



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

Prem Kumar Chumber
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Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

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

He exhorted his people to come over a common platform to challenge the forces that subjugated the Dalits. He waged a long battle and finally able to unite many communities among the Scheduled Castes to work for their upward social mobility. Scheduled Castes of Punjab, particularly of the Doaba region, consider him the pioneer of Dalit movement in the state that played a leading role in strengthening the mission of Dr B. R. Ambedkar not only in Punjab but in the whole of the country.

PM Trudeau's Historical Visit to the Guru Ravidass Community Center/Temple in Burnaby- December 14

Burnaby- The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, visited the Guru Ravidass Community Center in Burnaby on December 14 and shared his appreciation for the contributions being made by the congregation and members of the Society. PM Trudeau spoke of the values of "equality" prescribed by Guru Ravidass, and said these are the same values of Canada. Trudeau also had a tour of the community center and met congregation in the langar hall. Trudeau mentioned that he would be pleased to return to the Guru Ravidass Center once it is completed.

A couple of months ago, Trudeau also visited the Guru Ravidass Temple situated in his own riding in Montreal.

On behalf of the congregation and the board of the organization, Harjit Sohpaal (President) and



Amarjit Lealh (General Secretary) graciously welcomed the Prime Minister and all the elected officials, including Mayor Hurley of City of Burnaby.

A lot of excitement was evident that in the forty-two-year history of the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha (Vancouver), this was the first visit of the sitting Prime Minister of Canada to visit the Guru Ravidass Temple in Burnaby!

Sohpaal also acknowledged the continued support of MPs Harjit Sajjan, Randeep Sarai, and Sukh Dhaliwal. MP Saajan was particularly acknowledged for arranging the visit of PM Trudeau to the center.

PM Trudeau with members of the congregation. In the picture with PM Trudeau are: Raman-deep Saroya and her parents (Gurmej and Surinder Saroya) and uncle Hardev Saroya.



We do not want on our register and on our census Untouchables classified as a separate class. – GANDHI

I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the Untouchables, that to me is the "unkindest cut of all". It means the perpetual bar-sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the Untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the Untouchables, their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the Untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar-sinister, which is the shame, and not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism.

Let this Committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who are pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census Untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Muhammadans, so may Europeans. Will Untouchables remain Untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar, and for his desire to see the Untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability, I must say in all humility that here the great wrong under which he has laboured and perhaps

the bitter experiences that he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgement. It hurts me to have to say this, but I would be untrue to the cause of the Untouchables, which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world.

I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility, and I say that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of the Untouchables of India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever. I do not mind the Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam and Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages.

Those who speak of the political rights of Untouchables do not know their India, do not know how Indian society is today constructed, and therefore I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life. – Mr. M.K. Gandhi

Source Courtesy: Indian Round Table Conference
(Second Session)
7th September, 1931 -
1st December, 1931
Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and
Minorities Committee

Bharat Rattan Babasaheb B.R. AMBEDKAR

Hearty Tributes on His 68th Mahaparinirvan Divas

6TH December, 2024 which is just around the corner, marks the 68th Maha parinirvan Divas of Bharat Ratna, Babasaheb, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, an icon of social liberation and a strong voice of the voiceless. Let us pay our heart-felt tributes to the nobility of this great soul on this historic day.

It is a matter of pride, honor and duty for all of us to revitalize the immortal legacy of this intellectual giant, not only as the architect of the constitution of India, but also for his invaluable contributions in safeguarding the fundamental human rights and in the making of Modern India.

After vigorous and penetrating research into Babasaheb's writings and speeches by eminent scholars, rather than the distorted versions, the whole world now knows him as a towering stalwart of the 20th century for the cause of social justice.

On this historic occasion of his 67th Parinirvan Divas, some of the glimpses of his unceasing struggles and sacrifices, which speak for themselves, are shared as under:

SOCIAL DISABILITIES:- Born in a Mahar family of Maharashtra state on April 14th, 1891, Babasaheb, grew up in the midst of harsh and severe social disabilities faced by the untouchables of that time. His practical knowledge and face-to-face experiences with the inequalities and in-built inadequacies in the social hierarchy of India inspired him to raise his inner voice against this unjust social order.

EDUCATIONIST:- Babasaheb, as he was popularly and affectionately known, firmly believed that good education was the inner eye of a human being through which she/he could visualize the whole world in its true perspective and shielding them against the most formidable challenges of life. His birth in a family of so called "untouchables" but still reaching the peaks of education exploded the false myth that education is the birth-right of only the few selected segments of society.

CONSTITUTIONALIST:- As the principal architect of India's constitution, a seasoned statesman and a nation builder, he welded the entire nation of modern India into a unified entity through his charismatic skills and exceptional knowledge of constitutional law in drafting the constitution of free India, while tackling justly and

successfully, the diverse intricacies of Indian social order. He can, thus, be undoubtedly recognized as one of the most luminous stars in the galaxy of human intelligentsia. His painstaking work as the first Law Minister of free India in the enactment of Hindu code bill for safeguarding the rights of



women, is, inspite of stiff opposition, a priceless gift to the welfare of Indian society.

DISTINGUISHED ECONOMIST:- The versatility of his genius and exceptional knowledge in the field of Economics was a vital contribution in the establishment of Reserve Bank Of India, as reflected in the records of his interview before "The Hunt's commission" in 1934. Many other important commissions like Planning Commission, Finance Commission, Election Commission of India and University Grants Commission were also established with his innovative intellect and imagination.

MEMBER-VICEROY'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:- As a labor member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy of India from 1942 to 1946, he was responsible for enactment of many important labor laws such as reduction in the working hours from 14 to 8 hours

and establishment of the system of Employment Exchanges in India as a centralized channel of providing job opportunities to the needy. Dr. Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate in Economics was highly inspired by the distinguished writings of Babasaheb, recognizing him as the father of his

Economics, thus adorning his intellectual excellence like a rare glitter of an emerald.

RESURGENCE OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA:- Babasaheb remained deeply inspired all his life by teachings of Lord Buddha. Late Mr. D. C. Ahir, in his treatise on Buddhism "Buddhism Declined In India, How and Why" has defined and elaborated as to how Buddhism, once a prosperous religion, declined in the land of its birth as a result of concerted and calculated crusade against it by the reactionary Brahmins and Muslim invasions of India. It was Babasaheb, Dr B. R. Ambedkar who ignited a new spark in its revival and resurgence in India with his conversion to Buddhism alongwith five hundred thousands of his followers on October, 14th, 1956, just a few weeks before his Parinirvana on December 6th, 1956. His untimely demise, nodoubt, slowed its growth and expansion, but

it is in the process of its revitalized re-suscitation.

AWARD OF BHARAT RATNA:- During the tenure of Prime Minister V.P. Singh, Bharat Ratna was conferred on Babasaheb posthumously in 1990, in

recognition of his exceptional services to the nation. This noble gesture on the part of Mr. V. P. Singh reflects his deep and significant commitment towards the cause of social justice. Manyavar Kanshi Ram and Babasaheb:- Manyavar Kanshi Ram, founder of Bahujan Samaj Party, inspired by Babasaheb's ideology and mission, played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses in advancing the vision of Babasaheb. In fact, it was he who revived the genuine spirit of, otherwise declining phase of the mission, to the glory of its new heights.

STATUES UNVEILED TO HONOR BABASAHEB:- In recognition of his outstanding contributions in multiple fields and for being the key figure in the drafting of India's constitution, he is being venerated with the unveiling of his statues both in India and abroad. Recently Honorable President Dorupadi Murmu, in the presence of the Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, D. Y. Chandrachud, unveiled a 7-foot tall statue of Babasaheb at the Supreme Court of India, on the occasion of the "Constitution Day". It was an unprecedented recognition for his outstanding services to the nation.

We also appreciate Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Editor-in-Chief, "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" weeklies for starting a very innovative program "AmbedkarTimes TV" is depicting live pictures and speeches of various episodes.

CONCLUSION:- "LET US KEEP THE FLAME OF BABASAHEB'S LEGACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE BURNING AND KEEP THE CARAVAN OF HIS IDEALS MARCHING AHEAD TOWARDS ITS CHERISHED GOALS."

"Again with the hearty greetings to the greatness of Babasaheb, the champion of Human rights"



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



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Learn to live in this world with self-respect. You should always cherish some ambition of doing something in this world. But remember that the age of selflessness has ended. A new epoch is set in. All things are now possible because of your being able to participate in the politics and legislature of your country.

- Dr. Ambedkar

We pay glowing tribute to Bharat Rattan Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on his 68th Pririvan Divas.



Ram Murti Saroay

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Corollary of Dhamma of Tathagat Buddha

After attaining enlightenment, Tathagat Buddha gave his first sermon to the five seekers he knew before. After a few days, common people started to visit him to listen to his teachings, some of whom left worldly life and began to live with Tathagat. They used to live on the alms offered by the common people. They were called Bhikkhus and those who started to believe Tathagata and follow his Dhamma while living a worldly life were called Upasakas.

After their training in Dhamma was finished, the Bhikkhus who go for the propagation of Dhamma were/are called Bhante. Tathagat's message to them was:-

"The aim of the Bhikkhus who propagate Dhamma is not to become dependent, but to inspire the whole society with true Dhamma through their thinking prowess, character and behavior. People often confuse the meaning of spirituality with unproductive miracles, due to which it becomes difficult to motivate common people for introspection. People will disrespect you, will be scornful of you, even then you have to maintain calm. Be patient. And propagate Dhamma while following restraint.

If a householder invites you for a meal, then after the meal you have to

preach the Dhamma to the householder and the Upasakas present there. Just as a confectioner with his intelligence and hard work and using only three things - First, milk from which condensed milk, scraped cream, ghee, butter and cream, Second, sugarcane juice from which sugar, jiggery, sugar syrup and sugar candy and Third, wheat from which flour, refined flour, etc. - prepares different types of sweets, in the same way you should have a well-balanced speech in your mind, a balanced and articulate discourse should be given on any one subject..."



Dr Amritpal Kaur

Dr. Bhalla's new book is released by the Joint Secretary of UGC

Dr. Gambhir Singh Chauhan, Joint Secretary, University Grants Commission, New Delhi, today released the book 'Mindscape: A Collection of My Insights' written by Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla, Principal, Gujranwala Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Ludhiana. Dr. Gambhir Singh Chauhan, while sharing his views on the book on this occasion, said that this book based on articles related to Sikhism, Punjab, higher education, international issues and various aspects of life clearly reflects the diverse concerns, analytical approach, deep study, vast experience and scholarly outlook of Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla.

He congratulated Principal Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla for this book and also said that the author has definitely inspired the readers to think from a different perspective on very significant issues through this book. He also

highlighted that this book will help in understanding the universal teachings of the Sikh Gurus as well as the unique perspective of Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat, present life styles and the problems and challenges faced by the young generation. He appreciated the efforts of Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla and said that the writing style of Principal Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla is very interesting and creative, and helps the readers to explore



different approaches to review the preconceived notions about a wide range of issues.

Principal Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla, while sharing information about his book, said that the basic objective of the twenty articles included in this book is to make the readers aware about the spiritual philosophy of the Sikh Gurus as well as to educate them about issues related to Punjab, Sikhism and higher education.

He said that there is an urgent need to think seriously on various issues instead of forming opinions on various subjects on merely superficial levels. He specifically mentioned here that the foreword of this book has been specially written by Sh. Satyapal Jain, Additional Solicitor General of India and former Lok Sabha member. Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla thanked Dr. S. P. Singh, former Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, for his support and guidance in writing this book.

It is pertinent to mention here that Principal Dr. Arvinder Singh Bhalla is completely dedicated to research work along with performing his administrative responsibilities.

Till date, he has written nineteen books and more than eighty research papers and has successfully completed two research projects.

The Indian Constitution and Dalit Emancipation

Jai Birdi

Executive Director

Chetna Association of Canada

The Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar took 2 years, 11 months, and 12 days to draft the Indian Constitution. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, on the final adoption of the Constitution said, "I have realised as nobody else could have, with what zeal and devotion the members of the Drafting Committee, and especially its Chairman, Dr. Ambedkar in spite of his indifferent health, have worked." Undoubtedly, Dr. Ambedkar is the "Father of the Indian Constitution." The Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949. It came into force on January 26, 1950. At the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India, in 2015, declared November 26 as the "Constitution Day". Prior to that the day used to be known as the "Law Day."

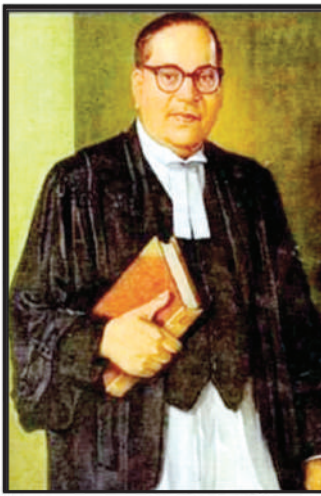
The Consulate General of India, Vancouver, in association with Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha, and Chetna Association of Canada, Vancouver celebrated the Day at Consulate's premises on November 27th. In addition to H.E. Manish, the Consul General, the other prominent speakers were Dr. Shinder Purewal, Professor of Political Science, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, Lawyer Lovleen Gill and Jai Birdi, Executive Director, Chetna Association. As the Day coincided with Guru Nanak's birthday, Giani Harmin-

der Singh of Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver spoke about Guru Nanak's philosophy.

While drafting the Constitution, due care was taken of nation's diversity, i.e. religion, language, and the educationally and economically disadvantaged population known as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who were lately declared to be called "The Dalits" – The Downtrodden. After about a three-quarter of a century of the implementation of the Constitution it becomes necessary to retrospect on the economic emancipation of this special section of Indian society.

Even before the Constitution came into force, Dr. Ambedkar's monumental writing, "Buddha or Karl Marx" and the Resolution of Karachi Congress, 1931 served as a great guide for economic emancipation of the masses. In other words, "In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom for the starving millions."

The Preamble of the Constitution gives a guarantee to secure Justice: social, economic, and political, and Equality of status and of opportunity. The Directive Principles of State Policy guide the government as follows:



"The State shall direct its policy in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and within limit of its economic capacity and development, to make effective provision for securing the right to work, education and to public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement or other cases of unde-

served want. The State shall also endeavour to secure to workers a living wage, humane conditions of work, a decent standard of life, and full involvement of workers in management of industries."

During these 73 years of the implementation of the Constitution, the underprivileged sections of Indian society have come a long way to combat economic hardship by provisions of reservation in employment, in educational institutions and in elected bodies, i.e., the Panchayats, State Assemblies and the Parliament. However, this is just a tip of an iceberg. A small percentage of people have been benefited by the welfare measures of the government. Still, we have to wipe out the tears of the man standing last in the queue. In the far-flung tribal areas people go empty stomach.

A Case in Reference to Dalit Economic Emancipation-

The Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DICCI) is one of the examples. The founder of DICCI, Dr. Milind Kamble states that whatever success the Chamber has gained, is because of the government and the constitutional framework.

It would not have been possible without government's pro-Dalit policies. He, however, is hopeful to achieve Dr. Ambedkar's vision of economic empowerment through self-help and entrepreneurship. Founded in 2005, the Chamber continues to face problems and challenges. These are some highlights of DICCI:-

It provides a platform and network for Dalit entrepreneurs to dream and act as a core group for shifting mindsets and creating opportunities.

Has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chambers of Commerce outside of India. In March this year, DICCI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, United States.

Has started signing Memoranda of Understanding with the Central Bank of India, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Has created a Venture Capital Fund.

Finally, to quote Dr. Ambedkar – "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are good, it will prove to be good."



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- Dr. Ambedkar



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Celebrating the Birth Centenary of Raj Kapoor: The Eternal Showman

Raj Kapoor, an actor, filmmaker, and visionary par excellence, left an indelible mark on Indian cinema, blending artistry with mass appeal in ways that continue

(1955) drew comparisons to Charlie Chaplin, showcasing his ability to blend humor with pathos. His portrayals of every man characters became emblems of hope and resilience, reflecting the dreams and struggles of post-independent India.

The Visionary Filmmaker

At just 24, Raj Kapoor became the youngest film director in Indian cinema with "Aag". He established the biggest and most glamorous production center 'R.K Studios', modelled on the great Hollywood studios. It was once considered the 'Mecca' of Bollywood. His directorial ventures Awara, Shri 420, Boot Polish, Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai, and Mera Naam Joker were marked by their innovative story telling, memorable music, and



to resonate across generations. His films are not merely stories but reflections of human aspirations, struggles, and emotions that continue to resonate. His legacy is preserved through the timeless music, iconic performances, and indelible narratives he left behind. His ability to blend entertainment with meaningful storytelling has set a benchmark for Indian and global cinema. His journey transcends the boundaries of time and geography, living on in every frame of his films and in the hearts of cinephiles worldwide.

Born on 14 December, 1924 in Peshawar, Ranbir Raj Kapoor belonged to the illustrious Kapoor family, which has been a cornerstone of Indian cinema. As the eldest son of Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor was steeped in the world of performing arts from a young age, laying the foundation for a career that would redefine Indian filmmaking. His acting career took flight with his debut in "Inquilab" (1935). However, movies like "Aag" (1948) and "Barsaat" (1949) established him as a force to reckon with.

His portrayal of the lovable tramp in Awara (1951) and Shree 420

deep social commentary. He had a unique ability to capture the zeitgeist, addressing themes of poverty, love, and morality while maintaining universal appeal.

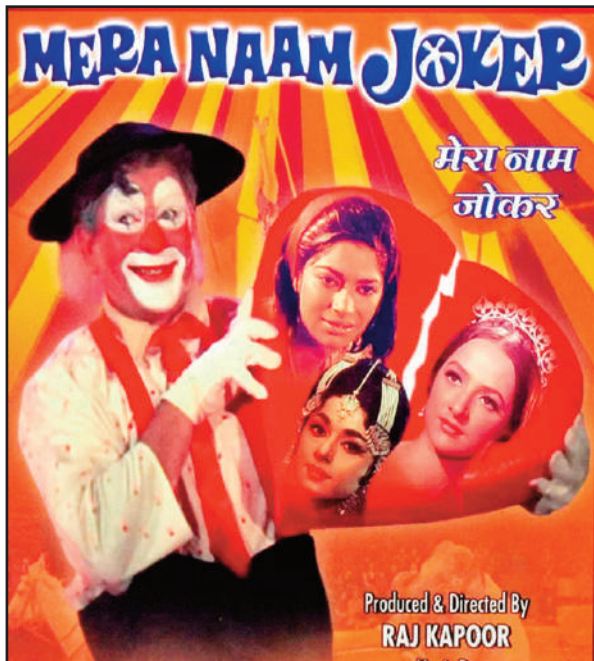
The Showman of Indian Cinema

Raj Kapoor's larger-than-life persona earned him the moniker "The Showman of Indian Cinema." Films like Sangam (1964), Bobby (1973) and Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985) reflected his evolving vision, appealing to both traditional and modern audiences. Beyond the glitz and glamour, Raj Kapoor was a

relentless perfectionist. His commitment to his craft often bordered on obsession, as seen in the making of Mera Naam Joker, a labor of love that, despite initial setbacks, is now regarded as a cult classic.

Raj Kapoor, the showbiz wunderkind, had to re-assess and plan a film for the resurrection of his studio. Like a phoenix he rose and keeping in mind the sensibilities of the emerging audience of the 70s, he produced 'Bobby'. His conviction paid off and the film went on to become one of the biggest hits of its time. The rest is history. His unabashed celebration of romance and beauty, often through the

Raj Kapoor's contributions to cinema earned him numerous accolades both nationally and



lens of rising stars like Nargis, Vyjayanthimala, and Dimple Kapadia, showcased his ability to adapt and innovate.

Accolades and Recognitions

internationally. He was decorated with India's third-highest civilian award Padma Bhushan in 1971, while Dada saheb Phalke Award was bestowed upon him in 1987. Awara (1951) was nominated for the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and his cinematic genius was celebrated in the Soviet Union, where he became a cultural icon. He also received the Order of Lenin, one of the highest honors from the USSR, for his role in promoting cultural exchange through cinema. Raj Kapoor's legacy was further recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award at several international film festivals, including those in Cairo and Karlovy Vary.

Raj Kapoor passed away on June 2, 1988, in New Delhi, after a prolonged battle with health issues. Kapoor's personal life, marked by his relationships and his deep bond with his family, added layers to his enigmatic persona. His ability to dream big, tell compelling stories, and connect with audiences on an emotional level ensures that his legacy will endure for generations. As we commemorate Raj Kapoor's birth centenary, his immortal words echo: "The show must go on."



Bhim Raj Garg
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Rotary Club of Kerman, California celebrates its 67th anniversary with annual Christmas dinner



FRESNO, California (Kulwant Dhalian / Neeta Machhike): The Rotary Club of Kerman, a city near Fresno in Central California, has been a long-time supporter of local cultural activities and local businesses for a long time.

This organization organizes the annual Kerman Harvest Festival, Christ-

mas Parade and many other activities every year in the city of Kerman after the end of the agricultural harvest and the harvest season. In this same fair, for the last two years, with the initiative of Kiranjot Kaur Dhese and the support of the entire 'Punjabi Sikh Community' team of Gulbinder Gary Dhese, the stage of Punjabi cultural

heritage is also set up in the Harvest Festival. In which Rotary Club of Kerman provides full support. Next year, the Vaisakhi fair will also be organized on a large scale in Karman with the support of the Rotary Club.

Yesterday, the Rotary Club Karman cut a cake to celebrate its 67th anniversary and held its annual Christ-

mas dinner party. At this time, all the members of the Rotary Club arrived and enjoyed delicious food, while sharing mutual love and exchanging gifts. Speaking at this time, the main member of the Rotary Club, Veronica, thanked all the members. All the attendees deserve congratulations for all these arrangements.

The Life and Times of Dr B.R. Ambedkar through the eyes of Indian Cinema

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar was an Indian polymath and the prime architect of the Indian constitution. Born on April 14, 1891, Baba Saheb was an economist, lecturer, and lawyer who battled against the societal injustice and atrocities committed against the untouchables. He went on to become one of the most revered leaders of the underprivileged populace. The emancipatory deeds of Dr. Ambedkar had touched the lives of millions. He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990.

The Untold Truth" (2000), was undertaken by National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in nine Indian languages. Directed by eminent filmmaker Jabbar Patel, it is a portrait of both the man and the legend through the prism of the important events that shaped Ambedkar's life from 1913 to his conversion to Buddhism in 1956. Veteran actor Mammootty played the titular role of Babasaheb.

The opening scene of the movie depicts the reactions to the attack on Dalits at Bhima Koregaon, which serve as a reminder that caste

Mera Yaar and Bhimaichya Vasaracha RamjichyaLekeracha. The film won National Film Awards for Best English Feature Film, Best Actor for Mammootty, and Best Art Direction for Nitin Chandrakant Desai. It was released only in Hindi/English after two years of its making. Madras High Court interfered to get release of its Tamil version. The callous attitude of the film makers had disappointed the film enthusiasts of regional cinemas.

"Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" (Kannada-2005), directed by Sharan Kumar Kabbur won three Karnataka State

has played a special role in the film. "Debu" (Marathi-2010), directed by Nilesh Jalmkar, is based on the life of social reformer and Saint Gadge Baba, who was immensely influenced by Babasaheb. Mohan Joshi en-



The life and teachings of Baba Saheb have been subject matter of around a dozen mainstream Indian movies, especially Marathi (7) and Kannada (3) languages. The film makers had tried to portray Babasaheb's legacy in true spirit, while the lead actors have successfully brought him to life on the big screen. On his Nirwana Divas, let us have a glance of the most talked-about films based on the life and works of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

The earliest known movie made on the life and works of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is 18-minute short film "Mahapurush Dr. Ambedkar" (1968) produced by Government of Maharashtra. Directed by Namdeo Varkar, this film fictionalised the key events of Dr. Ambedkar's life. The film had rare live footage of Dr. Ambedkar embracing Buddhism and his visit to Nepal along with close-up shots of his funeral procession at Dadar Chowpatty (Mumbai).

Reportedly, the first feature film on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a Marathi biopic "Bhim Garjana" (1989), directed by Sudhakar Waghmare. It show-cased his difficult childhood and the growing-up years shaping his ideologies. In 1991, another film on his earlier days Balak Ambedkar was made in Kannada language. Dr. Ambedkar (1992), a Telugu film, directed by Parpalli Bharat, had impressive star cast Akash Khurana as Babasaheb, Neena Gupta as Ramabai and Rohini Hattandi. Narayan Dulake enacted the role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Marathi film Yugpurush Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar (1993) directed by Shashikant Nalawade.

The most significant and costly cinematic venture on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar "Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar:



oppression takes on a varied range of shades. The film starts from his student days at Columbia University, USA. He refused to join Lala Lajpat Rai's Home-rule league as he was a scholarship holder from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. He did part-time jobs like washing plates and cleaning to meet his study expenses. Even being highly educated, he became subject of ridicule and neglect in rarified and intellectual circles. His subsequent transformation as crusader of the deprived classes made him popular across the nations.

The film had excellent songs like Buddhah Sharanam Gachchami, Kabir Kahe Yeh Jag Andha, Mann Lago

Awards. The film projected Babasaheb's cherished socio-economic reforms for the Indian society. "Periyar" (Tamil-2007) was based on the life of social reformer and rationalist Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, who was greatly influenced by Dr. Ambedkar. Mohan Raman played the role of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

"Joshi Ki Kamble" (2008-Marathi), directed by Shekhar Sarsandel, deals with reservation and caste system. The protagonist of the film young Ambedkarite Sanjay Kamble (Amey Wagh), grew up in a Buddhist Scheduled Caste Kamble family, but his biological parents are Hindu Brahmin (Joshi family). Ramdas Athavale

acted the role of Dr. Ambedkar.

Prakash Jadhav made "Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar" (2011), which dealt with the trials and tribulations faced by the young couple. Ramabai Ambedkar stood like a rock behind her husband's mission of uplifting the downtrodden populace, deprived of the basic human necessities for generations. He made another biopic "Bal Bhimrao" (2018), in which Manish Kamble played the role of child Bhimrao Ambedkar. The film delved deep into his budding years, showcasing his thought process, which ultimately evolved him as the Masiha of the under-privileged sections.

Dedicated to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Hindi movie "Shudra: The Rising" (2012), depicts the life of a Shudra and also features the popular Bhima song 'Jai Jai Bhim'. "A Journey of Samyak Buddha" (2013), Hindi film directed by Praveen Damle, is based on Dr Ambedkar's book 'The Buddha and His Dhamma'.

"Bole India Jai Bhim" (2016) is a Marathi film directed by Subodh Nagdeve, based on the life work of Dr. Ambedkar's follower and social reformer L. N. Hardas. The famous greeting 'Jai Bhim' was started by Hardas. "Ramabai" (2016), a Kannada language film directed by M. Ranganath was released on Dr. Ambedkar's 125th birthday. In this movie Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was played by Siddaram Karnik.

"Saranam Gacchami" (Telugu-2017), directed by Prem Raj, based on the Constitution of India and the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The movie features a unique song 'Ambedkar Saranam Gaccham' (I take

(Contd.. on next page)



**We pay glowing tribute to
Bharat Rattan Babasaheb
Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar
on his 68th Prininirvan Divas.**



Hans Raj Kajla

The Life and Times of Dr B.R. Ambedkar through the eyes of Indian Cinema

(Continue from page 7)

refuge in Ambedkar).

"Ramai" (Marathi-2019), was directed by Bal Bagrale. Vina Jamkar was in the lead role of Ramabai while Sagar Talashi karen acted Babasaheb's character. "Jayanti" (2021), is a Marathi social-drama, directed by Shailesh Baliram Narwade. The hero Santosh is inspired by the thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

"Jai Bhim" (Tamil-2021), is a legal drama directed by T. J. Gnanavel. The film highlights the police atrocities and state violence against a marginalised community. Based on a true incident in 1993, it revolves around the lives of Sengeni and Rajakannu, a couple from the Irular tribe.

The first Hollywood film based on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's life and ideologies "Origin" (2023), is written and directed by Ava Du Vernay. It is based on the book 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents' by Isabel Wilkerson. Professor Gaurav J Pathania, a renowned Ambedkarite has played the role of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. The movie explores the concept of caste in the United States and draws connections between the caste system in India and social hierarchies and racial discrimination in America.

"The Battle of Bhima Koregaon" is an upcoming Hindi film produced and directed by Ramesh Thete, is based on the Battle of Koregaon,

which took place on January 1, 1818.

Many TV serials have also been made on the life and teachings of Dada Saheb. The first TV serial "Dr. Ambedkar" (1992-93), was produced by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Doordarshan. Sudhir Kulkarni played the role of Babasaheb. In the TV Series "Pradhan Mantri" (2013-14), popular actor Surendra Pal enacted the character of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Rajya Sabha TV serial "Samvidhaan: The Making of the Constitution of India" (2014), had Sachin Khedekar as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Sony TV (Marathi) presented Prashant Choudappa as Babasaheb Ambedkar in its show "Garja Maharashtra" (2018-19). Next year Sagar Deshmukh appeared as young Ambedkar in the popular TV programme "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar- Mahamanvachi Gaurav-gatha" (2019-20). The entire life-sketch of Babasaheb from childhood to Mahaparinirvana has been portrayed through this serial.

The most popular serial "Ek Mahanayak Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" is on air since 2019. The serial, directed by Imtiaz Punjabi, is an inspiring story of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, portraying his journey from the age of five to becoming the author of the Indian Constitution. "Ambedkar- The Legend" is Hindi webseries directed by Sanjeev Jaiswal, which can be seen on the OTT platform Baba Play App. Many

untouched and neglected aspects of Babasaheb are shown in this series.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had inter-estin movies and he had interactions with a few prominent artists like V. Shantaram, Master Krishna rao Phulambrikar, P. K. Atre, Dilip Kumar, Shobhna Samarth and Lata Mangeshkar. One of the earliest movies that Dr. Ambedkar had watched is "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1927).

Thereafter he is reportedly watched "Achhut Kanya" (1936), Dharmatma (1935), Kunku (1937) and Oliver Twist (1948) etc. Acharya Atre made a film "Mahatma Phule" (1954) on the life of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. The launching of the shooting was done at the hands of Baba Saheb at Famous Studios on 31 January 1954. Baba Saheb also attended its premiere and was completely overwhelmed by the movie. The great Sangeet Kalanidhi Master Krishna rao Phulambrikar was deeply influenced by the movement sunder taken by Babasaheb and performed opening songs on many occasions. He composed music for Buddha Vandana, which was played during the mass conversion ceremony held at Nagpur in 1956.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is yet to be extensively explored in Bollywood. Indian filmmakers had never purposive engagement on social complexities to bring substantive change. Dr. Ambedkar's personality and political philoso-

phy were simply alien in such a conservative space. He was ignored by Indian Cinema for years but the trend is changing now. In recent films, Ambedkar is much more than just a framed-photo inside Government offices.

A few recent films like "Article 15" (Hindi), "Jai Bhim" (Tamil) and "Jayanti" (Marathi), portraying the grotesque social inequalities, feudal exploitation and caste atrocities are considered as the beginning of a new 'Dalit cinema' genre in the mainstream cinema.

Ambedkar is now visible on screen not only as a hanging portrait but also as a motivating influence for the characters. The arrival of filmmakers, technicians and artists from the Dalit-samaj, has given a new meaning to on-screen image of Babasaheb. Pa Ranjith often employs Ambedkar's name, photograph, statue, slogans and other Dalit symbols in the background of the narratives to provide substantive social meaning to the story. Narwade's "Jayanti" expanded this horizon and introduced Ambedkar's writings as a crucial force that motivate the protagonist to become a courageous heroic personality.

We do hope that the nascent 'Dalit Cinema' has the potential to churn out a new cinematic culture and can bring a more meaningful and socially responsible cinema to the audience.