



Ambedkar Times Weekly

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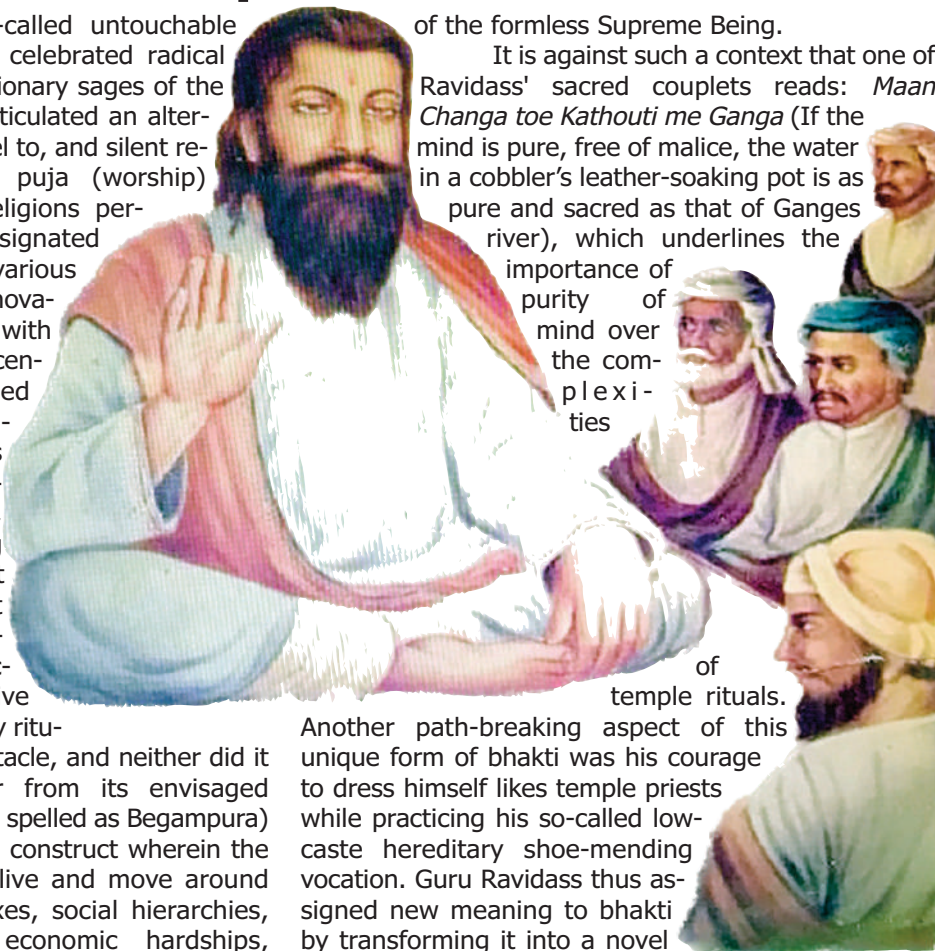
Guru Ravidass, Apostle of Formless God and Begumpura

Guru Ravidass, from the so-called untouchable castes, was one of the most celebrated radical bhakti poets and social revolutionary sages of the 15th-16th century, who had articulated an alternative genre of bhakti in parallel to, and silent reproach of, the ritual-based puja (worship) ceremonies of mainstream religions performed by Varna-based designated priests at altars dedicated to various different Hindu deities. This innovative and radical form of bhakti with its adoration to a non-anthropocentric God, sharply distinguished Guru Ravidass from the traditional form of Hindu prayers which involve recitation, lightening lamps (ceremonial flames), striking gongs, and blowing conch shells, but which did not assign any space to the vast multitude of historically segregated and socially excluded sections of society. His innovative bhakti genre did not include any rituals, ceremonies or sacred spectacle, and neither did it exclude anyone whomsoever from its envisaged utopian city of Begumpura (also spelled as Begampura) – an empowering and uplifting construct wherein the inhabitants would be free to live and move around without fear of the State, taxes, social hierarchies, discriminations, indignities, economic hardships, administrative restrictions and spatial confinements irrespective of caste, class, creed, and gender. It was a place where caste-based systems of 'graded inequality', and the social malice of untouchability would be unknown. Despite its utopian nature, Begumpura was not a mere figment of Bhakti radical Ravidass's mind, a fantasy or an ecstasy (Ram 2012: 679), it was based on a critical understanding of the socio-economic and political realities prevailing during his lifetime (cf. Omvedt 2008: 11).

Bhakti as an all-inclusive form of worship of *Nirguna* (God without attributes), and as meticulously articulated by Ravidass, and unlike that practiced in mainstream religious centres, needed no separate/exclusive sacred space to recite prayers or other rituals whatsoever in front of images of deities. The only sanctum sanctorum of his bhakti performance paraphernalia happened to be just a corner – leather-working-place – in his very home, which, in fact, could be considered as a three-in-one-unit comprising his dwellings, work place and a prayer *Sthal* (platform). His innovative form of bhakti did not require anyone to visit temples and to make pilgrimages to sacred water bodies. On the contrary, it empowered subalterns to remember and align with a formless God irrespective of any designated times or locations, and indeed, even at their homes. His unique model of bhakti, in fact, was inbuilt in his very profession of mending and making shoes, and for that he did not need to wait for a settled time to offer prayers surrounded by ritual and ceremonious paraphernalia. His bhakti was neither a detached kind of a special act to be performed in a well-designated sacred place like that of temple-based bhakti paradigm which revolves around deeply structured ritual, and elaborated prayers ceremonies, nor an intangible act of secretly reciting the given holy name by some so-called spiritually realised holy person. Instead, it was simply a way of life of a household person who needs not to be trained in any kind of a prayer ceremony. What s/he expected to be is nothing except to be sincere to one's profession while remaining immersed in loving memory

of the formless Supreme Being.

It is against such a context that one of Ravidass' sacred couplets reads: *Maan Changa toe Kathouti me Ganga* (If the mind is pure, free of malice, the water in a cobbler's leather-soaking pot is as pure and sacred as that of Ganges river), which underlines the importance of purity of mind over the complexities



of temple rituals. Another path-breaking aspect of this unique form of bhakti was his courage to dress himself like temple priests while practicing his so-called low-caste hereditary shoe-mending vocation. Guru Ravidass thus assigned new meaning to bhakti by transforming it into a novel and daring method of social protest against the system of untouchability. Novel in the sense that it emphasized compassion for all, and daring because he chose to imitate traditional temple priest's dress by wearing dhoti (cloth wrapped around the waist), *janeue* (sacred thread) and *tilak* (sacred red mark on forehead) even as he repudiated traditional Brahminical thought and practice – something which was a highly objectionable form of social behaviour for an outcaste of his times and the more dangerous for it.

The skillful deployment of Brahminical iconography by Guru Ravidass was an anathema for the Untouchables. Though he attired himself in a semblance of temple priests, he neither hid his low caste identity nor abandoned his shoe-mending occupation. This ingenious behaviour exercised a deeply corrosive effect on the centuries-old internalized inferiority system amongst the socially ostracised by instilling a sense of respect for manual labour and a growing pride in their low-caste identity – so much so, that large numbers of Guru Ravidass' followers preferred to be identified as 'Ravidassias' against their traditional degraded caste titles (Chandra 2000: 49; Hawley 1988: 272; Lochtefeld 2005: 201-02).

In the absence of any hope from the social elite of his times, Guru Ravidass expressed absolute faith in bhakti of a *Nirguna* God. His God was graceful, who elevated and purified the so-called Untouchables relegated to periphery in the Hindu social order: *Aisee lal tujh binu kaunu karai. Gareeb niwaaju guseea meraa maathai chhatar dharai...neecho uooh karai meraa govind kaahoo te na darai. 1. Rahau* (Sri Guru Granth Sahib: 1106).

<My Beloved, besides you who acts like this? Protector of the poor, my Master. You hold a royal umbrella over

my head. 1. Refrain>(for transl. see: Callewaert and Friedlander 1992: 166; Chauhan 2014: 34-35).

As he himself stated in his *bani* (spiritual poetry), Guru Ravidass lived close to Varanasi – a pilgrimage centre of Hindus on the banks of Ganga river dotted with varied temples where Aarti was/is offered twice a day – both early morning and late evening. The lowest castes were debarred from entering such sacred places as per *Varnavyavastha* (Varna-based social order), and it was against such dehumanising practices that Guru Ravidass articulated a counter narrative to Hindu form of prayer based on minutely laid ceremonies in one of his hymns:

Naam Tero Aarti Majan Murare, Hari Ke Naam Binu Jhuthey Sagal Pasaare. 1. Rahau (Sri Guru Granth Sahib: 694).

<O God! Your Name is my Aarti (an act of worship) and my ablutions. All other activities are false except Hari Naam. 1. Refrain> (for transl. see: Callewaert and Friedlander 1992: 163-64; Chauhan 2014: 50).

Guru Ravidass discarded all temple prayer ceremonies and emphasized the remembrance of the formless God Whom he addresses as *Ananta, Bajigar, Garib Niwaz Gusaeaa, Gobind, Har(i), Jagat Swami, Maadho, Madhve, Mukand, MuktiKa Data, Naaraain, Raghunath, Raja Ram Chand, Ram Gusaeaa, Ramiee, and Sagal Bhawan Ke Naika*, etc. (cf. Chauhan 2014: 3). For him, remembrance of God was Aarti, and it transcended any and all ceremonies – whether dipping in holy waters of Ganga, lightening lamps with oil and wick in them, flowers offered at the images of deities, sprinkling saffron mixed with water and offering sandalwood paste on the images of deities among others. This not only distinguished Guru Ravidass from mainstream Hindu image worship, but also laid the foundations of an alternative subaltern model of *Nirguna* bhakti, leading to a silent surge of socio-cultural and religious consciousness among those stifled by centuries of systemic social oppression.

Notes

1. *Meri jati kut bandhala dhore dhowanta niteh Banarasi aas pasa. Ab bipar pardhan tih kareh dandaut tere Naam sarnai Ravidas dasa (3) (1)* (Sri Guru Granth Sahib: 1293).

<My caste people are hide beaters and binders and carry carcasses of cattle around Varanasi. But, now my condition is such that chiefs of "Brahmins" prostrate before me. This is all due to the grace of surrendering to You. O Lord, Ravidas is Your slave (3) (1)> (for transl. see: Callewaert and Friedlander 1992: 168; Chauhan 2014: 57).

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Keynote address delivered at One-Day National Seminar on *Relevance of Guru Ravidas' Ideology in the Contemporary Era* (Dedicated to Guru Ravidas Jayanti), organised by Guru Ravidas Chair of Sant Sahitya Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, February 11, 2025.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 648th PARKASH UTSAV OF SATGURU RAVIDASS JI MAHARAJ

Prem Kumar Chumber
Editor-in-Chief:

Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, whose 648th birth anniversary is being celebrated throughout the world, is revered as Shiromani Sant of the medieval Bhakti movement of North India. He was born in the so called lowest of the low castes, in Seer Goverdhanpur near Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), whose touch was used to be considered polluting to the Savarnas. He opened a frontal attack on the system of Untouchability and spoke against the system of hegemonic Brahminical mediation for an access to spirituality. He also said that one needs not to hide his caste or leave his low profession to reach God. He became a model for his fellow beings to overcome the hierarchical barriers of Brahminical Social Order and to establish Begumpura a state without fear and sorrows. Sri Guru Ravidass elevated the status of the labour by emphasizing on the fact that manual labour is the best way to lead a pious life. He vehemently opposed living on alms and charity of others.

He defeated the famous Kashi Pundits in a formally organized Shastrartha and



proved that merit is not the fiefdom of the so called upper castes alone. Everybody is capable of obtaining knowledge and to worship. He underlined the fact that the fourfold division of the Hindu society is a sham and a gimmick keep a large section of the society under the cruel control of a few Upper castes in the name of purity-pollution principle cunningly devised by Brahmins. It is against this very system of oppressive social differentiation that Guru Ravidass envisioned an egalitarian socio-political order where there would be no place for untouchability and social oppression. For the social transformation of the society, Sri Guru Ravidass Ji laid emphasis on labour, compassion, virtue, prohibition of alcohol and all bad deeds. He also reiterated on the urgent need of remembering the formless God whom he addressed by varied names. Some scholars are of the view that Guru Ravidass did not form an organization nor he launched any consistent and systematic agitation against the system of untouchability. This is true. But to raise a loud voice at his times was no less than a clarion call to dismantle the unjust system of Brahminical social order. It is also true that the path told by him has become the beacon light for the Dalit movement.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Caravan: Marching Through His Writings and Speeches

Professor Kevin Brown, international expert on "Law and Caste" has donated 20 volumes of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches (BAWS) to Indiana University Herman B Wells Library on January 31st, 2025. Other Professors at the University who participated in this event are Kenneth Dau Schmidt, Luis Fuentes Rohwerand Pedro Machado. This book donation was supported by Ambedkar Association of North America (AANA) and this is historic moment for AANA and the local Ambedkarite communities across the USA and Canada, furthering their mission to promote Ambedkar's legacy and provide educational resources to institution-sand empowering educational institutions with critical resources.

The Indiana University librarian expressed profound appreciation for this donation, highlighting the immense value of Dr. Ambedkar's writings for students in various fields, including Humanities, Religious Studies, Economics, Anthropology, and Indian History. The comprehensive nature of Ambedkar's work, covering topics like social justice, economics, world religions, and constitutional law, makes these volumes a vital academic resource.

Indiana University, a public research university established in 1820, with over 48,000 students, including nearly 850 student organizations, 80+ language thoughts, and 380+ study programs abroad are renowned for its commitment to innovation and excellence. The addition of Dr. Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches enriches its library collection, ensuring future scholars access to his profound insights and ideas.

Our heartfelt thanks to Professor Kevin Brown and other faculty at Indiana University for supporting this noble endeavour. Thus by bringing Dr. Ambedkar's

- York University, Toronto, Canada
- Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
- Pacific University Oregon, Forest Grove, OR
- University of Georgia, Athens, GA
- Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA
- Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA
- University of Delaware, Newark, DE
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA
- Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
- Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
- Columbia University, New York, NY
- Franklin University, Ohio
- Adelphi University, New York
- University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
- University of Texas, Austin, TX



visionary work to Indiana University, AANA continues its mission of advancing education and social justice.

Expanding Ambedkar's Vision Across North America

AANA, alongside organizations like AIC, AIM, ABAT and BSG, has been instrumental in donating Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches to numerous esteemed universities and libraries across the USA and Canada. These contributions amplify awareness of Ambedkar's work and its relevance to modern discourses on equality, human rights, and social reform. Institutions that have benefited from these donations include:

- Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
- University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
- Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
- University of Texas, Austin, TX

Carolina, Greensboro, NC

- University of Texas, Austin, TX

Additionally, donations to local libraries have increased public accessibility to the critical literature on Indian History, economics, caste discrimination, Buddhist philosophy, and Ambedkar's vision of a just society.

About AANA

Founded in 2008, the Ambedkar Association of North America (AANA) strives to fulfill Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of uplifting marginalized communities through education. By spreading Buddha's message of peace and kindness, AANA fosters cultural, educational, and social initiatives that empower the South Asian diaspora in North America.

Report by: **M. Wasnik,**
Ambedkar Association of North America
(AANA)

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SATGURU RAVIDASS JI MAHARAJ

AN ETERNAL SYMBOL OF GODLINESS

As we all know, 648th Birthday of Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj is being celebrated all over the world on different dates during this month of February 2025 with a spirit of devotion and enthusiasm by millions of his devout followers.

On behalf of Supreme Council Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas, USA we convey our hearty congratulations to all our Gurughars and the devout followers on this pious and auspicious occasion.

As we gather to honor this esteemed spiritual leader, let us reflect on his teachings and the profound impact they have had on our lives. **Satguru Ravidass Ji's** message of equality, love, and unity transcends all boundaries and continues to inspire us to strive for a better and more harmonious world.

AGLIMPSE INTO GURUJI'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AND TEACHINGS: - During the 14th and 15th centuries, tyrannies, oppression and social discrimination based on caste distinctions had become rampant among Indian society. Guru Ravidass Ji appeared at Sis Goverdhanpur near Varanasi in 1377 A.D. as a messenger of Almighty God to awaken the society about these inhuman practices against weak and helpless people who were virtually and socially amputated from the main body-organism of Hindu society. The teachings from the life of Guru Ravidass Ji symbolize his love and devotion to one Almighty God, which he conveyed to the entire mankind in a simple, unassuming and straight-forward manner. His life had tremendous impact on the ritual-oriented and class-ridden society of India in particular and the world in general.



Satguru Guru Ravidass Ji's life is adorned with miraculous incidents which highlight his spiritual attainments and devotion to God. Mirabai and Jhallanbai, Royal Queens of Chittor in Rajasthan admired him so much, they became his devout followers, defying social

norms and restricted interaction with lower caste and backward people.

Satguru Guru Ravidass Ji, Satguru Guru Kabir Ji and Satguru Nanak Dev Ji were contemporaries and spiritual legends of the Bhagti Movement. They exchanged their divine thoughts when they met together at Varanasi. It was there that Guru Ravidass Ji offered his Vani (40 hymns and 1 Shalokto Guru Nanak Dev Ji, which later were enshrined in the holy pages of Guru Granth Ji by Guru Arjan Dev Ji at the time of its compilation in 1604 A.D.

Let us celebrate this holy day of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji's 648th Birthday together to foster a spirit of unity, peace and progress.

We appeal to all our Gurughars with best wishes for a meaningful celebration to carry on the legacy of our revered Guru for generations to come.

Thanking you all for help and cooperation in our future endeavors for enhancing the image of the Supreme Council.

**"JO BOLE SO NIRBHAI,
GURU RAVIDASS MAHARAJ JI KI JAI"**

Sangat Sewadar

O. P. BALLEY

**General Secretary
Supreme Council
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas
California USA**



TRIBUTE TO LATE MR. C.L CHUMBER

Mr. C. L. Chumber, a valiant fighter for the noble cause of marginalized sections of society is heartily remembered by his admirers on the occasion of his 9th Anniversary falling on February 6th 2025.

Mr. Chumber, as I knew him through his judicious and prudent writings in his famous Magazine "Qaumi Udarian" was an ardent supporter of the philosophy of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia, founder of Ad-Dharam movement and Manyavar Kanshi Ram founder of Bahujan Samaj Party.

A person like Mr. C. L. Chumber with strong and undaunted convictions never dies. His legacy will continue to live in the hearts and minds of his supporters and admirers and will remain as an inspiration for future generations.

Dr. Ronki Ram Dean (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Professor of Political Science Panjab University, Chandigarh)

who knew Mr. Chumber very closely also admired him for his admirable role in voicing the concerns of neglected sections of society.

With his sudden and untimely departure from this mortal world nine years ago we definitely lost a strong voice against unjust and monopolistic trends in society.

We once again pray to Almighty to keep him blessed for his unflinching expressions in spite of all kinds of odds and obstacles he had to confront.

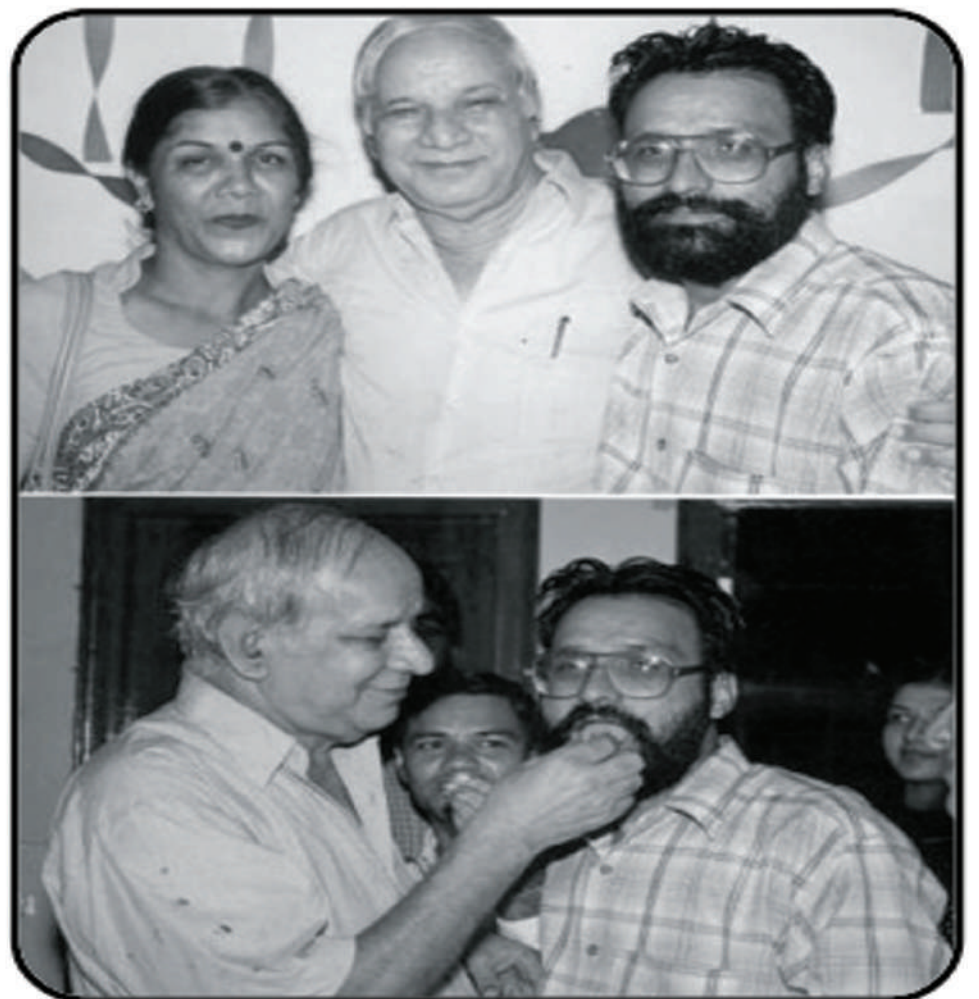
Mr. C. L. Chumber was also a great inspiration to his younger brother, Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, especially during the formative years of his weeklies "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba".

With due regards to his surviving family members and for contributions for a just social order.

O. P. Balley

Founder Member

Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg, CA.



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Pittsburg (CA) Program

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ਜਉ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤਾ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ॥ ਪਿਤਤ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੁੰਤਾ॥॥॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ

February 14-15-16, 2025 Gurpurb Satguru Ravidass Ji

Satguru Ravidass ji was born in 1377, in Kanshi, India. Satguru Ravidass Ji was a great religious and social reformer and Satguru Ji dedicated his whole life for the welfare of the humanity. Guru Ji preached social harmony among all and preached against caste discrimination.

Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha CA, Pittsburg is celebrating the 648th Parkash Utsav of SATGURU RAVIDASS JI on Sunday, February 16, 2025, at the temple. GURU JI KI SANGAT will perform Langar, Path and Parshad Sewa for this program Akhand Path will start on February 14, 2025 (FRIDAY) 9:30 AM and conclude on February 16, 2025 (SUNDAY) 9:30 AM followed by KIRTAN DIWAN until 2:00 PM. Prominent Kirtani Jatha of Bhai Onkar Singh ji, Una Wale and Bhai Balwinder Singh ji will enhance the Kirtan Diwan along with Katha by Sant Krishan Nath Ji Chaheru Wale.

Nishan Sahib Hoisting Ceremony

will be held at 11:00 AM on February 15, 2025 (Saturday)

There will be a Kirtan Diwan on Saturday evening also. Bhai Harjinder Singh ji Rasia and Giani Balwinder Singh ji will do Shabad Kirtan.

Entire Sangat is cordially invited to participate in the celebrations with family and friends and get blessings of Satguru Ravidass Ji

The Management Committee needs volunteers to prepare and serve Langar, keep Gurughar clean and organized, directing traffic/parking, kitchen Sewa, Jorha Sewa and other Sewas on all three days of Gurpurab Celebrations.

or **STALLS** or any other **SEWA**, please contact **President Sunita Singh Bangar at (415) 233-3319** or **Chairman Vinod Kumar at (408) 718-2506**. The Management Committee requests the help, support and co-operation from the entire sangat to celebrate 648th. Gurpurab of Guru Ravidass Ji.

There will be a Health Camp on

February 16, 25 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Your DONATIONS in CASH or KIND will be greatly appreciated. Members are requested to renew their membership by January 31, 2025.



Gurughar is open every day. Sukhmani Sahib path/ Akhand Path, Kirtan and Langar Sewa is hosted by Sangat or some devotee every Sunday.

"NANAK NAM CHARDI KALA TERE BHANE SARBAT DA BHALA"

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NANAK CHAND RATTU

A TRUE AND TRUSTWORTHY SOLDIER OF Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR

On the historic occasion of 103rd Birth Anniversary of late Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Private Secretary of Bharat Rattan Babasaheb, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar from 1941 to 1956, I am driven by an internal urge to share some of my personal reminiscences of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu which made him reckon as an iconic name associated with the life-long vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

As regards his personal life Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu was born on February 6, 1922, in village Sakruli, in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab and after completing his High School education in 1938 he moved to Delhi in November 1939 in search of a job. After strenuous efforts and difficult times he got a job in Government of India in 1941. While in service he worked his way up and passed his B.A degree Examination. He had to abandon his studies for M.A in the middle in order to serve Dr. Ambedkar.

Because of his hard work, loyalty and personal sacrifices in the service of his mentor, Mr. Rattu was able to win a unique level of trust, confidence and respect from Babasaheb, which he cherished and upheld as a holy relic throughout the rest of his life after Babasaheb's Pririvana on December, 6th, 1956.

My personal remembrances of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu go back to the year 1955-1956 when I moved from Punjab to Delhi in search of a job and came in close contact with him in Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh, New Delhi where he was living with his family in a Government allotted accommodation. I even stayed at Mr. Rattu's home for some time in 1955 before I could settle down in a job.

Mr. Rattu being quite senior to most of us in age and social status was highly respected among the community. At that time he was fully devoted in his task as private secretary to Babasaheb who was residing at 26, Alipur Road, Delhi.

Almost every day Mr. Nanak Chand used to go on his Bike to Alipur Road and usually come back to his home in Karol Bagh late at night to get ready in the morning to go to his office in Central Secretariat area in New Delhi. Sometimes he had to stay overnight with Babasaheb depending on the volume of work he had to handle single handedly. It was a great personal sacrifice on the part of Mr. Rattu which was adversely impacting on his health as well as his professional career. But in spite of all this there was no lapse in his dedication towards Babasaheb. Like a shadow he remained in his sacred company till his last breath and was to Dr. Ambedkar what Ananda was to Lord Buddha.

During the course of my association with Mr. Rattu, I learnt a lot about the life-long struggle, sacrifices and accomplishments of Babasaheb for equality and emancipation of the suppressed sections of society.

In 1956 Babasaheb was not keeping a stable health because of the heavy work load and mounting pressure on his mind to complete what he had undertaken to do. It was not possible to see him in person except through Mr. Rattu who had direct access to Babasaheb without any interference even from his wife. So it was Mr. Rattu gave me an opportunity to see Babasaheb in person many times at his residence on Alipur Road which was hardly a hundred yards away from my office in Old Secretariat area.

On the fateful day of December 6th, 1956 while, as usual, I was going to my office on my bike when the heart breaking news of Babasaheb's mysterious death in his sleep was unleashed on All India Radio. It was a nerve wrecking news spreading like a wild fire all over the Globe. Skipping my

day from work I went straight to 26, Alipur Road which was just at a stone's throw from my office. Only a handful of persons including Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri and Mr. M.R Bhardwaj, close confidants of Babasaheb, were there ahead of me. Since Babasaheb's dead body was still in his bed-room on the ground floor I joined Mr. Rattu and four other persons present there to co-ordinate and help physically in moving the body to the spacious Drawing Room close by



to facilitate the viewing by a stream of mourners rolling in from different parts of the adjoining states. I was an eye witness to a crowd of people crying and screaming and pressing for post-mortem and unbiased investigation in the mystery of Babasaheb's sudden passing away. Many people were loudly blaming Babasaheb's wife for her role in the mysterious death. It was only Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu who was profusely crying but was persuaded by Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri to appease the surging rage of the uncontrollable crowd.

Prime Minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru also visited Babasaheb's residence to pay his tributes and enquired from Mr. Rattu, Sohan Lal Shastri and Mrs. Savita Ambedkar about the circumstances of the death. I was a young man of almost 21 years of age at the time and am also visible in the picture now getting viral on the internet, standing in the crowd next to Pt. Nehru, Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Sohan Lal Shastri near Babasaheb's dead body. The entire cabinet of the Prime Minister also visited the residence to offer their condolences.

In an attempt to avoid the surging wrath of the crowds of followers of Babasaheb, Mrs. Savita Ambedkar insisted to transport the dead body to Sarnath (Place of Buddhist shrines) but was vehemently opposed by Nanak Chand Rattu and other close supporters because more than five lakhs of Babasaheb's followers were waiting in Bombay to participate in the funeral procession.

As stated by Mr. Rattu and Sohan Lal Shastri no financial help was available from Government of India including the Prime Minister to air-lift the mortal remains of Babasaheb to Bombay for final ceremonies and cremation. Even Mrs. Savita

Ambedkar declined to help. It was only Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu who offered to shoulder this big and moral responsibility and managed to collect some money at the spur of the moment from some close and staunch followers of Babasaheb to pay for transporting the body to Bombay by a chartered plane. Since the collection fell short of the required payment, Babu Jagjivan Ram, the then Communication Minister came to rescue and authorized the chartered flight leaving the balance to be settled later. 3-mile long procession was taken out from 26 Alipur Road to Safdarjung airport for flying the mortal remains of Babasaheb to Bombay for cremation. Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu, Mr. Sohan Lal Shastri, Mr. M.R Bhardwaj, Mr. Shankranand Shastri, Mr. Puran Chand Madhar and Mrs. Savita Ambedkar accompanied the body to Bombay.

AWARDS:-In recognition of his laudable and unique services to glorify the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar, many eminent writers and research scholars who wrote the biography of Dr. Ambedkar, highly appreciated and gratefully acknowledged Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu for providing the information and readily available material about the glorious history of Babasaheb's battle in the liberation of the voiceless people.

Mr. Rattu was also the recipient of Bheem Medal, Bheem Rattan Award, Ambedkar centenary Award, Vishvratna Dr. Ambedkar Bhushan Award and many letters of appreciation from Dr. Ambedkar organizations in India.

With restless endeavors of Mr. Rattu, Ambedkar Museum, set up by him in Nagpur has become a historical monument and a famous Buddhist pilgrimage center.

Retired as Under Secretary from Government of India on February 29, 1980 Mr. Rattu continued to remain actively involved and associated with the spread of Dhamma and the noble mission of Babasaheb till his last breath. Though I am permanently settled with my family in USA, I always met Mr. Rattu in Delhi while visiting India.

CONCLUSION: - Much more can be said about Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu's selfless services especially during the last few years of Babasaheb's life at the cost of his personal sacrifices, but I must not refrain from saying that even after Babasaheb's departure Mr. Rattu personally visited all the places connected with the mission of Babasaheb and left no stone unturned in keeping the flame alive and the caravan moving in the direction, his master wanted.

Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu's name will remain with its glow and luster in the galaxy of unrelenting efforts of Babasaheb's vision for breaking the shackles of social barriers. He will remain as an inspiration for future generations.

I also appreciate the services of Mr. Prem Kumar Chumber, Chief Editor, Desh Doaba and Ambedkar Times, the two weekly Newspapers, who always inspires and encourages me to write occasionally on historical as well as day-to-day issues of public interest for publication in the esteemed columns of his Newspapers.

Let me again express my hearty congratulations for celebrating the forthcoming 103rd Birth Anniversary of Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu on February 6th, 2025 who guarded as a true soldier in carrying out the mission of Babasaheb for social emancipation.



Humble Sewadar,
O.P. Bailey (General Secretary)
Supreme Council
Sri Guru Ravidass Sabhas USA
1-925-252-6085

Nanak Chand Rattu- An Unsung Warrior of the community

February 6 is the 103rd birth anniversary of an unsung warrior of the community, Nanak Chand Rattu a dedicated and close Aide of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar. Rattu

an awakened person, he came into contact of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Leader of the oppressed and suppressed segments of the society, and offered his services with total dedica-

office and will remain at the disposal of Babasaheb till late in the evening. Recently, I learnt from a TV interview of Shashi Sidharath, Rattu Sahib's daughter-in-law (wife of his son Sidharath) that her mother-in-law that is the wife of Rattu Sahib was such a nice and homely lady that every evening on her husband's late return from Babasaheb's residence, she used to give him fresh and hot food and fully supported her husband without any murmur. I vow my head in Naman to her also on this important day.

Nanak Chand Rattu remained with Babasaheb for almost 17 years till his Parinirvan on December 6, 1956. Rattu Sahib was almost a part of the family and he was the first person who was called to Babasaheb's bedside by Mai Saheb Savita Ambedkar, wife of the icon, on the fateful morning of December 6, 1956. I was told that Rattu Sahib himself informed the high-ups in the government about the sad demise of Babasaheb including the residence of PM Jawaharlal Nehru. Mai Saheb even took along Rattu Sahib to Bombay (Mumbai) for the last journey and rites of the departed leader. Physical connect between Babasaheb Ambedkar and Nanak Chand Rattu ended but spiritual and emotional bonds between the two remained till Rattu Sahib passed away in September, 2002 in Delhi.

Earlier Rattu Sahib retired from his government job as Under

Secretary in February 1980, a dignified position in the bureaucratic hierarchy in the corridors of power. Nanak Chand Rattu was a reservoir of information and knowledge

about Babasaheb with first hand touch and experience. Some of the details are duly registered in his 5 books which he wrote about Babasaheb Ambedkar and his mission. Two of these immensely informative and educative books, Reminiscences and Remembrances of Dr. Ambedkar and Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar, were reviewed by me and are available on the links given below.

<https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/search?q=nanak+chand+rattu>
<https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/2014/12/last-few-years-of-dr.html>

Some of the personal belongings of Ambedkar Sahib which were available with Rattu Sahib were thoughtfully donated by him to various museums and memorials of the leader for the benefit of the generations to come.



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



Dr. Ambedkar during the conversion ceremony at Nagpur 14.10.1956 with Mrs. Savitha Ambedkar, Mr. Nanakchand Rattu (his personal assistant) and Samta Sainik Dal volunteers.

Sahib was born in a remote village Sakruli of Hoshiarpur District of Punjab. After Matriculation, he went to Delhi in search of a job in 1938. Initially, to sustain himself, he did whatever came his way and succeeded in getting a job in the central government in 1941. Rattu, a laborious young man, did his B.A. in part-time and joined higher studies of M.A. In the process, as a son of the soil and

dedication and devotion in 1941 as an all-purpose Aide not only in secretarial assistance but also in the day to day personal and household chores at the residence of Babasaheb. Rattu Sahib soon won the trust of his benevolent boss with sheer dedication.

He will reach the residence of Babasaheb early in the morning on his bi-cycle before going to his own office and again in the evening after

Remembering Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu on his 103rd Birth Anniversary

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Though Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar did not born in Punjab, but in his mission, he got more support from the people of this state than any other state including Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh (Mhow, his birth place). The names of Sohan Lal Shastri, Bimal Prasad, Kartar Singh and Nanak Chand Rattu are the prominent among his followers from Punjab, who remained with him until his last breath. Among them Nanak Chand Rattu was the most prominent.

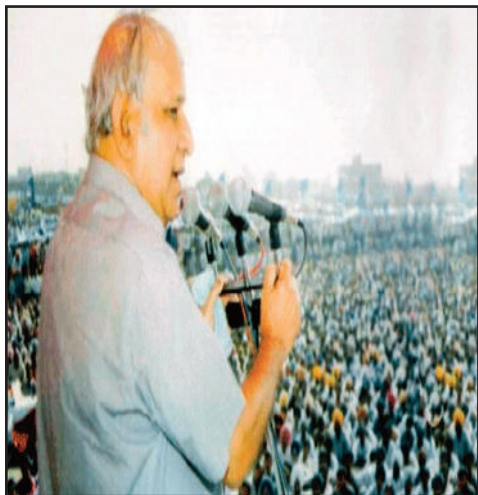
Born on February 6th, 1922, in village Sakruli of Hoshiarpur District of Punjab, Nanak Chand Rattu is best known as the most closely associated and loyal lifetime Private Secretary to Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar who served him dedicatedly for over 17 years. He was with him till late night on a day before and was the first one after Dr. Savita Ambedkar (2nd wife of Babasaheb) to notice his Mahaprinirvan on December 6th, 1956.

Nanak Chand Rattu came into the contact of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar after a year of his arrival in Delhi and remained in his service, first in person during his life, and after his Mahaprinirvan, in the form of writing his reminiscences and remembrances about him. Once he came into his Babasaheb's contact, he never missed a single day, including Sundays and official holidays, in his service before and after the government service duty hours. After the mortal journey of the messiah of downtrodden and the Chief architect of the Constitution of Independent India, Nanak Chand Rattu wrote a large number of books about the life and teachings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Some of the most widely read among them are: Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar; Little Known Facets of Dr. Ambedkar; Dr. Ambedkar: Important Messages, Sayings, Wit and Wisdom; Reminiscences and Remembrances of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar; Pioneers of Ambedkar Buddhist Movement in United Kingdom.

For his untiring service to the mission of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Nanak Chand Rattu was awarded Bheem Medal, Bheem Rattan Award, Ambedkar Centenary Award, Anand Award, Ambedkar Rattan Centenary Award, Vishvratna Dr. Ambedkar Bhushan Award and Letters of Appreciation by various national and international bodies within home and abroad. He also had embraced Buddhism with Baba Sahib. He was one of the few who accompanied the mortal remains of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Mumbai.

His writings about the life and teachings of Babasaheb are a rich treasure for those who do research on Babasaheb and his mission of the annihilation of caste. His writings provided vivid description of events related with Dr. Ambedkar's life and mission. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba Weeklies remember him reverently on his 103rd birth anniversary and pay him floral tribute.



KANSHI RAM TELLS DALITS**SPECIAL SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. KANSHI RAM JI AT 1ST WORLD DALIT CONFERENCE IN MALAYSIA ON 10TH & 11TH OCTOBER, 1998**

The Malaysian Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Datuk Sabaruddin Chikofficially opened the conference which saw the opening very colorful with Malaysian cultural and traditional dances performed by Indians, Malays and Chinese. Mr. Kanshi Ram garlanded the Portrait of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar while Dalit Sena President Ram Vilas Paswan garlanded the portrait of the great Periyar.

Mr. Kanshi Ram in his speech continued to trace the history of caste and Brahminical social order. He asserted by virtue of his vast experience that elimination of caste was impossible at this stage. He also elaborated the very purpose of creating caste. In context of caste oppression and Justice Mr. Kanshi Ram referred the role of Dr. Ambedkar. He commended the merit of 'Communal Award' which he achieved after a long struggle.

Dr. Ambedkar could not sustain the going due to the constant pressure of the mighty upper caste Hindus, Mr. Kanshi Ram told the delegates who packed the hall. 'Babasaheb Ambedkar was able to get reservation for the oppressed in legislative houses, job opportunities in government departments and also places in higher educational institutions.

I wish to stress upon that reservation is not the solution to our problem. We must become rulers instead of being ruled; givers instead of being takers, Mr. Kanshi Ram told the crowd to a thunder-

ous applause. It is my duty to prepare my people not to get reservation but to grant reservation. Who can gain reservation? Only rulers can grant reservation. Hence, I will prepare my people to become rulers. If we do not become rulers, our problems will remain forever, Kanshi Ram said.

In order to become rulers we must learn how to handle caste. Dr. Ambedkar, Nehru, Gandhi and Indira Gandhi were experts in handling caste. Nehru handled caste so well that he made Dr. Ambedkar helpless and retain the Brahminical Social Order. Indira Gandhi also handled caste well to benefit the Brahminical Social Order. Dr. Ambedkar prepared the SC/ST to handle Caste. That is how we could get many benefits from the British, he added.

Mr. Kanshi Ram expressed concern for 10 crores slum dweller, which are deprived of proper drinking water and electric supply. People migrating from villages to cities are also being denied of many facilities and end up in polluting the environment. But those refugees who came from Pakistan after independence were duly taken care of by the then government and a special budget was allocated to meet their basic necessities, he pointed out to the delegates.

According to Mr. Kanshi Ram, slum dwellers presently living in urban areas are the Dalit refugees who have migrated from the villages because of acrimony's & atrocities committed by upper caste Hindus.

They have not been able to influence the Planning Commission and the Government of India to allocate separate budget to provide them bread, clothes and shelter.

A decent life is a matter of fundamental right of every citizen in accordance with the constitutional mandate, Mr. Kanshi Ram asserted.

He advocated separate settlement for Dalit people as once formulated by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was very critical of the evil impact of caste-system in India.

Wherever the Indians went they never failed to carry with them this spreading disease he told the laughing and cheering crowd. The Indians are prepared to leave anything behind.

They leave behind their little property, small land and their huts. But they will never leave behind their caste. They carry with them wherever they go, he said. While urging the Dalits to unite he also called upon the Dalit intellectuals to shed away the approach of existing analysis only.

They should instead come with forward-looking approach in education, economic and social problems. They must also come up with some sort of effective solution programme, Mr. Kanshi Ram added. Mr. Kanshi Ram impressed upon the delegates that Dalit problem can only be solved through political power to rule the country. 'We must become the rulers instead of being ruled,' he told the cheering and applauding delegates.

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

Prem Kumar Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Punjab has the distinction of being the only state in India where caste based social exclusion was diluted because of the long spell of Muslim rule on the one hand and the most appealing egalitarian philosophy of Sikh faith and its grassroots impact on transformation of the life of downtrodden, on the other. However, caste and its resultant social negativities never ceased to torment the major section of the society. Caste discriminations in Punjab were/are more material in nature than social as in other parts of India. Prejudice takes precedence over pollution in Punjab. However, absence of pollution does not mean that Brahminism Social Order (BSO) is alien to it. On the contrary, it thrives under new structures of social subordination entrenched in material deprivation of Dalits in the state. Material depravation of the downtrodden in the state was reinforced by the customary laws of Razat-Namaas and the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900. Along with many other nonagricultural castes, Scheduled Castes people were historically deprived the right to own land. This restriction made them absolutely landless. It was because of this legal restriction that when Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia Ji after his re-



turn 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.

**Ambedkar Times**

"Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba" forums deeply appreciate the support it received from its sponsors, contributors, readers and well-wishers. A Big Thank You to all of you! With your support continuing and your kind encouragement, we promise you to serve you uninterruptedly with our utmost capacity in near future too.

Prem Kumar Chumber**Editor-in-Chief: "Ambedkar Times" and "Desh Doaba"**

Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report



Assemblyman Hoover

Honoring Two Former School Board Members

Supporting our local schools requires strong, dedicated leadership, and I am proud to recognize two individuals who have exemplified that commitment—Tim Hooley and Saul Hernandez. As they complete their service on their respective school boards, we honor their dedication to students, educators, and the broader community.

Tim Hooley served the Folsom Cordova Unified School District as a Board Member with distinction, bringing a focus on transparency and student well-being.

His background in mental health and his passion for education have made a lasting impact, ensuring that students receive the support and resources they need to succeed.

Saul Hernandez, after 12 years of service on the San Juan Unified School District Board of Education, leaves behind a legacy of thoughtful leadership and unwavering advocacy for students. His work across various district committees and his commitment to engaging with parents, staff, and the community have helped shape a stronger, more responsive school system.

I have had the privilege of knowing both Tim and Saul personally, and I can wholeheartedly vouch for their deep passion for students. Their contributions to public education have been truly impactful, and the positive effects of their work will continue to be felt for many years. I am sincerely grateful for their dedicated service and wish them nothing but success in their future endeavors.

Municipal Utilities Association

I was delighted to speak with members of the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA) about the pressing issues facing our energy and water sectors. It is imperative that the legislature advance policies that ensure every Californian has access to affordable, reliable utilities—without unnecessary regulatory burdens that drive up costs.

One of my top priorities is energy affordability. California families and businesses continue to see rising utility rates, in part due to the impact of overbearing cap-and-trade regulations. While environmental stewardship is important, we must strike a balance that protects consumers from excessive costs. I am working to ensure that our policies reflect this balance while maintaining the reliability of our energy grid. Water supply reliability is another major issue affecting our communities. We need long-term solutions to ensure a sustainable and affordable water supply for generations to come. This means investing in infrastructure, cutting red tape that delays critical projects, and ensuring that every Californian has access to affordable water rates.

Beyond these key issues, I remain open to working with CMUA members on other energy and water-related challenges impacting our state. Collaboration with local utilities is essential to crafting practical, effective policies that benefit our communities. I always appreciate the opportunity to speak with CMUA and look forward to continuing the fight for energy and water policies that put Californians first.

Community School Summit

Ensuring that students and families have access to the resources they need for success is a top priority. That's why I was excited to attend and speak at the Gateway Community Charters Community School Summit in McClellan Park. This event brought together several outstanding organizations dedicated to supporting both parents and children, highlighting the power of collaboration in education.

It was inspiring to see so many community partners working together to provide students with the tools and support they need to thrive. When schools, families, and local organizations join forces, we build stronger educational pathways that prepare students for lifelong success. As Vice-Chair of the Education Committee, I am committed to engaging with schools in my district and hearing directly from educators, parents, and community leaders. Events like this provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in our education system, helping to shape policies that truly make a difference.

Carmichael Chamber 2025 Awards

My team joined the Carmichael Chamber of Commerce for their 2025 Annual Awards Dinner, where they recognized this year's outstanding award recipients with certificates of recognition. This annual event is a highlight for the Carmichael business community, celebrating individuals and organizations that make a lasting impact on the region's success and vitality. With proceeds benefiting the San Juan Education Foundation, this event not only recognized achievement but also reinforced the Chamber's commitment to supporting

local nonprofits. I appreciate the Carmichael Chamber of Commerce for hosting such a meaningful event and for their ongoing efforts to support local businesses and organizations. Congratulations to all the honorees, and thank you for your leadership and service to the community.

Best of Orangevale

Orangevale is a community built on hard work, dedication, and a deep sense of local pride. That spirit was on full display at the Best of Orangevale 2024 Awards, where my team had the opportunity to celebrate the outstanding businesses, individuals, and organizations that make this community such a great place to live and work.

Held at the Orangevale Community Center, the event brought together local leaders, business owners, and residents for a night of recognition and appreciation. From innovative entrepreneurs to community champions, the award recipients exemplify the values that keep Orangevale thriving. Their commitment to service, resilience, and excellence is what makes this community truly special.

I want to thank the Orangevale Chamber of Commerce and all those who worked hard to make this event such a success and congratulations to this year's honorees, and thank you for your contributions to strengthening Orangevale.

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