

**Miracles of**  
**Satguru Ravidass Ji**



**Nishan Sahib of  
Ravidassia Dharam**

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**Publisher :**  
**Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Sthan**  
**Mandir**  
**Seer Goverdhanpur Banaras (U.P.)**

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**Writer : Chain Ram Suman**

**Price :**

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**Nishan Sahib of  
Ravidassia Dharam**

**Some Important facts of life Jagat  
Guru Ravidass Majharaj Ji**

- **Date of Birth :**  
Year 1377 AD (Bikrami Samvat-Magh Sudi 15,  
1433)
- **Birth Place :**  
Seer Goverdhanpur, Banaras (U.P.)
- **Name of Mother & Father :**  
Father, Respected Sh. Santokh Dass Ji  
Mother, Respected Smt. Kalsi Devi Ji
- **Name of the Grandmother and Grandfather :**  
Grandfather, Respected Sh. Kalu Ram Ji  
Name of Grandmother, Respected Smt.  
Lakhpati Ji,
- **Name of wife & son :**  
Wief Respected Respected Smt. Lona Ji  
Son Respected Sh. Vijay Dass Ji
- **Brahamlin :**  
Harh Di Sangrand 1584 Bikrami Samvat (1528)  
at Banaras

# BLESSINGS

Throughout his life Shri Guru Ravidass Ji preached for equality, liberty and truthfulness. He exhorted human beings to shun rituals and superstitions. He showed right path of worship of one God. This Dera has made all out efforts to disseminate the teachings of Guru Ji in India and foreign countries through publishing of books, gutkas, pamphlets, weekly Begumpura, documentary films, CDs, and TV programme and sammelans. This valuable book written by Shri Chain Ram Suman is another effort to enlighten the reader about greatness of Guru Ji and history of this Dera. It is hoped that the reader will be immensely benefited with this humble attempt. I feel immense pleasure in presenting this valuable book to the readers with all blessings.

*Sant Niranjan Dass,*

Gaddi-Nasheen,

Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji,

Sach Khand Ballan, Vill & P.O. Bal,

District Jalandhar. (PUNJAB, INDIA)

# FOREWORD

Satguru Ravidass Ji was born on Magh Purnima of Samvat 1433 at Seer Govardhanpur, Benaras. He lived for 151 years. He was one of the leading saints of Bhakti movement. Satguru Kabir Ji has writes in his praise –

Saadhan mein Ravidass Sant hain supach rishi  
so mania

Hindu turk duii din bane hain kachh(i) nahi  
pehchania

Guru Arjan Dev Ji writes in his glory as –

**Uuch te Uuch Namdeo samdarsi**

**Ravidass thakur ban(i) Aaiee**

Guru Ji preached equality, liberty, fraternity and universal brotherhood and worship of one God. He has given us a unique concept of ‘Begumpura’. He has stressed the need of establishment of Begumpura type of governance in the world. In such a state there will be no discrimination on the ground of caste, colour, sex, faith, country. All will be equal and there will be no worry at all. Every citizen will enjoy human rights-social, political, cultural, spiritual.

He laid the foundation of Socialistic Democratic Republic.

The United Nations has adopted the concept of 'Begumpura' of Satguru Ravidass Ji and incorporated in the preamble of its Charter.

The stupendous task of Guru Ravidass Mission was probably left to a great saint Sant Sarwan Dass Ji – the pioneer of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Sach Khand Bal, Village & P.O. Bal, district Jalandhar (Panjab) to be undertaken. A splendid 'Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir and gamut of other monuments have been constructed at Benaras by the saints of Dera Bal. As a result of their strenuous efforts Guru Ravidass Mission has been spread in India and abroad. And Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji sacrificed his life on 25-5-2010 while preaching teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji at Vienna.

More than 10 lakhs devotees had assembled on 636th Birth Anniversary of Guru Ravidass Ji at Varanasi. Ravidassia Dharam was announced in their presence by Sant Samaj in consultation with His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji Gaddin Nasheen. The tenets of new religion were read over by me with the

ashirwaad of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji.

For sometime past there has been persistent demand from foreign countries for a book on miracles and life-sketch of Satguru Ravidass Ji including history of Dera and its projects, in English language. This task was entrusted to Shri Chain Ram Suman who has completed it with all humility. He had been blessed by naam-daan by Sant Sarwan Dass Ji and is attached with this Dera since then. After his retirement as G.M from Pb. SCFC Chandigarh, he is in the sewa of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji Gaddi-Nasheen of this Dera. With the ashirwaad of Maharaj Ji he has written this valuable book in simple English.

It is hoped that the reader of this book will get immense knowledge on philosophy and miracles of Guru Ravidass Ji. He will also get glimpse of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji and vast areas of its coverage for Guru Ravidass Mission and human welfare activities.

**Sant Surinder Dass Bawa,**  
**Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji,**  
**Sach Khand, Bal. Jalandhar**

# Gratitude

All the miracles of Satguru Ravidass Ji are not found compiled in one volume. There has been persistent demand from foreign countries for sometime past that a book containing all the miracles of Satguru Ravidass Ji and history of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Bal should be made available in simple English for the readers. His Holiness Satguru Niranjn Dass Ji and Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji were kind enough to entrust this task to me. The subject was beyond my comprehension. However, with their blessings humble attempt has been made in this regard and this small book is in your hands. I humbly express my gratitude to the holy saints Baba Pipal Dass Ji, Satguru Sarwan Dass Ji, Satguru Hari Dass Ji, Satguru Garib Dass Ji, Satguru Niranjn Dass Ji Gaddi-Nasheen, Qaumi Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji and Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji for showering their mercy on me to enable me to write this book.

**Chain Ram Suman,  
155, New Lajpat Nagar,  
Noorwala Road, Ludhiana.**



# **Emergence of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji Sach Khand Bal & A great spiritual saint- Sant Pipal Dass Ji**

Satguru Ravidass Ji has said that there is no difference between saints and Almighty. Saints bless the astrayed people with NAM-simran. Among such saints, there was one highly spiritually enlightened saint named Shri 108 Sant Pipal Dass Ji Maharaj. He was born in village Gill Patti in Bathinda district. His grandfather had decided to settle permanently at Gill Patti after shifting from Kuttiwala and Joganand villages. Sant Pipal Dass Ji's earlier name was Shri Harnam Dass Ji. The parents of Sant Pipal Dass Ji were religious minded and Shri Pipal Dass Ji used to chant NAM of God under peepal tree sitting in solitude. The villagers had deep regard for him. He took up farming of his land. He received education in Gurmukhi. He was a very good scholar of Punjabi and Amrit Bani. He used to read the books which contained apathetic and

renunciatory themes. He was very fond of tree planting. The beri tree planted by him still exists in the village Gill Patti. He was married to Bibi Shobhawanti who was a religious minded lady. He was blessed with NAM by Sant Mohan Dass Ji.

They had two sons. The eldest son was ri Sewa Dass Ji and younger was Sarwan Dass Ji. Sarwan Dass was five year old when his mother Bibi Shobhawanti died. Sant Pipal Dass Ji was very sad. After some time he left Gill Patti village assigning the duty of farming to his eldest son Sewa Dass Ji. By travelling through various towns and villages, Sant Pipal Dass Ji ultimately, reached village Bal. However, he decided to settle at village Ballan in Jalandhar district. The scenic beauty and natural surroundings and *dake* trees of village Bal tempted Sant Pipal Dass Ji. He decided to settle there. Moreover, the residents of the village showed utmost regard to Sant Ji. After some days Sant Pipal Dass Ji left for Singriwal village along with Sarwan Dass Ji to bless NAM to the sangat there and to meet Shri Kaloo Ram Ji. But Sant Sarwan Dass

Ji asked his father that he had been feeling sad and depressed, so please take him back to village Ballan. Both came back and the residents showed them great respect and offered a mud house for their permanent stay there. Here Pipal Dass Ji continued worshipping Almighty and read out teachings and amritbani of Satguru Ravidass Ji to the sangat every morning and evening. There was one peepal tree in the village which was totally dried up. The sangat of the village requested Sant Pipal Dass Ji to make it green again so that the people might sit under its shade in the summer. However, Sant Pipal Dass Ji watered the tree and it became green in course of time. This incident changed the name from Shri Harnam Dass Ji to Sant Pipal Dass Ji. Mark juergens Meyer in his religious book “Religious rebels in Punjab” had beautifully described as under.

“Sant Pipal Dass established the Dera at that location, near village Ballan, around the turn of century while wandering in search of truth. When he encountered the place, he found a peepal tree which appeared to be dead, but after

he watered it, it sprang back to life. Pipal Dass understood this as a clear indication that truth was to be obtained on that spot, so he solicited nearby villagers to donate the land and began constructing his Dera. It soon became the centre of pilgrimage for lower castes and other villagers from all over central Punjab and from its inception it was a center for the veneration of Guru Ravidass.”

It was a worshipping place for the devotees of Ravidass Ji Maharaj, Sant Pipal Dass Ji used to meditate in the west of the village Ballan along with Sarwan Dass Ji during the day in solitude SachKhand Ballan has come up at this place. A school was also started at Ballan Dera where Punjabi and Amrit Bani was taught to children. They were taught the life and mission of Satguru Ravidass Ji. The sangat brought food for him. Sant Ji preached to abstain from intoxicants, not to believe in rituals and superstitions and to respect parents.. When a great social reformer Babu Mangoo Ram Moogowalia was struggling for the establishment of Ad-Dharam and collecting the historical data of

Maharishi Balmik Ji, Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Ravidass Ji and Satguru Kabir Ji, he came to meet Baba Pipal Dass Ji collecting literature on teachings and writings of Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj.

The word spoken by a Sadhu is always truthful. Whatever Sant Pipal Dass Ji uttered proved to be true. Once Sant Pipal Dass Ji visited the house of Baba Shami Ram Ji. He took pity on their poor financial condition. He told him that they get out the required grain from the kothi and it will remain full. He also asked them not to check up that the kothi is still full or not. They took out grain from the kothi for 13 months to see whether it is still full. To their amazement the kothi was still full of grain. But thereafter the kothi became empty as the grain was taken out from it.

Sant Pipal Dass Ji visited Arjanwal village to the house of Shri Waryama Ram. His wife requested Sant Ji that she had no child and her mother-in-law always taunted her and threatened her to compel her to leave the house. Baba Pipal Dass solaced her and told her that she would be

blessed with five sons and truly, five sons were born to her including Giani Joginder Singh Ji.

One day when Sant Pipal Dass was going to the village Bal to have some offerings from residents. He was in his own spiritual mood. He stopped in front of the house of Namberdar Piara Singh for alms. Smt. Mohan Kaur w/o Namberdar Piara Singh offered the offering to Sant Ji and politely requested that you were pride of the lowly, shelter for the poor and hope for the hopeless. There was no dearth of anything in my house but I have no child kindly bless me with this gift. Sant Pipal Dass Ji was moved by the request of Mohan Kaur and told her that in due course of time Almighty would bless her with five sons and advised her and her husband to worship NAM daily. Baba Ji came back to Dera. Truly after gap of some years five sons and a daughter were born to her and all the children were very nice having good manners. The entire family always praised all the saints of Dera Sach Khand Ballan. Shri Wattan Singh and Bibi Kesari Devi were living in Muradpur village and

after some time shifted to Alawalpur in Jalandhar district. Whenever Baba Pipal Dass Ji visited their residence, he always asked them to prepare saltish chapaties. When once Baba Ji went to their Muradpur house both Bibi Kesari and Wattan Singh humbly requested Baba Ji that they had no child and politely submitted that he should bless the couple with the gift of a son. At this Baba Ji asked the couple to solve five sweet patasas in water and then knead the flour with that water and prepare the food. They did so and prepared the sweet food for Sant Pipal Dass Ji which he took gladly and thereafter told the couple that Almighty will bless them with the gift of four children. Truly four sons were born to the couple. And doing such kind and munificent acts to the needy and poor, the great saint Baba Pipal Dass Ji left for his heavenly abode on Thursday, first Navrata, in 1928, to be one with the Almighty. The poet Tota Ram had rightly written-

*Jeewan ke udharne ko paapian de taarne ko  
Moorakh sudharne ko aaye sansar si  
Bachan raseele tap tej de hatheele*

*Vishe paanch jin keele shiv shankar murar si  
Unni sau pachasi bikrami si maheena assu  
Chhabbi din gaye chhad ditti gulzar si  
Veerwar din pherr time vi swer wala  
Poorva nachhattara mein pujje mokh dwar si.*

Baba Pipal Dass Ji was cremated towards east of village Ballan where the Smadh Angitha was erected. In the Dera Sach Khand Ballan, a room having minaret on its top is dedicated to the memory of the great spiritually enlightened saint. He left very rich legacy to his saintly son Sarwan Dass Ji who later established the Dera. The Dera is symbolic of spiritual highness and noble values. His Barsi is celebrated on first Naurtatra by holding Bhandara, satsang and hoisting of Dera Nishaan Sahib.

## **Shri 108 Sant Sarwan Dass Ji**

Sant Sarwan Dass Ji was born on 15th February 1895 in the family of Baba Pipal Dass Ji and Mata Sobha wanti Ji at Gill Patti Bhatinda. After the joti jot smaye of Baba Pipal Dass Ji, Sant Sarwan Dass Ji took over the Dera. He held the sangat in high esteem. He himself was a highly disciplined saint. Since the days of Baba Pipal



Dass Ji, he used to come out of the village to a distant quiet place and meditated there for longer hours. He attained divine enlightenment. He had *padam* (flower type of symbol) in his right foot. It signified his predetermined divinity. He built a Kutia of mud and sarkanda on one kanal land donated by one Shri Hazara Singh of village Bal. At this place an elegant mandir stands erected . He moulded his life to three norms SEWA-SATSANG-SIMRAN. He became famous and an example for others for noble values. He treated patients with free Ayurvedic medicines and divine blessings. Also he used to teach children. He strongly preached education among children in including girls. He liberally donated funds for schools, technical schools, colleges.

There was one raised platform in front of the kutia on which Maharaj Ji always meditated and held satsang. In course of time, Sant Hari Dass Ji joined the Dera. Later Sant Garib Dass Ji and Sant Niranjan Dass Ji dedicated themselves to the Dera and joined Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. They all joined for Sewa of the Sangat under the guid

ance of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji.

The writer has been fortunate enough to be close to Sant Sarwan Dass. He spent his night at his place at in village Bal. He always got up at 3.00 am. After bath he would sit in Samadhi. At the dawn of the day, he would go out for a long walk. Then he would come to Dera and give ayurvedic medicines to the patients, redressed individual problems of the devotees. Discussion on divinity were held with the saints and scholars. As soon on he was free from these engagements, he would start satsang. Then he would ask one or the other saint or any devotee from those present to recite amrit bani. This continued up to lunch. After lunch all devotees were requested to go to their homes. Maharaj Ji took rest for some time.

He would again start religious discourses in the after-noon. A little after sun set, Maharaj Ji daily went to spend his night at village place. There again used to be satsang. Many devotees from the Village Bal used to attend night satsang. After ardas at about 10 pm, Maharaj Ji would allow them to go to their homes. This was the

daily routine. Many devotees and saints used to recite sacred bani exhorting us to worship God and to do noble deeds. Many sang soul touching songs in melodious tunes conveying the message of Bhakti. There used to be calm and serene atmosphere. Indeed, Sant Sarwan Dass Ji became successful in creating a cult among the devotees to do good, to learn, to work hard, to spread love and affection, to make life meaningful, to do noble deeds, to be pious, to be an ideal and worthy person and above all to always remember God. He vehemently preached against rituals and superstitions. Following the foot prints of Guru Ravidass Ji, he laid stress on equality, fraternity, dignity, brotherhood. He was very practical. He asked his followers to discard traditional customs and beliefs which are inimical to the growth of human beings. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji was highly distressed when he ever heard of oppression of the weak. He shouldered the cause of the poor and the down-trodden and dedicated his life to the welfare of humanity. He wanted their unity and that inspired them to struggle for regaining their

human rights and dignity.

In those days there were stray incidents of oppression and insulting the poor on the pretext of the religion, religions books, religious place, bani, Bhagat, Guru and the like. He was a great visionary saint. As if he had a premonition of future course of incidents, he held the opinion that Ravidassias should have their own supreme place of worship- the Ultimate Place of Pilgrimage. He shared his views with other leading contemporary saints, scholars, intelligentsia, dignitaries. All supported his opinion. But they extended moral support only. The onus to build a temple on the birth place of Guru Ravidass Ji fell on Sant Sarwan Dass Ji alone. He traced the birth place of Satguru Ravidass Ji at Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. The construction of 7-storey grand temple was completed during his life-time itself. His dream was fulfilled. Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi is the supreme gift he has given to the humanity. Today pilgrims from the world over visit this holy temple and seek blessings of Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji.

Sant Sarwan Dass Ji fell ill. In the last

satsang he held on 11th June 1972, he asked to recite

Juggan de jug beet jaange  
Tainu milni na manas dehi  
Juggan de jug beet jaange

After the satsang he was taken to American Hospital at Ludhiana where he left for his heavenly abode on 11th June 1972 at about 12 p.m. Huge number of followers from far and near attended his cremation on 13-6-1972 in the premises of the Dera. His body was placed in pyre. It was lit by Sant Hari Dass Ji and Sant Garib Dass Ji. After a short while when the flames engulfed the pyre, a sudden three four feet high gush of stream of blood flowed from his body out of the pyre. It was an unprecedented phenomenon. Probably, he conveyed a message for us all for sacrifice for the poor people.

## **Shri 108 Sant Hari Dass Ji**

Ravidass bhanai jo jaanai so jaan(u)  
Sant anant(i) antar nahi

Satguru Ravidass Ji says that there is no difference between an saint and the God. The saints enlighten human beings through worship

of God. They get them rid of rituals and superstitions. Sant Hari Dass Ji was peace-loving, social reformer, visionary and divinely enlightened saint. He was born in 1885 in the family of revered father Hukam Chand Ji and mother Taabi Ji at village Garha near Jalandhar. His parents were religious minded. He was still a child when his parents expired. He took up occupation of shoe-making and painting. Since beginning he had leaning of hearing kirtan, singining kirtan and the company of Holy persons. He became free from worldly responsibilities after the marriage of his sister Bibi Punna Devi at village Chaheru. He cherished to find an enlightened guru.

Param paras gur bhetyay purab likhit lilat

He heard fame of Baba Pipal Dass Ji. He visited village Bal. In those days Satguru Pipal Dass Ji was staying in a small kutia. One day when Sant Hari Dass Ji visited Dera, Baba Pipal Dass Ji was not there. Sewadars told him that Baba Pipal Dass Ji had gone to village Haripur. Sant Hari Dass Ji followed and reached Haripur. At that time Baba Pipal Dass Ji was speaking in a satsang. When he looked at Baba Pipal Dass

Ji he felt blissful. He felt that he had found an enlightened guru. Sant Hari Dass Ji prayed for naam-daan. Sant Pipal Dass ji told that he would come to his village a day after and that he would be initiated. Baba Pipal Dass Ji visited village Garha a day after and blessed Hari Dass Ji with naam-daan. For most of the time Sant Hari Dass Ji remained absorbed in meditation. He used to visit Dera frequently and stayed there for days together. He also developed affection and regard for Sant Sarwan Dass Ji.

Baba Pipal Dass Ji left for his heavenly abode on 26 Assu Thursday Bikrami Samvat 1985. Sant Hari Dass Ji was very sad. Baba Pipal Dass Ji had told Sant Sarwan Dass Ji that he had blessed Hari Dass Ji with the Naam Daan and that BHEKH be also blessed later. He would also come to Dera permanently. He also prophesied that Hari Dass Ji will be an enlightened saint and that he will enlighten many others. After some time he organised a Sant Sammelan at village GARHA which was attended by Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Muslim Faqir Sayyad Ghulam Jalani and many other saints participated. Sant

Sarwan Dass Ji exhorted the human beings to chant Name of God to enlighten our souls to avoid pains of Birth and Death. Faqir Sayyad Ghulam Gilani said in his speech that Sant Sarwan Dass has the Noor of Allah on his face. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji blessed BHAGWA DRESS to Sant Hari Dass Ji. Since then Sant Hari Dass Ji freed himself from worldly entanglements and belongings. He learnt Gurmukhi from Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. He studied amritbani.

Sant Hari Dass Ji was fond of planting trees in the Dera. The mango trees planted and watered by him increase beauty of the Dera even today. He used to teach the children in the Pathshala in the Dera. He often used to say that if 'Mata shatruo pita vairi jo na balo pathita'. The parents who do not impart education to their children are their enemies. Sant Hari Dass Ji was plain speaking. He spoke the language the children understood. He loved children very much. Sant Hari Dass Ji preached satsangat, Bhajan Simran, ekta, smaanta, Bhaichara.

On the direction of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, he laid foundation stone of Shri Guru Ravidass



Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Benaras on 14 June 1965. This is a 7-storey temple today. Devotees from all corners of India and abroad throng to this sacred place. Sant Hari Dass Ji stayed at Benaras for some days after laying the foundation stone. Imli tree under which Guru Ravidass Ji used to hold satsang was dry. Sant Hari Dass Ji watered this sacred tree so long as he remained there. The imli tree has grown up to a big green tree. Pilgrims bow before this imli tree also.

After Joti Jot samai of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji on 11 June 1972 Sant Hari Dass Ji became third Gaddi Nasheen of the Dera. He started construction of temple in the sweet memory of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji on 10th August 1972. It was completed in short span of period. It was inaugurated on 11th June 1974. Idol of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji was installed in the temple on that day. He used to say that if Sant Sarwan Dass Ji had survived for 10 more years, he would also have become a saint. He built a 5-storey temple in a sweet memory of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji at Dera Bal. Satsang Hall was also constructed

in the Dera. He always preached for naam-simran and abstaining from intoxicants.

He used to read out to the sangat  
Sangat kariye saadh ki bandion kare khuda  
Loha kanchan hot hai dekho paras laa.  
Dekho paras laa su mat kar mano haasaa  
Sabh ban chandan hot hai jahan bawan ka vaasaa.  
Keh(i) girdhar kavi gai nadi sansei ki tariye  
Wadde bhaag jab hoi Santan di sangat kariye.

Sant Hari Dass Ji often said that this world is musafirkhana and mithya.

Jinde meriay ni tera koi nahi, aiwen koor  
havelian mallian ni () chhad dena ih des ih  
maapian da phir aan na dekhengi galiyan ni ()  
charkha tand na pavna mile tainu, jadon kant ne  
chithian ghalliyan ni () Tuun vi ronw di jaawengi  
aiss shehron jiwon agliyan rondian challian ni ()

Shri Gurnam Chand Judge had 3 daughters. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji blessed. He got 2 sons also. He visited Dera in 1973. His 3 daughters and one son Bobby went to the nearby flowing canal. In the course of washing hands in the running water in the canal, his son Bobby fell into

the canal and drowned. After hearing this news Smt. Gurbachan Kaur fell unconscious. Sant Hari Dass Ji went to the canal with the devotees to find out the boy. After search for one hour, the boy was seen floating at a distance of 1km. in the canal. The boy was dead. The body was brought to the temple and placed before the idol of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. The parents of the boy prayed to Sant Hari Dass Ji to have mercy. Sant Hari Dass Ji humbly prayed to Sant Sarwan Dass Ji to help and infuse breath in the boy. The boy was then sent to Dr. Shingara Singh at Jalandhar. The doctor examined the boy. The doctor told the boy that the boy was alright. The entire episode was told to the doctor. The doctor told them that it was the mercy and blessings of the saints that the boy is alive even though he drowned and floated in the canal for one hour. In the meantime, the boy came to senses. The doctor asked the boy as to what had happened. The boy told that sant khoondi de naal mainu bechaunde si, tun ithe ki karan aya si. In response to the prayer of Sant Hari Dass Ji, Sant Sarwan Dass Ji saved the boy.

Sant Hari Dass Ji left for his heavenly abode on 6th February, 1982 at 11.00 am. His Barsi is celebrated on 6th February each year with all devotion.

## **Shri 108 Sant Garib Dass Ji**

Sant Garib Dass Ji became fourth Gaddi-Nasheen of the Dera. He inherited a rich legacy of spirituality as well as social service to humanity from his predecessor saints of the Dera. He was born in the family of revered father Nanak Chand Ji and revered mother Har Kaur Ji at village JALBHEY near Adampur in district Jalandhar in 1925. Sant Niranjana Dass Ji was appointed as his assistant. He continued the activities of the Dera, started by Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, with greater fervour and devotion. He was a qualified vaid. He treated patients. Even those patients who were suffering from serious diseases were cured.

He talked very little and always served the sangat. He used to say that speaking too much is not necessary in SEWA and SIMRAN. He first visited England in 1985 along with Sant Rama Nand Ji. The foundation stone of famous

Guru Ravidass temple at Birmingham (U.K) was laid by him. It was also inaugurated by him. Foundation stone of many other Guru Ghars in India and abroad were laid by him. He blessed large number of foreign devotees with *naam daan*. He involved younger generation with Guru Ravidass Mission. He visited U.K. six times, America thrice and Canada once only.

His greatest contribution to human welfare was setting up of Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Hospital, at Koopur-Dhaypur (Kathar) in district Jalandhar dedicated to the memory of his Guru Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. Throughout his life he served patients. By establishing the hospital on 22nd October, 1982, he ensured care of the poor patients even after his death. Starting 'Begumpura Shehar' weekly was equally a great step in the direction of spreading Guru Ravidass Mission to the masses.

He laid foundation stone of Sant Sarwan Dass Memorial Teaching Block at Guru Ravidass ITI College, Phagwara. He built a model Sarai for stay of the pilgrims in the Dera. A grand 'Sant Sarwan Dass Memorial Gate' was built jointly

by Sangat of village BAL and the Dera by him on Jalandhar-Pathankot Road, Bal. He got it inaugurated from Sant Ishar Dass Ji, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar, on 11th June 1994.

On 11th June 1994 (the Barsi Smagam day of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji) he told the sangat that a big smagam will be held at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Varanasi in the end of June 1994, and that all should accompany him. This journey was undertaken by rail from 16th June to 23rd June 1994 in which many of his followers from foreign countries also participated. It was very hot and humid in Varanasi. When the sangat asked Maharaj Ji why he chose such a weather to undertake this pilgrimage, he replied that “I wanted to show you conditions under which we worked to construct this temple.” A hugely attended Dharmik Smagam was held on this occasion. Those people who were part of this trip will never forget this pilgrimage.

Only one month after returning from Varanasi, he fell ill. He was admitted in a Jalandhar Hospital. He left for his heavenly

abode on 23rd July 1994 at 2.55 PM. His body was kept for “Antim Darshan” in Sant Hari Dass Satsang Hall from 23rd to 25th July 1994 when he was cremated. Thousands of people bade him tearful farewell.

## **Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji**

Sant Niranjana Dass Ji became gaddinasheen of the Dera on 25-7-1994. He is a visionary, a thinker, steadfast in his convictions, divinely emancipated, perfect in simplicity, suave, accessible and truly a saint of the common man. His heart beats and soul vibrates with the sangat. He is dynamic in approach. He embodies the rich legacy of Baba Pipal Dass Ji, Swami Sarwan Dass Ji, Sant Hari Dass Ji, Sant Garib Dass Ji and his former Wazir Qaum de Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji. Whosoever bows at his feet with purity of mind, he feels himself exalted.

He was born in the family of revered father Sadhu Ram Ji and mother Rukmani Ji on 6th January 1942 at Ramdasspur (near Alawalpur) in district Jalandhar. His parents were devotees of Baba Pipal Dass Ji and Swami Sarwan Dass

Ji. They often visited this Dera and attended satsang. Child Niranjan Dass also used to come with his parents to the Dera. Swami Sarwan Dass Ji was very happy to talk with child Niranjan Dass.

Sant Niranjan Dass Ji started staying with Sant Sarwan Dass Ji at the age of 8 years. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji once asked Shri Sadhu Ram the name of this boy. He told that his name is Niranjan Dass but he is very lazy in doing work. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji said that he has named him as HAWAII GIR. This boy is not lazy but he will be even faster than wind. Shri Sadu Ram thanked Satguru Ji. Since then when Maharaj Ji called Hawaii Gir, he would come running at once.

Years gone by. Hawaii Gir had grown young. He had become more responsible now. He was very prompt in doing work. He was looking after the arrangements in the Dera himself.

Sant Niranjan Dass Ji has visited UK, USA, Canada, Spain, Holland, Italy, France, Germany, Dubai, Greece and a host of other countries along with Sant Rama Nand Ji. He laid foundation stones of Guru Ghars in all these coun



tries.

As a Gaddi Nasheen, with the assistance of Sant Rama Nand Ji, he took keen interest in developmental work at the Dera, Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Hospital, Kathar, Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Varanasi, Begumpura Shehar weekly paper, Sant Sarwan Dass Model School Phagwara, Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Eye Hospital, Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan, Guru Ravidass Mandir at Sirsagarh (Haryana), Guru Ravidass Mandir at Puna, Baba Pipal Dass Ji Sadhna Sthal, Gill Patti Bhatinda and other social activities. 31 Kalshes were installed at Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Varanasi. Four storey building was constructed for stay and additional land was purchased at Varanasi for the convenience of the pilgrims. Europeans devotees offered a Golden Palki for Kashi Mandir. Gold Plating of central dome of the Kashi temple was completed and inaugurated on 30th January, 2010, the auspicious occasion of 633th Jayanti of Guru Ravidass Ji.

A special train is run from Jalandhar to

Varanasi and back every year on Jyanti Purb for the convenience of the pilgrims since 2000. The Special Train Yatra is every body's wish. It is very interesting journey.

During all these years, Qaumi Shaheed Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji played key role in running the affairs of the Dera and completion of the projects under the patronage of Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji has also been a big help in managing routine day to day affairs. After the assassination of Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji, Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji extended whole-hearted support with fervour to Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. Virtually he occupied the place in the hierarchy of the Dera which was earlier held by Sant Rama Nand Ji. It was the farsightedness and vision of Sant Niranjan Dass Ji that in the changed scenario he boldly supported announcement of Ravidassia religion by the Sant Samaj and installed 'Amrit Bani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji' at supreme Ravidassia pilgrimage – Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi immediately. The declaration of new

Ravidassia religious has been received by the Ravidassia community, wherever they are, with open arms. This step has created instantly self-respect, liberty and dignity in a Ravidassia. Now he is no longer dependent on others for *puja path*. His own fearless God whom the poor are so dear is all pervading and all powerful.

Neechai uooch karai meraa gobind

Kahoo te na darai.

He is as strong as rock in going ahead for Shri Guru Ravidass Mission. Entire Ravidassia community is with him.

## **Qaum de Amar Shaheed**

### **Shri 108 Sant Rama Nand Ji**

Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji was a unique person of Ravidassia community. His thoughts were unique, his actions were unique and his shahadat was unique. So far there is none in the history who has spread Guru Ravidass Mission to the extent he has done. He was crusader in taking Guru Ravidass Mission to new heights. He traveled extensively in all major countries of the world with Sant Garib Dass Ji and Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. He recited hoarse the bani and teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji. As if he had magic powers, when he took his seat on the stage, there was pin-drop silence among the audience and no one would leave the pandaal till the end. His explanations of inner meanings of amrit bani were immensely appealing. Great was the task of spreading Guru Ravidass Mission in

the world and greater still was his zeal to do it. He was poet, a writer, singer, engineer, agriculturist, teacher, vaid, administrator, speaker, builder and above all a spiritually enlightened saint. He worked tirelessly for uniting masses in the spirit of

satsangat mil raheeye maadho  
jaise madhup makheera.

He valued the writers, orators, singers, and others who made significant contribution in field of Guru Ravidass Mission and Dr. Ambedkar Mission. He honoured more than 51 such distinguished persons with gold medals.

Sant Rama Nand Ji was born in the family of his revered father Mehanga Ram and mother Jeet Kaur Ji on 2nd February, 1952 at Ramdasspur near Alawalpur in district Jalandhar. He was a *tyaag murti* since boyhood. He graduated himself from Doaba college Jalandhar in 1972. He liked company of the holy persons. Members of his family did not like it. For most of his time he remained busy in SIMRAN. However, after some time, Sant Hari Dass Ji initiated him. He was blessed with Bhekh by Sant Garib

Dass Ji. Whenever Brahmleen Sant Garib Dass Ji and Gaddi Nasheen Sant Niranjan Dass Ji visited a foreign country, Sant Rama Nand Ji always accompanied them. He was instrumental in inspiring foreign Sangat to Naam Simran. The audience were, indeed, spell bound while listening his satsang.

He was an able administrator. He was the chief executive of the Dera. Under the guidance of Sant Niranjan Dass Ji, he ran the dera management most efficiently. He himself monitored the performance of each project.

Sant Rama Nand Ji will be ever remembered for his unparalleled contribution is dissemination of teachings and Bani of Guru Ravidass Ji throughout the world. He was a tireless preacher. He could handle the stage of lacs of audience. He was soft spoken but strict in his principles.

He was editor of 'Begumpura Shehar' weekly and an award was conferred on him by Bhartiya Dalit Sahitya Academy for his contribution to Dalit Sahitya. He was first in history to read out his speech on Guru Ravidass Ji in Brit

ish Parliament on 28th May, 2007. He was a scholar of Bani.

The immediate impact of *Shihadat* of Sant Rama Nand Ji was that the entire *Ravidassia qaum* in India was united at one platform. When we make indepth critical study of past history of Ravidassia community, we find that these people have since beginning been making efforts to regain their lost glory. They had carried out strong movements as detailed below for their liberty:

<u>State</u>	<u>Name of movement</u>
Panjab	Ad-Dharam Movement
Uttar Pradesh	Jatav Movement
Madhya Pradesh	Ahirwal Movement
Chhattisgarh	Satnami Movement
Andhra & Karnatka	Madiga Movement

All these movements were started for separate identity of Ravidassia Qaum. In foreign countries the Ravidassias have already got registered their community as Ravidassia and they have already got their *Har(i) da nishan* registered with the authorities concerned. There were massive protests and demonstrations in all

countries of the world against the assassination of Sant Rama Nand Ji. Entire world now recognizes that there is Ravidassia Qaum.

In this background there was introspection, contemplation and deliberations by the Ravidassia community all over the world. The result of all this exercise was that Ravidassia Religion and ‘Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji’ as religious book were announced on 30th January, 2010 by the Sant Samaj in the presence of more than 10 lakhs of Ravidassia followers at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi, on the auspicious occasion of 633rd Jyanti of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji. It was vociferously welcomed by all the followers present at the function. They shouted loud slogans “Jo bole so nirbhai, Satguru Ravidass Maharaj ki Jai”. Utmost happiness prevailed among Ravidassias in the world. ‘Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji’ was installed immediately at Shri Guru Ravidass janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. All people could have *darshan* of Guru



Ravidass Ji in the full moon on that night. This phenomenon was never witnessed before. It is a good omen for announcement of Ravidassia Religion.

## **Sangeet Academy**

As Amar Shaheed Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji was expert in Sangeet, he established Guru Ravidass Sangeet Academy in the Dera. It was inaugurated on 14-12-2008 at 1.00 pm by His Holiness Sant Niranjan Dass Ji in the presence of Sant Rama Nand Ji. Large number of children and *sangeet premis* were present. First song sang at the academy was a classical song. It was sung at the instance of Sant Rama Nand Ji. Regular classes are running in the academy under the principalship of a highly experienced music teacher. It may be mentioned that children were taught sangeet in the darbar of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji during his times. Now the sangeet teaching has been regularized by setting up Guru Ravidass Sangeet Academy. He identified missionary singers and writers. They were conferred Gold Medals for their contribution to Guru Ravidass Mission 'Amrit Bani Shri Guru

Ravidass Ji' and 'Begumpura Sehar ko naon' programmes prepared in his voice are telecast weekly from Jalandhar Doordarshan. This Sangeet Academy will go a long way in spreading of message of Amritbani.

He closely supervised and monitored construction of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi, Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Hospital Kathar, Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan Bal, Guru Ravidass Mandir and Sant Sarwan Dass Model School Hadiabad, Phagwara, Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Eye Hospital Bal, Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir Sirsagarh (Haryana), Karam Sthali Baba Pipal Dass Ji and Janam Sthali of Swami Sarwan Dass Ji, Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir Katraj, Pune. At times he himself would start labour work. He used to say, "I should do maximum seva of Guru Ji. Who knows I may or may not get time afterwards."

*"Jihra sama maharaj ji di seva wich lag jawe ohi changa hai, ki pata phir sama mile na mile".*

Sant Niranjana Dass Ji and Sant Rama

Nand Ji proceeded from Dera Sachkhand Bal on 17-4-2009 on tour to European countries as a further step for dissemination of Guru Ravidass Mission. They traveled as below:

Italy	17-4-2009	to	29-4-2009
Germany	30-4-2009	to	1-5-2009
Greece	2-5-2009	to	7-5-2009
France	8-5-2009	to	9-5-2009
Spain	9-5-2009	to	12-5-2009
Portugal	13-5-2009	to	6-5-2009
Germany	17-5-2009	to	22-5-2009
Austria	23-5-2009	to	2-6-2009

They spread teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji and held religious discourses in Italy, Germany, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal. Finally reached Austria on 23-5-2009. They stayed for the night with a devotee Shri Kishan Pal. In the morning on the unfortunate day on 24-5-2009, they took tea and departed. They took break-fast with some other family. At about noon they reached Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Vienna where the smagam was to be held. Shri Guru Granth Sahib was placed on a raised platform at a high place. Sant Niranjana Dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji

sat on the floor. The function had hardly started when Sikh militants shot at Sant Rama Nand Ji and Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. Both the saints were wounded seriously. Streams of blood was flowing from their bodies. Sant Rama Nand was slowly chanting Guru Ravidass Naam as if he wanted still more time to propagate the teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji. He became silent. He left for his heavenly abode on 25-5-2009 at about 00.15 a.m. The voice of a great saint who had spread Guru Ravidass Mission in the entire world had been silenced. Sant Niranjan Dass Ji survived.

Sant Niranjan Dass Ji along with body of Sant Rama Nand Ji flew from Vienna on 3-6-2009 by a special chartered plane and reached New Delhi at 5.00 AM on 4-6-2009. They reached Dera Bal in helicopter on 4-6-2009 at 8.00 AM. His body was placed near main gate of Shri Guru Ravidass satsang Bhawan for *antim darshan* by the public. Lacs of persons from entire Punjab, HP, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, UP and foreign countries traveled to Ballan to have *antim darshan* of their beloved saint and

who was so dear to them. They were sobbing, shrieking, and weeping in pain of death of Sant Rama Nand Ji. Large number of dignitaries had also arrived. The body was cremated at 4.00 PM. His Angitha Sahib has been erected adjacent to that of Brahmleen Sant Garib Dass Ji near Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan.

He has sacrificed his life for Guru Ravidass Mission. He has left a message for us all-

‘sat sangat mil raheeye maadho Jaise madhup makheera.’

Sant Rama Nand Ji has become brahmleen in Vienna attack. The place of his martyrdom - the place where he shed his blood for Guru Ravidass Mission – the place where he was just to remind the devotees the teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji- has been raised to a platform. A life size portrait of Qaum de Amar Shaheed has been placed at that platform. The pilgrims pay their homage to great saint at this holy place. The marks of bullets in the walls have been preserved to remind the visitors the heinous action of assassins. Physically he is not with us. But

his thought and teachings will continue to guide and inspire us to take the caravan to the destination before we sleep.

## **Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji**

Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji is simple, truthful, accessible and visionary. He has assimilated traditions and legacy of the dera saints. Even in his young age, he displays maturity in his dealings. After Sant Rama Nand Ji, Bawa Ji, as he is lovingly called, is the Chief Executive of the Dera. He oversees all the projects run by the Dera.

Bawa Ji was born in the family of his revered father Gurdas Ram Ji and mother Bibi Gurbachan Kaur Ji on 14th March 1973 at village Suchi Pind in district Jalandhar. His parents are ideal disciples of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji.

Once his mother Bibi Gurbachan Kaur fell seriously ill and was admitted in hospital. There was no hope of her survival. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji visited Bibi Gurbachan Kaur in the hospital. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji blessed and told his

mother “tera jo bacha hai eh mar javega. Tu tandrust ho javengi. Baad vich do hor larke paida honge.” Bibi Ji replied, “Satguru Ji bada larka tuhada hovega.”

Thereafter, Bawa Ji was born. He was offered to the dera. When he was 5 years old Sant Hari Dass Ji visited their house at Suchi Pind. *Uhna Bawa Ji nu bhagven kapre pehna ditte.* As a student he often visited Dera. Sant Hari Dass Ji, Sant Garib Dass Ji, Sant Niranjn Dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji all blessed and loved him very much.

He graduated himself from Doaba college Jalandhar in 1995-96. After his study he joined Dera. He learnt jaap, indepth meanings of Amritbani, satsang, writing books from Sant Rama Nand Ji. When Sant Niranjn Dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji went on tour to foreign countries for months together for dissemination of Guru Ravidass Mission, he managed Dera affairs to their satisfaction.

After the Martyrdom of Sant Rama Nand Ji, he successfully filled the void. He is always in the seva of Shri 108 Sant Niranjn Dass Ji and

the sangat.

## **Ravidassia Dharam**

After the martyrdom of Sant Rama Nand Ji entire Ravidassia community was agitated. They felt leaderless. For many years there was urge of Ravidassia community for a separate identity. Sant Rama Nand Ji had already pointed out in his speech delivered in the House of Commons, U.K on 28-03-2007 as below;

“Now worldwide there is strong urge among Guru Ji’s followers of establishing a separate identity of their own. But the pre-requisites for any people to establish a separate identity are-(i) Common Name, (ii) Common Guru, (ii) Common Place of Pilgrimage, (iv) Common Religious Book, (v) Common Religious Symbol and a (vi) Common method of Salutation. It is for the intellectuals, thinkers and various religious institutions to debate over these issues and take a well considered decision. The earlier it is done, better it will be for the community.”

Now the slogan of separate identity was on everybody’s tongue. All had focused their eyes on Dera Sach Khand Bal. All the Sant Samaj



was contacted by the Dera. Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji played a leading role in introducing separate religion and separate religious book. The Sant Samaj decided to launch Ravidassia Dharam and instal ‘Amrit Bani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji’ as religious book. Accordingly, Ravidassia Dharam, ‘Amrit Bani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji’ and Qaumi Nishaan HAR(i) were announced on 30th January 2010 in the presence of more than ten lakhs of devotees, from India and abroad, on the auspicious occasion of 633rd Guru Ravidass Jyanti Day at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi.

The entire Ravidassia community in India and abroad have welcomed the announcement of Ravidassia Religion and ‘Amrit Bani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji’. All are thankful to the Sant Samaj for taking this historic decision. Liberty and dignity of Ravidassia *qaum* lies in Ravidassia Religion. Let us all follow our own religion in its true spirit.

**Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Ji**

## Maharaj

This is the religious book of Ravidass Religion. It has been formed by the Sant Samaj of Ravidassia *qaum* after thorough research of Guru Ravidass Bani available at present. It was announced by the Sant Samaj to the followers of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj throughout the world on the auspicious occasion of 633rd Birth Anniversary of Guru Ravidass Ji at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. It may be clarified this religious book contains bani of Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj Ji only. On the title page symbol Har(i) adorns the holy book. It has one photo of Guru Ravidass Ji and second photo of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. Then there is a list of Principles of Ravidassia Religions. Thereafter, there is mention of main particulars of Guru Ravidass Ji. It contains 140 shabads, 40 *pade*, *painti akhri*, *bani haftawar*, *bani pandran tithi*, *baran maas updesh*, *dohra*, *saand bani*, *anmol vachan (milni de samen)*, *laawaan*, *suhag ustat*, *manglachar*, 230 *salok*. There are 177

pages in all of the book. It has been installed in majority of the States in India and in major countries of the world. This holy book has been widely accepted and owned. Let us all worship it.

## **Main Smagams of Dera Sachkhand Bal**

Maghi	14th January
Barsi of Sant Hari Dass Ji	6th February
Shahidi Day of Sant Rama Nand Ji	25th May
Barsi of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji	11th June
Barsi of Sant Garib Dass Ji	23th July
Flag hoisting ceremony	Pehla naurata

In addition to above functions, Baisakhi and Barsi of Baba Pipal Dass Ji are also celebrated. Special satsang congregations are held on each Sunday and each Sankranti. Maharaj Niranjan Dass Ji blesses the devotees with Naam Daan (Initiation) every Wednesday. On these days, large member of devotees pay visit to the Dera and seek blessings of His Holiness Sant

Niranjan Dass Ji.

**Shri Guru Ravidass Janam  
Asthan Mandir  
Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi  
(U.P.)**

Shri Guru Ravidass Ji was born in Varanasi then ‘Kashi’ in the year 1377 AD (Bikrami Samvat-Magh Sudi 15, 1433). But even after six centuries of Guru’s Ji’s lifetime, his followers did not have any central place connected with his name till second half of twentieth century. One of the probable reasons could be that after the lifetime of Guru Ji, no one made any effort to preserve his legacy.

There is detailed account of the kind of beautiful palaces in which Shri Guru Ravidass Ji used to live in the book “Anant Dass ki Parchayan” when Rani Jhalanbai came to meet Guru Ji. Anant Dass was the grandson of Sant

Pipa Ji- a contemporary saint of Guru Ravidass Ji. Therefore, his account can be believed to be most authentic. But it is also true that after the lifetime of Guru Ji no trace of any place accredited to the memory of Guru Ji was found in Benaras where he is believed to have lived for about 151 years. This remains a mystery of history.

The sacred task of perpetuating the memory of Guru Ji at Benaras and giving a befitting memorial in his name was undertaken by the spiritual, visionary and revolutionary saint Shri 108 Sant Sarwan Dass Ji of Dera Sach Khand Ballan. He made strenuous efforts to make Bani of Guru Ravidass Ji popular among the socially backward and downtrodden people. He thought his job incomplete until the place where Guru Ravidass Ji gave the sermon of Begupura was traced out and a suitable monument built there. Swami Sarwan Dass Ji assigned this task to a selected group of people. The group went to Varanasi and surveyed the area near the Benaras Hindu University. The Imlee tree and other indicators confirmed a location in a village Seer

Goverdhanpur, in the outskirts of Varanasi near BHU, as the birthplace of Guru Ravidass Ji, the plot of land was purchased and no time was lost to start construction of an impressive temple. The foundation stone of this Mandir was laid on Monday the 14th June 1965 on Ashad Sankranti day by Sant Hari Dass Ji, along with a large number of devotees of Dera Bal, specially deputed by Sant Sarwan Dass Ji for the purpose.

Once the foundation stone was laid, there was no looking back. A large number of Sewadars of the Dera were sent to Varanasi under the stewardship of Sant Garib Dass Ji to undertake and complete the construction. The place was undeveloped, without an approach passage and it was a Herculean task to manually carry construction material to the site from a considerable distance. Notwithstanding, the devotion to the Guru, dedication, the cause and aspiration of the Sewadars surmounted all this. In this endeavour, help came from public at large from within as well as from outside the country. The Guru's devotees residing in U.K. and other foreign countries were also keen to see the project com

pleted and contributed according to their respective individual capacities. The first phase of the temple was completed in the year 1972. Many saints from various Deras of Punjab and also some prominent figures of the community accompanied Sant Garib Dass Ji to Benaras for the inauguration ceremony on 22nd February 1974. A Murti of Guru Rvidass Ji was installed in the Mandir on this occasion.

Simultaneously, a Murti of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji was installed as a token of recognition of his contribution in giving followers of Guru Ji an elegant Mandir at the birthplace of Guru Ji.

It has become a mission for the saints of Dera Sachkhand Ballan to develop in every possible way this Janam Sthan Mandir so that it acquires the status and magnificence which a Mandir at the birthplace of Guru Ravidass Ji deserves. The Trust undertook additional construction work at the Mandir in the year 1993 and the completion of second phase of Mandir culminated in the installation of a golden Kalsh, atop the Mandir dome on 7.4.1994 by Babu Kanshi Ram Ji, in the presence of Sant Garib Dass Ji, other saints and a large number of devo

tees.

Shri Guru Rvidass Birth Anniversary is celebrated every year on Magh Purnima at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi with great pomp and show. Lacs of devotees from within and outside the country visit this sacred Mandir to pay their obeisance. For the convenience of the pilgrims a special train is arranged from Jalandhar City to Varanasi every year from 2000 A.D. onwards.

The followers of Guru Ravidass wish to see the birth place temple of their Guru to be a magnificent temple. For this purpose they make generous donations. As a result of this the façade of the Mandir was covered with white marble in the first phase.

Guru Ji's followers living in all parts of the world are sentimentally attached with this Mandir now. In the year 2007, the followers from Europe expressed a desire to Maharaj Ji that they wished to donate a Swarn Palki (golden palanquin) as a token of their love and devotion for their Guru. Maharaj Ji readily agreed to their



request. Thus a Swarn Palki was taken in a Shobha Yatra (religious procession) which started from Dera Sachkhand Ballan and culminated at Kashi Mandir, receiving overwhelming response from Guru Ji's followers in all the towns through which it passed in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and U.P.

Then came the historic moment for our community when Shri 108 sant Niranjana Dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji thought of gold plating the whole Mandir. Earlier 31 small and big domes had been decorated with gold Klashes on 625th Birth Anniversary of Guru Ji.

The inaugural ceremony for gold plating the Mandir had taken place in the year 2008 on the occasion of Jyanti of Guru Ji. Fulfilling the dream of Sant Rama Nand Ji the top dome of the Mandir was bedecked with gold and inaugurated on the Jyanti celebrations in the year 2009.

The affairs of the Mandir are managed by Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir Public Charitable Trust, which makes continuous endeavours to enhance the facilities at the Mandir for the convenience of the pilgrims. As a result

of these efforts, a big Langar Hall and a Yatri Niwas have been constructed.

Today Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir Varanasi is known worldwide among followers of Guru Ji. It is Mecca for them, a symbol of Dalit Identity and Dalit awakening.

## **Swaran Palki**

The sangat of Birmingham had decorated Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan, at Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji Sachkhand Bal with a Golden Palki. It was brought from Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir, Phagwara to Dera Sachkhand Bal in a well attended procession on 14-2-2007. The sangat from U.K. had also attended this procession. Followers of Guru Ji living in the areas adjoining to the route of the procession welcomed the sacred Palki devotionally at many places. The sacred Golden Palki was garlanded profusely by them. The participants in the procession were served tea, snacks, fruits, namkeen and sweets. The sangat has its darshan daily at Dera Bal.

Like other followers, the devotees of Europe were also very enthusiastic for decoration

of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. They cherished to adorn Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, with a golden palki. A fascinating big golden palki was prepared. Sant Rama Nand Ji knew that the sangat has to be motivated to donate gold for the Swarn Palki. He himself composed an inspiring song addressed to the sadhsangat as below:

**Chalo benaras sadhsangat ji,  
ik itihis rachauna haai  
Guru Ravidass de mandir nuu  
sone de vich marhauna hai**

**Pak pavittar dharti jithe,  
Guru Ravidass Ji aaye ne  
Qaum laii satgur ne jithe  
lakhn kasht uthaii ne  
Waang tarian us dharti da,  
har chirag chamkauna aye**

**Kasam assan nuu guru Ravidass de  
sachian sewadaran di  
Kasam assan nuu swami Sarwan Dass de**

par upkaraan di  
Jinna chir kam sire nahin charhda,  
chain nal nahin sauna aye  
Katra katra mil ke jiddan,  
ik samunder ban jaanda  
Patti patti jor ke ik,  
sone da mandir ban jaanda  
Jo bhi banda sarda sabh ne,  
apna hissa pauna aye  
Dunian de har kone wichon  
chal paye sewak piare ne  
Goonj rahe aj chauhin passin,  
satgur de jaikare ne  
Janam dihara satgur da,  
garh kaanshi vikhe manauna aye

Jis satgur de duare chalke,  
khud parmehar aye si  
Jis satgur ne maya tyagi,  
paras vi thukraye si  
Us satgur da jhanda saari,  
duniya vich lehrauna aye

Swami sarwan dass ji ballan,  
walian di agwarii aye  
Saari duniya de wich phaili,

satgur di wadyaii aye  
Azad Banaras di dharti nuu,  
aapan swarg banauna aye.

ਚਲੋ ਬਨਾਰਸ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ, ਇਕ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਰਚਾਉਣਾ ਏ  
ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਦੇ ਮੰਦਰ ਨੂੰ ਸੋਨੇ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਮੜਾਉਣਾ ਏ

ਪਾਕ ਪਵਿੱਤਰ ਧਰਤੀ ਜਿਥੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਆਏ ਨੇ  
ਕੌਮ ਲਈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨੇ ਜਿਥੇ, ਲੱਖਾਂ ਕਸ਼ਟ ਉਠਾਏ ਨੇ  
ਵਾਂਗ ਤਾਰਿਆਂ ਉਸ ਧਰਤੀ ਦਾ, ਹਰ ਚਰਾਗ ਚਮਕਾਉਣਾ ਏ

ਕਸਮ ਅਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਦੇ ਸੌਂਚਿਆ ਸੇਵਾਦਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ  
ਕਸਮ ਅਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਵਾਮੀ ਸਰਵਣ ਦਾਸ ਦੇ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ  
ਜਿੰਨਾ ਚਿਰ ਕੌਮ ਸਿਰੇ ਨੀ ਚੜ੍ਹਦਾ, ਚੈਨ ਨਾਲ ਨੀ ਸੌਣਾ ਏ

ਕਤਰਾ ਕਤਰਾ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਜਿੱਦਾਂ ਇਕ ਸਮੁੰਦਰ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦਾ  
ਪੱਤੀ ਪੱਤੀ ਜੋੜ ਕੇ ਇਕ, ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਮੰਦਰ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦਾ  
ਜੋ ਵੀ ਬਣਦਾ ਸਰਦਾ ਸਭ ਨੇ, ਆਪਣਾ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਪਾਉਣਾ ਏ  
ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਹਰ ਕੋਨੇ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਚੱਲ ਪਏ ਸੇਵਕ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਨੇ  
ਗੁੰਜ ਰਹੇ ਅੱਜ ਚੋਹੀਂ ਪਾਸੀਂ, ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੇ ਜੈਕਾਰੇ ਨੇ  
ਜਨਮ ਦਿਹਾੜਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦਾ, ਗੜ੍ਹ ਕਾਂਸ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ ਮਨਾਉਣਾ ਏ

ਜਿਸ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੇ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਚੱਲਕੇ, ਖੁਦ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਰ ਆਏ ਸੀ  
ਜਿਸ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਤਿਆਗੀ, ਪਾਰਸ ਵੀ ਠੁਕਰਾਏ ਸੀ  
ਉਸ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦਾ ਝੰਡਾ ਸਾਰੀ, ਦੁਨੀਆ ਵਿਚ ਲਹਿਰਾਉਣਾ ਏ

ਸਵਾਮੀ ਸਰਵਣ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਬੱਲਾਂ, ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਏ  
ਸਾਰੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਫੈਲੀ, ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਏ

## ਆਜ਼ਾਦ ਬਨਾਰਸ ਦੀ ਧਰਤੀ ਨੂੰ, ਆਪਾਂ ਸਵਰਗ ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਏ

The meeting of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust was held on 15-1-2008 under the Chairmanship of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji in the Committee Room of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Sachkhand Bal. The manner of transporting sacred Golden Palki from Dera Bal to Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi was discussed in detail. Various options were considered. It was felt that maximum number of followers of Satguru Ravidass Ji should be afforded an opportunity to have darshan of sacred Golden Palki. It was, therefore, resolved that the Palki would be taken in a well planned procession from Dera Bal to Varanasi. Since it was unique opportunity, a new unique bus fitted with transparent glasses be got prepared. Accordingly, a new bus fitted with transparent glasses and suiting to the dimension of the golden Palki was prepared. On 15-2-2008, the bus was parked in the open premises near Water Tank in Dera Bal. Qaumi Shaheed Bramleen Sant Rama

Nand Ji himself took keen interest in the decoration of the bus. He took chair and sat there. It was decorated under his supervision. The entire bus, including the tyres was washed and cleansed. The bus was tastefully decorated with flowers, banners, posters, photos. In the evening Sant Rama Nand Ji called His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjjan Dass Ji and a few sewadars as the sacred Golden Palki was to be installed in the bus. Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji was also present. At the instance of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjjan Dass Ji, Sant Rama Nand Ji said ardas. At the end of the ardas and shouting jaikaras “ Jo bole so nirbhai, Guru Ravidass Maharaj ki jai” the sacred Golden Palki was installed in the bus. The entire bus was covered with new cloth. On 15-2-2008, the devotees of European countries and other foreign countries who were to accompany the Shobha Yatra had reached the Dera. Large number of other yatris who were to go with the procession and still others who were to witness the ceremony had also arrived. All were in colourful clothes and gay mood. There was bahut chehal

pehal in the Dera.

On 16-2-2008 at 8.00 in the morning, the decorated bus was brought to the main gate wherefrom the yatra was to commence. In the presence of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji, Qaumi Shaheed Bramleen Sant Rama Nand Ji said ardas before commencing the procession. As the ardas came to close the devotees shouted “Jo bole so nirbhai, Guru Ravidass Maharaj ki jai” repeatedly. At this moment the conch-shells and naads sounded, the bells rang and nigara was beaten continuously. Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji and all those present bowed to the pious Golden Palki in reverence. The driver started the bus. It moved slowly and majestically. The impressive procession started under the lead of His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji. Sant Rama Nand Ji too accompanied. All other vehicles followed.

Sant Rama Nand Ji composed and recorded the undermentioned song for playing on Sound System throughout the route of Swarn Palki procession from Dera Bal to Benaras:

## **Son palki**



Son palki ji son palki  
Kinni sohni sangtan sajai palki

Guru Ravidass kiti kirpa apar ji  
Premian de dilan ch vasaya kina pyar ji  
Ahnian nuu kardi sujakhe palki

Sangtan nuu jur behna guran samjhaya hai  
Aisi soojh sadke nazara ajj paya hai  
Sabhna nuu vanddi khumari palki

Dhan han europe niwasi guru sangtan  
Charhaian ne qaum nuu majithi jihna rangtan  
Iho jihi dekhi nahi kade vi palki

Sone dian churian te gal vale har ji  
Waalien te kante keete Bheta nal pyar ji  
Sach hai gariban di ji jaan palki

Uch koti karigaran laiyyan rijhan poorian  
Door kare dilan vichon dilan dian doorian  
Kanshi nuu rawaana hoi yatra son palki

Sach da sroop satgur Niranjan Dass Ji

Bandgi khazana ditta guru Ravidass Ji  
Karde agwaii Shobha yatra palki

Rame aiwen gallan kar kar na sunaii ja  
Shubh Kaman ivch toon vi hissa kujh paii ja  
Dilan diyan bhukhan aj lahiyan palki.

ਸੋਨ ਪਾਲਕੀ ਜੀ ਸੋਨ ਪਾਲਕੀ  
ਕਿੰਨੀ ਸੋਹਣੀ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਸਜਾਈ ਪਾਲਕੀ

ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਕੀਤੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਅਪਾਰ ਜੀ  
ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਚ ਵਸਾਇਆ ਕਿੰਨਾ ਪਿਆਰ ਜੀ  
ਅੰਨਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਰਦੀ ਸੁਜਾਖੇ ਪਾਲਕੀ

ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜੁੜ ਬਹਿਣਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮਝਾਇਆ ਹੈ  
ਐਸੀ ਸੂਝ ਸਦਕੇ ਨਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਅੰਜ ਪਾਇਆ ਹੈ  
ਸਭਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੰਡਦੀ ਖੁਮਾਰੀ ਪਾਲਕੀ

ਧੰਨ ਹਨ ਯੋਰਪ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ  
ਚਾੜੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਕੌਮ ਨੂੰ ਮਜੀਠੀ ਜਿੰਨਾ ਰੰਗਤਾਂ  
ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੀ ਦੇਖੀ ਨੀ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਪਾਲਕੀ

ਸੋਨੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਚੁੜੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਗਲ ਵਾਲੇ ਹਾਰ ਜੀ

**ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਕਾਟੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਭੇਟਾ ਨਾਲ ਪਿਆਰ ਜੀ  
ਸੱਚ ਹੈ ਗਰੀਬਾਂ ਦੀ ਜੀ ਜਾਨ ਪਾਲਕੀ**

**ਉਚ ਕੋਟੀ ਕਾਰੀਗਰਾਂ ਲਾਈਆਂ ਰੀੜਾਂ ਪੂਰੀਆਂ  
ਦੂਰ ਕਰੇ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਦੂਰੀਆਂ  
ਕਾਂਸ਼ੀ ਨੂੰ ਰਵਾਨਾ ਹੋਈ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਸੋਨ ਪਾਲਕੀ**

**ਸੱਚ ਦਾ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ  
ਬੰਦਗੀ ਖਜ਼ਾਨਾ ਦਿਤਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ  
ਕਰਦੇ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਸ਼ੋਭਾ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਪਾਲਕੀ**

**ਰਾਮੇ ਐਵੇਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਕਰ ਕਰ ਨਾ ਸੁਣਾਈ ਜਾ  
ਸ਼ੁੱਭ ਕੰਮਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਤੂੰ ਵੀ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਕੁਝ ਪਾਈ ਜਾ  
ਦਿਲਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਭੁੱਖਾਂ ਅੱਜ ਲਾਹੀਆਂ ਪਾਲਕੀ**

The procession passed through Panjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh and reached Varanasi 20-2-2008. The procession stayed for night on 16-2-2008 at Ambala, on 17-2-2008 at New Delhi, on 18-2-2008 at Agra, on 19-2-2008 at Kanpur and reached Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi on 20-2-2008. The pious Palki attracted overwhelming homage from the vibrant sangat throughout the route. It was so fascinating a journey that only those who participated in it could

best describe in a befitting manner. The devotees of the places enroute bowed to the specially prepared glass fitted fortunate bus carrying the sacred Golden Palki for Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji. They washed it. They cleansed it with their new clothes. They sprayed incensed liquid and perfume on the bus. The devotees were showering flowers and flowers on the fortunate bus. Even the road on which the procession passed was fully covered with flowers. Suitable words do not strike me to describe the enthusiasm and devotion of the sangat, piety and beauty of the occasion. Holy was the occasion, holier still was the dedication of the devotees. There was tears of joy in their eyes. They were so much absorbed in the pious Palki that they forgot their own self. Probably they will never see such a sacred journey of Guru Ji's golden Palki passing through their own areas. It was a memorable event in the history of Shri Guru Ravidass Mission. The Golden Palki was inaugurated by Ms Mayawati Ji, Hon,ble Chief Minister Uttar Pradesh on the auspicious occasion of Guru Ravidass Jyanti Day on 21-2-2008. The press and electronic

media vied each other for coverage of the historic event.

It was the dream of Sant Rama Nand Ji to gold-plate Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. First phase of the project was completed when entire central dome of the temple was gold-plated and opening ceremony was performed by His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji on 30th January, 2010 in the presence of more than ten lacs of saints and devotees from India and abroad. With this ceremony dream of Qaumi Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji has been fulfilled.

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Memorial Gate, Lanka Chauraha, Varanasi**

Shri 108 Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Trust (Regd.) U.K. expressed the desire of having a monumental Gate in the memory of Guru Ravidass Ji in Varanasi City at some prominent road leading to the Mandir so as to perpetuate the memory of Guru Ji.

This project was again undertaken by Mandir

Trust under the chairmanship of Sant Niranjana Dass Ji. The foundation stone of the gate was laid on 25-05-1997 by Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji BSP Supremo in the presence of prominent residents of Varanasi, distinguished persons and senior bureaucrats. Ms. Mayawati was Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh at that time.

The workers worked day and night. Specially skilled stone layers were engaged from Rajasthan for this project. A huge Gate at Lanka Crossing was built in a very short period. It is a matter of great pride for our community that the gate was inaugurated by the then His Excellency, the President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan on 16-7-1998. Shri Suraj Bhan Hon'ble Governor and Shri Kalyan Singh Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Babu Kanshi Ram were also present.

At the time of inauguration of the gate, the President looked gay and happy. Disregarding the security barriers, he came out to the barricades and shook hands with aam aadmi and saints. It was so rare and happy moment. The visitors raised and waved their hand in his

honour, applause and gratitude. Large number of Guru Ji's devotees and saints from Punjab and other states were present on the occasion along with Sant Niranjan dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji. The writer was also fortunate to attend the inauguration ceremony of the gate.

After the inauguration of the gate, His Excellency the President visited Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. At the instance of Chief Guest, Qaumi Shahid Sant Rama Nand Ji narrated the entire story of research of this site and construction of the temple and the problems faced in this regard. The President took tea and snacks with the Hazoor Maharaj Niranjan Dass Ji, Qaumi Shahid Sant Rama Nand Ji, members of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust and other VVIPs. It is an unforgettable day in the history of Guru Ravidass Mission.

The names of the trustees of Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Trust (UK), who contributed for the construction of the gate, have been carved at the gate thereby immortalising

their gesture of perpetuating the memory of Satguru Ravidass Ji in the city of his assertion.

## **Yatri Niwas and Langer Hall**

Keeping in view the convenience of pilgrims to the Mandir, the Trust has acquired an Ashram for their stay. Now a new four-storey building has been constructed in this complex—each storey having 11 rooms with attached bathrooms. The Trust has also built a huge Langar hall, for serving food to visitors to the Mandir. It was inaugurated by Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji, Chairman Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust (Regd.) on 18th February, 2000 at 11.30 on the auspicious occasion of Jyanti Purb of Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj. The opening ceremony of Second storey of the Langer hall was performed on 26-2-2002.

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Park & Smark, Shri Guru Ravidass Ghat & Shri Guru Ravidass Setu**



It was due to the inspiration drawn from the activities of and the work carried out by the Mandir Trust that the U.P Government also thought of raising suitable memorials of Guru Ravidass Ji in the city of Benaras. It has built a beautiful Shri Guru Ravidass park and smark at Nagwa, a prominent place at the river “Ganga”. A spacious Guru Ravidass Ghat has also been built at the place. The new bridge over Ganga near the Mandir has been named Shri Guru Ravidass Setu (bridge).

The Janam Sthan Mandir of Guru Ji at Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi has now acquired the status of “Begumpura” for Guru Ji’s followers who have started paying obeisance at this Place of Pilgrimage in large numbers, which is growing day by day. All the followers of Guru Ravidass Ji throughout the world will remain indebted to Sant Sarwan Dass Ji and his successor Saints of Dera Sachkhand Ballan for giving them this “Ultimate Place of Pilgrimage”.

## **Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable**

## **Hospital, Adda Kathar**

As is well known to the followers of Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, innumerable people have been cured of their physical and mental ailments by the Dwa as well as Dua i.e. through medicine and spirituality bestowed upon them by the Saints of the Dera. This tradition has been continuing in the Dera since the life-time of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. The successor Saints also followed this practice.

To perpetuate the memory of his Guru, Sant Garib Dass Ji thought of starting a hospital. He held consultations with Sh. Beli Ram and Sh. Raj Mal for this purpose who offered to donate land for this purpose. Later Bibi Puro and Bibi Bhajno also donated their share of land. Panchayat of village Koopur also donated land for this noble cause. The foundation stone of this hospital was laid by him at Adda Kathar, Distt. Jalandhar on 20-10-1982. A humble beginning was made by starting a dispensary on 1-1-1984. With the blessings of all Gaddi-Nashin Saints of Dera Sach Khand Ballan this hospital has now assumed gigantic proportions running six specialilties and having 150 indoor beds.

The hospital provides patient care by a highly qualified team of doctors in the department of General Surgery, Medicine, Eye, ENT, Pediatrics and Gynaecology. Nearly 200 patients are attended in the OPD daily.

The OPD services are supported by modern diagnostic aids. For this purpose the hospital is equipped with state of the art hospital grade ultra-sound machine, a modern laboratory having auto-analysers for blood and urine tests, an X-ray machine and a computerized ECG machine etc.

The hospital is known for the general surgery being performed here. Appx 200 surgical operations are performed every month. The hospital has three operation theatres, which are equipped with state of the art machines such as Laparoscope, C-Arm, Boyle's apparatus, fully remote controlled OT tables and pulse oxymeters etc. All the sterilization needs of the OT's and wards are met by the central horizontal autoclave.

Very nominal fee is charged for the hospital services to partially meet the hospital expenditure which is approximately 1.5 crores per

year. The poor patients are not charges even the nominal fee and their expenditure is met by Maharaj Ji.

The management of the hospital is run through a Trust. Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji is the Chairman of the Trust and he is assisted by a dedicated team of Trustees who always think of new ways for the improvement of hospital services & introduction of new infrastructure in the hospital.

## **Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Eye Hospital, Dera Bal**

In order to serve the elderly people, an exclusive eye hospital has been established by the Dera adjoining the Dera itself under the aegies of Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Hospital Trust. Shri Swarn Dass Bangar, Bibi Resham Kaur of Village Bal (U.K.) and their family became the motivating force behind the construction of this hospital. Since mid sixties they had been holding an annual eye camp at the Dera, but due to some restrictions imposed by the Government it became difficult to hold these camps. Therefore they mooted the idea of an exclusive eye

hospital at the Dera and took the initiative by donating the major chunk of the expenditure incurred on establishing this hospital. A donation of rupees one crore one thousand one hundred eleven was given by them for this project. The foundation stone was laid on 10-11-2004 by Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji. The construction of the hospital was completed in record time. The hospital was inaugurated on 15th February, 2007 by Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji on the auspicious occasion of Birth anniversary of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji.

Modern machines such as Yag Laser, Phaco Emulsification machine, Carl-Zeiss Microscope, Carl-Zeiss Slit lamp and A Scan etc. have been installed in the hospital.

People from far and wide areas of Punjab avail the facilities of this hospital. Nearly 200 eye operations are performed every month.

## **Sant Sarwan Dass Model School Hadiabad, Phagwara**

Sant Sarwan Dass Ji was a spiritual leader of acknowledged acclaim besides being a great

visionary and a social reformer. As a social reformer he was cast in the mould of all previous social reformers devoted to Dalit cause. Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, Mahatma Jotirao Phooley, Smt. Savitri Bai Phooley, Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj, Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy Naiker and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar worked tirelessly in their own way for the upliftment of the down-trodden. They laid particular stress on education among Dalits, because they believed that no progress in society was possible without education. Swami Sarwan Dass Ji was fully conscious about the necessity of education among Dalits. Therefore, he used to collect students of poor people in the Dera and gave them all facilities for acquiring higher education. Ultimately, the present Gaddi Nasheen Sant Niranjana Dass Ji in consultation with Sant Rama Nand Ji decided to have a school dedicated to the memory of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji and he laid the foundation stone of Sant Sarwan Dass Model School at Hadiabad, Phagwara on 16-4-2002.

The opening ceremony of the School was performed on 19-2-2004 by Shri 108 Sant

Niranjan Dass Ji. Regular studies in the school started on 5-4-2004.

The school is up to Senior Secondary level. The stress is to impart quality education to the students who are mostly from poorer sections of society. It is an English Medium school affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi up to +2 level. Besides humanities, medical and non-medical subjects are taught at the senior secondary level. The Trust is making efforts to include vocational courses also in the coming sessions.

The school is housed in a plot of 2.5 acres of land donated by Shri Brij Lal and his wife Bibi Gurdev Kaur, Phagwara (U.K.). It has got 33 spacious class rooms, 6 well equipped laboratories, 2 general purpose halls, one well equipped library, one auditorium and an office block.

The school has nine buses for carrying the students to the school. The school has a separate 62.5 KVA diesel generator.

Tuition fee is charged from the students

is very low as compared to other private schools. Poor students are given further fee concession, criterion for which is the poverty of their parents. Scholarships to very poor students are given every year to impart them the education absolutely free. Some of these scholarships are sponsored by individual donors and the rest are given by the Trust.

The school is run under the management of Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Hospital Trust Adda Kathar, Distt. Jalandhar. It has got a School Management Committee under the Chairmanship of Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir Hadiabad Phagwara**

When a residential colony was being established in Hadiabad, Phagwara by Sh. Brij Lal and Sh. Des Raj of Phagwara, they came up with an idea to build a Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir in the colony. They not only donated land for this purpose, but also bore the entire expenditure of appx. Rs. 1.5 crores on the con



struction of the temple. The Mandir houses a Satsang Hall, a Langer Hall and eleven rooms in the temple.

The mandir was inaugurated on 19th February 2004 by Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji when it was formally donated to the Dera. As a symbol of handing over the Mandir keys, a pure gold key weighing one kilogram brought specifically from UK by Shri Brij Lal was handed over to Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. Shri Brij Lal also donated one Tata Safari car to the Dera.

The temple is now under the management of the Dera.

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir Sirsgarh (Haryana)**

Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji is famous for spreading the philosophy and teachings of Guru Ravidass both in India as well as abroad. With this end in view the Dera has established several religious places for spreading the mission of Guru Ravidass Ji.

Knowing this pursuit of the Dera a follower of the Dera Shri Gurbaksh Singh I.F.S. &

his wife Bibi Raj Rani belonging to Sirsagarh, District Ambala (Haryana) requested Maharaj Ji to build a Guru Ravidass Mandir in their village, to which Maharaj Ji agreed. For this purpose they donated a piece of land measuring 4 acres 17 marlas Maharaj Ji for. The foundation stone of the temple was laid on 31-7-2004 by Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji.

Major portion of the construction is complete. A big Satsang hall is under construction. The inaugural day function is held every year on 31st July in which devotees from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chandigarh participate in large numbers. This temple serves as a source of inspiration for the people of Haryana.

Free boarding and lodging facilities are available for all the pilgrims and especially those paying pilgrimage to Hardwar from the states of Punjab & Delhi etc.

The temple is now under the management of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust (Regd.) Varanasi.

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir**

## **Katraj, Pune**

Shri Guru Ravidass Mandir Katraj, Pune is another link in the series of expanding Guru Ravidass Mission the world over. One Shri Sukhdeo Rangnath Waghmare from Pune had an intuitional urge for building a suitable monument befitting the stature of Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj. As if it was preordained, Shri Waghmare happened to visit Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi. He was wonder struck to see the gamut of monuments dedicated to the memory of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj there. There from, his conviction became strengthened and real. He visited Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Sachkhand Bal. With all humility he opened his mind to Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji and Sant Rama Nand Ji. After two three meetings a lay-out of plan was unfolded.

A two acre plot was donated by Shri S.R. Waghmare and his wife Bibi Radha on Katraj-Kundwa Road, Pune for building Shri Guru Ravidass temple. The foundation stone of the temple was laid on 7th December, 2003 by

Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji. Sant Rama Nand Ji and several trustees and other distinguished persons were also present on the auspicious occasion. 85'X35' double storey temple has since been completed. A gate and a tower are under construction. If and when any of Guru Ji's follower from the world over gets a chance to visit Pune, visit to this sacred temple is essentially a part of his/her itinerary.

The sacred temple is also under the management of Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Public Charitable Trust (Regd.) Varanasi.

## **Begumpura Shehar Weekly**

Maharaj Garib Dass Ji was a visionary saint. He also understood the importance of having such a newspaper, as would serve the cause of the community and propagate the teachings and philosophy of Guru Ravidass Ji. With this motive in view he decided to start a religious weekly named 'Begumpura'. In the presence of many saints from Punjab, Sant Garib Dass Ji laid the foundation stone of a building on 23-1-1991 for housing a printing press for giving a voice to the poor people. On 23rd July, 1991

Begumpura paper was inaugurated at Mohalla Sunder Nagar, Jalandhar. Its first publication was published on 15th August; 1991. The weekly is serving our people till date with a new name 'Begumpura Shehar'. The circulation of this paper has increased manifold. It has been successful in conveying to the readers the teachings and message of Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji the world over. In addition, it has been on the forefront in raising the issues of the oppressed and down-trodden communities regarding human rights, equality, liberty, fraternity, co-existence, education, cruelty consciousness, awakening, identity, dignity, brotherhood, adventure. Above all it has been able to educate its readers in imbibing human values.

## **Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan, Dera Bal**

Sat sangat mil raheeye maadho  
Jaise madhup makheera.

It has been the tradition of this Dera to

hold daily, weekly, monthly and annual gatherings for holding religious discourses. Baba Pipl Dass Ji used to hold small gatherings in village Bal and inspired the audience to inculcate noble values in their life and be a valuable member of society and to worship God. Sant Sarwan Dass Ji held Satsang daily in the morning and the evening. Monthly Satsang was held on the Sankranti day in the open place of the Dera under the trees. Sant Hari Dass Ji also continued the tradition of usual religious gatherings. Sant Garib Dass Ji was the first saint of the Dera who visited England for the first time in 1985. Qaumi Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji also accompanied him. Thereafter, he visited United State of America and Canada several times. Qaumi Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji always accompanied Sant Garib Dass Ji to the foreign countries. In this process the number of followers of this Dera swelled manifold. The number of devotees in the daily, weekly and monthly Satsangs increased considerably. Need of a Satsang Hall was felt during the period of Sant Hari Dass Ji.

A spacious Satsang Hall named Sant Hari Dass Satsang Hall was built in the Dera premises in the year 1977. The religious meetings and Kirtan were held in this building even up to the year 2000. As a result of extensive touring by Sant Garib Dass Ji and later by Sant Niranjana Dass Ji along with Qaumi Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji both in India and abroad for spreading Guru Ravidass Mission, the number of followers of the Dera increased to a huge number. It was not possible to accommodate the gathering in Sant Hari Dass Satsang Hall. An unexpected whirlwind, hailstorm and rain disturbed many functions. In the interest of smooth celebration of the functions necessity of a very big Satsang Bhawan was felt. At the instance of Shri 108 Sant Sarwan Dass Charitable Trust U.K. and many devotees of foreign countries the decision to build Satsang Bhawan was finalized. In this process many devotees promised liberal donations for the purpose. Whenever, there was meeting of the Trust and foreign devotees this issue was again discussed at length. Shri Swaran Dass Bangar of village Bal (Chatham kent, U.K.)

also attended many such meetings.

In the concluding years of the twentieth century, someone proposed the land situated near the Dera and owned by Shri Swaran Dass Bangar as the suitable site for the Satsang Bhawan. After consultation of members of his family, Shri Swaran Dass Bangar offered to donate his 2.5 acres of land and Rs. one lakh for the proposed Satsang Bhawan. Everybody lauded the offer and expressed thanks to the family of Shri Swaran Dass Bangar.

The lay-out of the Satsang Bhawan was prepared and it was finally approved in its present shape. The name of the Satsang Bhawan was approved as Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan. The foundation of Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan was laid on 12th March, 2000 in the presence of thousands of devotees. Once the foundation stone was laid, there was no looking back. There was exuberant enthusiasm amongst the followers of Guru Ravidass Ji for construction of the Bhawan named after Shri Guru Ravidass Ji. Thousands of devotees thronged to the site for taking part in the construction process. Everyone thought that they



will be lucky who make manual contribution, whatever little it is, in digging the foundation of the sacred building. Qaumi Shaheed Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji led the crowd in this task. He folded his dhoti. He was seen digging the foundation. Soon he was seen lifting the soil. It was enough for the devotees. Every body vied with each other for carrying tokris full of soil to become fortunate enough. Some were seen digging the soil. Others were carrying the soil. It was, indeed, a memorable scene. It was surprising to note that the foundation of the entire building was dug up in a few days only.

The workforce consisting of engineers, technicians, bar-binders, moulders, shuttering workers, machine operators, mistries, skilled and unskilled labour, office staff- all worked tirelessly. Foremen and Project Manager were always on their toe. There were no scheduled working hours. All were working upto late at night. The management had struck the deal with production factories for supply of the quality material; that too at the heavy discount rates. It was indeed a continuing process. Qaumi Shaheed

Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji was the Chief architect and executive of the project. It was his dream project. The entire network and material was scanned and monitored by him regularly. He was so busy in the projects that any Dera affair could be discussed with him after midnight only. The process continued. As a result the gigantic building warranting long span of time for its completion was completed in short period.

Its dimension is 220' X 180'. It is a model of its own kind. There are 4 domes of 16' height on all the four corners. The dome at the main gate of the Bhawan is 20' high. The roof consists of 5 arc-curved divisions. Only 12 pillars in all carry the load of the roof. 6 pillars are in one line and 6 pillars are in other corresponding line. The distance of each line of pillars is 80'. There is 80' long and 30' wide concrete stage in the Satsang Bhawan. There is long 30' wide and 134' long jora-ghar in the basement of main gate. Golden kalshes have been installed on all the four domes in four corners of the Bhawan. In all seven golden kalshes have been installed on 7

domes. The spot will kindle the light and will go a long way in spreading the message of Guru Ji and shaping the abode of his dreams.

Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan- which was the dream project of Qaumi Shaheed Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji – was inaugurated by His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjan Dass Ji on 15th February, 2007. Incidentally, the occasion coincided with auspicious Birth Anniversary of Swami Sarwan Dass Ji- the pioneer of the Dera. Large number of devotees from Birmingham and other parts of U.K. were also present as this project was virtually sponsored by them. Today this Bhavan outshines all other constructions at the Dera and poses as a wonder structure of Ravidassia community in the world.

## **Studio**

There is 80'X30' air-conditioned studio in the basement underneath the stage. It was the brain child of Amar Shaheed Brahmleen Sant Rama Nand Ji. In addition to other qualities of his head and heart, he was renowned musician.

He labored hard for setting up studio in the Dera. Usually he recorded the programme at the calm and serene atmosphere at night. Fitting of AC, artificial ceiling, decorative tiles, stage infrastructure, furniture – all were of his choice. Permanent staff was recruited for carrying on the production. All this resulted in expeditious output of CDs, VCDs, documentary films, TV programme to be telecast weekly on Doordarshan. The cumulative effect of all these activities resulted in fast spread of Guru Ravidass Mission. All this process started by Amar Shaheed Sant Rama Nand Ji is now being overseen by Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji.

## **Tap Asthan Baba Pipal Dass Ji and Birth Place of Swami Sarwan Dass Ji**

Baba Pipal Dass Ji lived in village Gill Patti (Bhatinda - Faridkot- Ferozepur Road) in district Bathinda. He chanted God's Name here and attained divine enlightenment. His occupation was farming of land. About 1.5 acres of his land is still there. He had planted a Beri tree in this

land. It is situated 1.5 kms away from village Gill Pathi on Nayyanwala Road adjoining the canal. Shri Charan Singh Ji and his wife Bibi Dharam Kaur, heirs of Baba Pipal Dass Ji have donated this land to Dera Sant Sarwan Dass Ji. This Beri tree is still there. Its Bers are sweet. Swami Sarwan Dass Ji was born here on 15th February, 1895. His Holiness Shri 108 Sant Niranjana Dass Ji has constructed one 30'\*30' room, kitchen, bathrooms, 100ft shed for the convenience of the pilgrims.

An idol of Baba Pipal Dass Ji has been installed in the temple. The devotees visit and pay their homage at this sacred place.

## **Telecast of Television programme 'Amrit bani Shri Guru Ravidass Ji'**

Now is the era of media. From all quarters from within and outside the country there was buoyant demand that the program of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, his teachings and bani should be displayed on television. Accordingly, this unique weekly TV programme named 'Amrit Bani Shri Guru Ravidass Ji' was prepared by

Amar Shaheed Brahmleen Shri 108 Sant Rama Nand Ji in his own melodious voice in consonance with the norms prescribed by Doordarshan department. First episode of programme ‘Amrit Bani Shri Guru Ravidass Ji’ was telecast 13-9-2003 from DD Punjabi. This was the first ever programme solely on the teachings and bani of Guru Ravidass Ji telecast on TV. The force behind this project was Sant Rama Nand Ji. It was a new chapter in the history of Guru Ravidass Mission. Since 13-9-2003 the programme is continuing uninterruptedly. Later, it was extended to be telecast on DD (Regional) also.

‘Neechai ooch kare mera gobind, kahoo ten a darai’ – these are opening and concluding words recorded for TV programme in the unique voice of Shri Gurdev Ji, sewadar in the Dera. The moment the viewer listens these words, he is captivated. He feels buoyed and emboldened. The meaning and message of these words is very easy to understand. A very large number of viewers view this weekly programme regularly.

The project received overwhelming response from the masses. With the construction of Shri Guru Ravidass Satsang Bhawan, Dera's own studio of latest device has been built. The programme is continuing even today. It is now telecast at 4.30 pm to 5.00 pm on every Tuesday on DD-I (Regional) and at 6.30 am to 7.00 am on every Wednesday on DD-Punjabi from Jalandhar Doordarshan.

## **GURU RAVIDASS JI A SYMBOL OF LIBERTY**

ਚੌਦਾਂਹ ਸੈ ਤੇਤੀਸ ਕੀ, ਮਾਘ ਸੁਦੀ ਪੰਦਰਾਸ |  
ਦੁਖੀਉਂ ਖੇ ਕਲਿਆਣ ਹਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ | |

**CHAUDAN SAAI TETTES KI MAGH  
SUDI PANDRAS,  
DUKHION KE KALYAN HIT PARGTE  
SRI RAVIDAS.**

As per this couplet Guru Ravidass Ji appeared on this earth on 15th Magh Sudi full-

moon day of Bikram Samvat 1433 which coincides with, 1377 A.D. at Seer Govardhanpur a sub-urban area of Benaras. His revered father Santokh Dass Ji and mother Kalsi Devi Ji were happy to receive in their family the smiling sun-like face of Ravidass with eyes full of godly love. This divine gift was meant not only for family of Santokh Dass alone but it was a life-light for mankind as a whole. The brilliance on his face fore-shadowed his future deeds.

Since the advent of Vedic Age, caste system and untouchability have been prevalent in India. In passage of time, the socio-religious inhibitions became more strict and cruel. The untouchables were given an ignoble place. They were debarred from acquiring knowledge, own property and worship of God. They were considered untouchable in the sense that not only physical contact with them but even there shadow would pollute the body of high-caste people. These conditions prevailed in India for more than 3000 years. Social system had been crippled. Apathy meted out to the Shudras culminated in



13th and 14th century A.D. Worship synchronised with observance of rituals only and became hand-tool of priesthood. In such degenerated environment Guru Ravidass Ji emerged in Benaras (Kanshi-Uttar Pradesh, India) as a formidable adversary of socio-religious infirmities and stood for truthfulness. He defined worship afresh. He was protagonist of equality, oneness of God, human rights and universal brotherhood. Guru Ji was a multi-faceted personality. He was a suave socio-religious reformer, a thinker, a theosophist, a humanist, a poet, a traveller, a pacifist and above all a towering spiritual figure before whom even head-priests of Benaras lay prostrate to pay homage. He was pioneer of socialistic thought and strengthened noble values.

The caste in which he was born is called CHAMAR ) also KUTBANDHLA- a sub-caste of scheduled castes in Uttar Pradesh). They were oppressed and badly treated by the society. Practising in leather and tanning is the profession of this community.

On attaining adulthood Guru Ravidass Ji faced the brunt of social handicaps. However,

he started blowing conch-shell, ringing bells and applying tilak on his fore-head and worshipping God. This was taken seriously by the priests. They tried to restrict him from following such practices. But he did not deter. They lodged complaints with the Kashi Naresh against Guru Ravidass Ji for copying them and disregarding Hindu religious tenets. The king interfered. Acid tests were put by the king for ascertaining truthfulness. Guru Ravidass Ji floated PATHRI (stone) in river Ganga, took out JANJUS of 4 YUGS from his chest and showed to the king, at Chittorgarh he became as many Ravidass as the Pandits, he gave his appearance to one BHALLA NATH and Bhalla Nath was killed in place of Ravidass. On all these occasions he was victorious and priests had to eat a humble pie. He proved to be the saviour of down-trodden community groping in darkness of unjust socio-religious environment for survival in tight grip of hate, despair and serfdom.

Guru Ravidass Ji composed hymns profusely in praise of God. Other hymns are scattered and are available in piecemeal at different

places at Sant Dadu Dyal Sanskrit Mahavidyala, Jaipur, Nagri Pracharni Sabha Library, Varanasi and various libraries in Bikaner, Jodhpur, Naraina, Chittor etc. He preached his thought and philosophy through his hymns.

The hymns of Guru Ravidass Ji had become popular. Dr. Darshan Singh, the learned author, writes in his book “A Study of Bhakta Ravidass” (Page 6, Punjabi University, Patiala Publication Second Edition 1996)- “It is maintained in the Janam-Sakhi by Sodhi Meharvan (1581-1640) that Mardana the rebeck player and life long companion of Guru Nanak used to sing the hymns of Bhakta Ravidass and other Bhaktas.” He has made this assertion with reference to Sodhi Meharban’s Janamsakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Vol. I (Amritsar Khalsa College) Page 73 wherein it is depicted as below :

**MARDANA DOOM (U) KALALAN KA  
TALWANDI RAI**

**BHOAI KI REHDA, RABAB (U)  
WAJAIDA, NAAM KAMBIR, TILOCHAN,  
RAVIDAS, DHANNE BENI DE PADE  
GAWTA. GURU BABE NANAK KAI**

## AAGE PADE GAWTA

In the hymn “Begumpura” Guru Ravidass Ji postulates the world of his dreams. There will be no distress, no tax, no restriction from going and coming, no fear in the world. It will be an ideal place to live in. The preamble of the Charter of the United Nations has been prepared in conformity with theme of this hymn.

He was famous for his spiritual perfection. A large number of kings and queens became his disciples. Prominent among them were Raja Pipa, Raja Nagar Mal, Rani Jhalan Bai, Meera Bai. The kings had built many temples dedicated to Guru Ji but these were later either demolished or converted into worship places of other faiths.

Satguru Ji spoke high of his Chamar caste. He addressed the ‘*nagar janan*’ – the residents of Benaras in particular and masses in general that ‘*meri jaat(i) bikhiaat chamaarn*’. He told the then king that Chamar caste is well-known. Since he had taken shelter in the Naam of the Lord, even the leading and distinguished Brahmans bowed down flat before him in reverence.

As per “Shri Guru Ravidass-Life and Writ

ings” Edition 1993 of learned author Dr. Lekh Raj Parwana, Mata Loona, wife of Guru Ravidass Ji, was humble and she extended her full co-operation for success in the mission of her husband. By virtue of her blissful behaviour she was taken as goddess by the devotees.

As recorded by learned author Dr. Lekh Raj Parwana at Page 116-117 in his book “Shri Guru Ravidass-Life and writings” first edition 1993, Guru Ravidass Ji visited Northern India twice. Firstly, he was accompanied by Kabir Ji, Tarlochan Ji, Sain Ji and Dhanna Ji and met Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Chuharkana, now known as Nankana Sahib where Guru Nanak Dev served them food with Rs.20/- which had been given to him by his revered father Mehta Kalu Ji for some profitable business. At his second visit to Punjab, Guru Ravidass Ji met Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Sant Ghat of Kali Bein in Sultanpur Lodhi. At third time he met Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Guru Ka Bagh, Benaras and exchanged their views on several topics pertaining to religion, social system and liberty of human beings. Guru Ravidass Ji gave gift of his VANI of 40 hymns and one couplet

to Guru Nanak Dev Ji as desired by him.

Guru Ravidass Ji is said to have visited Mathura, Prayag, Haridwar, Kurukshetra, Godavari, Sultanpur, Panghat, Ranipur, Bhagalpur, Naraingarh, Nagpur, Bija, Bhopal, Jhansi, Bundi, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Bombay, Hyderabad Kathiawar, Karachi, Bahawalpur, Kala Bhag, Kohat, Khaibar Pass, Jalalabad, Srinagar, Dalhousie, Gorakpur, and widely preached his philosophy. As such, wherever he went large number of people came under his influence and became his devotees. It is due to his itinerary that he is known in entire India.

Guru Ravidass Ji held discussions with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Satguru Kabir Ji and Sant Ramanand Ji against prevalent social, religious, economic and political persecution. Topics of casteless and classless society, oneness of God, equality and human rights were discussed. He was one of the pioneers of Bhakti Movement. It was reformatory wave against ritualistic worship and other evils with which society was gripped. Worship was given a fresh simple definition. Predominantly, all saints of ideal thought joined

Bhakti Movement. Since the mode of worship preached by them was free from rituals, people of different faiths became their devotees. It was a period of religious renaissance.

He lived for about 151 years. He was able to bring about a sea change in socio-religious environment of our society. His sermons are relevant even today as in the 15th century A.D. All human beings may derive inspiration from his teachings and hymns and enlighten their lives.

## **Birth of Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji**

It is a historical truth that even God is shaken when the people commit sinful activities at a large scale. When the situation becomes acute, God sends his emissary to put the stray humanity on the right path. In the medieval period of Indian history Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Kabir Ji, Satguru Sain Ji, Satguru Ravidass Ji, Satguru Nanak Dev Ji and many others preached equality, fraternity, truth and secularism. They exhorted human beings to shun discrimination on any ground.

It the 13th and 14th century, people in In

dian territory were plundered by foreign invaders. They were subjected to inhuman treatment. Hinduism and Islam were two main religions in India. The society was divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes. Mul-Niwasis- the original inhabitants of India were deprived of human rights. They were not allowed to get education, wear neat and clean clothes. Even their shadow was understood to pollute the high caste persons. There were cruelties and misery all around. In such a pathetic and awesome scenario, Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ji took birth in the family of father Santokh Dass Ji and mother Kalsi Devi Ji on 15th Magh Sudi full-moon day of Bikram Samvat 1433 which coincides with 1377 A.D. at Seer Govardhanpur a sub-urban of Benaras. His grandfather was revered Kalu Ram Jassal and grandmother Lakhpati Saroy. There was dazzling light in the Universe at the time of his birth. Even the saints, sages, rishis and munis bowed before him in reverence and predicted him to do something miraculous. They predicted that Ravidass Ji will annul caste system, equality will prevail and human rights will be wrested to the



betterment of the common man.

The eyesight of the midwife of birth of Guru Ji was weak. As the birth of Guru Ji took place, the old lady had a glance at the new born baby. Her eye sight improved immediately. She was very happy. She told the parents of Guru Ji, that a large number of babies have taken birth through her. The parts of body of this infant are peculiar. She has never seen such a baby. She predicted that as a result of his deeds, the family will become famous.

### **Temple at birthplace**

After a lapse of 600 years Sant Sarwan Dass Ji of Dera Sach Khand Ballan, district Jalandhar (Punjab, India) traced the birthplace of Guru Ravidass Ji at Seer Govardhanpur, Benaras. As a result of strenuous efforts of Sant Sarwan Dass Ji, Sant Hari Dass Ji and Sant Garib Dass Ji, a 7-storey grand temple has been constructed at the birthplace. It has now become Ultimate Place of Pilgrimage for the devotees in India and abroad.

There is an *imli* tree quite adjacent to the mandir site. When the foundation stone of the

temple was laid it was a dry trunk of the tree. Sant Hari Dass Ji watered the tree daily so long as he stayed there. The tree became live again. To-day it is big tree. The pilgrims pay their obeisance at this place also.

## **Childhood**

Once revered father's sister of Guru Ravidass Ji visited his house. She brought a leather hare toy for child. Leather hare toy was given to child Ravidass Ji. He felt very happy to have the fascinating toy. While playing with the toy, he pushed the toy with his feet thrice. When it was pushed third time the leather hare toy became live hare. It was running and playing with Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Ji was happy with it. Guru Ji's father's sister's husband came in. He was told all about the leather hare toy. He was astonished to hear all about miracle. They all touched the soft feet of Guru Ji.

Guru Ravidass Ji was of 5 years' age when his revered mother expired.

There was one Karmawati who was of 60-65 years age. She was blind. She was residing at Seer Govardhanpur (Benaras). She was friend

of Mata Lakhpati Ji- the grandmother of Guru Ravidass Ji. Whenever Lakhpati Ji visited Karmawati, she took Ravidass Ji along. Although Karmawati was blind, she used to prepare yarn on *charkha*. One day Ravidass Ji took the BOHIA (a small sarkanda vessel for keeping *poonian and galota*) away from the *charkha*. Karamwati tried to locate it but it was not there. Then Guru Ji kept BOHIA at the same place. Karamwati again tried to locate the BOHIA. It was there. She was astonished at this. She thought that earlier also she tried to locate the BOHIA at the same place but it was not there then. She felt as if somebody is there near her. However, she started preparing yarn on the *charkha*. Then Guru Ji tried to snatch the *charkha* from Karamwati. She resisted. She stretched her arms around and caught hold of Guru Ji and uttered as to who you were? Guru Ji pulled his hands from her hold and put both his hands on her eyes and said, “Mother you see who am I”. Guru Ji took off his hands from her eyes. She opened her eyes. Her eye-sight was normal. She had the glance of beautiful face of Guru Ji. She touched

his feet in reverence. "Fortunate are your parents in whose family you have taken birth", she complimented to Guru Ji. Guru Ji came back to his house.

Karmawati wanted to have still more *darshan* of Guru Ji. She came to house of parents of Guru Ji. She narrated the entire story. She congratulated his parents for having such a godly son.

## **FAMILY LIFE**

As Guru Ji attained boyhood, he remained absorbed in spiritual activities for most of his time. His father wanted him to take up ancestral occupation. Although he did help his father in his profession but he did not take keen interest in it. He was mostly in detached mood. His parents were worried about of his future. By and by he started religious discourses, Casteist people used to laugh at him that being of low caste, he is talking of spirituality. But he continued his discourses. His parents planned his marriage that he could engross himself in his family life and stop spiritual leanings. He was married

to a religious minded girl name Lona Devi of Mirzapur. She handled all domestic work at her in-laws. She was a noble lady. She cooperated her husband in spiritual discourses. Guru Ji had one son Vijay Dass. In book 'The Chamars' G.W. BRIGGS writes 'Name of his wife was Lona that of his son Vijay Dass'.

## **Guru Ravidass Ji coined Gurmukhi Alphabet**

The community in which Guru Ji was born was in the shackles of discrimination, untouchability, poverty and ignorance. He cherished to change the entire scenario of the community. He wanted first to take up educational aspect. He preached –

**Madho abidiaa hit keen**

**Bibek deep maleen**

The untouchables were strictly prohibited from reading Devnagri script. Even a glance of the devnagri letters by them could mean damage of eyes and as such blindness. It was all hor

rible. To save the ignorant people Guru Ji invented his own Gurmukhi alphabet consisting of 34 letters.

**Nana Khiaan puraan bed bidh(i)  
Chautees akhar manhi**

Education was spread by Guru Ji. The people of his community started learning.

Giani Gurcharan Singh has written a book ‘Gurmukhi Akhar Bhagat Ravidass ne banaai’. The author says that originally there are only 34 letters of the alphabet. With a view to make education difficult the selfish people have increased the letters to 52. It proves that 34 letters of Gurmukhi alphabet have been coined by Guru Ravidass Ji. He has also mentioned in the book that untouchables were not allowed access to Devnagri script. He felt necessity of Gurmukhi script so that the untouchables could be educated.

Before partition of India and Pakistan, a Lahore court had adjudicated that the gurmukhi alphabet was coined by Guru Ravidass Ji. He

was not only religious leader but a literary luminary also.

Dr. Krishna Kalsia, author 'Guru Ravidass Kav Kala' has mentioned in the book that there is sole influence of Punjabi in Guru Ravidass bani. This also shows that Guru Ji has coined gurmukhi alphabet.

## **GURU RAVIDAS JI AS A PROMISING STUDENT**

Pt. Sharda Nand ran his Pathshala in his house. Guru Ravidass Ji was put to his Pathshala (School) by his revered parents. Many other casteist people tried to restrain Pt. Sharda Nand from admitting in his Pathshala and teaching Ravidass Ji-a low caste boy. He was a wise man and he realised from his face that the boy Ravidass Ji appeared to be a godly boy. In utter disregard of the pressure of casteist people, Pt. Sharda Nand admitted Guru Ravidass Ji and started teaching him. He was a sober and promising student. When he taught him the letters of alphabet, Guru Ravidass Ji expanded and spoke

poetic lines, originating from the particular letter, signifying Glory of God.

*Man re ! chal(i) chatsar parhaoon*

*Chit(u) kagad kar(i) mas(i) nainan ri,*

*Barakhri sikhaoon.(pause)*

*A-agyan chhanr(i) man moorikh,*

*Aa-aasan achal lagaon.*

*I-ila pingla khol kivrya,*

*Soon(i) samadh rahaon.*

*U-ur mainh ram h(i) rakhoon,*

*Nainan mainh basaon.*

*M-mer(i) taj(i) raam naam mil(i),*

*Param tat kau paon.*

*R-ran raam moh(i) guru deenhau,*

*Nanh(i) ih(u) mantar visraon.*

*Kahai Ravidass rrankaar japthin(i)*

*Bhau sagar(u) tar(i) jaaon.*

All this had great influence on Pt. Sharda Nand, his teacher. He realised that boy Ravidass Ji was spiritually enlightened since beginning. Although Guru Ravidass Ji was still a boy, yet Pt. Sharda Nand had developed deep regard for student Ravidass Ji.



## **DEAD SON OF PT. SHARDA NAND'S SON BECAME ALIVE**

In his childhood when Guru Ravidass Ji was studying in the Pathshala of Pt. Sharda Nand, he developed friendship with his son. They used to play together.

One day in the game of hide-and-seeK, Guru Ravidass Ji won and his friend lost the game. As a result, his friend was to seek hidden Ravidass Ji in his next turn. By this time night had fallen. It was mutually agreed that the friend (son of Pt. Sharda Nand) would play his turn of seeking Guru Ravidass Ji tomorrow in the morning.

In the next morning, Guru Ravidass Ji, along with other play-mates, waited for his friend for a long time but he did not turn up. At last Guru Ravidass Ji himself went to his residence with other play-mates.

The parents and other members of family of friend of Guru Ravidass Ji were weeping. The

neighbourers and others were also sitting in remorse. Guru Ravidass Ji enquired as to what had happened. He was apprised that his friend (son of Pt. Sharda Nand) had died during night. Guru Ji wondered as to why he had died without playing his turn of seeking Guru Ji in the game of hide-and-seek. He wanted to see his friend. Pt. Sharda Nand took Guru Ravidass Ji along to the place where dead body of his son was lying. In a friendly tone, Guru Ravidass Ji, asked his friend that it was not the time to sleep and he should get up and play his turn of seeking him in the game of hide-and-seek. By virtue of spiritual powers of Guru Ravidass Ji, His friend became alive. He got up and was willing to play. His parents and others were astonished. They were happy again.

The parents and relatives of the friend of Guru Ji and others bowed at sacred feet of Guru Ji and thanked him.

## **A Brahman Boy Rescued**

A Brahman boy named Ram Lal was a close friend of Guru Ravidass Ji. For most of the time they remained together and played to

gether. The Brahman boy did not observe untouchability also. He loved Guru Ji very much. The Brahmans were jealous and could not tolerate that a Brahman boy should play with an untouchable boy. They emphatically impressed upon his parents to detract their son from moving and playing with a boy of low-caste. But Ram Lal obeyed none.

The Brahmans, being jealous of Guru Ravidass Ji, complained to the king about the friendship of Ram Lal (a Brahman) and Guru Ravidass Ji (an untouchable). The king called Ram Lal to the court. He was decided to be killed by throwing before a hungry lion. As such, he was thrown before a hungry lion. The lion thundered. Ram Lal cried at his high pitch and fainted. When the lion came near the boy it became calm. It looked around. Instead of killing the boy it looked frightened. It saw Guru Ravidass Ji sitting near and protecting Ram Lal. The lion bowed before Ram Lal and receded. Ram Lal came to senses. He got up and came straight to his friend Guru Ravidass Ji and thanked him for his protection from the lion.

The King and Brahmans felt ashamed. The King realised that Ram Lal has been protected by some spiritual power. The king freed him.

## **Non-acceptance of Philosopher's Stone**

Guru Ravidass Ji was a great saint of medieval Age who remained contented with his minimum belongings and resources of livelihood. He preferred to lead a poor man's life. Many kings and queens and other rich people were his disciples but he never expected and accepted any wealthy offers. God deemed it proper to give him a philosopher's stone. One day God, in the guise of a saint, visited Guru Ji's hut and offered him a philosopher's stone with whose touch iron would be converted into gold. The saint asked him to construct a palatial building with money earned with converted gold. Suitable boarding and lodging arrangements could also be made for visiting Sadhus. Guru Ji listened all this. After a pause he politely refused the offer with the plea that he prefers to be poor and that he would serve the visiting Sadhus with

his available resources. Even the repeated offers of the philosopher's stone by the Godly saint were not accepted by Guru Ji.

At last the saint thought that he should leave the philosopher's stone in his hut and he could use it later. He requested Guru Ji to keep it with him and he would collect it from him on return. Guru Ji told him to keep it in a particular place in the hut. The saint kept that stone there.

The saint came back after 13 months. He asked for philosopher's stone. Guru Ravidass Ji asked him to collect it from the place where he had kept. He had not used it. The saint wondered on his tenacity of non-involvement in worldly wealth. The saint was very happy and took away the philosopher's stone, went out and disappeared.

Guru Ji has taught us a lesson that one should not be greedy. One should work hard for earning livelihood.

## **Guru Ravidass Ji Escaped Attempt on Life**

Ever since his childhood, Guru Ravidass Ji

had religious bent of mind. His talks were not conventional. Even his family members were astonished at his strange actions. He was an undaunted boy. When he became adult, he started worshipping God like the Brahmans. He blew conch-shell, applied Tilak (mark) on forehead wore Janju (sacred thread) and tied Dhoti (cloth sheet used instead of trousers) like the Brahmans. He vehemently condemned caste system and untouchability. He preached equality, secularism, truthfulness, oneness of God and human rights. Since his message was of universal brotherhood, people of all shades irrespective of caste, sex or creed came to listen his sermons. His following was fast increasing. At this, the Brahmans and Piran Ditta Mirasi planned a strategy to kill Guru Ravidass Ji. A meeting of several young-men was to be arranged in desolate and lonely place away from the village where Guru Ravidass Ji would also be invited. In the course of discussion, Guru Ravidass Ji would be manhandled and killed. Guru Ji knew it before hand due to his spiritual power.

The meeting started at the venue. In course

of discussion a group of persons caught hold of him and tried to kill him. At this juncture, by virtue of his spiritual powers, Guru Ravidass Ji cast his appearance on one Bhalla Nath. As a result, Bhalla Nath, their companion, looked to others as Ravidass. They killed him. After a short while, Guru Ji blew conch-shell at his hut. The killers were astonished to hear the sound of the conch-shell. They went back to the spot of the scuffle and found that Bhalla Nath had been killed instead of Guru Ravidass Ji. They repented and prayed Guru Ravidass Ji for forgiveness.

## **Floating of Pathri (Stone)**

According to Hindu scriptures worship of God was the sole right of Brahmins only. On the contrary, Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, who belonged to Chamar caste, also started worship of God. He started blowing conch-shell and ringing the bell. He was enlightened and had realised God. He simplified mode of worship and discarded rituals. His religious discourses were most convincing and truthful. As a result, cutting across caste barriers, large number of people

became his followers. All this irked the Brahmans. It was a challenge not only to their priestly supremacy but an adverse impact on their source of livelihood also. Brahmans forbade him from worshipping God. But he did not relent and took worship as his birth-right.

At last Brahmans approached the then Kashi Naresh Hardev Singh and complained against Guru Ravidass Ji for practising worship of God. Guru Ravidass Ji was summoned to appear in the court of the king. Guru Ji explained in the court that worship is everybody's right and that he is the truthful worshipper of God. The Pandit priests and Guru Ravidass Ji were asked to bring their Thakur (Idol) whom they worshipped, to the river Ganga on the appointed day. Only that party will be adjudged as the true worshipper whose Thakur floats in the river.

Brahman priests and Guru Ravidass Ji arrived at Rajghat of the river Ganga as directed by the king. The Pandits had brought small Thakur stones wrapped in the cotton. But Guru Ravidass Ji was stoutly carrying a 40 kg. heavy-weight square stone on his shoulders with



unshakeable confidence. A huge crowd of residents of Benaras gathered on Rajghat of river Ganga to witness the fateful and decisive event. The king and the courtiers also reached the spot. The Brahman priests who were the aggrieved party were given first turn to float their Thakur stones in the river. All the tall fleshy, head shaven, Janju (thick thread) wearing and Tilak applied Brahman priests blew conch-shells and fumbled Vedic Mantras and gently placed their Thakur stones in the river one by one. To their great dismay, all their Thakur stones gently sank down deep into the water. All of them bowed down their heads. The on-lookers were stunned to see the sinking Thakurs of Brahmans.

Then was the turn of Guru Ravidass Ji. He lifted his heavy-weight stone on his shoulders. There was thaw. All eyes were focussed on Guru Ji and the stone he carried. Curiosity prevailed. It was a decisive moment. In case his stone also sinks, there will be further gloom for the lowly. Guru ji closed his eyes and stood erect. His face blushed and with all humility he prayed to God.

*Meri sangat poch soch din raati  
Mera karam kutilta janam kubhati.  
Raam gosaeaa jeea ke jeewnaa  
Mohi naa bisaarho main jan tera. (Rahaao)  
Meri haro vipt jan karo subhaaiee  
Charn naa chhadoo sareer kall jaaiee.  
Kaho Ravidass pario teri saabha.  
Beig milho jan karu naa bilanbaa.*

At this moment there was dazzling light in the sky. All the on-lookers expected something miraculous. Guru Ji moved ahead to the water and gently placed the stone in light-blue transparent water of the river. To great astonishment of the on-lookers the stone (Pathri) floated majestically. Guru Ji gently smiled and thanked God for coming to his rescue. There was spontaneous applause from the viewers.

The Pandits had failed in the test. They had been proved false worshippers. The on-lookers made a mockery of the Pandits. The king announced victory to Guru Ravidass Ji as the truthful worshipper. All respectfully fell at his feet. Guru Ravidass Ji was seated in a golden palanquin and moved in a procession in the city.

The mindset of the masses was changed and they developed regard for him and the lowly. They were blissful after having glimpses of Guru Ji.

A gala-function was organised after some-time in the honour of Guru Ravidas Ji to celebrate his victory. He was seated at a raised cushioned and beautiful seat decorated with jewels. All the courtiers, diwans, intelligentsia, chieftains and selected people formed the gathering. All spoke high of Guru Ravidass Ji. The king and members of his family intantly became followers of Guru Ji. At the end of the function sweets were distributed. The people touched sacred feet of Guru Ji and went back home singing his praise. This event was recorded in the annals of court in calligraphic golden letters.

It was an unprecedented and eventful day for the untouchables. New glorious history was created for them on that fateful day. Truth had come out victorious against falsehood. False beliefs had been belied !

## **Disgrace of Guru Ravidass Ji Be- got Leprosy**

Saintly persons belong to entire mankind. They do not represent any single caste or creed. They cherish universal well-being; and persuade humanity to follow the path of Truth and Equality. Guru Ravidass Ji was a reputed enlightened saint of medieval Age. Influenced by the truthfulness of his sacred sermons of worship of God, devotees from all castes became his disciples. After having learnt of his fame as an Emancipated saint, a wealthy Seth visited his place to hear his religious discourses. On that day Guru Ji threw light on importance of human birth. It was elucidated that rare phenomenon of our birth is a result of our benevolent deeds in our previous life.

Dulabh janam pun phal payo

The Almighty should, therefore, be worshipped to enlighten our this life. Other than His Name all show of rituals is false.

At the end of Satsang (religious discourses) Guru Ji distributed nectar from shallow earthen pot lying near his seat. On observing it as dirty

water, he threw nectar behind his head and back instead of drinking. It fell partially on his clothes and partially on the floor.

The gathering dispersed. The Seth came back home. Thinking that his clothes had been spoiled and polluted by dirty water given by Guru Ravidass Ji, he took off the clothes and donated to a poor man who was suffering from leprosy.

The poor man wore the clothes donated by the Seth. The clothes bore blots of nectar given by Guru Ravidass Ji to the Seth. The poor man felt soothing effect on his body as soon as he put on the clothes. The wounds of leprosy started healing up. He started having sound sleep at night. In a short period, the poor man became completely healthy as if he had never suffered from the disease. On the other hand leprosy developed on the body of the Seth. He got lot of treatment from highly qualified and experienced Vaidis and Hakims but the disease continued becoming serious. The wounds of leprosy became wet. Continuous intense pricking pain upset the psyche of the Seth and plunged him in gloom.

He sat alone and pondered as to whether the disease was due to disgrace of the saint. He went to Guru Ravidass Ji and apologized for throwing nectar on his earlier visit. Guru Ji forgave him. He got relief from the disease automatically within a few days. Thereafter, the entire family of the Seth became Guru Ji's disciples.

## **Display of Janjus of 4 Ages**

The Hindu religious books have put a bar on the so-called Shudras from worshipping God. The Shudras were not allowed to wear the Janju (sacred thick thread), put mark (Tilak) on forehead and observe other religious practices. Guru Ravidass was born to face the brunt. He started wearing Janju, put Tilak (religious mark) on forehead and wearing Dhoti like that of Pandits. He also observed other practices which were peculiar to the Brahmans only. All this was taken very ill by the Pandits. In the beginning they tried to impress upon Guru Ravidass Ji not to resort to the practices followed by them. But Guru Ji would not agree. He told them that they were wearing false Janju.

Aggrieved by the intransigent attitude of Guru Ravidass Ji, the Brahmans brought to the notice of the king, the religious practices followed by Ravidass Ji which are peculiar to the Brahmans only. The king was furious on the issue. He sent for Guru Ravidass Ji for clarifying his position. Guru Ravidass Ji appeared in the court of the king. The Brahmans too had come in large numbers. The issue of wearing Janju (sacred thick thread) was discussed.

Brahmans said that as per Hindu scriptures, Janju is to be worn by the Brahmans only. Ravidass being untouchable should stop wearing it. Guru Ravidass Ji told the king that it has falsely been written in the scriptures that non-Brahmans will not wear Janju. It is injustice with others. However, he will stop wearing Janju on one condition. The Pandits would show him what he was just going to show to the king. Guru Ji took out a Rambi (knife) and struck it into his chest making four-inch long cut. Blood blew profusely. There was a pool of blood on the floor. He pulled out four Janjus from his chest— one of gold, second of silver, third of copper

and fourth of thread-signifying his wearing these Janjus in Satyuga, Treta, Duaaper and Kalyuga. This also demonstrated that the untouchables are pure, truthful and innocent. The Brahmans cut a story figure. Their faces turned pale. Understanding the reality, the king fell on the feet of Guru Ji and begged apology for the harassment caused to him. A broad-minded Guru Ji forgave him.

At the end of the event, Guru Ji told the king and the gathering that in fact Janju has no significance in attainment of God. He wore it only to demonstrate its futility and to show the right path to the Brahmans. Guru Ji took off his Janju and gave it to the king. Thereafter, he never wore any Janju as such.

The pains taken by Guru Ravidass Ji to wrest human rights should not be allowed to go unfelt and unsung. It should further kindle the spirit to continue the pace. Blood flowed from his chest may energise blood of the generations to tread his foot-prints and thrill the era.

## **Meera Bai Saved**

Meera Bai was the only child of her par



ents. Her mother died when Meera Bai was still in her infancy. She was brought up under the custody of Duda Ji, her grandfather who was a worshipper of God. He had met Guru Ravidass Ji several times. He was under his influence. Meera Bai was also influenced by the devotional bent of mind of her grandfather. It is said that at the time of marriage of Meera Bai, Guru Ravidass Ji blessed the couple.

After her marriage, she adopted Guru Ravidass Ji as her Guru, with the consent of her husband and other elderly members of her family. Religious discourses were held daily at the open compound of 1800 ft. high Kumbh Shyam Mandir near Vijay Sitambh, Chittorgarh. These discourses had deep impact on innocent conscience of Meera Bai. In this compound, Meera used to dance in ecstasy of deep Divine devotion. She used to sing the praise of her Guru.

*Guru milya Ravidass Ji dini gyan ki gutki  
Chot lagi nijnam hari ki mharey hivrey khatki.*

By this time, Meera Bai had become a truthful devotee of Guru Ravidass Ji. She had unshakeable faith in Guru Ji. She was absorbed

in meditation and company of saints all the time. After the death of her father-in-law, her troubles started. Bikramjit the younger brother of her deceased husband, was apprehensive and did not like her remaining aloof in meditation and company of saints. But Meera Bai did not relent.

Bikramjit got her thrown in Gambhiri river at mid-night. She glimpsed Guru Ravidass Ji in the turmoil of waves. The waves comfortably sprang her out to the bank of river. This incident confirmed purity of Meera and she felt blissful.

On another day in her intuitional devotional state of meditation, Meera Bai was talking and laughing with Guru Ravidass Ji in her room. Bikramjit apprehended that she was talking and laughing with some outsider in her room. Out of wrath he unsheathed his sword to kill her. He knocked at the door and asked her angrily to open the door. Without waiting he forcefully pushed the door open. There was no man. Room was filled with dazzling light. Meera was absorbed in meditation. This shook him. His conscience cursed him. He fainted. After some time he gained consciousness. Feeling helpless he came out.

Meera Bai faced yet another crucial test. A cushioned bed was prepared. Piercing sharp nails were studded on it. Meera Bai was asked to sit on it as it was purported to be manufactured for her comfortable sleep. She did as directed. By virtue of protection by Guru Ravidass Ji the piercing nails became flowers. She had sound sleep on the bed.

Bikramjit was still haunted by the phobia of killing Meera Bai. He chalked out a strategy to kill Meera Bai in consultation with his ministers. She was to be offered milk mixed with poison by posing it as nectar sent to her by Guru Ravidass Ji. Uda Bai, sister of Bikramjit, secretly told Meera Bai that poison in the milk is going to be offered to her posing as nectar sent to her by Guru Ravidass Ji; that she should not drink it. Meera Bai replied that if it is said to have been sent by Guru Ravidass Ji, she would drink it as nectar. Milk mixed with poison was offered to Meera Bai through Pandit Daya Ram stating that it is nectar sent by Guru Ravidass Ji and she should drink it. In meditation Guru Ravidass Ji told her that although it is poison-mixed-milk yet

she should unhesitatingly drink it as nectar. Meera Bai repeated Name of Guru Ravidass Ji devotionally and carried the pot containing poisonous milk. It became nectar. She drank it and became blissful. She sang in ecstasy :

*Vish ko pyala Rana Ji melio dyo  
Mertani ne paye*

*Kar charanamrit pee gayee re,  
gunGobind ra gaye.*

Bikramjit still thought of killing Meera Bai. He thought out another plan. A poisonous snake was to be sent to Meera Bai posing as garland sent by Guru Ravidass Ji for her. The snake would sting her when the pot is opened. Pot carrying poisonous cobra snake was taken to Meera Bai and she was told that it is a garland sent by Guru Ravidass Ji for her. She should wear it. She meditated Guru Ji. By spiritual power of Guru Ravidass Ji the snake became a beautiful garland. She removed disc of the pot. It was a beautiful garland. She picked it up and wore it. She was moved and sang spontaneously :

*Saanp pitaro Rana Ji bhejyo, dyo mertani  
gal Daar*

*Hans hans Meera kanth lagayo yo to mhan  
Re nausar haar.*

*Meera Bai thanked Guru Ravidass Ji. She  
was saved.*

Bikramjit was now helpless. He yielded to Meera Bai and begged apology for past attempts to kill her. She forgave him. Bikramjit and members of his family developed deep regard for Guru Ravidass Ji.

Guru Ravidass Ji was a great saint. Meera Bai was his equally great disciple. Her heart beat with Guru Ji; her soul vibrated with Guru Ji. She wrote and sang profuse devotional poetry in praise of Guru Ravidass Ji. Sweet and melodious tunes of hymns of Meera Bai can be heard even today in air in the serene vicinity of Chittor. Radio and Television too sing her devotional songs as the day dawns.

## **The Episode of Damri (small coin)**

Kumbh festival was held at Haridwar on the bank of the river Ganga. Pandit Ganga Ram set out to attend this festival. On the way he visited Guru Ravidass Ji at Benaras and paid

homage to him. On being asked by Guru Ji he apprised him that he was going to attend Kumbh festival at Haridwar. Guru Ravidass Ji gave one Damri (small coin) to Pandit Ganga Ram with the direction that he should offer this Damri to Ganga Mata only if she accepts it by taking her hand out of water. He was amazed at the unprecedented condition. However, he took the Damri and went away to Haridwar. He thought in his mind that since time immemorial innumerable devotees have offered money, gold and silver ornaments and other precious jewels but Ganga Mata has never accepted these offers by taking out her hand. This was something impossible and unheard of. He took it very lightly.

At Har Ki Pauri, Haridwar, after taking his bath, Pandit Ganga Ram said his prayers and started his journey back home. The Pandit had forgotten to offer Damri of Guru Ravidass Ji to Ganga Mata. Soon his way back home the Pandit felt giddy and fainted and sat down. He fell asleep. He realised that he had forgotten to offer Damri to Ganga Mata. As he woke up, he immediately went back to the holy river.

Pandit Ganga Ram spoke loudly towards the river not believing that he would get any response. He uttered that Ravidass Ji has sent a Damri to her. But it is to be given only if it is accepted by taking out your hand. At this, Ganga Mata lifted her right hand out of water and accepted Damri sent by Guru Ravidass Ji, leaving the Pandit in the shock. In return, Ganga Mata gave a golden Kangan (bangle) to Pandit Ganga Ram and asked him to give it to Guru Ravidass Ji as her gift. Pandit Ganga Ram came back home and gave the Kangan to his wife instead of giving it to Guru Ravidass Ji.

After a few days, at the instance of his wife, he went to the market to sell the precious Kangan as he was in great need of money. Jeweller was astonished to see the precious Kangan. He had never seen such a bangle before. He apprehended the mischief and passed on the bangle to the king that Pandit Ganga Ram had stolen it from somewhere. He king showed the beautiful bangle to his queen. She liked it very much and insisted for one more matching Kangan of same type. The Pandit was helpless. The king directed

him to arrange one matching bangle, failing which he would be punished. Pandit Ganga Ram broke down and narrated the whole episode as to how he got this bangle. He requested the king and queen to accompany him to Guru Ravidass Ji for the purpose. When they reached there, Guru Ji extended a hearty welcome to them. Pandit Ganga Ram narrated the whole tale of bangle to Guru Ji and repented for the perfidious act and humbly sought forgiveness. He also implored that a matching bangle is needed by the king and the queen.

*Mun changa to kathauti mein Ganga*

(If mind is pure, the Ganga flows in the small earthen shallow pot). Broad-minded Guru Ji asked them to see in the earthen shallow pot. To their amazement, river Ganga was flowing and there were innumerable bangles floating in it. Guru Ji asked them to identify the matching bangle. All this shook their spirit. They were fascinated and highly impressed by the spiritual power of Guru Ji that they became his followers. They listened evening religious discourses and went back home singing the praise of Guru Ravidass Ji.



At some place this episode has been described differently. Once the king and queen along with courtiers and other dignitaries visited the place of Guru Ravidass Ji. The queen possessed the kangan (bracelet) which had been sent by Ganga Ji to Guru Ji. It was so dear to her. The queen requested Guru Ji for second matching kangan. Kind hearted Guru Ji lifted the stone on which he used to process leather and said-

*Man Changa to kathauti mein Ganga.*

Ganga was flowing. So many kangans like the one with the queen were floating in the Ganga. The king and queen were amazed to see all that. They sought forgiveness. They became disciples of Guru Ravidass Ji.

The above episode has been described at some pages with still a minor difference. The queen demanded a matching kangan, the king went to the shore of the Ganges. He worshipped Ganga Ji, in many manners but got no response. Then taking pandit ji along reached the kutia of Guru Ravidass Ji. He humbly requested Guru Ji for second matching kangan of the one in his possession. Guru Ji said that he could get as many kangans as he liked. He lifted the pathri

(stone) on which he used to process leather and asked Ganga Ji to bless a kangan to the king.

All were astonished to see the flow of Ganga beneath the pathri. Ganga Ji was throwing out with waves many kangans matching with the one the king was having. All were amazed to see all this miracle. The king begged apology and bowed on the sacred feet of Guru Ji in reverence. He became disciple of Guru Ji. Holy sages are king of the kings.

## **Dinner of Guru Ravidass Ji at Chittorgarh**

Once Rani Jhalan Bai of Chittorgarh visited Benaras on pilgrimage. She paid homage at many temples. There she heard of perfection in enlightenment of Guru Ravidass Ji. She went to the place of Guru Ji at Govardhanpur, Benaras and listened his religious discourses. She was highly convinced and influenced by Guru Ji. She was so much impressed that she prayed Guru Ji to make her his disciple. Guru Ji told her to adopt some high-caste saint as Guru as she belonged to Rajput caste. But she implored and insisted to become his disciple. Seeing her truthfulness

and perseverance in conviction, Guru Ji initiated her and made her his disciple. The Pandits could not bear that a Rajput queen should become disciple of a low caste saint. They complained to Raja Sangram Singh that his queen had adopted Ravidass Ji as her Guru. At this the king was annoyed with the queen. However, she talked high of Guru Ji and his enlightenment and charismatic powers that he had. After hearing this, the king also developed regard for Guru Ji and cherished to see him.

The king and queen arranged a Satsang (religious congregation for discourses) at Chittorgarh. Guru Ravidass Ji was prayed to attend the Satsang as the Chief Guest. After spiritual deliberations community dinner was arranged in honour of Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Ravidass Ji knew spiritually that Pandits would not take meals if he sits in line with them. Therefore, he preferred to sit alone in a separate room. However, when service of food was ready the Brahmans stood away and refused to sit with Guru Ravidass Ji, because they said, he belonged to low caste. When Guru Ji came to know all about it he agreed to sit alone in another room. Then

the Pandits agreed to take meals. The food was served. When the Pandits began to eat food they were astonished to see that Guru Ravidass Ji was sitting on both sides of each of the Pandits. On right side, he was there and on left side he was again there. The Pandits felt ashamed and repented for their unruly behaviour with Guru Ravidass Ji. They prayed Guru Ji to forgive them. They were forgiven. All of them became Guru Ji's disciples.

## **Freeing a She-deer from a Hunter**

Long ago the area of present LEHARTARA in Benaras was a jungle. Deers and other species of animals inhabited it. Guru Ravidass Ji also used to visit this forest and meditate there in lonely place. Once a hunter laid net to catch a deer. A she-deer was entrapped; it was caught by the hunter and was to kill it. The she-deer implored the hunter that its small children are hungry and are waiting for her for feed. It will come back after feeding them. The hunter would not let it go. However, he agreed to free it against a surety. Guru Ravidass Ji incidentally

listened all this. He offered to stand surety for the she-deer. In case it did not come back Guru Ji was willing to pay the price.

The she-deer was allowed to go to see its children. It fed its children and told them the tale of having been caught by the hunter and freed for a short-while on the surety of Guru Ravidass Ji. The children said, “We do not want to survive without you. We also accompany you to be killed with you.” Within the agreed time the she-deer and its children came back to Guru Ji where the hunter was also waiting.

The hunter was astonished to see the truthfulness of she-deer and thought that Guru Ji knew the episode before hand.

The hunter repented for past killings and took a vow not to kill animals in future. The she-deer and its children were freed. The hunter fell on the feet of Guru Ji and became his follower. The she-deer and its children bowed at the sacred feet of Guru Ji and expressed their gratefulness. Thereafter, the she-deer and its children would bow to Guru Ji whenever he visited the forest.

## **King Pipa lost Nectar**

Guru Ravidass Ji was famous for his enlightened Realisation. He had written many hymns in the praise of God. His sermons discussed in religious discourses were most convincing. His message was of universal appeal. As a result, large number of people attended his religious congregations.

King Pipa had a religious bent of mind. One day he attended Satsang (religious discourses) of Guru Ravidass Ji. He was highly impressed with truthful sermons. At the end of Satsang, Guru Ravidass Ji distributed nectar to the visitors. King Pipa thought of low caste of Guru Ji and hated water being posed as nectar. Guru Ji poured nectar on his hands to be drunk. Thinking it as polluted water he threw it down through the gap in both the hands together. As a result, nectar fell on the clothes of king Pipa. It left indelible blots on the clothes.

After reaching his home, king Pipa sent the clothes to washerman for washing. The in

delible blots could not be removed. Daughter of the washerman sucked the blots for their removal. The moment she sucked the blots, she was enlightened. She could tell as to what was happening in the distant places. All this came to the notice of king Pipa. He enquired from the girl as to how she got this spiritual power. She told him that the moment she sucked blots on his clothes, she was enlightened. King Pipa repented. He realised that he had wasted nectar taking it as water of low caste saint.

He went to Guru Ravidass Ji and begged apology for throwing nectar. He prayed Guru Ji to give him the same nectar again. Guru Ji told him that he had missed the opportunity, as the nectar was not available now. However, on his insistence, Guru Ji initiated him and made him his disciple. King Pipa worshipped God as guided by Guru Ravidass Ji. As a result of Divine devotion he became emancipated. Other members of his family and many visitors also became followers of Guru Ji.

## **King Sikandar Lodhi freed Guru**

## **Ravidass Ji from jail**

Sikandar Lodhi was a ruler of Delhi. He was very cruel towards Hindus and their traditions. He even converted large number of Hindus to Islam.

The Pandits saw Guru Ravidass Ji dressed like a Hindu (Brahman) and reported it to the king. The king ordered his soldiers to put Ravidass Ji in prison and had him locked up. As usual Guru Ji was in meditational mood. It so happened that locks of the jail broke away automatically. Soldiers were amazed to see all this. Guru Ji was seen moving freely outside the jail inspite of strict supervision by the soldiers. All this was brought to the notice of king. The king realised his high-handedness and set Guru Ji free from prison. He begged apology from him.

At an other time Sikander Lodhi sent Guru Ravidass Ji to a dark prison-cell at the instance of the maulvis. Then all the devotees and staff members felt as if Guru Ji is seated on the throne. The jail authorities brought to the notice of the king. They pleaded that Guru Ravidass Ji is spiritually enlightened having charismatic powers.



The king realised his blunder. Guru Ji was freed. The king begged apology from Guru Ji. The maulvis were reprimanded.

Once the Pandits and Muslims complained to the king Sikander Lodhi about the activities of Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Ji was imprisoned. Sikander Lodhi was upset. He slept at night. During night he saw himself in a tragic situation, Guru Ravidass Ji was seen rescuing him. The king was highly impressed with Guru Ji's spiritual powers. Next day in the morning, Guru Ji was freed. King humbly requested Guru Ji for forgiveness.

The Brahmans were jealousy of the increasing fame of Guru Ravidass Ji. On one pretext or the other they lodged a complaint with the king Sikander Lodhi against Guru Ji. The king ruled that Guru Ravidass Ji be thrown before a drunken elephant. Next day Guru Ji was thrown before a drunken elephant. To their great astonishment the elephant bowed before Guru Ji in reverence and went back. The king begged apology and Guru Ji forgave them all.

Thereafter, the king never interfered in the affairs of Guru Ravidass Ji.

## **Reverse Flow of Ganga River**

Benaras is a sacred city inhabited on the bank of river Ganga. In Benaras it is a custom to perform last rites of the dead bodies on bank of pious river Ganga. Even from the distant places surrounding Benaras, dead bodies are brought here.

Revered father of Guru Ravidass Ji grew very old. He fell ill and died. Guru Ravidass Ji called his neighbourers for performing last rites.

Guru Ravidass Ji along with his companions carried the dead body to the bank of the river where last rites of dead bodies are performed. The Brahmans forbade on the plea that water of river Ganga flows from the spot towards the main city where Brahmans take bath and they would be polluted. Guru Ji felt very much harassed. They again carried the dead boy to a distant place named Nagwa on bank of the river where Brahmans were not likely to be defiled by untouchability. The last rites were performed on dead body of revered father of Guru Ravidass Ji at that spot. They prayed for peace

of the departed soul. At this time due to spiritual power of Guru Ji there was thunder. Water of river Ganga flowed reverse and a strong wave sprang up towards the dead body and washed away and immersed all the mortal remains. From that moment, at this spot reverse flow of Ganga water continued. Reverse flow of river water took place due to spiritual power of Guru Ravidass Ji.

At this pious place Nagwa, a fascinating ‘Guru Ravidass Smark and Park’ and have been set up. Spacious and beautiful Guru Ravidass Ghat has also been built by Ms Mayawati regime on the bank of the river quite adjacent to the Smark and Park.

## **Jealousy of Piran Ditta Mirasi**

Guru Ravidass Ji was well wisher of human beings. He never discriminated between anybody on any ground. He preached sat marg in his religious discourses. He became famous amongst the people. People of all varnas and castes became disciples of Guru Ravidass Ji. Piran Ditta Mirasi did not like increasing fame of

Guru Ji.

One day Piran Ditta Mirasi called a meeting of his favourites. They planned to kill Guru Ravidass Ji. On some pretext Guru Ji was called to the Sabha. When Guru Ji arrived, some started hot talk with him. Guru Ji argued with them as to why they were talking rough with him without any reason. Some of them suddenly jumped over Guru Ji to kill him. At this Guru Ji remembered God and recited shabad:

*Ram gusaaeee jee ke jeewnaa  
Moh na bisaar(u) mai jan tera (Rahaao)  
Meri har(u) bipit jan krhu subhaaiee  
Charan na chhaadao sareer kaljaaiee  
Kaho Ravidass parao teri sabha.  
Beig milhu jan karu na bilanma*

As soon as Guru Ji humbly and devotionally recited above shabad there was dazzling light in the sky. All members of the Sabha started seeing appearance of Guru Ji on all sides. They all were confused and scared. At the same time Guru Ji was seen blowing conch-shell at his house. Guru Ji was rescued by God. They failed in their plan. The Sabha members repented

on their action and begged apology from Guru Ji.

The sacred place of occurrence of this incident is located towards Ganga near Lotu Baba Pir at Seer Govardhanpur Varanasi.

## **Blessings of Gold coins**

Guru Ravidass Ji had not accepted the God's offer of Philosopher's stone earlier.

Once again God visited the place of Guru Ji. He told Guru Ji that large number of devotees visit him daily. There is dire need of running of free community kitchen and a good sarai accommodation for the pilgrims. It is said that a large number of devotees, kings, courtiers used to visit the place of Guru Ji. You need money for all these facilities for the followers. You will, therefore, be getting 5 gold coins daily. Thereafter, 5 gold coins were found daily at Guru's place.

A splendid Satsang Bhawan, residential accommodsation and Dharamshala were constructed. Community kitchen was also run.

*Mandir Mehal kya bahutera*

*Jahan tahan bhagtan ka dera.*

Satsang is as necessary now as it was in

olden times. All of us should attend satsang and adopt sacred teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji.

## **A Sheikh begged for mercy**

Shri Guru Ravidass Ji held religion discourses everyday. He inspired the audience to shun discrimination on any ground. Equality and fraternity, worship of the Almighty with devotion and detachment from material belongings were the essence of his discourses. He cherished universal well-being. It was appealing to all the Hindus and Muslims alike. His fame spread all around.

One Sheikh of Varanasi also heard the fame of Guru Ji. He came to the place of Guru Ravidass Ji and heard his satsang. He observed that many kings, queens and others prominent figures were also there raptly listening the satsang. He was very much impressed with Guru Ji truthful sermons having universal appeal. His many misconceptions were clarified and removed.

At the end of satsang, Guru Ji distributed nectar (amrit) from his dauri (shallow earthen pot which he used for soaking leather). Its colour

was brown. It was served to all those present including Sheikh. Thinking it as polluted water, he hated and threw it aside. In this process, some drops of the nectar fell on his clothes. After reaching home he took off the clothes and handed over to the maid servant for washing.

The maid servant tried to wash off the blots on the clothes but these could not be removed. She put the clothes bearing blots in mouth and sucked so that the blot was removed. When she sucked the blots, she was divinely enlightened. She started talking God and heavenly bodies. Sheikh also came to know the spiritual powers of the maid servant. He enquired from her as to how she has attained all these powers. She told him that when she sucked the blots on the clothes, she became spiritually emancipated. The Sheikh repented that he had wasted and disregarded the nectar offered to him by Guru Ravidass Ji. He felt himself sinful and disgraced. He came to Guru a few days later and begged apology for throwing nectar thinking it polluted water. All the truthful saints are kind hearted. Guru Ji forgave and told him that you have missed the

opportunity. However, he was initiated and asked to chant God's Name Har(i) Har(i) Har(i). Even now those who want to be spiritually elevated should chant God's Name Har(i) Har(i) Har(i).

## **Karma Bai – the disciple of Satguru Ravidass Ji**

Karma Bai was divinely enlightened lady. Karma Bai's fame spread all around. Saints visited her place from far and near. One day a saint said, 'Karma ! how is it that God takes meals at your home daily.' She told while preparing meals chapattis, khichri for the God, I chant the sacred Name of God. When the meals are ready, all the items are kept in proper manner and are covered with a clean cloth. The saint told her that this is not the proper manner. She should wash wood needed as fuel, mud plaster the kitchen, bathe and then prepare meals. From next day she started the new process. One day while observing the new process, the meals were prepared late. God had to wait. God was still busy in eating khichri, Sant Rama Nand also prayed him to take meals with him. God had to



go to Sant Rama Nand Ji immediately. He could not even cleanse khichri from his face and hands. Sant Rana Nand Ji enquired all about from the God. God told that he daily took Khichri at the house of Karma Bai. Today she was late in preparing Khichri. 'I was still taking Khichri that you called me'. Hearing all this, Sant Rama Nand Ji was astonished to know that God takes meals at the house of Karma Bai! The priest went to Karma Bai and enquired on to how God comes to her house daily. She told him that while preparing meals she did simran of naam on blessings of Satguru Ravidass Ji that God takes meals at my house every day. Sant Rama Nand requested Karma Bai to pray to God to show me His appearance. Next day she requested God to let Sant Rama Nand have His darshan. God told that Sant Rama Nand is not clean at heart; he nurtures duality. She again requested that kindly do have mercy on him and bless him with your darshan. At the instance of Karma Bai God blessed Sant Rama Nand Ji with His darshan.

## **Ganga Ji as a girl**

Guru Ravidass Ji arranged a Bhandara. Ganga Ji also appeared in the shape of an unmarried girl to take part in Bhandara. Seeing her unique beauty, the king sent a message to Guru Ji that the girl be married to him. Guru Ji told all to Ganga Ji. Ganga Ji told Guru Ji that king will harass him. So let the king come for marriage. On the appointed day, the marriage procession arrived at the place of Guru Ravidass Ji. Fully adorned Ganga appeared. When she saw the king, she disappeared in the shallow earthen pot showing flowing Ganga. At this such a strong stream of water out-flowed from the pot that the entire marriage procession was drowned. Every body realised that it was Ganga Ji in the shape of girl who had come to seek blessings from Guru Ravidass Ji.

## **Udasis of Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji**

Guru Ravidass Ji was an institution in himself. He wanted to make amends in the social and religious system. He set out for spreading his teachings to far off places. Guru Ji travelled

to distant places to spread his message. Due to discrimination the spots built in his memory have been destroyed. Today there is no remnant showing his visit to any distant place. He not only wrote amritbani but also travelled all corners of the countries, as below, to make common man understand his philosophy of removing caste system, discrimination, ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, illusion.

## **Udasi – 1**

1. Ranipur, Malpi, Maadhopur, Bhagalpur, Naraingarh, Kalpi and Nagpur.
2. Barhanpur, Bijapur and Bhopal.
3. Chandehi, Jhansi, Toad, Bundi, Udaipur.
4. Jodhpur, Ajmer, Bombay.
5. Amarkot, Hyderabad, Kathiawar, Bombay.
6. Bombay to Karachi, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Bahawalpur.
7. Kalabagh, Kohat, Darra Khaibar, Jalalabad.
8. Jalalabad to Kafirstan, Srinagar.
9. Dalhousi to Gorakhpur, Gorakhpur to Kashi

## **Udasi – 2**

Kashipur to Gorakhpur, Partapgarh, Shahjahanpur. Then he proceeded up to Himachal mountains. All the devotees accompanying him were asked to go back to their places. He directed that henceforth his son would initiate the disciples and that he would come back after a long time.

Guru Ji was instrumental in bringing about many revolutionary reforms in society. The age old unhealthy rituals and traditions were abandoned. Large number of sinful bodies were blessed who started their fresh pious lives. When they were shown the right path even the religious hard core fanatics repented and begged apology. Many patients struggling for life and death were cured. Whosoever came to his shelter, all were emancipated and they became pious.

### **Udasi – 3**

Satguru Ravidass Ji travelled to Arabs countries also. He held dialogues with chiefs of various religions and innumerable persons were blessed with the powers he had. We find mention of various places in Guru Ji's bani. In shabad 'Begumpura sehar ko naon' there is mention of

Abadaan . As per mahan kosh of Bhai Kahan Singh it is a famous place in Iran. It indicates that Guru Ji visited Arab country also. He visited Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arab, Madina and Mecca and Afghanistan. In his journey to all these places large number of muslims became his disciples.

Some monuments might have been erected in Guru Ji's memory by his followers in these countries. But these could not have been maintained.

## **Travel to Himachal and Sirdhar Parbat**

There is mention in Guru Nanak Dev Janam Sakhi that Guru Nanak Dev Ji along with Bhai Bala and Mardana visited Himachal and Sirdhar Parbat. Bhai Bala and Mardana asked Guru Nanak Dev Ji if any body else has also visited this place before them. Guru Nanak Dev Ji told them that Guru Kabir Ji and Guru Ravidass Ji have visited his place. As such Guru Ravidass Ji, visited Himachal and Sirdhar parbat also. Virtually Guru Ravidass Ji travelled entire India and

Arabian countries. There is, however, utmost need of research work in travels of Guru Ji.

## **Gold cows became alive**

One day king Nagar Mal called Guru Ji to his palace. Many Pandits were also there.

The Pandits were mumbling vedic mantras. When the ceremony came to close, the king donated gold cows to the Pandits. Guru Ji intervened. He told that he does not believe in caste system. However, as per vedic provisions, the pandits can entertain donation of live cows only. Gold cows are not alive. These are dead. Carrying dead animals is the right of the Chamars. There was thaw. Guru Ji was right in his interpretation. But the greedy pandits were also not ready to leave gold cows, which were so costly. Ultimately, it was decided that the pandits may instill life in the cows, only then they can take the cows home. Otherwise, Guru Ji will get the gold cows. The pandits recited so many mantras but the cows could not move. Then they said that let Guru Ravidass Ji put life in the gold

cows. Guru Ji prayed to God. The gold cows became alive. They moved to lap of Guru Ji. The pandits were defeated. All bowed at the sacred feet of Guru Ji.

## **Dialogue of Satguru Ravidass Ji with Alawadi King**

Shri Jasbir Singh Sabar, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar has mentioned on Page 71 of his book “Bhakt Ravidass” that the dialogue being narrated is written at Page 463, 466, 487 of manuscript Sikh Reference Library Amritsar written in Samvat 1786.

Alwadi was king at Benaras. The qazis were jealous of increasing popularity of Satguru Ravidass Ji. They complained to the king that a chamar is preaching religious tenets. Many persons have become his disciples. On their instigation king Alawadi called Guru Ji to his court. Guru Ji was seated beside the seat of the king. Beside several persons of Guru Ravidass’s community carrying leather on their heads also accompanied Guru Ravidass Ji. The king felt foul smell of leather. The persons carrying leather were beaten and expelled from the court yard.

The king asked Guru Ravidass Ji that you were initiating others as your disciples, show some miracle. Guru Ji said that miracle has already been shown. He told that “I was worshipping God by chanting His Naam, you have seated me by your side although I am also Chamar whereas you have expelled others of my community from your darbar.”

Naagar Janan meri jaat(i) bikhiaat Chamaarun  
Ride raam govind gun saaran.

Guru Ji told, “O! residents of Benaras I am Chamar by caste. I am seated near the seat of the king in darbar because I am worshipping God whereas my companions carrying leather had been shunted out.”

Sursari salal krit baaruni re  
Sant jan karat nahi paann  
Suraa apviter nat awar jal re  
Sursari milat nahi hoie aann.

If alcohol is prepared out of Ganga water, it is disliked. When alcohol is prepared with well water and thrown in Ganga it mixes with Ganga water. It is worshiped.

Tar tar(i) apviter kar(i) maaneeaaai re



Jaise kaagaraa karat bichaarn  
Bhagat(i) bhaguot likheeaai tih(i) uopre  
Poojeeai kar(i) namaskarn

Leaves of TAR tree are considered impure. But when paper is prepared out of Tar leaves and God's praise is written on this paper, every body bows before it.

Meri jaat(i) kut bandhla dhor dhouwanta  
Nith(i) baanaarasi aas paasaa  
Ab bipar pardhan tih(i) karih dhanduout(i)  
Tere naam sarnaaie Ravidass daasaa.

I am cobbler by caste. People of my caste still carry away dead bodies around Benaras every day. Since I worship God, I am divinely emancipated. Even the distinguished pandits lay flat before me in reverence.

After hearing all this, the king was highly impressed and gave gold chowki and large sums of money to Guru Ji. The qazis again complained to the king that Ravidass Ji has disregarded the offerings given to him. He had distributed entire money to the destitutes and threw gold chowki in the Ganga. The king felt angry. He again called for Guru Ravidass Ji and asked all about the

gold chowki. The king insisted to return him the same gold chowki. Guru Ji took the king to the Ganga. He spoke to Ganga that his gold chowki may be given back to him. Ganga threw seven gold chowkis out in a strong wave. The king said that his is only one chowki, how it is that these are seven chowkis. Guru Ji told the king that in a single day one gold chowki has multiplied to seven chowkis. Had it remained there for more days it would have multiplied manifold. All these would have been for your comfort. Since the original gold chowki has been taken back from the Ganga, nothing will increase now.

The king realised his blunder and begged apology from Guru Ravidass Ji. He bowed to the sacred feet of Guru Ravidass Ji in reverence and scolded the Qazis.

## **Dialogue of Guru Ravidass Ji with Guru Kabir Ji and Guru Nanak Dev Ji**

Satguru Ravidass Ji used to hold religious

discoursed daily at Seer Govardhanpur, Benaras. Satguru Kabir Ji also held satsang daily at Kabir Chaura, Benaras. Both of them often met each other and held mutual discussions on religion, Naam, satsang, ritualism, enlightenment, saadhsangat, Hari(i), discrimination, high and low, caste system, secularism, equality, fraternity, truth, human beings and host of other topics.

Shri Lekh Raj Parwana writes in his book “Sri Guru Ravidass Jeewan ate Kirtaan” that Guru Nanak Dev Ji held three counts of dialogues with Guru Ravidass Ji. Their first meeting and goshti was held at Chuharkana (Nankana Sahib) when Guru Nanak Dev Ji was still in boyhood. Five saints Kabir Ji, Ravidass Ji, Sain Ji, Peepa Ji and Dhanna Ji had travelled to Punjab for preaching religiosity. Guru Nanak Dev Ji had been given twenty rupees from his revered father Mehta Kalu Ji for a profitable deal. He spent the amount of twenty rupees in the service of the above saints and got their blessings. He deemed it as Sacha Sauda. Guru Nanak Dev Ji spiritually knew everything. He might have judged

their divinity as a regard of which he served them.

Father Mehta Kalu Ji scolded Guru Nanak when he learnt that the five saints belonged to low caste. Feeling it a social stigma, he slapped Guru Nanak Dev Ji and said that Guru Ravidass Ji and Guru Kabir Ji belonged to low-caste and that why had he developed his relations with them. At this Guru Nanak Dev Ji blatantly condemned jaat-paat and stoutly reacted.

Neechan andir neech jaat neecha huu at(i) neech  
Nanak tin ke sang saath waddyen so kya rees.

Second goshti of Guru Ravidass Ji with Guru Nanak Dev Ji took place when Guru Ravidass Ji, along with sant-mandli, visited Punjab 125 years later. They reached Sultanpur after meeting their friends, devotees, saints and disciples. The sant smagam was fixed to be held at the spot where gurdwara Sant Ghat stands today. In this sant smagam it appears the concepts of God, formless, omniscient, omnipresent, Sach Khand (abode of God), pervading everywhere in the Universe, - were discussed. The discussion held here formed the basis of the concepts of Udasian of Guru Nanak Dev Ji which are

stated to have commenced from the Sant Ghat site.

Third goshti of Guru Nanak Dev Ji was held with Guru Ravidass Ji and Guru Kabir Ji at Gopaldass di bagichi at Kashi where Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh stands today. At this meeting final shape was given to entire fabric of Bhakti Andolan in the interest of human beings. A strategy was also chalked out for smooth management of the movement. In the same visit to Benaras Guru Nanak Dev Ji discussed various divine concepts with Sant Rama Nand Ji and Swami Shankracharya Ji. Thereafter, again there was general meeting of the saints. Guru Ravidass Ji was the champion on religious and spiritual reforms in the meeting. The road map of religious, social and political reforms was prepared in this sant smagam. Millions and millions of human beings engrossed in superstitions and rituals were to be freed from its quagmire and the concept of ik om (one God) was to be taken down to the masses. The ideal of Guru Ravidass Ji was to liberate millions of human beings including scholars, saints, Sidhs, brahmans from

superstitions, rituals and false and misplaced beliefs and practices and to motivate them to believe in one God. It was decided in this goshti that non-violent movement should be started for amelioration of shudras and raising their social status to equality, liberation of womanhood, removal of injustice and to raise voice against the atrocities perpetrated by the kings on their subjects.

## **Raja Chander Partap**

Raja Chander Partap of Ghazipur had heard the fame of Guru Ravidass Ji. He attended the mass feeding function (Yagg) organized by Maharana Sangha at Udaipur where Guru Ravidass Ji was also invited. At the end of the function, Raja Chander Partap humbly prayed to Satguru Ji to pay his pious visit to his palace at Ghazipur to grace the occasion of mass feeding function. Rana Sangha assured that in case Satguru Ji wished, he would escort him to Ghazipur. Satguru Ji blessed and accepted the invitation. Meera Bai and Karma Bai would also accompany Guru Ji.

On the scheduled day Guru Ji reached the

palace of Raja Chander Partap. He was received honourably by the king, his queens, courtiers and other dignitaries. He was garlanded profusely. Guru Ji was seated in the specially decorated room in the palace. A big mass feeding function (yagg) was organized in which Guru Ji participated. All neighboring kings and relatives also attended the ceremony. Next day Guru Ji came back to his place.

## **Bibi Bhanmati becomes disciple of Guru Ravidass Ji**

Bibi Bhanmati of Multan (now in Pakistan) was a pious lady who remained busy in thakur pooja for major time of the day. However, she did not have any enlightenment. Her mind remained upset. Somehow, she heard of fame of Guru Ravidass Ji of being divinely enlightened saint. She was told that if she aspires for supreme spiritual bliss, she should go to Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji and seek his blessings.

Bibi Bhanmati along with her husband reached Guru Ji's place at Benaras. They bowed at the sacred feet of Guru Ji. Incidentally, Gorakh

Nath had also come to Guru Ji for goshti. Gorakh Nath tried to take away stealthily spiritual powers of Guru Ravidass Ji but he failed to shake Guru Ji.

Guru Ji spared time for Bibi Bhanmati. She told Guru Ji her spiritual and mental position. Guru Ji recited following shabad:

Har(i) har(i) har(i) har(i) har(i) har(i) hare  
Har(i) simrat jan gaye nistar(i) tare (Rahao)  
Har(i) ke naam kabir ujjagar.  
Janam janam ke kate kagar.  
Nimat naamdeo doodh peeia.  
Tuo jag janam sankat nahi aaya.  
Jan Ravidass ram rang raataa  
Eiou gur prasad narak nahi jataa.

When Bibi Bhanmati understood the meaning of the shabad, she was highly impressed with divine enlightenment of Guru Ji. She was moved.

She humbly prayed to Guru Ji for initiation. Guru Ji blessed her and asked her to chant the Name of God as Har(i) har(i) har(i) har(i) for attainment of supreme bliss and to avoid the pains of transmigration. She became disciple of



Satguru Ravidass Ji.

## **Acrobat's Play**

Sometime back the idols of the mandir had come to the lap of Guru Ravidass Ji and went back to the mandir as directed by him. This was known to every body in Benaras. The Brahmans did acknowledge the divine enlightenment of Guru Ji. Even the king had become his disciple. But the Brahmans nurtured jealousy against Guru Ravidass Ji. They always talked ill of him on one pretext or the other.

King Nagar Mal invited Guru Ji for lunch. Other dignitaries were also called. The Brahmans who were jealous of Guru Ji, struck a hoax with the acrobats for which heavy payment was promised. They wanted to denigrate Guru Ji in the eyes of the king and others. The acrobat was not likely to be paid liberally by the guests; and the acrobat was to talk ill of Guru Ji holding his presence responsible for their poor earnings.

The acrobat started his tricks after the lunch. First of all Guru Ravidass Ji placed 10 gold mohars in their thaal. Guru Ji's disciples and well wishers gave liberal amount to the ac

robot. As a result he earned more amount than that was to be paid by the Brahmans. Instead of condemning Guru Ji the acrobat highly praised him. Wherever they went they eulogized Guru Ji. The Brahmans could not succeed in their insidious designs against the saint.

## **Dialogue with Gorakh Nath**

Gorakh Nath heard popularity of Guru Ravidass Ji. One day Gorakh Nath visited Seer Govardhanpur, Varanasi and enquired about the place of Guru Ravidass Ji. He came to the place where Guru Ji lived. Guru Ji welcomed Gorakh Nath and offered him the seat. He thanked Gorakh Nath for having visited him. Gorakh Nath told Guru Ji that he has heard his fame. As such, he had come to see him.

Gorakh Nath gave his shoe to Guru Ji to be mended. Gorakh Nath said that mending shoes is a mean occupation. You should not carry it on. I give you a precious herb. Warm it and touch any metal; it will turn the metal into gold. Construct a good house in place of the hut. Guru Ji replied that he had appeared on this earth for joining the souls which are departed from the

Almighty. He cut a piece of leather. Put it at a proper place on the shoe of Gorakh Nath. He put the yarn in his mouth for readying it for sewing the shoe. As the cotton thread passed through Guru Ji's mouth, it turned into gold. Gorakh Nath was astonished to see all this. He came to know that Guru Ravidass Ji possessed supreme spiritual powers. Ignorant people misunderstand him as lowly. He wished Guru Ravidass Ji to become his disciple. Gorakh Nath asked Guru Ji to look into his toombi. Guru Ji saw that in toombi there were jewels, diamonds, and golden Sumer Parbat. Guru Ji said that you are great. I praise you. He then asked Gorakh Nath to look into his dauri ( shallow earthen pot containing water in which leather is soaked for repair of shoes). Gorakh Nath saw viraat swaroop , jarh, chetan, Asthawar, Jangam, life, 5 elements- sky, air, fire, water, earth, Kuber, Inder, other devtas, moon, sun, stars, Vishnu, Brahma, Shiv and the Universe. Gorakh Nath became numb to see all this. His pride was shaken. He prayed to Guru Ji to be apologized. He fell on Guru Ji's feet. Guru Ji told him that ridhian sidhian are nothing before God's Name. God's Name is source of

all comforts. Guru Ji preached that he who mingles with God, all the godly powers appear in his palm.

## **Meeting of Guru Ravidass Ji with Sadhna Ji & Guru Ravidass Ji released from jail by Sikandar Lodhi**

Sadhna Pir used to kill birds and sell their meat in the market. On the other hand Guru Ravidass Ji preached non-killing of animals. Sadhna Ji did not like his preachings. One day he came to the place of Guru Ravidass Ji and asked him to be converted to Islam as it did not observe caste system. It is a sacred religion. Guru Ravidass Ji told Sadhna Ji to shun his pride and chant God's Name. Sadhna Ji was highly impressed with the arguments of Guru Ji and became his disciple.

At some other time Sadhna Ji visited King Sikandar Lodhi and spoke high of Guru Ravidass Ji and that he had become his disciple. Sikandar Lodhi was annoyed. He called Guru Ravidass Ji

through Sadhna Ji. Sikandar Lodhi was a cruel king. As Guru Ravidass Ji appeared in the court he was asked to be converted to Islam but Guru Ji refused to oblige the king. At this Guru Ravidass Ji was sent to jail. He sat in Samadhi and worshipped God. God took pity on Guru Ji. He appeared before him and talked with him. When Sikandar Lodhi visited jail in the evening, he overheard voice of God. “You have troubled my worshipper. Your dynasty will be annihilated.” The king was stunned and trembled to hear all this. He went to Guru Ravidass Ji, repented and begged his apology. He was released immediately. King Sikandar Lodhi gave a word to Guru Ji that in future he will not harass any body. Sikandar Lodhi had a precious diamond. He offered it to Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Ji refused the offer. Guru Ji told the king that he was worshipper of Diamond- the God.

Har(i) so heera chhadh(i) kai karih aan kee aas,  
Te nar dojak jaahige sat bhaakhai Ravidass.

## **Sachkhand gaman of Guru**

## **Ravidass Ji**

Satguru Kabir Ji, Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Tirlochan Ji and Satguru Dhanna Ji were asked by God to visit Satguru Ravidass Ji and convey him that he has attained supreme emancipation and that he will be called to sachkhand after 21 days. All these saints came to Guru Ji. He humbly welcomed and offered them seats. Guru Ji served them well. They told Guru Ji that God has ordained him 21 days more in this world, and they went away.

Guru Ji was at Benaras. Members of his family relatives and devotees were told all about the message of God. On the 21st day Guru Ji had a bath early in the morning and meditated. He mystically chanted the pious Name of God and mingled with Him on Asarh Sakranti of Bikrami Samvat 1584 (1528 A.D.). His followers remember him devotionally and get inspiration from his teachings. He was successful in bringing about sea change in the social and religious thought. His teachings and amritbani are as truthful and valid today as these were during his era and will continue to guide humanity in

future.

## **Impact of teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji on Babur**

As a result of his victory in Battle of Panipat in 1526 Babur was the first Mughal King who occupied throne in Delhi. He had brutally massacred lakhs of innocent bodies. However, whatever he did, he did in the name of God. During the course of advance in Indian Territory he came across pirs, saints, rishis also. He also heard of spiritual powers of Guru Ravidass Ji. Once he took his son Humayun along and went to see Guru Ravidass Ji. At that time Guru Ji was sitting at his place. Babur bowed at the feet of Guru Ji in reverence. Guru Ji scolded Babur for murdering innocent bodies. He asked him to shun pride.

Kyon Babur hua babra, man mein adhik ghumaan  
Kroron prani maar kar, tu ne kiya paap mahaan.

Therefore, Babur developed regard for Guru Ji. His teachings stunned Babur. In remorse he distributed money of his treasures at Delhi and Agra to the poor and destitute. Now the subjects developed respect for Babur and called him QALANDAR or FAQIR.

## ਡੇਰਾ ਸੱਚਖੰਡ ਬੱਲਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਿਤ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ

1. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਬਾਣੀ (ਗੁਟਕਾ) ਪੰਜਾਬੀ
2. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਕਾ ( ਗੁਟਕਾ )
3. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ (ਗੁਟਕਾ) (ਨਿਤਨੇਮ)
4. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਕਾ ( ਗੁਟਕਾ ) ( ਨਿਤਨੇਮ )
5. ਸੁਖਸਾਗਰ ( ਪੰਜਾਬੀ )
6. ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਕਾਠੀ —ਸੰਤ ਰਾਮਾ ਨੰਦ ਜੀ
7. ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਏਕੰ ਮੀਰਾ ਪਦਾਕਲੀ —ਸੰਤ ਰਾਮਾ ਨੰਦ ਜੀ
8. ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ (ਸਟੀਕ ਤੇ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਜੀਵਨ) -ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਬਾਵਾ ਜੀ
9. ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਕਾਠੀ ( ਸਟੀਕ ਏਕੰ ਸੰਖਿਸ਼ਤ ਜੀਵਨ ) ਹਿੰਦੀ -ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਕਾਕਾ ਜੀ
10. ਨਿਤਨੇਮਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਕਾਠੀ ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ ( ਸਟੀਕ )ਹਿੰਦੀ —ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਕਾਕਾ ਜੀ
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—ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਬਾਵਾ ਜੀ
12. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਪਾਕਨ ਜੀਵਨ ਕਥਾਏਂ-ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਕਾਕਾ ਜੀ
13. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਜੀਵਨ) -ਸੰਤ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਬਾਵਾ ਜੀ
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15. ਜਨਮ ਸਾਖੀ 'ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ' ਅਰਥਾਤ ਤਵਾਰੀਖ ,,
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17. ਮਹਿਮਾ ਦਰਬਾਰ ਸੱਚਖੰਡ ਬੱਲਾਂ
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21. ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਰੋਤ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਬਾਣੀ —ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਅਮਰ ਨਾਥ ਕੌਸਤਵ
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23. ਸਗਲ ਭਵਨ ਕੇ ਨਾਇਕਾ ਡਾ. ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਕਲਸੀਆ
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29. ਸਤਿ ਭਾਖੇ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ — ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਸਿੰਘ
30. ਸਟੀਕ-ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਜੀ - ਸੰਤ ਕੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਹਿਤਕਾਰੀ, ਸੰਤ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਦਾਸ ਝਾਲਸਰੀ
31. ਜਗਤਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਸੰਪ੍ਰਦਾਇ ਸੰਤ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਨਾ ਸਥੱਲ —ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਸੋਮਨਾਥ ਭਾਰਤੀ



# Satgurū Ravidas Jī

Wikipedia

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# Ravidassia religion

Part of a series on <b>The Ravidasi Panth</b>

<b>Ravidasi beliefs and practices</b>
Aarti
Meditation ·
Bhawan
<b>Holy Book</b>
<b>Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji</b>
<b>Ultimate Place of Pilgrimage</b>
<b>Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan</b>
<b>Topics</b>
Guru Ravidass ·
Guru Ravidass Jayanti
<b>Harr Nishan</b>


The **Ravidassia religion** <sup>i</sup>/rɑːvaɪdɑːssɑːtɑː/ (or **Ravidassia Dharam**; Punjabi: ਰਵਦਿਸ਼ੀ ਧਰਮ, Hindi: रवदिसस्यि धर्म, Urdu: راولدسسِيہ دھرم) is a monotheistic religion based on the teachings of the 14th century Indian guru Ravidass, revered as a satguru and prophet by his followers. Ravidass, a Chamar by birth, taught monotheistic spirituality and a message of equality and emancipation from the Indian caste system.

Historically Ravidassia represented a range of beliefs in South Asia, with some devotees of Ravidass counting themselves as Ravidasia Sikhs, others as "Lower Caste Hindus", and others considering themselves a separate group from Hinduism and Sikhism. The Ravidassia community began to take on more cohesion following 1947, and the establishment of successful Ravidassia communities in the diaspora.

Ravidassias believe that Ravidas is a guru (saint) whereas the Sikhs consider him a *bhagat* (holy person)<sup>[1]</sup> even though the Sikh Gurus included some of Ravidas's (as well as other Bhagats) teachings in the 11th Sikh guru 'Guru Granth Sahib Ji'.

Ravidassias believe that since Ravidas lived before the 1st Sikh Guru and his teachings were studied by the Sikh Gurus and influenced them, he is just as much a saint as them. This has caused conflict with hardline orthodox Sikhs which culminated in the 2009 murder of Ravidassia cleric Ramanand Dass by Sikh extremists in Vienna. This has led to a more decisive break from the orthodox Sikh structure. Initially the Ravidassia revered the Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs, which was the only repository of Ravidass' devotional poetry. However, following their schism from mainstream Sikhs, the Ravidassi compiled their own holy book of Ravidass' teachings, the Amritbani Guru Ravidass

Ji, and many Ravidassia temples now use this book in place of the Guru Granth Sahib.

## Basis

Guru Ravidass was born on 15 January 1377 CE, (Indian calendar Sunday Sukhal Falgin Parvitha 1433) to the Kutvandla Shudra community. His birthplace was a locality known as Mandhuadhe in the city of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh state, India. The birthplace is now marked by the Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan (Begampura), and is a major place of pilgrimage for the followers of Guru Ravidass today. Ravidassia believe that Ravidass died in Benares at the age of 126.<sup>[2]</sup>

The holy book *Amritbani* contains 240 teachings by Guru Ravidass, expressing such thoughts as:

My caste is low, my lineage is low, and mean is my birth. I have sought Rama's refuge, says Guru Ravidass Ji the cobbler.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Beliefs

Ravidass' teachings represent an offshoot of the *bhakti* movement of the fifteenth century, a religious renaissance in India. Ravidass taught the following principles:

- The oneness, omnipresence and omnipotence of Hari and His incarnations including *Rama*
- The human soul is a particle of Hari; the difference between the two being like the difference between gold and the bangle, water and the wave.
- The rejection of the notion that Hari cannot be met by lower castes.
- To realize God, which is the goal of human life, man should concentrate on *Hari* during all rituals of life.
- The only way of meeting with Hari (*moksha*) is to free the mind from duality.

## Membership

The Shri Guru Ravidas Mission states that the conditions on being a member of the community are:

- That one who preaches Guru Ravidass's philosophy is a Ravidassia.
- It is not a condition that one should have been born in the Ravidassia community to become or initiated as one.
- To celebrate Shri Guru Ravidass Jayanti according to the Punjabi calendar, Sunday, Sukhal Falgin Parvitha.

## Objectives

Dera Sach Khand Ballan of Jalandhar, Punjab on 30 January 2010 at the 633rd birth anniversary of Ravidass announced the objectives of Ravidassia religion as:

- "To propagate the Bani and teachings of Satguru Ravidass Ji. Besides, the teachings and thought of Maharishi Bhagwan Balmiki Ji, Satguru Namdev Ji, Satguru Kabir Ji, Satguru Trilochan Ji, Satguru Sain Ji and Satguru Sadna Ji would also be propagated".
- "To respect all religions, love mankind and lead virtuous lives".

Sri Guru Ravidass International Organisation for Human Rights believes in protecting the rights of Ravidassia and is a registered charity organisation in UK.



Procession of Ravidassias in Bedford



Festival of Shri Guru Ravidass at Arzignano, Italy

## Places of worship

The Ravidassia place of worship is called a *bhawan* or Gurughar.<sup>[4]</sup> Other Ravidassias call their place of worship by the Sikh term *gurudwara* or the Hindu term *mandir*. A Ravidassia can meditate and reflect on God anywhere, as Guru Ravidass stated that "God dwells within the heart and is always around us." Shoes are removed on entering, and hands washed. Outside a bhawan there is a flag upon which is written *Hari*, and above it a lamp symbolising enlightenment from Guru Ravidass' teachings. *Langar*, a communal lunch, takes place inside the bhawan and all are free to partake of it. Inside the bhawan, hymns from the Amritbani are recited daily, and the guru's image is worshipped.

## Worship service (*Arti*)

Ravidassia Arti takes place daily in the bhawan at the closing of the day's formal services. This consists of the *Arti* written by Ravidass in which he tells God that only his name is sufficient. Whilst the Arti is sung, devotees wave trays with small flames made from Camphor in front of an image of Guru Ravidass. The Ravidassia Arti is included in the religious holy book Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji. Arti is a ceremony of adoration which consists of waving round the head of an idol on a platter containing a conch-shell and rattle gong.

The Arti includes the declaration:

*Your name is my arti and ablution, o Lord. Without God's name all religious paraphernalia are false. Your name is my prayer-mat, your name my saffron-grater, and your name is the saffron, which i sprinkle on you. Your name is the water, your name the sandal-wood, and the repetition of the name is the rubbing thereof; this is the sandal paste, which i take to anoint you. Your name is the lamp, your name the wick, your name is the oil, which i pour therein. With your name i have kindled the light, with its illumination my entire home is bright. Your name is the string, your name the garland of flowers, defiled are all the eighteen loads of leaves, offerings of ours. Why should i offer thee what you yourself has created? Your name is the fly-whisk which i wave over you. The whole world is involved in the eighteen Puranas, and the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, it rotates within the four forms of species. Your name is the arti, says Ravidass, and your true name itself is offered, o Lord, as the ceremonial food to you.*

## Scriptures

The Ravidassia temples "Bhawan" contain the holy book "Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji" which contains all the hymns by Guru Ravidass. This book contains the following hymns: Raga – Siri(1), Gauri (5), Asa(6), Gujari(1), Sorath(7), Dhanasari(3), Jaitsari(1), Suhi(3), Bilaval(2), Gaund(2), Ramkali(1), Maru(2), Kedara(1), Bhairau(1), Basant(1), and Malhar(3). The book contains 140 shabads, 40 pade, and 231 salok. There are 177 pages in all of the book.

A version of the holy book *granth* containing 240 hymns of Guru Ravidass ji was installed at the Guru Ravidass temple in Jalandhar Punjab on 1 February 2012 on the occasion of birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass. The Dera Sach Khand Ballan religious community had announced the formation of the new Ravidassia religion and separation from Sikhism at Varanasi. The split from Sikhism was triggered after the killing of its deputy head Sant Ramanand Dass in May 2009 at a temple in Vienna by some Sikh radicals.<sup>[5]</sup>

President of newly formed Begumpura Lok Party and a supporter of the new religion, Satish Bharti, said that the copies of the new *granth* were put on display during the religious processions in order to assert that the community members are firm believers of the new religion.

## Leaders

Ravidassias are aligned with a *sant* who mentors them on their spiritual path, providing personalised mantras and advice. The head of the Ravidassia Dharam, known as the *sadhus* are present mainly in Punjab and the Dera Sach Khand Ballan consists of *sadhus*, also known as Sant Samaj who in turn lead and are heads of all Ravidassias deras around the world. The leader of the Ravidassia religion, known as the Gaddi Nashin is Sant Niranjjan Dass alongside Sant Surinder Dass Bawa Ji . Former leaders include Sant Hari Dass, Sant Sarwan Dass, Sant Garib Dass and Sant Baba Pippal Dass.

## Customs

The Ravidassia employ the greeting "ਜੈ ਗੁਰੂਦੇਵ" (*Jai Gurudev*) "जय गुरुदेव " the motto of the religion.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Symbols

The Ravidassia religious symbol is known as the Harr Nishaan ("sign of God"). The Gurmukhi transliteration of the name Harr is the main symbol of the Ravidassia religion.

The religion is also represented by a flag, containing:

- A bigger circle with 40 rays of sunlight signifying forty hymns of Guru Ravidass.
- In between the bigger and smaller circles is written a couplet: ਨਾਮ ਤੇਰੇ ਕੀ ਜੋਤੀ ਲਗਾਈ, ਭੇਈਚਿ ਭੇਈਚਿ ਭਠਣ ਮਗਲਈ (*Naam tere kee jot lagayi, Bhaio Ujjaaro Bhawan saglaare*, "Your Name is the flame I light; it has illuminated the entire world")
- A star
- A flame representing the *naam* (word) that would illuminate the entire world.
- A circle depicting the whole universe, which is contained and run in God's order.
- *Har* (ਹਰਿ, ਹਰੀ) and flame over it. *Har* represents Ravidass and his teachings. The insignia Har is chosen after the name of their Guru, as *ravi* means "illumination" and *dass* "servant of god".



Religious Flag

## Relationship with Sikhism

Ravidasis claim that their religion was created after they were excluded from Sikh gurdwaras in Punjab. There are many similarities with mainstream Sikhism and indeed temple worship is almost identical, except for the Ravidasi use of Aarti using the words of Ravidas' Aarti hymn. The primary difference is the reveration of Ravidas as their main prophet or teacher.

The Ravidasi community insists they are separate from Sikhism (because Guru Ravidass, not the Guru Granth Sahib is their spiritual Satguru) and in terms of partaking in the hierarchy of formal Sikhdom this is largely true. However, their reveration for Sikh scripture, belief in some Sikh principles and similarities in Sikh worship, firmly render them as a part of the Sikh religious domain.

## Festival

The birthday of Guru Ravidass is celebrated every year at the Seer Gowardhapur village temple in the state of Uttar Pradesh in January or February and the government of India has declared it a gazetted holiday.

Every year more than 1 million devotees from India and abroad visit the Seer Goverdhanpur temple. In India, devotees pour in from Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, MP, Bihar, UP and Uttarakhand while foreign devotees from the US, Canada and UK through the village.

On the day there is a Path of Amritbani Guru Ravidass read, the Harr(i) nishaan sahib is changed ceremonially, and there is a special *Ravidassia Arti* and a *Nagar Kirtan* procession bearing Shri Guru Ravidass' portrait are taken out to the accompaniment of music through the streets of the temple locality.

Special pilgrim trains have been run to and from Varanasi for the last 12 years on the occasion of Parkash Ustav of Guru Ravi Dass. A special train is run from Jalandhar to Varanasi and back every year on Guru Ravidass Jyanti Purb for the convenience of the pilgrims since 2000.



Devotees at 635th Anniversary of Guru Ravidass  
at Sri Guru Ravidass Janamsthan Mandir,  
Varanasi

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- [2] <http://news.chennaionline.com/newsitem.aspx?NEWSID=c02d0968-b11f-4bb9-8c60-0cdac0529d81&CATEGORYNAME=NATL>
- [3] Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji, Pg 58
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## External links

- Guru Ravidas Guruji.com (<http://www.gururavidassguruji.com/>)

# Guru Ravidass

<b>Guru Ravidass Ji</b>	
<b>Senior posting</b>	
<b>Title</b>	Guru
<b>Period in office</b>	1450–1520
<b>Religious career</b>	
<b>Website</b>	Guru Ravidass Ji Website <sup>[1]</sup>

Part of a series on <b>The Ravidasi Panth</b>

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<b>Topics</b>
Guru Ravidass ·
Guru Ravidass Jayanti
<b>Harr Nishan</b>


**Guru Ravidass Ji** (also **Rohidas**<sup>[2]</sup> and **Ruhidas** in eastern India) was a North Indian Guru mystic of the bhakti movement who was active in the 15th century CE. Venerated in the region of Uttar Pradesh as well as the Indian state of Maharashtra, his devotional songs and verses made a lasting impact upon the bhakti movement. He is often given the honorific *Guru*. He was a socio-religious reformer, a thinker, a theosophist, a humanist, a poet, a traveler, a pacifist and a spiritual figure before whom even head-priests of Benaras lay prostrate to pay homage.

Guru Ravidass Ji was a shoemaker of the Kutbandhla Chamar caste. His devotional songs were included in the Sikh holy book.<sup>[3]</sup> There is also a larger body of hymns passed on independently that is claimed and attributed to Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Ravidass was subversive in that his devotionism implied a leveling of the social divisions of caste and gender, yet ecumenical in that it tended to promote crossing of sectarian divides in the name of a higher



spiritual unity.

Guru Ravidass Ji taught that one is distinguished not by one's caste (jāti) but by one's actions (karma) and that every person has the right to worship God and read holy texts. He opened a frontal attack against the system of Untouchability. He rejected the tradition of Brahmin mediator to reach the Supreme Being. He also said that one need 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. Guru Ravidass elevated the status of the labour by emphasizing on the fact that honest labour is empowering.

## Background

The details of Guru Ravidass Ji's life are controversial. According to some he was born in 1376/7 or else 1399 CE but many scholars offer later dates. Schaller estimates his lifespan as 1450–1520 while the *Encyclopædia Britannica* contents itself with a *floreat* of 15th-16th century CE. Partly this is due to traditions that make him, the guru of Meera (according to a song attributed to her:<sup>[4]</sup> "guru miliyaa raidasjee"). However, as Schaller points out, the importance of such claims lies in their establishing the authority of a lineage of gurus (parampara). One may count oneself a disciple of a master without having actually met him.

Guru Ravidass' origin and parents are also given differently. According to history he was born in a village named Seer Govardhanpur, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. His father Baba Santokh Das was a Chamar leather merchant and Mata Kalsa Devi was his mother. Guru Ravidass' father married him to Mata Lona Devi at early age and according to the *Ravidas Purana* he had a son named Vijaydas. A region between Allahabad and Benares is named after him.

The queen of Chittorgarh is said to have been a disciple (this may be connected with Meera, who was married to the ruler of Chittorgarh). It is said that the conservative Brahmins of Kashi could not stand the popularity of this "untouchable Guru". A complaint was made to the king that he was working against age-old norms of social order (*varnashrama dharma*) - a cobbler was not supposed to talk of God or do work of advising or teaching. The ruler arranged for an assembly of learned men. Ravidas was also invited and was felicitated publicly. A procession was arranged (*shobha yatra*) and the king himself participated.

## Devotion to God

As a Vaishnava Hindu, Guru Ravidass Ji was an adherent devotee of God in His form of Rama.

Frequently he was use the words Ram, Raja Ram Chanda, Raghunath, Hari, Krishna, Madho, Gobind to describe God.

He writes:<sup>[5]</sup>

My caste is mean; my birth is mean.

I come under your protection Ram

Says Ravidass, the cobbler.

## Begumpura Shehr

Begumpura ("land without sorrow") is a term coined in a poem by Guru Ravidass Ji. Begampura is the name of an idealized city where there is no suffering or fear, and all are equal.<sup>[6]</sup> The verse is seen as reflecting both a sense of poverty and caste humiliation, and a desire to find a utopia without suffering:

The regal realm with the sorrowless name  
 they call it Begumpura, a place with no pain,  
 no taxes or cares, none owns property there,  
 no wrongdoing, worry, terror, or torture.  
 Oh my brother, I've come to take it as my own,  
 my distant home, where everything is right...  
 They do this or that, they walk where they wish,  
 they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.  
 Oh, says Ravidas, a tanner now set free,  
 those who walk beside me are my friends.

## Guru Ravidass and Meera Bai

Meera Bai considered Guru Ravidass Ji as her spiritual Guru. Meera Bai was a queen of Chittor and a daughter of the king of Rajasthan and she used to follow the teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji which teaches about that one's fate of the future lies on his karmas (doings) rather than on his caste or creed's.

Guru Ravidass Ji's incidence of life has become the inspiration for the people of today and in one such incident when Guru Ravidass' disciples were going to take holy dip in the sacred river Ganges and wanted Guru Ravidass Ji to accompany them and Guru replied that he has promised to deliver shoes to his customer on that particular day and will not be able to join them due to this particular reason and when one of his disciple urges then Guru Ravidass Ji uttered his belief saying that: "Man changa tow kathoti mein Ganga" i.e. That is if your heart is pious then the holy river is right in your tub and you need not go anywhere else to take a dip. There is a small chhatra (umbrella) in front of Meera's temple in Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan. It has guru Ravidass' engraved foot print also. As a respect to her guru, Meera Bai once wrote: "Guru Milyaa Ravidass Ji ..."<sup>[7]</sup>

## Ravidass' Panth and relation with Sikhism

The earliest collection of these poems are available in the Sikh scriptures, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book). It was compiled by Shri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth guru of the Sikhs. It contains 41 verses by Guru Ravidass.

In the 20th century, syncretic followers of Ravidass Ji's teachings, who may have identified as Sikh, Hindu, or simply "Ravidasi" began to coalesce. Following the murder of their cleric Ramanand Dass Ji in Vienna in 2009, this movement declared itself to be a religion fully separated from Sikhism, and now known as the Ravidassia religion. The Ravidassia religion compiled a new holy book, Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji. Based entirely on the writings and teaching of Guru Ravidass Ji, it contains 240 hymns and all Ravidassias temples utilize it.

## Political significance

Today he is respected, as when Bangaru Laxman (Organiser, 6-8-1995) accused Congress leader Sitaram Kesri of showing "disrespect to Dalit Guru Ravidass Ji, Satyakam Jabali, Sadhna Kasai, Banka Mahar, Dhanna Chamar and others who protected Hindus against foreign onslaughts."<sup>[8]</sup>

## Songs and teachings

तोही मोही मोही तोही अंतु कैसा ॥ कनक कटकि जल तरंग जैसा ॥१॥

जड पै हम न पाप करंता अहे अनंता ॥ पतति पावन नामु कैसे हुंता ॥१॥ रहाड ॥

तुमह जु नाइक आछहु अंतरजामी ॥ प्रभ ते जनु जानीजे जन ते सुआमी ॥२॥

सरीरु आगधै मो कड बीचारु देहू ॥ रवदिस सम दल समझावै कोऊ ॥३॥

ਤੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਤੋਹੀ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਕੈਸਾ ॥ ਕਨਕ ਕਟਕਿ ਜਲ ਤਰੰਗ ਜੈਸਾ ॥੧॥

ਜਉ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤਾ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ ॥ ਪਤਤਿ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੁੰਤਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ

॥

ਤੁਮ੍ਹਰੁ ਜੁ ਨਾਇਕ ਆਛਹੁ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤੇ ਜਨੁ ਜਾਨੀਜੈ ਜਨ ਤੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥੨॥

ਸਰੀਰੁ ਆਗਧੈ ਮੋ ਕਉ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਦੇਹੂ ॥ ਰਵਦਿਸ ਸਮ ਦਲ ਸਮਝਾਵੈ ਕੋਉ ॥੩॥

*You are me, and I am You-what is the difference between us? We are like gold and the bracelet, or water and the waves.*

If I did not commit any sins, O Infinite Lord, how would You have acquired the name, Patit-Pavan (Redeemer of sinners)?

You are my Master, the Inner-knower, Searcher of hearts. The servant is known by his God, and the Lord and Master is known by His servant.

Grant me the wisdom to worship and adore You with my body.

O Ravi Daas, one who understands that the Lord is equally in all, is very rare.



View of Sri Guru Ravidass Park, Varanasi

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# Chamar

**Chamar**, also known as Chamari/Camari/Charmkar/Charmkari, are one of the untouchable communities, or dalits, who are now classified as a Scheduled Caste under modern India's system of positive discrimination. As untouchables, they were traditionally considered outside the Hindu ritual ranking system of castes known as varna.

They are found mainly in the northern states of India, Pakistan and Nepal.

Ram Narayan Rawat posits that the association of the Chamar community with a traditional occupation of tanning was constructed, and that the Chamars were instead historically agriculturists.

## Demographics

According to the 2001 census of India, the Chamars comprise around 14 per cent of the population in the state of Uttar Pradesh and 12 percent of that in Punjab.

Chamar population in India by State, 2001			
State	Population	State Population %	Notes
Bengal	999,756	1.25%	
Bihar <sup>[1]</sup>	4,090,070	5%	
Delhi <sup>[2]</sup>	893,384	6.45%	
Chandigarh <sup>[3]</sup>	48,159	5.3%	
Chhattisgarh <sup>[4]</sup>	1,659,303	8%	
Gujrat	1,041,886	2%	
Haryana <sup>[5]</sup>	2,079,132	9.84%	Most Chamars in the districts of Hisar, Jind, Panipat, Karnal, Sonapat, Rohtak, Kaithal, Gurgaon, Faridabad, are Jatav Chamars who largely follow Ravidasia sect. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>
Himachal Pradesh <sup>[6]</sup>	414,669	6.8%	The Chamars are the second largest SC caste in the state after the Kori. Chamars are mainly found in the following districts: Kangra, Mandi and Una.
Jammu & Kashmir <sup>[7]</sup>	488,257	4.82%	
Jharkhand <sup>[8]</sup>	837,333	3.1%	
Madya Pradesh <sup>[9]</sup>	4,498,165	7.5%	
Maharashtra <sup>[10]</sup>	1,234,874	1.28%	
Punjab <sup>[11]</sup>	2,800,000	11.9%	The most politically and socially influential <sup>[citation needed]</sup> Chamars are from the state of Punjab, where they form nearly 12% of the population (2.8 million), with Dalits comprising 27% of the population. In the Punjab they are divided into various groups, such as Ad-Dharm, Ravidasi, Ramdasia, and Chamar.  In Malwa most Chamars turned to Sikhism, whereas in Doaba most of them did not opt for Sikhism. In Majha they are called Ramdasia and Ravidasia, in Doaba they are called Adi Dharmi. They are highly concentrated in the Doaba, and the Malwa region of Punjab, where they form over 25% of the population. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Rajasthan <sup>[12]</sup>	5,457,047	9.7%	Chamars in Rajasthan can only be identified in the districts adjoining to the states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The districts of Bikaner, Shriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Churu, Jhunjhunu, Alwar, Bharatpur and Dhaulpur are inhabited by Chamars. In the districts of Bharatpur, Dhaulpur and parts of Alwar (adjoining to Bharatpur) they are known as Meghwal. Citing sources <i>Raigar</i> (leather tanners) and <i>Mochi</i> <sup>[13]</sup> (shoe makers) are other two castes related to the leather profession. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>
Uttar Pradesh <sup>[14]</sup>	19,803,106	14%	Most Chamars reside in Western Uttar Pradesh are known as Jatav. In this state, the political party of Chamars Bahujan Samaj Party has its political base and this has led to Bahujan Samaj Party to win the state elections and chief minister post by Mayawati four times since 1990. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>
Uttaranchal <sup>[15]</sup>	444,535	5%	

## Religion

Chamars are primarily Hindus with significant numbers also found in Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

### Ravidassia Chamars

Some Chamars are followers of the Ravidassia religion after Guru Ravidas, a 14th Century guru, and himself a Dalit Chamar. Conversion of Hindu Chamars to Ravidassia accelerated towards the end of the nineteenth century, due to the rise of the Adi Dharm mission, launched in 1903 for the restoration and propagation of Guru Ravidass teachings, including the removal of caste distinctions. The number of Chamars who declared Ravidassia as their religion increased from 100,014 in 1881 to 155,717 in 1931. In 2009, the Ravidassia religion formally broke from Sikhism, following the assassination of a Ravidassi clergymen by Sikh extremists at a temple in Vienna, Austria.



Procession of Ravidassias in Bedford

## Occupations

Chamars who have adopted the weaving profession and abandoned tanning and leathercraft, identify themselves as Julaha Chamar; R. K. Pruthi suggests this is in the hope that they might in future be considered as Julaha by other communities in the future. They believe that leatherwork is "degrading" when compared to weaving.

## Military

### Sikh Light Infantry

The Sikh Chamar Ramdasia has a history of military service and are heavily represented in the Sikh Light Infantry.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

### Chamar Regiment

The 1st Chamar Regiment was an infantry regiment formed by the British during World War II. Officially, it was created on 1 March 1943, as the 27th Battalion 2nd Punjab Regiment was converted. The Chamar Regiment which was involved in the Pacific War Japanese front and was awarded the Battle Honor of Kohima for their distinguished role in the Battle of Kohima. The Regiment was disbanded in 1946. Recently, several politicians have demanded that The Chamar Regiment be revived.



The Chamar Regiment badges

## Notable people

- Kanshi Ram (1934–2006), founder of Bahujan Samaj Party and mentor of Mayawati Kumari
- Jagjivan Ram (1908–1986), first Labour Minister of India, former Defence Minister of India, former Deputy Prime Minister of India and father of Meira Kumar
- Mayawati, Leader of B.S.P, Chief Minister of U.P.
- Meira Kumar, Speaker of Indian Parliament
- Chamkila, Punjabi Singer,
- Mohinder Singh Kaypee M.P Jalandhar

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# Untouchability

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**Untouchability** is the social-religious practice of ostracizing a minority group by segregating them from the mainstream by social custom or legal mandate. The excluded group could be one that did not accept the norms of the excluding group and historically included foreigners, house workers, nomadic tribes, law-breakers and criminals and those suffering from a contagious disease. This exclusion was a method of punishing law-breakers and also protected traditional societies against contagion from strangers and the infected. A member of the excluded group is known as an **Untouchable** or **Paria**.

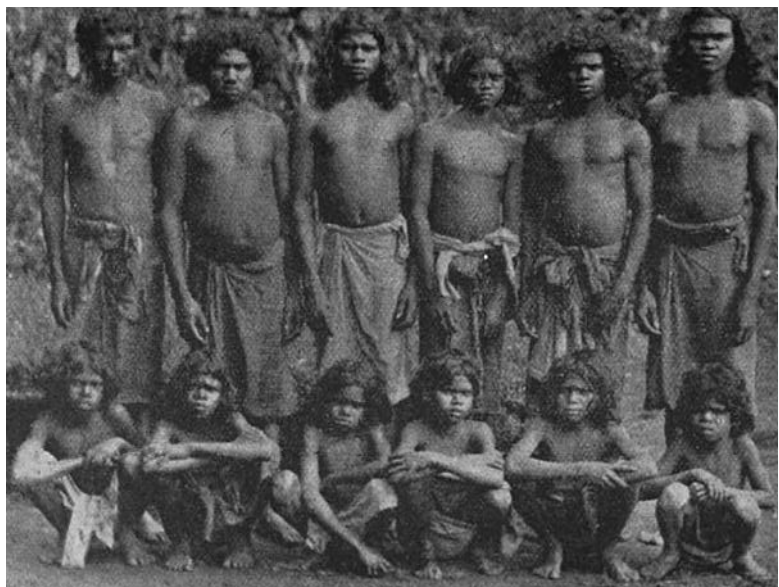
The term is commonly associated with treatment of the Dalit communities, who are considered "polluting" among the people of South Asia, but the term has been used for other groups as well, such as the Burakumin of Japan, Cagots in Europe, or the Al-Akhdam in Yemen. Untouchability has been made illegal in post-independence India, and Dalits substantially empowered, although some prejudice against them continues, especially in rural pockets dominated by certain other backward caste (OBC) groups.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Untouchability in practice

### Untouchability and discrimination

In the name of untouchability, Dalits have faced work and descent-based discrimination at the hands of the dominant castes. Instances of this discrimination at different places and times included:<sup>[2]</sup>

- Prohibition from eating with other caste members
- Provision of separate glasses for Dalits in village tea stalls
- Discriminatory seating arrangements and separate utensils in restaurants
- Segregation in seating and food arrangements in village functions and festivals
- Prohibition from entering into village temples
- Prohibition from wearing sandals or holding umbrellas in front of higher caste members
- Prohibition from entering other caste homes
- Prohibition from riding a bicycle inside the village
- Prohibition from using common village path
- Separate burial grounds
- No access to village's common/public properties and resources (wells, ponds, temples, etc.)
- Segregation (separate seating area) of Dalit children in schools
- Sub-standard wages
- Bonded labour
- Social boycotts by other castes for refusing to perform their "duties"



Untouchables of Malabar, Kerala (1906)

## Government action in India

The 1950 national constitution of India legally abolishes the practice of untouchability provides measures for positive discrimination in both educational institutions and public services for Dalits and other social groups who lie within the caste system. These are supplemented by official bodies such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Despite this, instances of prejudice against Dalits still occur in some rural areas, as evidenced by events such as the Kherlanji massacre.

## Untouchable groups

- Gypsies in India and Europe
- Burakumin in Japan
- Baekjeong in Korea
- Cagots in France
- Dalit in South Asia
- Ragyabpa in Tibet (see Social classes of Tibet)












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# Dalit

## Dalit

	
Rettamalai Srinivasan · Ayyankali · K. R. Narayanan · B. R. Ambedkar ·	
Regions with significant populations	
 <b>India</b>	~ 166 million
 <b>Nepal</b>	~ 4.5 million (2005)
 <b>Pakistan</b>	~ 2.0 million (2005)
 <b>Sri Lanka</b>	Unknown (2008)
 <b>Bangladesh</b>	Unknown (2008)
 <b>United Kingdom</b>	500,000 estimated <sup>[1]</sup> (2013)
 <b>United States</b>	Unknown (2013)
 <b>Canada</b>	Unknown (2013)
 <b>Malaysia</b>	Unknown (2013)
 <b>Singapore</b>	Unknown (2013)
Languages	
Languages of South Asia	
Religion	
Hinduism · Sikhism · Buddhism · Christianity · Islam	
Related ethnic groups	
Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Munda	

**Dalit** is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions. There are many different names proposed for defining this group of people, including *Panchamas* ("fifth varna"), and *Asprushya* ("untouchables").<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In 2001, the proportion of Dalit population was 16.2 percent of India's total population. The Dalit population is broadly distributed across Indian states and districts. In 2001, the state of Punjab had the highest proportion of its population as Dalit, at about 29 percent, and the state of Mizoram had the lowest at nearly zero. The government of India recognises and protects them as Scheduled Castes. The term Dalit has been interchangeably used with term Scheduled Castes, and these terms include all historically discriminated communities of India out-caste and Untouchables.

While discrimination based on caste has been prohibited and untouchability abolished under the Constitution of India,<sup>[2]</sup> discrimination and prejudice against Dalits in South Asia remains.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup> Since its independence in 1947, India has implemented an affirmative policy of reservation, the scope of which was further expanded in 1974, to set aside and provide jobs and education opportunities to Dalits. By 1995, of all jobs in India, 17.2 percent of the jobs

were held by Dalits, greater than their proportion in Indian population. In 1997, India democratically elected K. R. Narayanan, a Dalit, as the nation's President. Many social organisations too have proactively promoted better conditions for Dalits through improved education, health and employment.

Dalits and similar groups are found in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Further wherever immigrants from these countries have gone caste has gone with them. As a result Dalits can also be found in the U.S., U.K, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, and the Caribbean.

In addition, the Burakumin in Japan, Cagots and Roma in Europe, Al-Akhdam in Yemen, Baekjeong in Korea and Midgan in Somalia are or were excluded from the surrounding community in much the same manner as the Dalit. In fact, a 2012 paper argued that the European Romas' DNA matches the Dalit in India.

## Etymology

The word "**Dalit**" does not appear in any sacred scriptures or historical texts of India.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> It is actually a word based on 17th-century European notions about the Indian caste system.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> The word is derived from Sanskrit, and means "ground", "suppressed", "crushed", or "broken to pieces". It was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile "untouchable" castes of the twice-born Hindus.<sup>[6]</sup>

According to Victor Premasagar, the term expresses their "weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society."<sup>[7]</sup>

Currently many Dalits use the term to move away from the more derogatory terms of their caste names or even the term Untouchable. The contemporary use of Dalit is centered on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity. It is now a political identity similar to the way African-Americans in the U.S. moved away from the use of Negro to the use of Black or even African-American.

**Other Terms** Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi coined the word Harijan, translated roughly as "Children of God", to identify the former Untouchables. But this term is now considered derogatory<sup>[citation needed]</sup> when used to describe Dalits. In addition the terms "Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes" (SC/ST) are the official terms used in Indian government documents to identify former "untouchables" and tribes. However, in 2008 the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, noticing that "Dalit" was used interchangeably with the official term "scheduled castes", called the term "unconstitutional" and asked state governments to end its use. After the order, the Chhattisgarh government ended the official use of the word "Dalit".

"Adi Dravida", "Adi Karnataka", "Adi Andhra" and "Adi-Dharmi" are words used in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab respectively, to identify people of former "untouchable" castes in official documents. These words, particularly the prefix of "Adi", denote the aboriginal inhabitants of the land.

## Social status of Dalits

### History

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste. Dalits worked as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines, and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual, and this pollution was considered contagious. As a result, Dalits were commonly segregated, and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. For example, they could not enter a temple or a school, and were required to stay outside the village. Elaborate precautions were sometimes observed to prevent incidental contact between Dalits and other castes. Discrimination against

Dalits still exists in rural areas in the private sphere, in everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources. It has largely disappeared in urban areas and in the public sphere. Some Dalits have successfully integrated into urban Indian society, where caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalits often remain excluded from local religious life, though some qualitative evidence suggests that its severity is fast diminishing.

### Modern India

Since 1950, India has enacted and implemented many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its Dalit population. By 1995, of all jobs in India, 17.2 percent of the jobs were held by Dalits, greater than their proportion in Indian population. Of the highest paying, senior most jobs in government agencies and government controlled enterprises, over 10 percent of all highest paying jobs were held by members of the Dalit community, a tenfold increase in 40 years. In 1997, India democratically elected K. R. Narayanan, a Dalit, as the nation's President. In last 15 years, Indians born in historically discriminated minority castes have been elected to its highest judicial and political offices. The quality of life of Dalit population in India, in 2001, in terms of metrics such as access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water, housing, etc. was statistically similar to overall population of modern India. In 2010, international attention was drawn to the Dalits by an exhibition featuring portraits depicting the lives of Dalits by Marcus Perkins.

In India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, Dalits have revolutionised politics and have elected a popular Dalit chief minister named Mayawati.

## Societal rivalries and disputes amongst Dalits

Dalits aren't one caste but historically were different groups that were not members of the four castes or chaturvarna system. Even in modern times several are rivals and sometimes communal tensions become very high on issues. A study found more than 900 Dalit sub-castes throughout India.<sup>[8]</sup> Politically, by emphasising the rights and well-being of any one caste community, however, leaders risk severing attachment to an emerging Dalit consciousness and fostering inter-caste rivalries between SCs.<sup>[9]</sup> The DLM party leader says that it's easier to organize Dalits on the basis of their caste rather than unite them to fight caste prejudice as a whole.<sup>[10]</sup>

A civil servant Dahima says:



Dharavi is a slum in Mumbai. While no statistics since 1986 are available, activists claim the majority of Dharavi population were Dalits, and they live together with other castes and tribes. Pictured is one of the entrances to Dharavi.

“All that keeps India from having a bloody revolution is that we Dalits are a divided lot.”

In modern history, Balmikis have described Jatavs as oppressors of the poorer.<sup>[11]</sup> Balmikis and Pasis in the 1990s refused to support the BSP, claiming it was a 'Chamar Party'.<sup>[12]</sup> Many Dalit Sikhs that are converts to Sikhism claim a superior status over the Raigar, Joatia Chamar and Ravidasi and do not intermarry with them.<sup>[13]</sup> They are divided into gotras which regulate their marriage alliances. In Andhra Pradesh, Mala and Madiga are two Dalit caste communities who were constantly in conflict with each other due to the historical rivalry between them.<sup>[14]</sup> Although the Khateek (butchers) are generally viewed as a higher caste than Bhangis, the Bhangis will not offer cleaning services to Khateeks due to belief that Khateeks are unclean from their butchering/slaughtering profession.<sup>[15]</sup> They also consider the Balai, Dhobi, Dholi, and Mogya as unclean and do not associate with them.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Dalits and religion

The Sachar Committee report of 2006 revealed that scheduled castes and tribes of India are not limited to the religion of Hinduism. The 61st round Survey of the NSSO found that 90% of the Buddhists, one-third of the Sikhs, and one-third of the Christians in India belonged to the notified scheduled castes or tribes of the Constitution.

Religion	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	Total
Buddhism	90%	7.40%	97%
Christianity	9%	33%	42%
Sikhism	31%	0.9%	32%
Hinduism	22%	9%	31%
Zoroastrianism	–	16%	16%(+?)
Jainism	–	2.6%	2.6%(+?)

Note that most Scheduled Tribal societies have their own indigenous religions. Mundas have a Munda religion, for example. These indigenous or native religions are infused with elements of the local dominant religions, so that Munda religion contains many Hindu elements, some Christian elements, Jain or other elements.

## Hinduism

The large majority of the Dalits in India are Hindus, although some in Maharashtra and other states have converted to Buddhism, often called Neo-Buddhism.

## Historical attitudes

The term Chandala is used in the Manu Smriti (literally: The recollection of Manu or with more latitude, The laws according to Manu) in the Mahabharata. In later time it was synonymous with "Domba", originally representing a specific ethnic or tribal group but which became a general pejorative. In the early Vedic literature several of the names of castes that are referred to in the Smritis as Antyajias occur. The have *Carmanna* (a tanner of hides) in the Rig Veda (VIII.8,38), the Chandala and Paulkasa occur in Vajasaneyi Samhita. *Vepa* or *Vapta* (barber) in the Rig Veda. Vidalakara or Bidalakar are present in the Vajasaneyi Samhita. *Vasahpalpuli* (washer woman) corresponding to the Rajakas of the Smritis in Vajasaneyi Samhita. Fa Xian, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who recorded his visit to India in the early 4th century, noted that Chandalas were segregated from the mainstream society as untouchables. Traditionally, Dalits were considered to be beyond the pale of Varna or caste system. They were originally considered as *Panchama* or the fifth group beyond the fourfold division of Indian people. They were not allowed to let their shadows fall upon a non-Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground where they walked to remove the 'contamination' of their footfalls. Dalits were forbidden to worship in temples or draw water from the

same wells as caste Hindus, and they usually lived in segregated neighbourhoods outside the main village. In the Indian countryside, the Dalit villages are usually a separate enclave a kilometre or so outside the main village where the other Hindu castes reside.

Some upper-caste Hindus did warm to Dalits. Some of such Hindu priests were demoted to low-caste ranks, an example of the latter was Dnyaneshwar, who was excommunicated into Dalit status in the 13th century but continued to compose the Dnyaneshwari, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Eknath, another excommunicated Brahmin, fought for the rights of untouchables during the Bhakti period. Historical examples of Dalit priests include Chokhamela in the 14th century, who was India's first recorded Dalit poet and Raidas, born into a family of cobblers. The 15th-century saint Sri Ramananda Raya also accepted all castes, including untouchables, into his fold. Most of these saints subscribed to the Bhakti movements in Hinduism during the medieval period that rejected casteism. The story of Nandanar, is popular wherein a low-caste Hindu devotee, who was rejected by the priests but accepted by God. Due to isolation from the rest of the Hindu society, many Dalits continue to debate whether they are 'Hindu' or 'non-Hindu'. Traditionally, Hindu Dalits have been barred from many activities that were seen as central to Vedic religion and Hindu practices of orthodox sects. Among Hindus each community has followed its own variation of Hinduism, and the wide variety of practices and beliefs observed in Hinduism makes any clear assessment difficult.

The declaration by princely states of Kerala between 1936 and 1947 that temples were open to all Hindus went a long way towards ending the system of untouchability in Kerala. According to Kerala tradition the Dalits were forced to maintain a distance of 96 feet from Namboothiris, 64 feet from Nairs and 48 feet from other upper castes (like Maarans and Arya Vysyas) as they were thought to pollute them.<sup>[17]</sup> A Nair was expected to instantly cut down a Tiar, or Mucua, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave who did not turn out of the road as a Nair passed. Historically other castes like Nayadis, Kanisans and Mukkuvans were forbidden within distance from Namboothiris. Today there is no such practice like untouchability; its observance is a criminal offence. However, educational opportunities to Dalits in Kerala remain limited.

### Reform movements

The earliest known historical people to have rejected the caste system were Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. Their teachings eventually became independent religions called Buddhism and Jainism. The earliest known reformation within Hinduism happened during the medieval period when the Bhakti movements & Ramanuja actively encouraged the participation and inclusion of Dalits. Ramanuja took Dalit disciples publicly into his fold and even took them into temple. He put forth the Dalit born Nammalvar as the philosophical head of the sect and propagated Nammalvar's works as Dravida Veda. In the 19th century, the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission actively participated in the emancipation of Dalits. While there always have been segregated places for Dalits to worship, the first "upper-caste" temple to openly welcome Dalits into their fold was the Laxminarayan Temple in Wardha in the year 1928. It was followed by the Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the last King of Travancore in the Indian state of Kerala in 1936.

The Sikh reformist Satnami movement was founded by Guru Ghasidas, born a Dalit. Another notable guru was Guru Ravidas was also a Dalit. Other reformers, such as Jyotirao Phule, Ayyankali of Kerala and Iyothee Thass of Tamil Nadu worked for emancipation of Dalits. The 1930s saw key struggle between Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar over whether Dalits would have separate or joint electorates. Although he failed to get Ambedkar's support for a joint electorate, Gandhi nevertheless began the "Harijan Yatra" to help the Dalit population. Palwankar Baloo, a Dalit politician and a cricketer, joined the Hindu Mahasabha in the fight for independence.



*A school of untouchables near Bangalore, by  
Lady Ottoline Morrell.*

Namantar Andolan was part of a 16-year Dalit campaign to rename Marathwada University as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University. In 1977, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Vasantdada Patil, promised Dalit Panther that a renaming would happen; the Maharashtra Legislature passed a resolution to this effect in July 1978. Thereafter, there were attacks on Dalits by non-Dalits and upper caste Hindus for a fortnight. A new Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar, postponed implementation and this led to a Long March being organised by Dalit leaders and sympathisers in December 1979. Thousands of participants and prominent leaders were arrested.<sup>[18][19]</sup> The renaming, involving some compromise, finally took place on 14 January 1994.

Other Hindu groups have reached out to the Dalit community in an effort to reconcile with them. On August 2006, Dalit activist Namdeo Dhasal engaged in dialogue with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in an attempt to "bury the hatchet". Hindu temples are increasingly receptive to Dalit priests, a function formerly reserved for Brahmins. Suryavanshi Das, for example, is the Dalit priest of a notable temple in Bihar. Anecdotal evidence suggests that discrimination against Hindu Dalits is on a slow but steady decline. For instance, an informal study by Dalit writer Chandrabhan Prasad and reported in the New York Times states: "In rural Azamgarh District [in the state of Uttar Pradesh], for instance, nearly all Dalit households said their bridegrooms now rode in cars to their weddings, compared with 27 percent in 1990. In the past, Dalits would not have been allowed to ride even horses to meet their brides; that was considered an upper-caste privilege."

Many Hindu Dalits have achieved affluence in society, although vast millions still remain poor. In particular, some Dalit intellectuals such as Chandrabhan Prasad have argued that the living standards of many Dalits have improved since the economic liberalisation in 1991 and have supported their claims through large qualitative surveys. Recent episodes of caste-related violence in India have adversely affected the Dalit community. In urban India, discrimination against Dalits in the public sphere is greatly reduced, but rural Dalits are struggling to elevate themselves. Government organisations and NGO's work to emancipate them from discrimination, and many Hindu organisations have spoken in their favour.<sup>[20]</sup> Some groups and Hindu religious leaders have also spoken out against the caste system in general.<sup>[21]</sup> However, the fight for temple entry rights for Dalits is far from finished and continues to cause controversy. Brahmins like Subramania Bharati also passed Brahminhood onto a Dalit, while in Shivaji's Maratha Empire there were Dalit Hindu warriors (the Mahar Regiment). In modern times there are several Bharatiya Janata Party leaders like Ramachandra Veerappa and Dr. Suraj Bhan. (See *List of Dalits*)

More recently, Dalits in Nepal are now being accepted into priesthood (traditionally reserved for Brahmins). The Dalit priestly order is called "Pandaram"

## Sikhism

Although Sikhism clearly admonishes the idea of a caste system, going to the lengths of providing common surnames to abolish caste identities, many families generally do not marry among different castes. Dalits form a class among the Sikhs who stratify their society according to traditional casteism. Kanshi Ram himself was of Sikh background although converted because he found that Sikh society did not respect Dalits and so became a neo-Buddhist.

### Talhan gurdwara caste conflict

In 2003 the Talhan village Gurudwara saw what started out as a bitter dispute between Jatt Sikh and Chamars turn into a social war. The Chamars came out in force and confronted the Randhawa and Bains Jatt Sikh Landlords who refused to give the Chamars a share on the governing committee of a shrine dedicated to Shaheed Baba Nihal Singh. The shrine pulled an annual taking of 3–7 Crore Indian Rupees of which the Jatt Sikh Landlords just "*gobbled up a substantial portion of the offerings*". Though the Dalits form more than 60 percent of Talhan's 5,000-strong population, local 'traditions' ensured that they were denied a share in the committee. The landlords, in league with radical Sikh organisations and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, attempted to keep out the Dalits by razing the Shrine overnight and constructing a gurdwara on it, but the Dalit quest for a say in the governing

committee could not be eliminated. Chanan Ram Pal *President* of the Talhan Dalit Action Committee stated,

*"We fought a war for swabhimaan (self-respect). The teachings of Guru Ravidas and the access to modern education inculcated in us this desire. We are an economically independent community, many of our people are nris who send money from Dubai, the West, etc. Here, we do not work for landlords, we are self-employed. Like any other caste, we too are the offspring of Punjab. We drink its water, we live on its food. We are as good as anybody"*

The Village Sirpanch and active member of the Shrine committee Bhupinder Singh Bains admitted to the landlord corruption and stated,

*"Every Sunday, the gulak was opened. Of the Rs 5–7 lakh in offerings, Rs 1–2 lakh was pilfered. The committee was against having Chamars as members as it was an old tradition. It is wrong to think like that. The dalits got very upset when they asked for some money to celebrate their festivals and the committee dominated by us doled out just Rs 10,000-Rs 15,000. The dalits wanted to become part of the committee; they fought a four-year battle in court. Today, with the dalits around, everyone keeps a watch and corruption in the shrine has been curbed,..."*

Bhupinder Singh Bains continued,

*"Those earlier notions of untouchability, which was a Brahmanical concept, no longer prevail. Earlier, poor Chamar families were dependent on us, for example, for taking the molasses' waste. Now they stand equal to us, with many of their children becoming Class I officers earning fat salaries. While the sons of landlords refuse to work on the land, the children of the Chamars study and get good jobs. In contrast, our sons are getting hooked to drugs as they idle their time away,..."*

The Chamars fought a four-year court battle with the Jatt Sikh Landlords and their allies including the Punjab Police; whilst in that time there were several boycotts against the Chamars of the village. The Jatt Sikhs and their allies even cut off the power supply to their homes resulting in them not being able to obtain water. In addition to that, there were various scuffles and fights in which Chamar youths armed with Lathhis, rocks, bricks, soda bottles and anything they could find fought against Jatt Sikh landlords their youths and the Punjab Police. Dalit youngsters painted their homes and motorcycles with the slogan, *Putt Chamar De (proud sons of Chamars)* in retaliation to the Jat slogan, *Putt Jattan De*.

## **Christianity**

Across India, many Christian communities in South India still follow the caste system. Sometimes the social stratification remains unchanged and in some cases such as among Goan and Mangalorean Catholics, the stratification varies as compared to the Hindu system.

A 1992 study of Catholics in Tamil Nadu found some Dalit Christians faced segregated churches, cemeteries, services and even processions. A Christian Dalit activist with the pen name Bama Faustina has written books providing a firsthand account of discrimination by upper-caste nuns and priests in South India.

## **Buddhism**

In Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and a few other regions, Dalits have come under the influence of the neo-Buddhist movement initiated by Ambedkar. In the 1950s, Ambedkar turned his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion to Buddhism.[10] Ambedkar twice visited Myanmar (then Burma) in 1954; the second time in order to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in 1956. It was published posthumously.

After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa,[11] Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on 14 October 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion. He then proceeded to convert an estimated 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him.[10] Taking the 22 Vows, Ambedkar and his supporters explicitly condemned and rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. He then travelled to Kathmandu in Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. He completed his final manuscript, *The Buddha or Karl Marx* on 2 December 1956.

The rate of conversion of Dalits to Buddhism and Christianity are reducing in modern India, due to the efforts of several Hindu Reform Movements and mass reconversion movements by hardline Hindu organisations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and RSS and as well as government programs and employment initiatives to alleviate the status of the Dalits.

## **The Prevention of Atrocities Act**

The Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA) is a tacit acknowledgement by the Indian government that caste relations are defined by violence, both incidental and systemic. In 1989, the Government of India passed the Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA), which clarified specific crimes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (the Dalits) as "atrocities," and created strategies and punishments to counter these acts. The purpose of The Act was to curb and punish violence against Dalits. Firstly, it clarified what the atrocities were: both particular incidents of harm and humiliation, such as the forced consumption of noxious substances, and systemic violence still faced by many Dalits, especially in rural areas. Such systemic violence includes forced labour, denial of access to water and other public amenities, and sexual abuse of Dalit women. Secondly, the Act created Special Courts to try cases registered under the POA. Thirdly, the Act called on states with high levels of caste violence (said to be "atrocities-prone") to appoint qualified officers to monitor and maintain law and order. The POA gave legal redress to Dalits, but only two states have created separate Special Courts in accordance with the law. In practice the Act has suffered from a near-complete failure in implementation. Policemen have displayed a consistent unwillingness to register offences under the act. This reluctance stems partially from ignorance and also from peer protection. According to a 1999 study, nearly a quarter of those government officials charged with enforcing the Act are unaware of its existence.

## **Dalits and contemporary Indian politics**

While the Indian Constitution has duly made special provisions for the social and economic uplift of the Dalits, comprising the so-called scheduled castes and tribes in order to enable them to achieve upward social mobility, these concessions are limited to only those Dalits who remain Hindu. There is a demand among the Dalits who have converted to other religions that the statutory benefits should be extended to them as well, to "overcome" and bring closure to historical injustices.

Another major politically charged issue with the rise of Hindutva's (Hindu nationalism) role in Indian politics is that of religious conversion. This political movement alleges that conversions of Dalits are due not to any social or theological motivation but to allurements like education and jobs. CriticsWikipedia:Avoid weasel words argue that the inverse is true due to laws banning conversion, and the limiting of social relief for these backward sections of Indian society being revoked for those who convert. Bangaru Laxman, a Dalit politician, was a prominent member of the Hindutva movement.

Another political issue is over the affirmative-action measures taken by the government towards the upliftment of Dalits through quotas in government jobs and university admissions. About 8% of the seats in the National and State Parliaments are reserved for Scheduled Caste and Tribe candidates, a measure sought by B. R. Ambedkar and other Dalit activists in order to ensure that Dalits would obtain a proportionate political voice.

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Anti-Dalit prejudices exist in fringe groups, such as the extremist militia Ranvir Sena, largely run by upper-caste landlords in areas of the Indian state of Bihar. They oppose equal treatment of Dalits and have resorted to violent means to suppress the Dalits. The Ranvir Sena is considered a terrorist organisation by the government of India.

In 1997, K. R. Narayanan was elected as the first Dalit President.

In 2007, Mayawati, a Dalit, was elected as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India. Some reports claimed her 2007 election victory was due to her ability to win support from Dalits and the Brahmins, the so-called upper most castes. However, surveys of voters on the eve of elections, indicated that caste loyalties were not necessarily the voters' principal concern. Instead, inflation and other issues of social and economic development were the top priorities of the electorate regardless of caste. Mayawati's success in winning broad support across castes has led to speculations of her as a potential future Prime Minister of India.

Some Dalits have been successful in business and politics of modern India. Indian law and constitution does not discriminate against Dalits. Despite anti-discrimination laws, many Dalits still suffer from social stigma and discrimination. Ethnic tensions and caste-related violence between Dalit and non-Dalits have been witnessed. The cause of such tensions is claimed to be from economically rising Dalits and continued prejudices against Dalits. Dalits suffer discrimination in education, jobs and health care. A 2006 article in BBC News reported incidences of violence, disputes and claims of discrimination against the Dalits in Maharashtra. The article also noted that families belonging to non-Dalit castes living in the same village claim they do not treat Dalits differently. The interview quoted a carpenter caste person saying "We tell them anything and they tell us you are pointing fingers at us because of our caste; we all live together, and there are bound to be fights, but they think we target them."

Kevin Reilly and others note that Dalits as well as tribal people have benefitted from broad and mandatory job reservations, school admission quotas, and affirmative action programmes since 1947. Dalits also have reserved seats in India's parliament and state assemblies and are enjoying greater political power.

## **Dalits and international comparative sociology**

William Darity and Jessica Nembhard have compared the economic disparities between Dalits and other castes in India, to economic disparities between ethnic/race/caste groups observed in other nations such as Australia, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Malaysia and South Africa. They claim their comparative inquiry across diverse countries refute several conventional wisdoms about intergroup disparity. They note that India has lower level of intergroup inequality than many other nations; however, given India's general poverty and lower gross per capita income, the average quality of life for Dalits and non-Dalits is lower than other countries.

## **Dalits in the United Kingdom**

After the second world war substantial immigration took place from nations and countries of the former British Empire largely including the Indian Subcontinent,<sup>[22]</sup> which now consists of modern day Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. These immigrations were largely driven by post World War II labour shortages. Among the South Asian immigrants were Dalits, and like the rest of the Sub continent diaspora, they settled and established their own communities.

The report conducted by the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire, the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University, and reported by The Guardian alleges that caste discrimination is "rife" in the United Kingdom. The report claims that this conclusion was reached via surveys and focus groups. The report also alleges that casteism persists in the workplace and within the National Health Service and even at the doctors surgery.

British Indians are, however, divided on the issue of the prevalence of caste discrimination in Britain, and discrimination claims are disputed by the Hindu Council of the UK who assert that the issue was being "manipulated" by Christians and other anti-Indian activists eager to convert Hindus from their faith.

Hindu groups assert that caste issues will be resolved in a generation and that it is dying out<sup>[23]</sup> and that there is a trend in inter-caste marriages that should resolve the issue. Some believe that caste discrimination is non-existent. Some have stated that the government does not have the right to interfere in the community's internal affairs. The Hindu Forum of Britain conducted their own research and concluded that caste discrimination was "*not endemic in British society*", and that these reports aim to increase discrimination by legislating social interactions and personal choices that are expressions of people's freedom, and any barriers should be removed through education and awareness, not through legislation.

Two reports were conducted on the matter. The first report was conducted by the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance in collaboration with academics from the universities of Hertfordshire and Manchester and the Manchester Metropolitan University. The second report was conducted by the government organisation NIESR the *National Institute for Economic and Social Research*.

The first report conducted by the ACDA and reported by The Guardian and The Telegraph found that the Caste system is wide spread and affects tens of thousands of people at work, at schools within the National Health Service and even at the doctors surgery. A second report was conducted and authorised by the government through NIESR, the *National Institute for Economic and Social Research*. The study has found evidence that caste discrimination and harassment is likely to occur in Britain. Evidence has been found in respect of work and the provision of services. Whilst not ruling out the possibility of caste discrimination in education, no incidents enabling a conclusion that caste discrimination was likely to occur in education were found. The report found favourable aspects for anti legislation groups in using educational methods instead of legislation. However, non-legislative approaches were ruled less likely to be effective in the private sector and would not assist those where the authorities themselves were discriminating. One of the criticisms of discrimination law in caste discrimination cases would be the difficulty there would be in proving caste discrimination and harassment. Legislation not only provides structures for redress but also leads to much greater understanding of the issues and reduces the acceptability of such discrimination and harassment.

In addition, more recent studies by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research on alleged caste discrimination in Britain admit to being largely inconclusive, and that any caste discrimination was "not religion specific and is subscribed to by members of any or no religion". Equalities Minister Helen Grant has expressed concern that there is insufficient evidence of caste-based discrimination in Britain to require specific legislation, and Shadow Equalities minister Kate Green has also said that the impact is on a relatively small number of people. Religious studies professor Gavin Flood of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies concludes that the Hindu community in Britain is particularly well integrated, and that necessitates the loosening of caste ties. Also, casteist beliefs are prevalent mainly among first generation immigrants, with such prejudices declining with each successive generation due to greater assimilation.

Currently Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Dates and numbers#Chronological items the amendment is still under consideration and a verdict for the caste discrimination clause section 9 (5)a has not yet been delivered. Opinions are being sought from both Hindu and Sikh groups in the UK who are both for and against anti caste discrimination legislation.

Two British politicians have supported anti-caste legislation Lord Avebury and Lady Thornton.

## The Sikh diaspora in the United Kingdom

Although caste is presented as a Hindu concept, caste has and continues to influence Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Caste divisions exist among Sikhs, Muslims and Christians whose families came from the sub-continent, as well as Hindus. The Sikh diaspora in the United Kingdom is highly affected by caste, with Sikh gurdwaras being built along caste lines. The Ramgarhia Sikh gurdwaras are an example of caste-based gurdwaras in Britain. Caste-based gurdwaras exist all over Britain and most gurdwaras in Britain are controlled by members of a single caste. Caste remains a vitally important factor in Sikh religious organisations.<sup>[25]</sup> Caste factors are so acute that Sikhs of different caste are not able to share one gurdwara. In most British towns and cities with a significant Sikh population, rival gurdwaras can be found with caste specific management committees. The Sikh diaspora has maintained the same social structure of caste as in their homeland of Punjab. The caste system and Caste identity is very entrenched and reinforced among Sikhs in Britain.<sup>[26]</sup> The main divisions among Sikhs in the United Kingdom are the Jatt Sikhs, Ramgarhia Sikhs and the Dalit diaspora among the Sikhs being the Mazhabi Sikhs and Ramdassi Sikhs. The Dalit Sikh diaspora have largely been segregated into Valmiki and Ravidassia temples.

As Sikh Dalits worship in segregated temples they have formed umbrella groups consisting of a network of lower caste temples throughout the UK.<sup>[28]</sup> Caste tensions erupt between higher caste Jatt Sikhs and lower caste Sikhs. Physical violence is also known to erupt between the two communities when an inter caste marriage takes place between the two communities. In the city of Wolverhampton incidents of Jatt Sikhs refusing to share water taps and avoidance of making any physical contact with lower castes has been reported. At a sports competition in Birmingham in 1999, Jatt Sikhs refused to eat food that had been cooked and prepared by the Chamar community.

Many upper-caste Sikhs hardly ever refer to Chamar places of worship with respectable terms.<sup>[29]</sup> Many simply refer to them as the "Chamar Gurdwara". The majority of higher caste Sikhs would not eat in a Ravidassi house or in the Ravidassi temples. Many Chamars have stated that they are made to feel unwelcome in Sikh gurdwaras and Hindu temples it has also been found that many Sikhs do not wish to give Chamars equal status among their own gurdwaras and communities. Consequently this has resulted in the Sikh Chamars (Ramdassi Sikhs) uniting with fellow Chamars, not necessarily of the same Sikh religion. Together they moved off and formed the Ravidassi Temples.

Like the Chamars, the Mazhabi Sikhs too were subjected to the same forms of inequality and discrimination in gurdwaras from Upper caste Sikhs; and The Mazhabi Sikhs unified with the Hindu Churas and formed the Valmiki Temples that exist around Britain.

The caste social structure and segregation among Sikhs in Britain can also be seen beyond and outside gurdwaras. A pub in Bedford, a town in the east of England is known as "The Chamar pub" due to perceptions about its clientele. The former mayor of Coventry, a person of Dalit origin, felt it necessary to shift his campaign from a mostly Indian



A Sikh gurdwara in Smethwick. The majority of gurdwaras in Britain are Caste based<sup>[24]</sup> and one can indirectly inquire about one's caste based upon which gurdwara one attends.



A Valmiki Temple in the UK. Caste segregation has meant that Mazhabi Sikhs and Hindu Churas have united to establish their own Temples throughout Britain. Some Valmiki temples keep a copy of the *Guru Granth Sahib*<sup>[27]</sup> and Mazhabi Sikhs and Valmikis pray together.

ward to a non-South Asian constituency in order to get elected to that post.

Social segregation and caste boundaries are well defined and maintained among British Sikhs through marriages. Inter-Caste marriages are highly frowned upon if not prohibited between Sikhs of different castes especially with Dalit Sikhs, and are very rare. There was great opposition and fury when a Ramgarhia groom desired to marry a Jatt Sikh bride.<sup>[30]</sup> The bride's kin even threatened to kill the Ramgarhia groom. Despite the Jatt Sikhs and Ramgarhia Sikhs, both traditionally considered "Upper caste Sikhs" in Britain; fierce opposition occurred as the Jatt Sikhs viewed themselves to be superior in caste rank, in the traditional Sikh caste Hierarchy. Sikh marriages in Britain are highly caste endogenous and this forms a basic requirement among Sikh marriages. The social segregation of Sikh Dalits is well maintained through clear prohibition and discouragement of Inter-caste marriages with them.

Sikh gurdwaras in Britain generally do not accept inter-caste marriages. A tiny minority of Sikh gurdwaras may perform marriage ceremonies for inter-caste marriages but generally they are grudgingly accepted and solemnised in some gurdwaras, however they are not welcomed outright. Gurdwaras may place hurdles in the way of solemnising such marriages, for example, insisting on the presence of the words **Singh** and **Kaur** in the names of the bridegroom and bride, or deny such couples open access to gurdwara-based religious services and community centres associated with gurdwaras.

Theoretically the position of Sikhism is that it is an inclusive, casteless, classless and egalitarian faith which implies an acceptance of inter-caste marriages. However in practice this is not the case. Caste should have no place in Sikh marriages but in practice it is influential.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Dalit literature

Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian literature.<sup>[32]</sup> One of the first Dalit writers was Madara Chennaiah, an 11th-century cobbler-saint who lived in the reign of Western Chalukyas and who is also regarded by some scholars as the "father of Vachana poetry". Another early Dalit poet is Dohara Kakkaiyah, a Dalit by birth, six of whose confessional poems survive.<sup>[33]</sup>

## Modern Dalit literature

In the modern era, Dalit literature was energised by the advent of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who focused on the issues of Dalits through their works and writings; this started a new trend in Dalit writing, and inspired many Dalits to come forth with writings in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Punjabi.<sup>[34]</sup>

By the 1960s, Dalit literature saw a fresh crop of new writers like Baburao Bagul, Bandhu Madhav<sup>[35]</sup> and Shankar Rao Kharat, though its formal form came into being with the Little magazine movement.<sup>[36]</sup> In Sri Lanka, Dalit writers like K.Daniel<sup>[37]</sup> and Dominic Jeeva gained mainstream popularity in the late 1960.

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## Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

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The **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** (STs) are two groups of historically-disadvantaged people recognised in the Constitution of India. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.2 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively, of India's population (or about 24.4 percent altogether, according to the 2001 census).<sup>[1]</sup> The *Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950* lists 1,108 castes across 25 states in its First Schedule,<sup>[2]</sup> and the *Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950* lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule.<sup>[3]</sup>

Since independence, the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (the three categories combined constitute about 60 percent of India's population) were given reservation in India. The reservation policy became an integral part of the Constitution through the efforts of Bhimrao Ambedkar, who participated in the Round Table Conferences and fought for the rights of the oppressed and depressed classes. The Constitution lays down the general principles of affirmative action for SCs and STs.

## History

Since the 1850s these communities were loosely referred to as Depressed Classes, or *Adivasis* ("original inhabitants"). The early 20th century saw a flurry of activity in the Raj assessing the feasibility of responsible self-government for India. The Morley-Minto Reforms Report, Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms Report and the Simon Commission were several initiatives in this context. A highly-contested issue in the proposed reforms was the reservation of seats for representation of the Depressed Classes in provincial and central legislatures.

In 1935 the British passed the Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. The reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act, which came into force in 1937. The Act introduced the term "Scheduled Castes", defining the group as "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes', as His Majesty in Council may prefer". This discretionary definition was clarified in *The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936*, which contained

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a list (or Schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces.

After independence the Constituent Assembly continued the prevailing definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, giving (via articles 341 and 342) the president of India and governors of the states a mandate to compile a full listing of castes and tribes (with the power to edit it later, as required). The complete list of castes and tribes was made via two orders: *The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950*<sup>[4]</sup> and *The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950*,<sup>[5]</sup> respectively.

## Legislative framework

The Constitution provides a three-pronged strategy to improve the situation of SCs and STs:

- *Protective arrangements*: Such measures as are required to enforce equality, to provide punitive measures for transgressions, to eliminate established practices that perpetuate inequities, etc. A number of laws were enacted to implement the provisions in the Constitution. Examples of such laws include The Untouchability Practices Act, 1955, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, etc.
- *Affirmative action*: Provide positive (preferential) treatment in allotment of jobs and access to higher education as a means to accelerate the integration of the SCs and STs with mainstream society. Affirmative action is popularly known as reservation.
- *Development*: Provide resources and benefits to bridge the socioeconomic gap between the SCs and STs and other communities.

## National commissions

To effectively implement the various safeguards built into the Constitution and other legislation, the Constitution under Articles 338 and 338A provides for two statutory commissions: the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. The chairpersons of both commissions sit *ex officio* on the National Human Rights Commission.

## Constitutional history

In the original Constitution, Article 338 provided for a special officer (the Commissioner for SCs and STs) responsible for monitoring the implementation of constitutional and legislative safeguards for SCs and STs and reporting to the president. Seventeen regional offices of the Commissioner were established throughout the country.

There was an initiative to replace the Commissioner with a committee in the 48th Amendment to the Constitution, changing Article 338. While the amendment was being debated, the Ministry of Welfare established the first committee for SCs and STs (with the functions of the Commissioner) in August 1978. These functions were modified in September 1987 to include advising the government on broad policy issues and the development levels of SCs and STs.

In 1990, Article 338 was amended for the National Commission for SCs and STs with the *Constitution (Sixty fifth Amendment) Bill, 1990*. The first commission under the 65th Amendment was constituted in March 1992, replacing the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the commission established by the Ministry of Welfare's Resolution of 1989. In 2003, the Constitution was again amended to divide the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two commissions: the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. In 2013, Government of India decided to constitute a High Level Committee (HLC) under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal Affairs to prepare a position paper on the present socioeconomic, health and educational status of STs and suggest a way forward.

## Distribution

According to the 61st Round Survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), almost nine-tenths of Indian Buddhists belonged to scheduled castes, while one-third of Christians belonged to scheduled tribes. While a large proportion of scheduled castes were Hindus, they belonged to castes and tribes with low populations. The 2006 Sachar Committee report also confirmed that members of scheduled castes and tribes were not exclusively Hindu.

The following table indicates the percentage of each religion's adherents belonging to a scheduled caste or tribe (note the distribution of religions):

Religion	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe
Buddhism	89.50%	7.40%
Christianity	9.00%	32.80%
Sikhism	17.0%	0.90%
Hinduism	22.20%	9.10%
Gond		100%
Jainism		2.60%
Islam	0.80%	0.50%

## Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan

The Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) of 1979 mandated a planning process for the social, economic and educational development of Scheduled Castes and improvement in their working and living conditions. It was an umbrella strategy, ensuring the flow of targeted financial and physical benefits from the general sector of development to the Scheduled Castes. It entailed a targeted flow of funds and associated benefits from the annual plan of states and Union Territories (UTs) in at least a proportion to the national SC population. Twenty-seven states and UTs with sizable SC populations are implementing the plan. Although the Scheduled Castes population according to the 2001 Census was 16.66 crores (16.23 percent of the total population), the allocations made through SCSP have been lower than the proportional population.

## Notable members

- B. R. Ambedkar: Jurist, political leader, writer, father of Indian Constitution
- K. R. Narayanan: Tenth President of India
- Babu Jagjivan Ram: Former Deputy Prime Minister of India
- K. G. Balakrishnan: Former Chief Justice of India, chairman of national human rights commission
- Ramkrishnan Suryabhan Gavai: Former MP, Governor of Kerela and Bihar
- Sushilkumar Shinde: Cabinet Minister for Home Affairs
- Mayawati: Former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh
- Birsa Munda: Indian independence advocate and tribal leader
- Damodaram Sanjivayya (1921–1972): First dalit chief minister of a state and first dalit president of the Indian National Congress
- Kanshi Ram: Founder of Bahujan Samaj Party
- G. M. C. Balayogi: Former Speaker of the Lok Sabha
- Shibu Soren: Former Chief Minister of Jharkhand state
- S. Ashok Kumar: Judge, Madras High Court and High Court of Andhra Pradesh
- Ram Vilas Paswan: President of the Lok Janshakti Party
- Bangaru Laxman: Former President of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)



- Lala Ram Ken: Member of the seventh and eighth Parliaments
- Vinoo Mankad: Cricketer who played in 44 test matches for India
- Ilaiyaraaja: Music director, instrumentalist and composer
- Damodar Raja Narasimha: Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh
- J. Geeta Reddy: Leader of the Legislative Assembly, AP
- Betha Sudhakar ("Pichha kottudu sudhakar"): Comedian, Tollywood character actor
- Lankapalli Bullayya (1918–1992): First dalit university vice-chancellor (Andhra University, 1968–74)
- Jwala Prasad Kureel: MP of the sixth Lok Sabha; member of Janata Party serving Ghatampur (UP) Lok Sabha constituency
- PL Punia: Chairman, National Commission for SC/ST
- Thol. Thirumavalavan: president viduthalai ciruthai katchi and member of parliament from 2009 from tamilnadu.
- Meira Kumar: Speaker of the 15th Lok Sabha formed in May 2009 (daughter of Babu Jagjivan Ram: Former Deputy Prime Minister of India from Indian state of Bihar)
- A.P. Anil Kumar: Minister for Tourism and Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes in the Indian state of Kerala

## Notes

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# Caste

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The *Basor* weaving bamboo baskets in a 1916 book. The *Basor* are a Hindu caste found in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

*Part of a series on*

**Political and  
legal  
anthropology**

**Social and cultural  
anthropology**

**Caste** is a form of social stratification characterized by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a style of life which often includes an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion based on cultural notions of purity and pollution. Its paradigmatic ethnographic example is the division of India's Hindu society into rigid social groups, with roots in India's ancient history and persisting until today. However, the economic significance of the caste system in India has been declining as a result of urbanization and affirmative action programs. A subject of much scholarship by sociologists and anthropologists, the Hindu caste system is sometimes used as an analogical basis for the study of caste-like social divisions existing outside Hinduism and India.

According to UNICEF and Human Rights Watch, caste discrimination affects an estimated 250 million people worldwide.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

## Etymology

The English word "caste" derives from the Spanish and Portuguese *casta*, which the Oxford English Dictionary quotes John Minsheu's Spanish dictionary (1599) to mean, "race, lineage, or breed." When the Spanish colonized the New World, they used the word to mean a "clan or lineage." However, it was the Portuguese who employed *casta* in the primary modern sense when they applied it to the many in-marrying hereditary Hindu social groups they encountered upon their arrival in India in 1498. The use of the spelling "caste," with this latter meaning, is first attested to in English in 1613.

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## Caste system of India

Historically, the caste system in India has consisted of thousands of endogamous groups called Jatis or Quoms (among Muslims). The scholarly Brahmins of India envisaged the four well-known categories to classify the society (the Varnas):

- Brahmin (fire priests, scholars and teachers)
- Kshatriyas (warriors, administrators and law enforcers)
- Vaishyas (agriculturists, cattle raisers and traders)
- Shudras (service providers and artisans)

It has been pointed out that some people were considered left out from these four caste classifications, and in certain places were called Panchama (literally, the fifth). Regarded as outcastes or the untouchables, these people lived on the fringes of the society. All the Jatis were clubbed under the *varnas* categories during the British colonial Census of 1901.

Upon independence from the British rule, the Indian Constitution listed 1,108 castes across the country as Scheduled Castes in 1950, for affirmative action.<sup>[4]</sup> The Scheduled Castes are sometimes called as Dalit in contemporary literature. In 2001, the proportion of Dalit population was 16.2 percent of India's total population.



An early 20th century "ethnographic" photograph of men and women from the Kurmi caste—famed as cultivators and market gardeners—sowing their field.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Caste in rest of South Asia

### Nepal

The Nepalese caste system resembles that of the Indian Jāti system with numerous Jāti divisions with a Varna system superimposed for a rough equivalence. But since the culture and the society is different some of the things are different. Inscriptions attest the beginnings of a caste system during the Lichchhavi period. Jayasthiti Malla (1382–95) categorized Newars into 64 castes (Gellner 2001). A similar exercise was made during the reign of Mahindra Malla (1506–75). The Hindu social code was later set up in Gorkha by Ram Shah (1603–36).

### Pakistan

Religious, historical and sociocultural factors have helped define the bounds of endogamy for Muslims in some parts of Pakistan. There is a preference for endogamous marriages based on the clan-oriented nature of the society, which values and actively seeks similarities in social group identity based on several factors, including religious, sectarian, ethnic, and tribal/clan affiliation. Religious affiliation is itself multilayered and includes religious considerations other than being Muslim, such as sectarian identity (e.g. Shia or Sunni, etc.) and religious orientation within the sect (Isnashari, Ismaili, Ahmedi, etc.).

Both ethnic affiliation (e.g. Pathan, Sindhi, Baloch, Punjabi, etc.) and membership of specific biraderis or zaat/quoms are additional integral components of social identity. Within the bounds of endogamy defined by the above parameters, close consanguineous unions are preferred due to a congruence of key features of group- and individual-level background factors as well as affinities. McKim Marriott claims a social stratification that is hierarchical, closed, endogamous and hereditary is widely prevalent, particularly in western parts of Pakistan. Frederik Barth in his review of this system of social stratification in Pakistan suggested that these are castes.

## Sri Lanka

The Caste system in Sri Lanka is a division of society into strata, influenced by the classic Aryan Varnas of North India and the Dravida Jāti system found in South India. Ancient Sri Lankan texts such as the Pujavaliya, Sadharmaratnavaliya and Yogaratnakaraya and inscriptional evidence show that the above hierarchy prevailed throughout the feudal period. The repetition of the same caste hierarchy even as recently as the 18th century, in the British/Kandyan period Kadayimpoth - Boundary books as well, indicates the continuation of the tradition right up to the end of Sri Lanka's monarchy.

## Caste-like stratification outside South Asia

### South-east Asia

#### Indonesia

Balinese caste structure has been described in early 20th-century European literature to be based on three categories – triwangsa (thrice born) or the nobility, dwijati (twice born) in contrast to ekajati (once born) the low folks. Four statuses were identified in these sociological studies, spelled a bit differently than the caste categories for India:

- Brahmanas - priest
- Satrias - knighthood
- Wesias - commerce
- Sudras - servitude

The Brahmana caste was further subdivided by these Dutch ethnographers into two: Siwa and Buda. The Siwa caste was subdivided into five – Kemenuh, Keniten, Mas, Manuba and Petapan. This classification was to accommodate the observed marriage between higher caste Brahmana men with lower caste women. The other castes were similarly further sub-classified by these 19th-century and early-20th-century ethnographers based on numerous criteria ranging from profession, endogamy or exogamy or polygamy, and a host of other factors in a manner similar to castas in Spanish colonies such as Mexico, and caste system studies in British colonies such as India.



A Sudra caste man from Bali. Photo from 1870, courtesy of Tropenmuseum, Netherlands

## East Asia

### Japan

In Japan's history, social strata based on inherited position rather than personal merits, was rigid and highly formalized. At the top were the Emperor and Court nobles (*kuge*), together with the Shogun and daimyo. Below them the population was divided into four classes in a system known as *mibunsei* (身分制). These were: samurai, peasants, craftsmen and merchants. Only the samurai class was allowed to bear arms. A samurai had a right to kill any peasants and other craftsmen and merchants whom he felt were disrespectful. Craftsmen produced products, being the third, and the last merchants were thought to be as the meanest class because they did not produce any products. The castes were further sub-divided; for example, the peasant caste were labelled as *furiuri*, *tanagari*, *mizunomi-byakusho* amongst others. The castes and sub-classes, as in Europe, were from the same race, religion and culture.

Howell, in his review of Japanese society notes that if a Western power had colonized Japan in the 19th century, they would have discovered and imposed a rigid four-caste hierarchy in Japan.

De Vos and Wagatsuma observe that a systematic and extensive caste system was part of the Japanese society. They also discuss how alleged caste impurity and alleged racial inferiority, concepts often quickly assumed to be slightly different, are superficial terms, two faces of identical inner psychological processes, which expressed themselves in Japan and other countries of the world.

Endogamy was common because marriage across caste lines was socially unacceptable.

Japan had its own untouchable caste, shunned and ostracized, historically referred to by the insulting term *Eta*, now called *Burakumin*. While modern law has officially abolished the class hierarchy, there are reports of discrimination against the Buraku or Burakumin underclasses.<sup>[5]</sup> The Burakumin are regarded as "ostracised." The burakumin are one of the main minority groups in Japan, along with the Ainu of Hokkaidō and those of residents of Korean and Chinese descent.

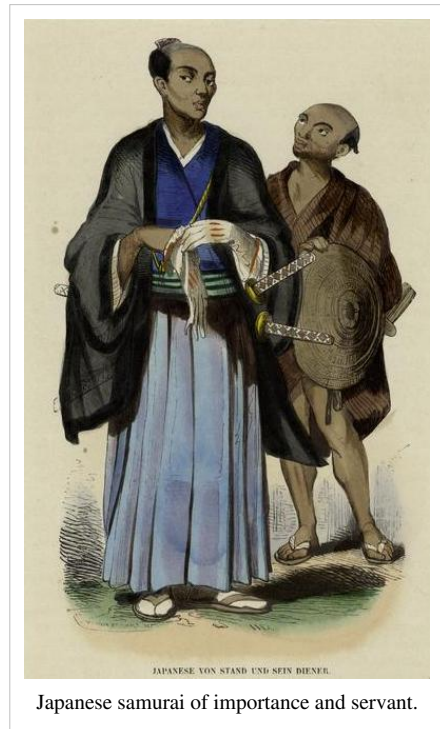
## West Asia

### Yemen

In Yemen there exists a hereditary caste, the African-descended Al-Akhdam who are kept as perennial manual workers. A 2008 New York Times report claims that Yemen has over 1 million of these discriminated and ostracized Al-Akhdam people, that is about 5 percent of Yemen population.

## Africa

Various sociologists have reported caste systems in Africa. The specifics of the caste systems have varied in ethnically and culturally diverse Africa, however the following features are common - it has been a closed system of social stratification, the social status is inherited, the castes are hierarchical, certain castes are shunned while others are merely endogamous and exclusionary. In some cases, concepts of purity and impurity by birth have been prevalent in Africa. In other cases, such as the *Nupe* of Nigeria, the *Beni Amer* of East Africa, and the *Tira* of Sudan, the exclusionary principle has been driven by evolving social factors.



## West Africa

Among the Igbo of Nigeria - especially Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, Edo and Delta states of the country - Obinna finds Osu caste system has been and continues to be a major social issue. The Osu caste is determined by one's birth into a particular family irrespective of the religion practised by the individual. Once born into Osu caste, this Nigerian person is an outcast, shunned and ostracized, with limited opportunities or acceptance, regardless of his or her ability or merit. Obinna discusses how this caste system-related identity and power is deployed within government, Church and indigenous communities.

The *osu* class systems of eastern Nigeria and southern Cameroon are derived from indigenous religious beliefs and discriminate against the "Osus" people as "owned by deities" and outcasts.

The Songhai economy was based on a caste system. The most common were metalworkers, fishermen, and carpenters. Lower caste participants consisted of mostly non-farm working immigrants, who at times were provided special privileges and held high positions in society. At the top were noblemen and direct descendants of the original Songhai people, followed by freemen and traders.<sup>[6]</sup>

In a review of social stratification systems in Africa, Richter reports that the term caste has been used by French and American scholars to many groups of West African artisans. These groups have been described as inferior, deprived of all political power, have a specific occupation, are hereditary and sometimes despised by others. Richter illustrates caste system in Cote d'Ivoire, with six sub-caste categories. Unlike other parts of the world, mobility is sometimes possible within sub-castes, but not across caste lines. Farmers and artisans have been, claims Richter, distinct castes. Certain sub-castes are shunned more than others. For example, exogamy is rare for women born into families of woodcarvers.

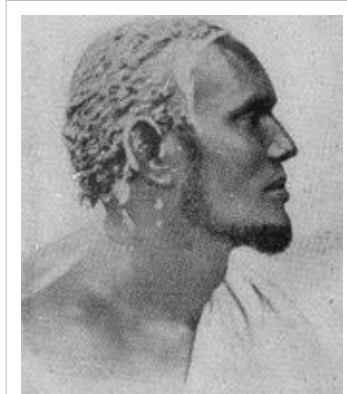
Similarly, the Mandé societies in Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone have social stratification systems that divide society by ethnic ties. The Mande class system regards the *jonow* slaves as inferior. Similarly, the Wolof in Senegal is divided into three main groups, the *geer* (freeborn/nobles), *jaam* (slaves and slave descendants) and the underclass *neeno*. In various parts of West Africa, Fulani societies also have class divisions. Other castes include *Griots*, *Forgerons*, and *Cordonniers*.

Tamari has described endogamous castes of over fifteen West African peoples, including the Tukulor, Songhay, Dogon, Senufo, Minianka, Moors, Manding, Soninke, Wolof, Serer, Fulani, and Tuareg. Castes appeared among the *Malinke* people no later than 14th century, and was present among the *Wolof* and *Soninke*, as well as some *Songhay* and *Fulani* populations, no later than 16th century. Tamari claims that wars, such as the *Sosso-Malinke* war described in the *Sunjata* epic, led to the formation of blacksmith and bard castes among the people that ultimately became the Mali empire.

As West Africa evolved over time, sub-castes emerged that acquired secondary specializations or changed occupations. Endogamy was prevalent within a caste or among a limited number of castes, yet castes did not form demographic isolates according to Tamari. Social status according to caste was inherited by off-springs automatically; but this inheritance was paternal. That is, children of higher caste men and lower caste or slave



A Griot, who have been described as an endogamous caste of West Africa who specialize in oral story telling and culture preservation. They have been also referred to as the bard caste.



A Madhiban, also known as Midgan or Medigan or Boon or Gaboye, specialize in leather occupation. They have been listed as one of three occupational castes discriminated in East Africa. Austrian Red Cross reports that they, along with *Tumal* and *Yibir* people are locally known collectively as *sab*, meaning low caste people.

concubines would have the caste status of the father.

### Central Africa

Albert in 1960 claimed that the societies in Central Africa were caste-like social stratification systems. Similarly, in 1961, Maquet notes that the society in Rwanda and Burundi can be best described as castes. The Tutsi, noted Maquet, considered themselves as superior, with the more numerous Hutu and the least numerous Twa regarded, by birth, as respectively, second and third in the hierarchy of Rwandese society. These groups were largely endogamous, exclusionary and with limited mobility. Maquet's theories have been controversial.

### East Africa

In a review published in 1977, Todd reports that numerous scholars report a system of social stratification in different parts of Africa that resembles some or all aspects of caste system. Examples of such caste systems, he claims, are to be found in Rwanda and Ethiopia in communities such as the *Gurage* and *Konso*. He then presents the *Dime* of South-West Ethiopia, amongst whom there operates a system which Todd claims can be unequivocally labelled as caste system. The *Dime* have seven castes whose size varies considerably. Each broad caste level is a hierarchical order that is based on notions of purity, non-purity and impurity. It uses the concepts of defilement to limit contacts between caste categories and to preserve the purity of the upper castes. These caste categories have been exclusionary, endogamous and the social identity inherited.

The Borana Oromo of southern Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa also have a class system, where the Watta, an acculturated Bantu group, represent the poorest class.

The traditionally nomadic Somali people are divided into clans, wherein the Rahanweyn agro-pastoral clans and the occupational clans such as the Madhiban are sometimes treated as outcasts.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Europe

### France and Spain

For centuries, through the modern times, the majority regarded Cagots of western France and northern Spain as an inferior caste, the untouchables. While they had the same skin color and religion as the majority, in the Churches, they had to use segregated doors, drink from segregated fonts, receive communion on the end of long wooden spoons. It was a closed social system. The socially isolated Cagots were endogamous, and chances of social mobility non-existent.

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- "Early Evidence for Caste in South India", p. 467-492 in *Dimensions of Social Life: Essays in honor of David G. Mandelbaum*, Edited by Paul Hockings and Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1987.

## External links

- CHAPTER X: SOCIAL STAGNATION: I: Muslim Society is even more full of social evils than Hindu Society is -BR Ambedkar ([http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambekar\\_partition/410.html#part\\_1](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambekar_partition/410.html#part_1))
- Auguste Comte on why and how castes developed across the world - in *The Positive Philosophy*, Volume 3 (see page 55 onwards) (<http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3113/comte/Philosophy3.pdf>)
- Robert Merton on Caste and The Sociology of Science ([http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/students/envs\\_5110/merton\\_sociology\\_science.pdf](http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/students/envs_5110/merton_sociology_science.pdf))
- Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age - Susan Bayly ([http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item1168367/?site\\_locale=en\\_GB](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item1168367/?site_locale=en_GB))
- Class In Yemen (<http://www.countercurrents.org/hr-marguerite250404.htm>) by Marguerite Abadjian (Archive of the Baltimore Sun)
- Hindu Caste System & Hinduism: Vedic vocations (Hindu castes) were not related to heredity (birth) ([http://web.archive.org/web/20091026134948/http://geocities.com/lamberdar/\\_caste.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20091026134948/http://geocities.com/lamberdar/_caste.html))
- International Dalit Solidarity Network: An international advocacy group for Dalits (<http://idsn.org/>)

## Varna (Hinduism)

An article <i>related to</i>
<b>Hinduism</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hindu</b></li> <li>• <b>History</b></li> </ul>
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**Varna** (वर्ण) is the term for the four broad ranks into which traditional Hindu society is divided. The four varnas (*chatur varna*) are, in order of precedence,

1. the Brahmins: priests and scholars.
2. the Kshatriya: kings, governors and soldiers.
3. the Vaishyas: cattle herders, agriculturists, artisans<sup>[1]</sup> and merchants.
4. the Shudras: labourers and service providers.

This quadruple division is the ancient division of society into "principle castes"; it is not to be confused with the much finer caste system in India based on occupation as it emerged in the medieval period.<sup>[2]</sup> Even though only laid out in detail in post-Vedic Brahmanism (in the *Manusmṛti*, the oldest of the Dharmashastras, compiled during the time of the Kushan Empire), the varna division is alluded to in the late Rigvedic Purusha Sukta, and it has been theorised to reflect a much more ancient tripartite society (where only the first three castes would correspond to the ancient division, considered *Arya*, and allowed to participate in Vedic ritual, while the fourth caste of non-Aryas represents reflects the subjected indigenous population),<sup>[3]</sup> ultimately cognate with the western "estates of the realm" (viz. division into a priestly class, a warrior class, and a class of commoners or free farmers, apart from a population of unfree serfs excluded from society proper).

Caste politics is a controversial issue in the contemporary Republic of India and the varna concept forms a part of those politics.

## Etymology and origins

Varna is a Sanskrit term *varṇa* (वर्ण) is derived from the root *vr*, meaning "to cover, to envelop" (compare *vrtra*). The meaning of the word as used in the Rigveda has the literal meaning "outward appearance, exterior, form, figure, shape, colour" besides the figurative "colour, race, kind, sort, character, quality, property". Already in the Rigveda, the term can mean "class of men, tribe, order, caste", especially expressing the contrast between the *āryas* and *dāsas*.<sup>[4]</sup>

The earliest application to the formal division into four social classes (without using the term *varna*) appears in the late Rigvedic Purusha Sukta (RV 10.90.11–12), which has the Brahman, Rajanya (instead of Kshatriya), Vaishya and Shudra classes emerging from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the primordial giant, Purusha, respectively:

11. When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

12. The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made.

His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced. (trans. Ralph T.H. Griffith)

In the post-Vedic period, the division is described explicitly and in great detail in the Dharmashastra literature, later also in the Puranas and other texts. The *Manusmṛiti* is the oldest of the Dharmashastra texts, reflecting the laws and society of Gupta period India.

Rigvedic evidence of such a quadruple division of society has been compared to similar systems, especially with a view to reconstructing hypothetical Proto-Indo-European society. Such comparison is at the basis of the trifunctional hypothesis presented by Georges Dumézil. Dumézil postulates a basic division of society into a priesthood (Brahmins), warrior class or nobility (Kshatriyas) and commoners (Vaishyas), augmented by a class of unfree serfs (Shudras).

## Hindu tradition

The concept of dharma deals mainly with the duties of the different varṇas and āśhramas (life cycles).

The Dharmasāstras are the classical Hindu texts dealing with the concept of dharma. The *Manusmṛiti* is the oldest and most prominent of these texts, compiled by the early centuries of the Common Era (reflecting the rise of Hinduism following the decline of Buddhism in India).

The first three varnas are seen as "twice born" and they are allowed to study the Vedas.

The occupations of the Vaishya are those connected with trade, the cultivation of the land and the breeding of cattle; while those of a Kshatriya consist in ruling and protecting the people, administering justice and expounding all dharma. Both share with the Brahmin the privilege of reading the Vedas. To the Brahmin belongs the right of teaching and expounding the sacred texts and other knowledge. Shudras provided services and labour to all the

society.

Manusmriti assigns cattle rearing as Vaisya occupation, however there are sources in available literature that Kshatriyas also owned and reared the cattle and cattle-wealth was mainstay of their households. Emperors of Kosala and Prince of Kasi are some of many examples.

Separate and shunned by society, including the Shudras, were the "untouchables" such as the Dalit and the Chandaal, who had to deal with the disposal of dead bodies and are described as dirty and polluted. There was a belief that one's Karma in the past, resulted in one's condition in this birth. "Now people here whose conduct is good can expect to quickly attain a pleasant birth, like that of a Brahmin, the Kshatriya, or the Vaishya. But people of evil conduct can expect to enter a foul womb, like that of a dog, a pig, or a Chandaal".

The Tantric movement that developed as a tradition distinct from orthodox Hinduism between the 8th and 11th centuries CE<sup>[5]</sup> also relaxed many societal strictures regarding class and community distinction. However it would be an over generalization to say that the Tantrics did away with all social restrictions, as N. N. Bhattacharyya explains:

"For example, Tantra according to its very nature has nothing to do with the [class] system but in the later Tantras [class] elements are pronounced. This is because although many of our known Tantric teachers were non-Brāhmaṇas, rather belonging to the lower ranks of society, almost all of the known authors of the Tantric treatises were Brāhmaṇas."<sup>[6]</sup>

## Varna and jāti

The terms *varna* (theoretical classification based on occupation) and *jāti* (caste) are two distinct concepts: while *varna* is the idealised four-part division envisaged by the above described Twice-Borns, *jāti* (community) refers to the thousands of actual endogamous groups prevalent across the subcontinent. A *jati* may be divided into exogamous groups based on same *gotras* (गोत्र). The classical authors scarcely speak of anything other than the *varnas*; even Indologists sometimes confuse the two.

In India and Nepal the sub-communities within a *varna* are called "jaat" or "jati". Traditionally, individuals marry only within their *jati*. People are born into a *jati* and normally it cannot be changed.

## Modern India

Critics point that the effect of communities (*jatis*) inheriting *varna* was to bind certain communities to sources of influence, power and economy while locking out others and thus create more affluence for *jatis* in higher classes and severe poverty for *jatis* in lower classes and the outcaste Dalit. In the last 150 years Indian movements arose to throw off the economic and political yoke of an inherited class system that emerged over time, and replace it with what they believed to be true Varnashrama dharma as described in the Vedas.

Swami Krishnananda, a foremost disciple of Swami Sivananda and former General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, noted the following about inherited social status in his autobiography:

While the [*varna*] system was originally evolved for the necessary classification of human duty in order to preserve the organic stability of society, its original meaning and its philosophical foundation was forgotten through the passage of time, and bigotry and fanaticism took its place through the preponderance of egoism, greed and hatred, contrary to the practice of true religion as a social expression of inner spiritual aspiration for a gradual ascent, by stages, to God Almighty. Vidura, famous in the Mahabharata, was born of a Shudra woman. But he had the power to summon the son of Brahma, from Brahmaloaka, by mere thought. Which orthodox Brahmin can achieve this astounding feat? It is, therefore, necessary for everyone to have consideration for the facts of world-unity and goodwill, Sarvabhuta-hita, as the great Lord mentions in the Bhagavad Gita. Justice is more than law. No one's body is by itself a Brahmin, because it is constituted of the five gross elements,- earth, water, fire, air and ether. Else, it would be a sin on the part of a son to consign to flames the lifeless body of a Brahmin father. It is, therefore, not proper to victimise a colleague by an action

plan of any religious community wedded to fundamentalist doctrines.

—[7]

Paramahansa Yogananda also opposed what he called to the un-Vedic inherited social status as we know it today. He taught that varna originated in a higher age, but became degraded through ignorance and self-interest. Yogananda said:

These were (originally) symbolic designations of the stages of spiritual refinement. They were not intended as social categories. And they were not intended to be hereditary. Things changed as the yugas [cycles of time] descended toward mental darkness. People in the higher [classes] wanted to make sure their children were accepted as members of their own [class]. Thus, ego-identification caused them to freeze the ancient classifications into what is called the 'caste system.' Such was not the original intention. In obvious fact, however, the offspring of a brahmin may be a shudra by nature. And a peasant, sometimes, is a real saint.

—Conversations with Yogananda, Crystal Clarity Publishers, 2003

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- [3] Macdonell-Keith II 252, note 42; Monier-Williams: "*varna*: class of men, tribe, order, caste (prob. from contrast of colour between the dark aboriginal tribes and their fair conquerors; in RV. esp. applied to the āryas and the dāsas; but more properly applicable to the four principal classes described in manu's code, viz. Brahmans, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and sūdras"
- [4] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit Dictionary* (1899). Monier-Williams surmises that the "caste" meaning reflects the "contrast of colour between the dark aboriginal tribes and their fair conquerors".
- [5] Flood, Gavin, "The Śaiva Traditions" in: Flood (2005; paperback edition of Flood 2003) p.208
- [6] N. N. Bhattacharyya. *History of the Tantric Religion*, p. 44-5.
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## Further reading

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## External links

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# Reservation in India

**Reservation in India** is the process of setting aside a certain percentage of government jobs and vacancies in educational institutes for members of backward and under-represented communities (defined primarily by caste). Reservation is a form of quota-based affirmative action. Reservation is governed by constitutional laws, statutory laws, and local rules and regulations. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) are the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policies under the Constitution — with the object of ensuring a "level" playing field.

The reservation system has received a mixed

response from Indians since its inception. It has been praised for diminishing the gap between the upper and lower castes by allowing the latter to enjoy the further increased opportunities as the former in jobs, education and governance by allotting seats exclusively for them. It has also been criticised for discouraging a merit-based system and encouraging vote bank politics.

Caste & Community Groups	Rural	Urban
Scheduled Tribes	45.8	35.6
Scheduled Castes	35.9	38.3
Other Backward Castes	27.0	29.5
Muslim Upper Castes	26.8	34.2
Hindu Upper Castes	11.7	09.9
Christian Upper Castes	09.6	05.4
Upper Caste Sikhs	00.0	04.9
Other Upper Castes	16.0	02.7
<b>All Group</b>	27.0	23.4

**Note-** NSSO – National Sample Survey Organisation  
**Below poverty line** – A Person who spends below Rs.327 in Rural Areas & Rs.454 in Urban areas Per Month Rs.40 = 1\$  
**Upper Castes** Include all Castes that are not either SC/ST or OBC  
**Scheduled Castes** - SC a term used officially by the Indian Constitution – currently terms like *dalits*, is used by people from these caste groups, Gandhi used *Harijans*  
**Scheduled Tribes** - ST a term used officially by the Indian Constitution– to refer to people of various Indigenous people in India also called *Advasi*  
**Other Backward Castes** - OBC the term used under Mandal commission report, to refer to caste groups that are also lower strata of Indian society

Caste and community profile of people below the poverty line in India, as outlined in the Sachar Report

## Background of caste based reservation

A common form of past discrimination in India is the practice of untouchability. Scheduled Castes (SCs) are the primary targets of the practice, which is outlawed by the Constitution of India. An untouchable person is considered "impure or a lesser human."

During the Vedic period, the varna system was used. The system consists of four ranked varnas. A person's varna was defined by his or her socio-economic duties (broadly classified into four classes or Varnas). These duties were either voluntarily performed or were assigned by the local administrator—one's varna was initially not defined by one's birth into any particular family. However, over the years, the system has changed so that one is born into a varna based on lineage.

The primary stated objective of the Indian reservation system is to increase the opportunities for enhanced social and educational status of the underprivileged communities and thus enable them to take their place in the mainstream of Indian society. The reservation system exists to provide opportunities for the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to increase their political representation in the State Legislatures, the Executive Organ of the Union (Centre) and States, the labor force, schools, colleges, and other public institutions.

The Constitution of India states in article 16(4): "Nothing in [article 16] or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes." Article 46 of the Constitution states that "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

In 1982, the Constitution specified 15% and 7.5% of vacancies in public sector and government-aided educational institutes as a quota reserved for the SC and ST candidates respectively for a period of five years, after which the quota system would be reviewed. This period was routinely extended by the succeeding governments. The Supreme Court of India ruled that reservations could not exceed 50% (which it judged would violate equal access guaranteed by the Constitution) and put a cap on reservations.

However, there are state laws that exceed this 50% limit and these are under litigation in the Supreme Court. For example, the caste-based reservation stands at 69% and the same is applicable to about 87% of the population in the State of Tamil Nadu. In 1990, Prime Minister V. P. Singh announced that 27% of government positions would be set aside for OBC's in addition to the 22.5% already set aside for the SCs and STs.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Present caste-based reservation system of Union Government

Category as per Government of India	Reservation Percentage for each Category as per Government of India
Scheduled Castes (SC)	15%
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	7.5%
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	27%
Total constitutional reservation percentage	49.5%

## Beneficiary groups of the reservation system

Enrolment in educational institutions and job placements are reserved based on a variety of criteria. The quota system sets aside a proportion of all possible positions for members of a specific group. Those not belonging to the designated communities can compete only for the remaining positions, while members of the designated communities can compete for all positions (reserved and open). For example, when 1 out of 10 clerical positions in railways are reserved for ex-servicemen, those who have served in the Army can compete both in the "General

Category" as well as in the specific quota.

Seats are reserved for people under the following criteria:

## Caste

In central-government funded higher education institutions, 22.5% of available seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students (15% for SCs, 7.5% for STs). This reservation percentage has been raised to 49.5% by including an additional 27% reservation for OBCs. This ratio is followed even in Parliament and all elections where a few constituencies are earmarked for those from certain communities (which rotate per the Delimitation Commission).

The exact percentages vary from state to state:

- In Tamil Nadu, the reservation is 18% for SCs and 1% for STs, based on local demographics.
- In Northeast India, especially in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram, reservation for ST in State Govt. jobs is 80% with only 20% unreserved. In the Central Universities of NEHU(shillong) and Rajiv Gandhi University, 60% of seats are reserved for ST students.
- In Andhra Pradesh, 25% of educational institutes and government jobs are reserved for OBCs, 15% for SCs, 6% for STs and 4% for Muslims.
- In West Bengal, 35% of educational institute seats and 45% of government jobs are reserved for SC, ST, and OBC (25% SC, 12% ST, 10% Muslim).

## Gender

In 1993, a constitutional amendment in India called for a random one third of village council leader, or pradhan, positions in gram panchayat to be reserved for women.<sup>[2]</sup> The village council is responsible for the provision of village infrastructure – such as public buildings, water, and roads – and for identifying government program beneficiaries. Although all decisions in the village council are made by majority, the pradhan is the only full-time member and exercises significant control over the final council decisions.<sup>[3]</sup> Recent research on the quota system has revealed that it has changed perceptions of women's abilities, improved women's electoral chances, and raised aspirations and educational attainment for adolescent girls.<sup>[4]</sup>

There is a long-term plan to extend this reservation to parliament and legislative assemblies. For instance, some law schools in India have a 30% reservation for females. Progressive political opinion in India is strongly in favor of providing preferential treatment to women in order to create a level playing field for all of its citizens.

The Women's Reservation Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on 9 March 2010 by a majority vote of 186 members in favor and 1 against. As of March 2013, the Lok Sabha has not voted on the bill. Its opposers say gender cannot be held as a basis for reservation alone other factors should also be considered e.g. economic, social conditions of woman candidate. There also is a growing demand for women reservation in pre-existing reservations like OBC, SC/ST, Physically handicapped etc. Some feminist groups still demand that reservation for women should be at least 50% as they comprise 50% of the population.

## Religion

Reservation has also been extended to religious minorities. The Tamil Nadu government has allotted 3.5% of seats each to Muslims and Christians, thereby altering the OBC reservation to 23% from 30% (since it excludes persons belonging to Other Backward Castes who are either Muslims or Christians).

The Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced a law enabling 4% reservations for Muslims in 2004. This law has however not been passed and is currently being contested in the Supreme Court.<sup>[5]</sup> Kerala Public Service Commission has a quota of 12% for Muslims. Religious minority (Muslim or Christian) educational institutes also have 50% reservation for Muslim or Christian religions. The Central government has listed a number of Muslim communities as backward Muslims, making them eligible for reservation.

## Controversy

The Government of India on 22 December 2011 announced establishment of a sub-quota of 4.5% for minorities within the existing 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes. The reasoning given was that Muslim communities that have been granted OBC status are unable to compete with Hindu OBC communities. It was alleged that the decision was announced as the Election Commission announced Assembly elections in five states on 24 December 2011. The government would not have been able to announce this due to the model code of conduct. On 12 January 2012, the Election Commission stayed implementation of this decision for violation of the model code of conduct. Later, Justice Sachar, head of the Sachar Committee that was commissioned to prepare a report on the latest social, economic and educational condition of the Muslim community of India, criticized the government decision, saying "Such promises will not help the backward section of minorities. It is like befooling them. These people are making tall claims just to win elections". He suggested that instead of promising to give reservations, the government should focus on basic issues of improving administration and governance.

On 28 May 2012, the Andhra Pradesh High Court quashed the sub-quota. The court said that the sub-quota has been carved out only on religious lines and not on any other intelligible basis. The court criticised the decision: "In fact, we must express our anguish at the rather casual manner in which the entire issue has been taken up by the central government."

## Status as a domicile

With few exceptions, all jobs under certain State governments are reserved for those who are domiciled within the jurisdiction of that government. For example, in Punjab Engineering College (Chandigarh) 85% of seats were earlier reserved for Chandigarh-domiciles—now it is 50%. There are also some seats reserved for the Jammu and Kashmir 'migrants' in every Government-aided educational institute.

## Other

Some reservations are also made for:

- Terrorist victims from Kashmir, e.g. in Punjab
- Single Girl-Child (in Punjab)
- Migrants from the state of Jammu and Kashmir
- Sons/daughters/grandsons/granddaughters of Freedom Fighters
- Physically handicapped
- Sports personalities
- Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) have a small percentage of reserved seats in educational institutions. (Note : NRI reservations were removed from IIT in 2003)
- Candidates sponsored by various organizations
- Those who have served in the armed forces ('ex-serviceman' quota—because the age of superannuation in the Military Service is much shorter than that in the Civil posts; moreover, certain intakes are tenure-based, e.g. the



- contract for Short-Service Commission is merely 8 years)
- Dependents of armed forces personnel *killed-in-action*
- Repatriates
- Reservation in special schools of Government Undertakings/ PSUs, for the children of their own employees (e.g. Army schools, PSU schools, etc.)
- Paid pathway reservations in places of worship (e.g., Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, Tiruthani Murugan (Balaji) temple)
- Seat reservation for Senior citizens and Physically handicapped in public (bus) transport.

## Government funding allowing reservations in colleges/universities

A University Grants Commission (UGC) provides financial assistance to universities for the establishment of Special Cells for SC/STs. The cells help universities implement the reservation policy in student admission and staff recruitment processes for teaching and non-teaching jobs. They also help the SC/ST categories integrate with the university community and help remove the difficulties SC/ST individuals may have experienced. SC/ST cells have been set up in 109 universities. The UGC provides financial assistance to universities and affiliated colleges for implementation of Special Cells. It provides the universities with assistance worth ₹ 1,00,000 per annum for:

1. Travelling Allowances & Dearness Allowances for field work
2. Data Collection
3. Analysis and evaluation of statistical data
4. New Computer and Printer (once in a plan period)

The UGC provided financial assistance only up to the end of the Xth Plan period ending 31 March 2007. The work undertaken by the SC/ST Cells was reviewed at the end of Xth plan. The Xth plan is proposed to ensure that there is an effective implementation of the reservation policy in admissions, recruitment, allotment of staff quarters, hostels, etc. Essentially, its goal was to ensure that the SC/ST Cells were established in the universities.

## Reservation in promotion

### Background

The Supreme Court, in its 16 November 1992 judgment in the Indra Sawhney case, ruled that reservations in promotions are *unconstitutional*, but allowed its continuation for 5 years as a special case. In 1995, 77th amendment to the Constitution was made to insert clause (4A) to Article 16 before the five-year period expired to continue with reservations for SC/STs in promotions. Clause (4A) was further modified through the 85th amendment in order to give the benefit of *consequential seniority* to SC/ST candidates promoted by reservation.

The 81st amendment was made to the Constitution that inserted clause (4B) in Article 16 to permit the government to treat the backlog of reserved vacancies as a separate and distinct group, to which the limit of 50 percent ceiling on reservation may not apply. The 82nd amendment inserted a provision in Article 335 to enable states to give concessions to SC/ST candidates in promotion.

The validity of all the above four amendments i.e. 77th, 81st, 82nd and 85th was challenged in the Supreme Court through various petitions clubbed together in *M Nagaraj & Others vs. Union of India & Others*, mainly on the ground that these altered the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

On 19 October 2006, the Supreme Court upheld these four amendments but stipulated that the concerned state will have to show, in each case, the existence of *compelling reasons* which include *backwardness*, *inadequacy of representation* and overall *administrative efficiency*, before making provisions for reservation. The court further held that these provisions are merely enabling provisions. If a state government wishes to make provisions for reservation to SC/STs in promotion, the state has to collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy

of representation of that class.

### 2007 Reservation in promotion in Uttar Pradesh

In 2007, Government of Uttar Pradesh introduced reservation in promotions. The policy specified reservation for SC/ST employees in the first stage of their promotion and that of the benefit of consequential seniority in successive promotions. However, this policy was challenged through a spate of petitions and subsequently Allahabad High Court on 4 January 2011 struck down the policy terming it as *unconstitutional*.

The Allahabad High Court verdict was challenged in the Supreme Court through various petitions namely Civil Appeal No.s 2608 of 2011, 2622 of 2011 and many others. The Supreme Court on 27 April 2012, upheld the high court judgement. The bench consisting of Justice Dalveer Bhandari and Justice Dipak Misra rejected the government's argument on the ground that the it failed to furnish sufficient valid data to justify the move to promote employees on caste basis.

The apex court reiterated the law laid down through various judgements by the Constitution benches in the *M Nagaraj*, *Indra Sawhney* and other cases wherein it was declared that reservation in promotions can be provided *only if* there is sufficient data and evidence to justify the need.

### Reservations in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is the state having the highest percentage of reservations in India in any form. Minimum 83.3% reservations are applicable in the state in education and Government jobs.

The reservation schedule in Andhra Pradesh is as follows-

- Schedule Classes (A, B, C, D) – 15%
- Schedule Tribes – 6%
- Backward Classes (A, B, C, D) – 25%
- Physically Handicapped (Blind, Deaf & Dumb and OPH) – 3%(1+1+1)
- Ex-Service Men (APMS only) – 1%
- Women – 33.33%

Total % of reservations – 83.33%

### Excluded from the reservation system

People in the following categories are not entitled to take advantage of the reservation system:

Categories for Rule of Exclusion	Rule of Exclusion Applies to the following:
Constitutional posts	The sons and daughters of the President of India, the Vice-President of India, Judges of the Supreme Court, the High Courts Chairman, the members of Union Public Service Commission, members of the State Public Service Commission, Chief Election Commissioner, Comptroller Auditor-General of India or any person holding positions of a constitutional nature.
Service Category: Those who are considered Group 'A'/Class I officers of the All India Central and State Services (Direct Recruits) or those who are considered Group 'B'/ Class II officers of The Central and State Services (Direct Recruitment) or those who are employees in the Public Sector.	Those who have parent(s) that are Class I or Class II officers, or both parents are Class I or Class II officers but one of them dies or suffers permanent incapacitation. For more visit Pgs 7-8 of [6]. The criteria used for sons and daughters of Group A and B are the same for the employees of the Public sector.

Armed forces including Paramilitary Forces (Persons holding civil posts are not included).	The sons and daughters of parents either or both of whom is or are in the rank of colonel and above in the army or in equivalent posts in the Navy, the Air Force, and the Paramilitary Force. But that will hold true provided that- 1. "the wife of an armed forces officer is herself in the armed forces (i.e., the category under consideration) the rule of exclusion will apply only when she herself has reached the rank of Colonel." 2. "the service ranks below Colonel of husband and wife shall not be clubbed together" 3. "if the wife of an officer in the armed forces is in civil employment, this will not be taken into account for applying the rule of exclusion unless she falls in the service category under item No.II in which case the criteria and conditions"
Professional class and those engaged in Trade and Industry	If a person has a high paying job such as physician, lawyer, chartered accountant, income tax consultant, financial or management consultant, dental surgeon, engineer, architect, computer specialist, film artist or other film professional, author, playwright, sports person, sports professional, media professional or any other vocations of like status. If the husband holds one of the above jobs and the wife doesn't then the husband's income will be taken into consideration and if the wife holds one of the above jobs then the wife's income will be taken into consideration. The income of the family as a whole will be taken into account because the whole point of the reservation system is to raise the social status of the people that belong to the SC's, ST's and OBC's and if a family's income is high already it is considered that it raises their social status as well.
Property owners- agricultural, plantations (coffee,tea,rubber,etc.), vacant land and/or buildings in urban areas	Sons and daughters of those who have irrigated land area which is equal to or more than 85% of the statutory ceiling area will be excluded from reservation. They would only be under reservation if the land is exclusively unirrigated. Those with vacant buildings can use them for residential, industrial or commercial purposes, hence they are not covered under reservations.
Creamy layer	Son(s)/daughter(s) of those who earn ₹ 6 lakh ( ₹ 600,000) or more annually for three consecutive years are excluded from reservation.

The creamy layer is only applicable in the case of Other Backward Castes and not applicable on other group like SC or ST. Though the efforts are also being made to do so. In some state the reservation within reservation has been made but creamy layer as such is applicable in OBCs only.

### **Institutions kept out of the purview of reservation**

The following institutions have been kept out of the purview of Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006:<sup>[7][8]</sup>

1. Homi Bhabha National Institute, Mumbai and its ten constituent units, namely:

1. Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay
2. Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam
3. Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology, Indore
4. Institute for Plasma Research, Gandhinagar
5. Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre, Kolkata
6. Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata;
7. Institute of Physics, Bhubaneshwar
8. Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai
9. Harish-Chandra Research Institute, Allahabad
10. Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai

2. Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai
3. North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences, Shillong
4. National Brain Research Centre, Manesar, Gurgaon
5. Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore
6. Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad
7. Space Physics Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram
8. Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun

## History of the reservations system

In August 1932, the then Prime Minister of Britain, Ramsay Macdonald gave his 'award' known as the Communal Award. According to it, separate representation was to be provided for the Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Dalit. The depressed classes were assigned a number of seats to be filled by election from special constituencies in which voters belonging to the depressed classes only could vote. This was planned to be an extension of divide and rule policy of the British.

The Award was highly controversial and opposed by Mahatma Gandhi, who fasted in protest against it. Communal Award was supported by many among the minority communities, most notably the Dalit leader, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. After lengthy negotiations, Gandhi reached an agreement with Dr. Ambedkar (Initially opposed it) to have a single Hindu electorate, with Dalits having seats reserved within it. This is called the Poona Pact. Electorates for other religions like Muslim and Sikh remained separate.

Present reservation system has a long history and has been debated before and after Indian independence from the British in 1947.

Reservations in favour of Backward Classes (BCs) were introduced long before independence in a large area, comprising the Presidency areas and the Princely states south of the Vindhya. In 1882, Hunter Commission was appointed. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule made a demand of free and compulsory education for everyone along with proportionate representation in government jobs. In 1891, there was a demand for reservation of government jobs with an agitation (in the princely State of Travancore) against the recruitment of *non-natives* into public service overlooking qualified *native* people. In 1901, reservations were introduced in Maharashtra (in the Princely State of Kolhapur) by Shahu Maharaj. Chhatrapati Sahuji Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolhapur in Maharashtra introduced reservation in favour of non-Brahmin and backward classes as early as 1902. He provided free education to everyone and opened several hostels in Kolhapur to make it easier for everyone to receive the education. He also made sure everyone got suitable employment no matter what social class they belonged. He also appealed for a class-free India and the abolition of untouchability. The notification of 1902 created 50% reservation in services for backward classes/communities in the State of Kolhapur. This is the first official instance (Government Order) providing for reservation for depressed classes in India.<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1908, reservations were introduced in favour of a number of castes and communities that had little share in the administration by the British. There were many other reforms in favor of and against reservations before the Indian Independence itself.

Even after the Indian Independence there were some major changes in favour of the STs, SCs and OBCs. One of the most important occurred in 1979 when the Mandal Commission was established to assess the situation of the socially and educationally backward classes.<sup>[10]</sup> The commission did not have exact figures for a sub-caste, known as the Other Backward Class(OBC), and used the 1930 census data, further classifying 1,257 communities as backward, to estimate the OBC population at 52%. In 1980 the commission submitted a report, and recommended changes to the existing quotas, increasing them from 22% to 49.5%. As of 2006<sup>[11]</sup> number of castes in Backward class list went up to 2297 which is the increase of 60% from community list prepared by Mandal commission. But it wasn't until the 1990s that the recommendations of the Mandala Commission were implemented in Government Jobs by Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

The concept of untouchability was not practiced uniformly throughout the country; therefore the identification of oppressed classes was difficult to carry out. Allegedly, the practice of segregation and untouchability prevailed more in the southern parts of India as opposed to in Northern India. Furthermore, certain castes or communities, considered "untouchable" in one province were not in other provinces.

## Advances under the reservations system

The public sector jobs are divided into 4 categories: Class I (or Group A), Class II (or Group B), Class III (or Group C) and Class IV (or Group D). The Class I employees take up 2.2% of the public sector workforce, the Class II employees take up 3.3% of the public sector workforce, the Class III employees take up 66.8% of the public sector workforce, and the Class IV employees take up 27.2% of the public sector workforce. Below are the percentages of the SC employees in the Central government:

Class	1959	1965	1974	1984	1995
I	1.18	1.64	3.2	6.92	10.12
II	2.38	2.82	4.6	10.36	12.67
III	6.95	8.88	10.3	13.98	16.15
IV	17.24 (excludes sweepers)	17.75	18.6	20.2	21.26 (excludes sweepers)

The above table shows that over time as the new laws for the reservation systems were passed employment of SC's in Class I,II,III, and IV public sectors increased substantially.

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- [6] <http://ncbc.nic.in/Pdf/OfficeMemorandum.pdf>
- [7] <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=23895>
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- [11] [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reservation\\_in\\_India&action=edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reservation_in_India&action=edit)

## External links

- "Raising Female Leaders" J-PAL Policy Briefcase, April 2012 (<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/publication/raising-female-leaders>)
- PhD Admissions - Artificial and Arbitrary Shortages of Vacancies Created by, inter alia, Irrational Implementation of Reservation Principle (<http://consultant-law-education-india-nepal.in/wordpress/>)
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