising to give land to the tillers, took no precipitate step to rehabilitate the under privileged. Their status remained unchanged, never finding a place of honour in the society.

Throughout his entire career Ishwar Das enjoyed the reputation of a competent, fair and upright judge, who could not be influenced by extraneous factors or circumstances. His honesty and integrity were unquestionable. Hospitality offers from interested quarters were invariably but politely turned down.

It is noteworthy that he wrote his own judgements, showing depth of knowledge and experience in juridical matters. His judgements were found to be invariably balanced and well thought out, drawing appreciation and commendation from the knowledgeable legal fraternity.

During the post-independence turmoil Ishwar Das (1947-52) was

responsibility of issuing passports to Indians, vested with Government of India in New Delhi but the actual processing and issuing of the document within the state, was delegated to Home Department of Punjab. Policy directives were to come from Delhi. Specific contentious and doubtful cases had to get Delhi's prior clearance.

During those years there was no visa requirement for Indians' entry to the U.K., provided they had valid legal travel document. Suddenly there was a rush from Punjab to make a bee line to the land of opportunity. The challenge was to obtain a passport. That is where the irrepressible bureaucracy made life difficult even for genuine visitors. Apart from the requirement of getting CID's clearance from security angle, an applicant had to have a princely sum of Rs.10, 000 in personal bank account as guarantee.

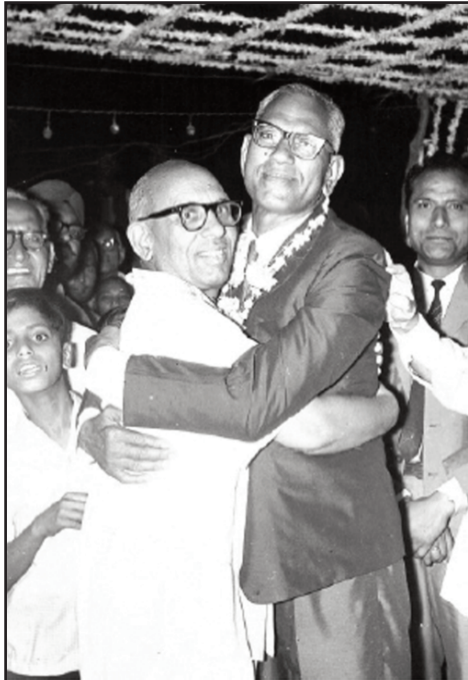
Ishwar Das soon found out that the rich landowners faced comparatively less problem in obtaining a passport because of their wealth and contacts, using influence through money power. It was the poor lower caste persons, who never got a fair chance and were denied the document on flimsy grounds. A few test cases were brought to his notice. He reversed the Department's wrong decision in a specific case, keeping Central Government informed, for which he won appreciation. His next target was to streamline and simplify bureaucratic procedure, while processing applications. He put up a wellargued office note, analysing the issues dispassionately and giving concrete suggestions for simplifying them. As per the note, special consideration had to be shown to the deprived community, bringing down bank guarantee amount substantially in their case. These were accepted and immediately implemented.

(Contd. on next page)

Profile of icons, my role models

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With the easy availability of passports, thousands of people from the community, migrated to the U.K., U.S. and Canada, in the first wave in early 1950s. During my posting to Indian High Commission in London (1980-83), when the Southall community got to know about my wife Kamlesh, being Pawar's daughter, I was treated as



The samdhis milan Bankey Lal & Ishwar Das

their own son-in-law, and showered with love, affection and hospitality in ample measure. Chaudhry Ishwar Das Pawar is still remembered and venerated as a highly respected figure.

The tenure at Shimla lasted just about a year but before moving out, he made another pioneering contribution, even though it was not within his sphere of responsibility. He planted an idea in the mind of important Punjab cabinet Ministers, with whom he was close, to create a separate Department to look after the deprived sections. He drafted a proposal for creation of "Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes Department". He felt pleased when the proposal was accepted and implemented. This went a long way to address the issues, so vital for the advancement of their cause.

Sterling contribution to Subordinate Services Selection Board

After independence, the newly established entity of Punjab had to put in place institutions to run its affairs in a systematic, organised manner, as per the law. Recruitment of personnel for the running the state, as per the prescribed guidelines, in a fair and just

manner, had to be ensured, based on merit and qualification. A Subordinate Services Selection Board was set up, to which Ishwar Das was appointed as a member, along with its Chairman Rao Bhim Singh, a retired Senior Police Officer, and Dr. Atma Singh, a medical practitioner. He took over his responsibilities in September 1953.

The Board encountered initial difficulties, hostile reaction from the Government departments, who hitherto had the freedom to choose candidates, as per their whims and fancies, not being answerable to any outside authority. That responsibility now rested with the Board, who set up recruitment rules and procedures, in an objective manner. In due course inimical forces had to come around, when they saw an impartial procedure set into practice by the Board, had the backing of the Government.

The Board earned good name by acting as a well-knit cohesive team, working for the best interest of the state. Around that time the policy of reservation for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in Government jobs had been introduced. Implementation of that provision posed a dilemma for Ishwar Das, whose moral responsibility it was to ensure that their posts did not go unfilled. The ground situation was that Scheduled Caste (S.C.) candidates were not forthcoming in sufficient numbers. Most of them were not even aware of the opportunity available and could not apply in time. Even those eligible and qualified, were found to be lacking in personality and appearance in interview, as a majority of them came from the rural background.

The immediate challenge was how to argue with other Board members, to overlook poor marks obtained by the reserved category candidates in qualifying examinations, as against general candidates. With his brilliant legal background, Ishwar Das argued that "... all those who possessed minimum qualifications prescribed for the post were eligible for appointment, that the test was held only for the purpose of elimination, which meant culling the unnecessary element and bringing down the number of candidates to reasonable proportions. If the same rule was applied to S.C. candidates, it would evidently mean their elimination altogether, while in the case of others this rule did not adversely affect them, as they were not only in large but unduly disproportionate numbers". The other members gave him a patient hearing, agreeing to try out to see how the proposal would

be put into practice.

Back to his parent Law department, Pawar served as Additional and Officiating District and Sessions Judge at Ambala (1961- 65). His last posting as District and Sessions Judge, before retirement in May 1966 was at Sangrur.

Post retirement appointments

With such a distinguished career, knowledge and wide varied experience behind him, Punjab Government made full use of it by appointing him as Presiding Officer, Industrial Labour Tribunal (1966-68), Member Planning Board (1968) and finally Member, Chandigarh Housing Board (1973-78).

Ishwar Das was highly regarded among the political establishment for his sagacity and wisdom. He had direct access to senior Ministers, who sought his advice on a wide range of issues. At their request he would put up well thought out draft proposals, on issues outside his realm of responsibility, which were invariably accepted and implemented.

As a family man Ishwar Das felt happy to have Lakshmi Devi as life partner. Both of them were devoted to each other. Indeed, Lakshmi was a pious and saintly lady. She managed the household with love and affection. A perfect hostess, she was warm and hospitable to the stream of visitors, who showed up at odd hours at her home. She happily put-up unexpected outstation visitors as house guests, at great inconvenience. Her kitchen was kept busy, dishing out food, lovingly prepared and offered. She had a heart of gold. She brought up her five children in the most loving manner.

Eldest son Ramesh joined Punjab MARKFED public sector organisation. He rose to be its Establishment Officer. He married Prof Dr. Kiran, to whom were born Rohit (b. 1976) and Shalini (b.1978). Second son Suresh, migrated to New Zealand/Australia. From his marriage to Geeta there are two children, Amit and Bharti. Next in line Kamlesh married V.B. Soni, their

children being Manish (b. 1969) and Medha (b.1976). Everybody's favourite Naresh was employed as legal counsel by Punjab State Agricultural Marketing Board. He married Suman, from whom Aparna (b. 1977) and Subodh (b. 1979) were born. Youngest daughter Hira, who married IRS officer (Customs and Excises Department) Yoginder Pal, settled down in Mumbai, has



The Pawar family at the marriage of Kamlesh and VBS 13.5.1968.

two daughters.

Ishwar Das's lament that wife Lakshmi passed away too soon in July 1974, after fighting a prolonged painful terminal illness. After leading a lonely life for 33 years, he passed away at a ripe age of 99 years on June 11, 2007. With that an era came to end.

Chaudhry Sahib never sought fame or acknowledgement for himself. He had no streak of political instinct to capitalise on. His was a selfless and dedicated life to uplift the downtrodden community. Legacy of such a leader must not be allowed to be consigned to history. He continues to inspire the coming generation as pole star, a guiding spirit.

The above account is a modest attempt to keep Ishwar Das Pawar's inspirational role alive. I had the privilege of observing him from close quarters, interacting on a wide range of issues regularly. His autobiography: "My Struggle in Life" is the original source to turn to learn about his deep thought process. That is the only way to infuse new hope and inspiration among the forthcoming generation.

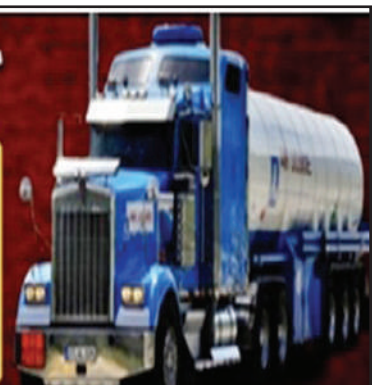


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