

305.5688054552  
R 669 M

**Mango Ram, Ad Dharm  
&  
The Dalit Movement in Punjab**  
Ronki Ram



SP 103

**Mangoo Ram, Ad Dharm  
&  
The Dalit Movement in Punjab**

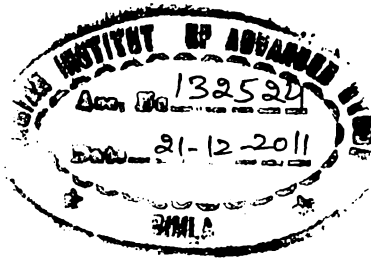
**Ronki Ram**


इन्दराज  
Entered



***Critical quest***

**New Delhi**



 Library IAS, Shimla  
305.5688054552 R 669 M



00132524

305.5688054552  
R 669 M



**Mangoo Ram, Ad Dharm  
&  
the Dalit Movement in Punjab**

**Ronki Ram**

© Contributions to Indian Sociology

First published in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* Vol.38, No.3.

Reproduced here with kind permission from CIS

Cover Picture: Shanti Swaroop Bauddh

This edition: 2008

Printing: Gautam Printers, New Delhi

*Publisher*

**Critical Quest**

420, G-Block, Phase VI, Aya Nagar, New Delhi - 110 047

Phone: 011-2650 2012; Mobile: 9910036543

E-Mail: [criticalquest@gmail.com](mailto:criticalquest@gmail.com); [criticalquest@hotmail.com](mailto:criticalquest@hotmail.com);

[criticalquest@rediffmail.com](mailto:criticalquest@rediffmail.com)

<http://www.criticalquest.info>

ISBN: 978-81-89524-36-4

## **Mangoo Ram, Ad Dharm & the Dalit Movement in Punjab**

Punjab has been a site of invasions, conflicts, agitations and martyrdoms. It has also been a boiling cauldron for various social and political movements. Its history is rich with innumerable instances of people's upsurge against tyranny. However, what makes the case of Punjab unique is that challenges against oppression and violence have always been progressive and secular, and not against a particular caste or community. In all the struggles and movements, moreover, the contribution of the lower castes and the untouchables was considerable, as was the case in the Bhakti movement too, led by Dhanna, Sadna, Sain and Ravidas, among others.

However, another movement which arose in the 1920s in the Doaba region of Punjab has not succeeded in attracting serious scholarly attention. Mark Juergensmeyer's pioneering work *Religious Rebels in the Punjab* (1988) remained the only reference to the role of Punjab in the 'Adi Movement' in India. The so-called Ad Dharm movement in Punjab draws its inspiration from saint Valmiki and the Bhakti movement, especially from Ravidas, Kabir and Namdev. It was the only movement of its kind in the north-western region of the country that aimed at securing a respectable place for the Scheduled Castes through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration and political assertion, rather than seeking patronage from above. Although this movement petered out after the first general elections in independent India, its emphasis on social transformation and political assertion against structures of social inequality and oppression continues to attract Ad-Dharmis and other Scheduled Castes of Punjab. At present, the movement finds sustenance through the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Punjab.

### **The Genesis of the Ad Dharm Movement**

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a series of political developments which *inter alia* led to the formation of Adi movements in different parts of colonial India. The main objective of these movements, of which the Ad Dharm movement was one, was to liberate the so-called untouchables so they could lead a life of dignity and equability with the twice-born.

Although the abolition of untouchability was also on the agenda of the protagonists of the social reform movements, they wanted to achieve it without changing the basic structure of the caste system (Manuqu, 2003:5). Operating within the ambit of the nationalist struggle, they could not devote themselves totally to the removal of untouchability. Since the immediate goal of the nationalist movement was to liberate the country from British imperialism, '[t]he ultimate result was that neither the Nehruvian secularism nor Gandhian "Ramraj" could provide an Indian identity that was liberatory for the dalit and low castes..' (Omvedt, 1994: 92; see also Suresh, 1996: 364).

The most virulent opposition to the caste system emanated from the lower-caste movements for whom the immediate important issue was caste domination, not Western hegemony, social emancipation or political autonomy. The struggle against imperialism and other such issues were of secondary importance (Kothari, 1998: 50-51). The main exponents of these movements were, among others, Jyotiba Phule, Baba Saheb Ambedkar, E.V. Ramasay Naicker, Narayanaswami Guru in Kerala, Achutananda in U P and Mnagoo Ram in Punjab.

The present article is confined to the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab. It aims to explore, first, the social and political configurations in colonial Punjab during the 1920s which led to the rise of this movement; and second, to document the present status of the movement in Punjab. What were the circumstances in which the Ad Dharm movement originated in 1926, and what accounted for its so-called demise in 1946?<sup>1</sup>

Who were its protagonists? What objectives did they seek to achieve, and were the tactics and strategies they adopted suitable for the realisation of these objectives? Did these objectives sharpen the struggle against social oppression or lead to the blunting of the struggle? Whom did the Ad Dharm consider its sympathisers, and whom its adversaries? What status did these sympathisers and adversaries hold in the socio-economic and politico-administrative setting of Indian society? What is the present status of the Ad Dharm movements? What are its goals and objectives, and how is it intended to realise them?

### **Ad Dharm: Socio-political Settings**

The Ad Dharm movement was born in volatile social and political circumstances in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and, while similar socio-political situations pertained throughout the country, the presence of various communal organisations in Punjab (Arya Samaj, Christian Church, Sikh Khalsa Diwan, the Ahmaddiya movement) makes the case of the latter a peculiar one. It was precisely during this period of socio-political uncertainties that the British government passed the Land Alienation Act of 1900 and The Government of India Act of 1919. These Acts provided further impetus to the ongoing competition between the various communal organisations (Mohan 1992: 164-68). Although the Land Alienation Act of 1900 was aimed at preventing the transfer of land from the hands of agriculturist castes into the non-agricultural money-lending castes, it also debarred many castes from owning land.

Untouchables who were already deprived of land according to the Hindu *varna-vyavastha* system were now legally debarred from land ownership. The system of separate electorates introduced in 1909 and 1919 further exacerbated communal and separatist politics (Tanwar, 1999: 29), with serious implications in the province of Punjab where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had their respective political organisations pursuing their vested interests (Malhotra, 1976: 74-88). Since Scheduled castes did not have their own

organisation to articulate and defend their interests, they became the centre of attention of all the communal organisations, each of whom was trying to woo them to secure an edge over the others in terms of numbers. This was, perhaps, the first time in the history of Punjab that the Scheduled Caste presence was recognised in the calculation and formulation of social and political forces. The provision for separate electorates also raised the expectations that they might become an independent force rather than be used by the Arya Samaj, Congress or Akalis, as pawns on the chessboard of electoral politics.

Moreover, the adoption of a resolution for the removal of untouchability by the Indian National Congress in 1917 provided further impetus to the Scheduled Castes in their efforts to seek a respected place in society, as did California-based Ghadar Movement and the Babbar Akali Movement, both revolutionary and militant in comparison to the non-violent and passive postures of the Indian National Congress and Arya Samaj.

Interestingly, the Ad Dharm movement, particularly some of its key protagonists, had had close affiliations with the Arya Samaj before they became active in the movement. As Juergensmeyer remarks:

The Arya Samaj had provided young untouchables with ideas of social equality not only by allowing them to attend its schools but also by creating service organisations such as the Dayanand Dalit Udhar at Hoshiarpur and Achhut Udhar at Lahore (2000:222).

The trio that initially conceived the idea of the Ad Dharm movement consisted of Vasant Rai, Thakur Chand and Swami Shudranand, all of them also active as either *pracharaks* (preachers) or *upadeshaks* (missionaries) in the Arya Samaj movement. Vasant Rai had been a teacher with the Arya Samaj, and subsequently with the Samaj's orthodox Hindu opposition, the Sanatan Dharm (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 38). Swami Shudranand was a missionary of the Samaj, and Takur Chand, though a Dalit like Vasant Rai and Shudranand, was



called pandit because of his association with the Arya Samaj. Even after their absorption into the newly-formed Ad Dharm movement, the Arya Samaj offered them important roles in the movement to lure them back.<sup>2</sup>

### Mangoo Ram and Ad Dharm

Mangoo Ram literally took the movement to the doorsteps of the untouchables in the Doaba region and soon emerged as a cult figure of the Dalits in Punjab. He was born at Mugowal, a village in the district of Hoshiarpur, on 14 January 1886. Though his forefathers were *chamars*, his father, Harnam Dass, had abandoned the traditional caste-based occupation of tanning and preparing hides, and taken to trading in tanned leather. Since the leather trade required knowledge of English to read the sale orders, he was eager that Mangoo Ram receive an education which would free him from the *beggar* (forced labour) which he had to do in lieu of English orders read for him by the upper-caste literates. Initially, Mangoo Ram was taught by village *sadhu* (Saint). Then, after studying at different schools, he joined a high school at Bhajwara, a town a few miles away from his home.<sup>3</sup> Being a *chamar*, he had to sit separately from the other upper-caste students, outside the classroom on a gunny bag brought from his home. In 1905 Mangoo Ram left the high school to help his father in the leather trade, which developed into a thriving business. However, in 1909 he followed in the footsteps of his peer group in the Doaba region and left for America. Interestingly, even in America, Mangoo Ram had to work on the farms of a Punjabi zamindar who had settled in California.<sup>4</sup>

However, while in California, Mangoo Ram came in close contact with the Ghadar movement – a radical organisation which aimed at liberating India from British rule through armed insurrection. In fact, he participated in the weapon smuggling mission of the organisation. He was arrested and awarded capital punishment, but was saved from the death sentence by chance (Ahir, 1992: 2). The news of his supposed death reached his village. According to the tradition of his community, his widow, named Piari, married his elder

brother. Mangoo Ram remarried on his return to India 16 years later and had four sons from his second wife, named Bishno.<sup>5</sup> Mangoo Ram did not find any change in Indian society after his 16 years abroad:

While living abroad I had forgotten about the hierarchy of high and low, and untouchability; and under this delusion returned home in December 1925. The same disease from which I had escaped started tormenting me again. I wrote about all this to my leader Lala Hardayal Ji, saying that until and unless this disease is cured, Hindustan could not be liberated. In accordance with his orders, a programme was formulated in 1926 for the awakening and upliftment of the *Achhut qaum* (untouchable community) of India.<sup>6</sup>

Settling in his native village, he opened a school for the lower-caste children in the village. The school was temporarily housed in the garden of Risaldar Dhanpat Rai, a landlord of his village, and a half-acre of land was later donated for the purpose by Lamberdar Beeru Ram Sangha, another landlord of the same village. The school had five teachers including Mangoo Ram,<sup>7</sup> and it was in that school that the first official meeting of the Ad Dharm movement was held on 11-12 June 1926. In another version, the school traced its origin to the support provided by the Arya Samaj (Juergensmeyer, 2000:224). However, given his close association with the Gadar movement in California, Mangoo Ram's relationship with the Arya Samaj was not as close as were those of Vasant Rai, Thakur Chand and Swami Shudranand. Moreover, his personal experience of being treated as an equal in America, particularly by his fellow Ghadarites, inculcated in him an intense desire and inspiration for equality and social justice. Soon Mangoo Ram emerged as a folk-hero of the Dalits who started rallying around him, particularly in the heavily Dalit areas of the Doab region. However, in 1929 the Ad Dharm organisation split into two factions, the Ad Dharm Mandal with its headquarters in Jalandhar, headed by Mangoo Ram; and the All India Ad Dharm Mandal with its headquarters in Loyalpur, headed by Vasant Rai.<sup>8</sup> In fact Vasant Rai group

was lured back by the Arya Samaj in 1929, while Mangoo Ram group played an active part in the politics of Punjab for a period of more than two decades from 1926 to 1952.<sup>9</sup>

Mangoo Ram set a clear agenda for Ad Dharm movement, namely to create a new religion for the lower castes. Lower castes were treated shabbily by the Hindus who, for political motives, considered them co-religionists. While the Arya Samaj was making frantic efforts to bring *Shudras* who had converted to Islam, Christianity and Sikhism back into the Hindu fold (Malhotra, 1976: 74-88; Sharma, 1985), Mangoo Ram thought it appropriate to intervene at this juncture to espouse the Dalit cause and carve out a separate Dalit identity.

In the poster<sup>10</sup> announcing the first annual meeting of the Ad Dharm movement, Mangoo Ram, along with Swami Shudranand and Babu Thakur Chand, devoted the entire space to the hardships faced by the untouchables at the hands of the caste Hindus. He also made an appeal to the *Achhuts* to come together to chalk out a programme for their liberation and upliftment. Addressing the *chamars, chuhras, sansis, bhanjhras, bhils, etc.*, as brothers he said:

We are the real inhabitants of this country and our religion is Ad Dharm. Hindu Qaum came from outside to deprive us of our country and enslave us. At one time we reigned over 'Hind'. We are the progeny of kings. Hindus came down from Iran to Hind and destroyed our qaum. They deprived us of our property and rendered us nomadic. They razed our forts and houses, and destroyed our history. We are seven crores in numbers and are registered as Hindus in this country. Liberate the Adi race by separating these seven crores. They (Hindus) became lord and call us 'others'. Our seven crore number enjoy no share at all. We reposed faith in Hindus and thus suffered a lot. Hindus turned out to be callous. Centuries ago, Hindus suppressed us; sever all ties with them. What justice can we expect from those who are the butchers of the Adi race. The time has come; be cautious, now the Government listens to appeals. With the support of a sympathetic

Government, come together to save the race. Send members to the councils so that our qaum is strengthened again. British rule should remain forever. Make prayer before God. Except for this Government, no one is sympathetic towards us. Never consider ourselves as Hindus at all; remember that our religion is Ad Dharm.<sup>11</sup>

The leaders of Ad Dharm thus chose to restore dignity and freedom to the untouchables by detaching them completely from Hinduism and consolidating them into their own ancient religion – Ad Dharm – of which they had become oblivious during the long domination by the ‘alien Hindus’. In fact, the task of reviving their ancient religion was not an easy one, for the untouchables had forgotten their Gurus and other religious symbols during long period of persecution at the hands of the *Savarnas*. They had been condemned as impure and declared unfit to have their own theology. Thus, to revive Ad Dharm was tantamount to developing a new religion for the *Achhuts*. Mangoo Ram’s claim that the Dalits were the real inhabitants of this land made an enormous psychological impact on the untouchables, providing a theological podium to sustain and reinforce the new Dalit identity.

Before the 1920s, and especially before the rise of the Ad Dharm movement, the untouchables in Punjab had not envisaged the idea of a separate identity. The growing communal politics and resultant unrest within Punjab in the 1920s, coupled with the emergence of Dalit organisations in different parts of the country, offered them a good opportunity to carve out such an identity. Untouchables, counted as Hindus, constituted one-fourth of the total population in pre-partition Punjab. In a system of communal representation, some Muslim leaders proposed that the *Achhuts* should be separated from the caste Hindus, and divided equally between the Hindus and Muslims. A large number of the *Achhuts* of Punjab converted to Christianity (especially the *chuhras* of Sialkot and Gurdaspur), Sikhism (in Sialkot and Gurdaspur) and Islam (Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore divisions) (Bakshi Ram, n.d.: 23):

Consequently, the Hindus in the province had been reduced from 43.8% in 1881 to 30.2% in 1931 while the Sikh increased from 8.2% to 14.3% and the Muslims from 40.6% to about 52% and in the British territory [ie. excluding the Punjab Princely States] the population of the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims in 1931 was 26.80%, 12.99% and 56.4% respectively (*Census of India, 1931, Vol. xvii, Punjab Part 1, p.291, quoted in Malhotra, 1976:75*).

Alarmed by this trend, the Arya Samaj decided to put an end to the conversion of *Achhuts* lest it result in political suicide for the Hindus. Lala Lajpat Rai's *Achhut Udhar Mandal*' at Lahore, Swami Ganesg Dutt's '*Antyaj Udhar Mandal*' at Lahore and Lala Devi Chand's '*Dayanand Dalit Udhar Mandal*' at Hoshiarpur were established in response to these conversions. The Arya Samaj started its *Shuddhi* campaign to bring the converted *Achhuts* back into Hindu fold (Bakshi Ram n.d: 23). This also brought the Arya Samaj into confrontation with the Sikhs and the Muslims, as in a famous incident in 1900 when the Sikhs protested against the Arya Samaj's practice of publicly shaving lower-caste Sikhs and offering them *Shuddhi* (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 27).

It was at this stage that Ad Dharm entered into the volatile territory of communal politics in Punjab. There was no one to welcome it (Viridi, 2001: 10). However, they received some support from the British government which 'would no doubt have brought at least to high-caste minds thoughts of imperialist "divide and rule"' (Saberwal, 1976: 71; see also Chandra et al, 1989:290-91).

### **Dominant Castes, Violence and Ad Dharm**

The Ad Dharm faced stiff opposition and its followers fell victim to physical violence at the hands of both Hindus and Sikhs. In fact, the Ad Dharmis were beaten up when they organised meetings. They were '[c]hased everywhere and hounded out of bounds of towns and villages by the Hindus and quite often they had to hold their meetings and conferences in open fields. One such incident also took place at Una' (Pawar, 1993:77). They were also denied entry into

meadows and common lands to fetch fodder for their cattle and access to the open fields to answer the call of nature, and were interned in their houses by the Sikhs and Hindus for no other fault than that of being registered as Ad-Dharmis in the Census of 1931. In Ferozepur district, two *chamars* were burnt alive because they registered themselves as Ad-Dharmis (Chumber, 1986: 51). In Layalpur district, an Ad-Dharmi girl was murdered. In Nankana Sahib, the Akalis threw ash into the *langar* (food prepared in bulk for free distribution) meant for those who had come to attend the Ad Dharm meeting (Manak, 1971). In village Dakhiyan-da-Prah of Ludhiana district, Sikh youths abducted Shudranand from the dais of the *Achhuts*'s public meeting. In Baghapurana, many *Achhuts* were boycotted for two months. These *Achhuts* were living in villages where the Jat-Sikhs or Muslims were in a dominant position. The jat-Sikhs had compelled the *Achhuts* to record themselves as Sikhs. However, despite repression and intimidation, the *Achhuts* did not give in and recorded Ad Dharm as their religion (Bakshi Ram, n.d. 54-56). In village Ghundrawan of Kangra district, the Rajputs even smashed the pitchers of the Ad-Dharmi women who were on their way to fetch water. When denied water from the village pond, the Ad-Dharmis had to travel three miles to fetch water from the river. The ongoing torture at the hands of the Rajputs ultimately compelled them to leave the village to settle in Pathankot. It was only after the intervention of Sir Fazal-i-Hussain, Chief Commissioner, on the request of Mangoo Ram, that their grievance was looked into and they were rehabilitated in their native village (Mantak, 1971: n. 8). In the face of opposition by the upper-caste Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, the leaders of Ad Dharm had a tough time proving to the Lothian Committee<sup>13</sup> that they were neither Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims nor Christians (Ahir, 1992: 9-11; Piplanwala, 1986: 10-15). The Sikh representatives claimed that since many of the *Achhuts* believed in the Guru Granth Sahib and solemnised their marriage ceremonies in accordance with Sikh customs, half of their population should be added to the Sikh

religion and the other half be merged with the Hindus. Likewise, the Muslim representatives told the Lothian Committee that since some of the *Achhuts* perform Namaz (offer prayers), keep *rozās* (long fasts) and bury their corpses in cemeteries instead of burning them, they should be divided equally between Hindus and Muslims. Similarly, the Hindu representatives stressed that since the *Achhuts* believed in the Vedas and performed their marriage ceremonies in accordance with Hindu customs, no one except the Hindus had the right to seek their allegiance. Moreover, Lala Ram Das of the Dayanand Dalit Udhar Mandal (Lahore) informed the Franchise Committee that there were no untouchables in Punjab. According to them the untouchables were the backward classes of Hindus who could be placed at par with the rest through the performance of *Shuddhi*. Hence, no separate treatment was warranted for the untouchables in Punjab. In sum, as Saberwal states (1976, 52), 'Untouchables generally were being subjected to strong pressures by Muslims, Hindus, and others, each community seeking to pull them into its own fold, at least for the day of the census: it was common then to seek to influence census results as a prelude to political claims'.

In addition, insinuations and condemnations were also hurled at the Ad Dharm Mandal by the various religious groups in a bid to create dissension within the movement. The leaders of Ad Dharm were alleged to have hobnobbed with the Muslims during the crucial time of communal representation when the Hindus and Muslims were ranged against each other. The Ad Dharm's political alliance with the Unionist Party during the Punjab Assembly elections, first in 1937 and then again in 1945-46, was an irritant both for the Congress and for the Hindu Sabha.<sup>14</sup> The Hindu leaders did not care for the Ad-Dharmis' growing links or association with the British government who, in the 1937 election, provided cars for their campaign. 'In public meetings, they would attack the various aspects of Hindu society, and if this led to violence, the government used to protect them' (Saberwal, 1976: 70-71).

As regards the Ad Dharm's proximity to Muslims, it was more of political expediency than blind alliance. It was, in fact, Mangoo Ram who categorically said no to the proponents of Partition (Chumber, 1986: 52; Sain, 1985: 37), but he showed keen interest in implementing communal representation for the *Achhuts*. When Gandhi sat on his fast-unto-death at Poona against the separate electorate for untouchables, Mangoo Ram followed suit declaring: 'Gandhi if you are prepared to die for your Hindus, then I am prepared to die for these untouchables'. On this ground Mangoo Ram was accused of being casteist:

The rift between the liberal Gandhian and radical untouchables was not healed, however, since each continued to perceive the other as an obstacle to achieving intercaste harmony. Gandhi thought the untouchables' militant separatism was reinforcing the concept of caste and the untouchables thought Gandhi was trying to whitewash existing differences and to deny untouchables their legitimate base of power. Both the perceptions were to some extent correct (Juergensmeyer, 2000: 230).

Gandhi pleaded on behalf of the Shudras and tried to live like a *bhangi* among them to share their hardships, but Mangoo Ram was a *chamar* who had personally experienced the pangs of untouchability. Thus, his response to the epic fast against a separate electorate was not merely a pragmatic but also an existential one. When Dr Ambedkar compromised with Gandhi and the Poona Pact was signed, Mangoo Ram rang up Dr Ambedkar in an angry mood to tell him that he had committed a blunder. While Ambedkar claimed to have signed the Poona Pact under moral pressure, the Ad-Dharmis perceived that the Scheduled Castes had lost much more than they had gained thereby: 'Babuji (Mangoo Ram) wanted to liberate untouchables from the Hindus but Dr Ambedkar committed the blunder of his life by agreeing to the idea that untouchables were Hindus' (Chumber, 1986: 51). That is why Mangoo Ram continued his fast even after the Pact was signed and broke it only after the declaration by the government



that eight seats would be reserved for the untouchables in Punjab. The fast undertaken by him continued for 28 days from 20 September to 17 October 1932, until the Pact was received at Jalandhar. Mangoo Ram used to say, 'Those people (Hindus) who had humiliated us for thousands of years, how could we trust their promise?' (Mugowalia, 1986: 35). Thus the Ad Dharm movement suffered severe hardships in attempting to carve out a separate identity for its *qaum* but, despite this, the Ad-Dharmis succeeded in registering 'Ad Dharm' as a separate religion for the lower castes in Punjab in the 1931 Census.

### Ad Dharm and Dalit Identity

A close study of the objectives set forth by the Ad Dharm founders and the methods adopted by them shows that they endeavoured to establish a *religious identity* for the lower castes rather than building a *subaltern consciousness*. The Ad-Dharmis wanted to remove the stigma of untouchability from their community and secure equal rights and respect for lower-caste people, but the approach adopted by the Ad Dharm leaders resulted in their creating another religion. The Ad-Dharmis were asked to salute each other in the name of *jai Guru Dev* (Victory to the divine guru) and to respond with *Dhan Guru Dev* (blessed be the divine guru). These greetings were meant to differentiate them (the untouchables) from the other religious communities: for example, the Hindus address each other with *Namaste*, Sikhs with *Sat Sri Akal* and Muslims with *Salaam* (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 53). Sant Ravidas was projected as a spiritual preceptor and Guru Bhagwan Satguru Namdev, Maharaj Jabir and Rishi Valmiki were also included in the theology of Ad Dharm. The Sanskrit phrase *Sohang*<sup>15</sup> (I am that) was adopted as a *mantra* of the new Ad Dharm religion and is still used in wall calendars of Guru Ravidas. As far as the salutations are concerned, they have become memorabilia of the Ad Dharm movement.

The protagonists of the Ad Dharm movement also strove to provide their new religion with a sacred book, called *Ad Prakash*, the original light. The purpose of such a move was to

institutionalise the newly-created religion. Mangoo Ram expressed his will among his closest circle that only the sacred couplets from *Ad Prakash* should be chanted at his death ceremony. At that time there was only a handwritten copy of the *Ad Prakash* available. Subsequently, Saint Isher Dass of village Nandgarh of district Hoshiarpur compiled the holy book.<sup>16</sup> Thus the Ad Dharm movement provided a new sense of identity to the untouchables which they had lacked earlier, giving them the status of *qaum*, a community, similar to that of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.

The Ad Dharm made a substantial contribution to the social and political life of Dalits in Punjab. Although a large number of social organisations had sprung up since the early 1920s for the benefit of the untouchables, all of them were patronised by the upper castes and failed to bring any significant change in the *varna* system and caste configuration of Indian society. That the Ad Dharm had to project Dalits as a separate *qaum* with an independent religion was not only a sociological issue, but also had deep political implications in an inegalitarian social system where some people were excluded by birth from the mainstream. Interestingly enough, their being untouchable was more pronounced in terms of denying them benefits of facilities available in the civil society, and less in terms of seeking their menial services.

However, with the introduction of adult franchise, the untouchables have no longer been 'untouchable' so far as their votes are concerned. Though they are hardly encouraged to aspire to seats of power, the game of numbers had made it imperative for the Hindus to have claims on the untouchables. Even in the instruction guide for the 1931 Census mention was made that,

[a]ll chuhras who are not Muslims or Christians, and who do not return any other religion, should be returned as Hindus. The same rule applies to members of other depressed classes who have no tribal religion (1931 Census, Punjab, Vol. 20, Chap. 11, p.289, as quoted in Juergensmeyer, 1988: 73).

The emancipatory project launched by Mangoo Ram, as vividly enunciated in the resolution passed in the first meeting of the Ad Dharm, emphasised the social equality of the Dalits and stressed their social and cultural awakening rather than merely seeking jobs and other benefits from the government. The Ad Dharm Report<sup>17</sup> listed ten basic principles and twelve duties of the Ad Dharm organisation, and fifty-six commandments to be followed by the Ad-Dharmis. The main emphasis of these commandments, principles and duties was on the cultural, social and religious aspects. The Report also includes twenty-five resolutions passed in the first Ad Dharm Conference in 1926. The government was requested to provide special schools and scholarships for untouchable children (resolutions 7, 10, 11); proper representation in elected bodies and government departments (resolution 17); to eliminate *rayit-namma*, and not to apply the Land Alienation Act to the untouchables (resolution 13). The Ad Dharm Mandal led by Mangoo Ram was able to raise the religious and organisational status of the untouchables beyond imagination.<sup>18</sup> The new constitution of independent India, adopted on 26 January 1950, incorporated special provisions for Dalits to raise their social status and help them achieve social equality. In fact, voices for such special provisions were first raised by the Ad Dharm in 1926 and subsequently documented in its report in 1931. In 1950, Mangoo Ram requested his *qaum* to relieve him of active social service life and called upon young Ad-Dharmis to take forward the cause of Dalit liberation.<sup>19</sup>

For two decades, from 1950 to 1970, the Ad Dharm movement remained dormant for reasons best known to its leaders. In fact, most of the Adi movements in different parts of the country ceased to play an active role in post-colonial India until 1970. Some of their leaders either joined the Congress or, for some time, carried out their political struggle under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. Some scholars believe that the Ad Dharm movement was eventually absorbed into Dr

Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation and confined itself to the social and religious matters affecting the Scheduled Castes (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 153).

However, facts do not support such an interpretation. After the 1937 Punjab Assembly elections in which the Ad Dharm won all but one of the reserved seats, the underlying factionalism within its organisation came to the surface. The main factional confrontation was between Seth Kishan Das and Master Gurbanta Singh. Seth Kishan Das was a rich man of the famous Boota Mandi,<sup>20</sup> whose financial support to the Ad Dharm Mandal was no secret. He was also in the good books of Mangoo Ram, President of the Mandal. Master Gurbanta Singh was an Arya-Samaji turned Congress sympathiser who had also served as the Ad Dharm General Secretary at one time. He projected himself as a real representative of the untouchables, being one of them as a poor man, whereas Seth Kishan Das, a wealthy leather merchant, could not in his view empathise with the poor untouchables. Master Gurbanta Singh contested the 1937 Punjab Assembly election as a Congress nominee from the Jalandhar reserved seat against Seth Kishan Das, who was supported by the Ad Dharm Mandal. Master Gurbanta Singh was defeated by Seth Kishan Das by a big margin, further widening the gulf between them. In the meantime, Seth Kishan Das, without taking Mangoo Ram into confidence, formed the Achhut Federation, a Punjabi version of Dr Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation. Mr Gopal Singh Khalsa, an MLA from the Ludhiana reserved seat, joined him as a Vice-President. Master Gurbanta Singh exploited Mangoo Ram's annoyance and stepped into the Ad Dharm Mandal, thereby coming closer to him. Master Gurbanta Singh, who reportedly wanted to emulate Mangoo Ram by forming an organisation and a publication to match *Adi Danka*, the weekly newspaper of Ad Dharm,<sup>21</sup> established the Ravidas Naujawan Sabha which for some time published the *Ravidas Jaikara*. Bhagat Singh Mal, Pritam Singh Bala and Karam Chand Shenmar were some of the

prominent members of the Ravidas Naujawn Sabha. In the 1946-47 Punjab Assembly elections, Mangoo Ram put his weight behind Master Gurbanta Singh who was a Congress nominee against Kishan Das of the 'Achhut Federation'. This time, Master Gurbanta Singh defeated Seth Kishan Das. However, by this time, thanks to the allure of political office, the leadership of the Ad Dharm Mandal was dispersed among different political segments. Mangoo Ram himself got elected to the Assembly with the support of the Unionist Party from Hoshiarpur constituency. The Ad Dharm Mandal building, which had been constructed with the financial support of Seth Kishan Das, came under the control of Master Gurbanta Singh who eventually became the custodian of its property and Chairman of Ravidas High School.

A cursory glance at these developments in the Ad Dharm movement would suggest that the movement had effectively ceased to exist by the late 1940s. But a movement is too broad a phenomenon to be confined within the boundaries of a compact organisation or a political party. It may go into a gestation period for some time, only to resurface again. As P N Mukherji writes:

Hardly, if ever, does a social movement sustain a uniformly high level of mobilised action. It alternates between periods of activity and relative calm, during which period it may devote itself to organisational problems. Therefore, a period of relative calm need not imply its dissipation. (1977: 47).

The Achhut Federation and the emergence of an articulate Dalit leadership which eventually joined the Congress was, in fact, the product of the Ad Dharm movement. The founding of the Achhut Federation and the joining of the Congress Party by some of the Ad-Dharmis should not be interpreted as marking the demise of the Ad Dharm movement. Even when the movement was in low ebb, Mangoo Ram and his associates like Sant Ram Azad and Chanan Lal Manak remained steadfast to the principles of the Ad Dharm Movement.

### Rejuvenation

In 1970, when efforts were made by Mangoo Ram Jaspal, another Ad Dharmi of the Doaba region who had returned from England to settle in Jalandhar and revive the movement, the veteran Mangoo Ram promptly came forward to help resuscitate the movement. Some other distinguished Ad-Dharmis, who had remained loyal to the movement even during its quiescent period, wrote a series of articles in the *Ravidas Patrika* regarding the new Ad Dharm movement, which was revamped on 13 December 1970 under the banner of Ad Dharm Scheduled Castes Federation.

There were striking similarities between the Ad Dharm Mandal and the Ad Dharm Scheduled Castes Federation. As a matter of fact, Mangoo Ram commented that, 'We're back to where we were in 1925' (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 263). Unless the objective conditions or contradictions which initially propel the movement are altered or resolved, the goals and ideology may remain intact, to re-emerge at the slightest opportunity (cf. Mukherji, 1977: 42). The main objectives of Ad Dharm movement were to carve out an independent identity for the Untouchables and to blot out the stigma of Untouchability. All though AdDharm movement played an effective role in mobilising Dalits on these vital issues, the shift in the political arena induced by the electoral system forced the movement to adjust to the changed political scenario. Since the majority of the Ad Dharm leadership became involved in the electoral process to gain political power,<sup>22</sup> this eventually diluted the movement's emphasis on the goals of the removal of untouchability and the construction of a separate Dalit identity. As a result the 'objective conditions' remained unchanged. In spite of legal provisions enshrined in the Indian constitution, the traditional authority structures of hierarchy resisted and stalled the process of social transformation. According to Mangoo Ram, 'our people in the government are still treated like slaves. They fear their superiors and high caste people' (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 258). In other words, the evil of

untouchability has not been eradicated from the complex social structure of the society and 'physical untouchability has given way to the mental untouchability'.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the goal of constructing a communal identity for the untouchables by developing a separate religion, though partly achieved in the 1931 Census, was rolled back in 1932 by the Poona Pact. Henceforth, from the status of a religion, Ad Dharm was reduced to the category of caste. So, instead of elevating the status of the untouchables it had a negative impact on Dalit mobilisation. A new caste was simply added to the already long list of Scheduled Castes, with *chamars* being further categorised into *chamars* and Ad-Dharmis.

The new Ad Dharm movement of the 1970s arose against this background, pledged to revive the spirit of social and cultural transformation ignited by Mangoo Ram in the 1920s. Efforts were also made to keep away from the power politics which had marred the social and cultural programme of the original Ad Dharm movement. The Ad Dharm Scheduled Castes Federation reiterated the importance of the communal identity of Ad-Dharmis as a separate *qaum*. In fact, the revived movement was more theological, with religion employed as a rallying point for harnessing the allegiance of the untouchables. The construction of a Ravidas Temple in Benares and the expansion of the Ravidas *dera* (temple) in village Ballan near Bhogpur town of Jalandhar were focal points of the new Ad Dharm movement, designed to highlight the significance of saint Ravidas for the cause of Dalit consciousness. The first conference of the revived movement which was held at a religious site – Ravidas *dera* – at village Ballan, focused on the renewal of the *qaumi* identity. However, in due course some material demands were also included; land reforms and raising the income limit for defining poverty from Rs 3,600 to Rs 6,000 were among the most important demands in this regard (Juergensmeyer, 1988: 261).

The revised Ad Dharm movement attempted to widen the scope of the Ad Dharm religion by including in its fold the *chuhras* (sweeper caste), Mazhbi Sikhs, Ramdasias, and Ambedkar

Buddhists. In order to enlist the support of the *chuhras*, who had become estranged from the Ad Dharm (Saberwal, 1976: 68), Valmiki, the patron saint of the sweeper caste, was assigned special importance in the revival movement.

Although the Ad Dharm Scheduled Castes Federation adopted the well-tried formula of Dalit mobilisation, it did not succeed in eliciting the same level of response. The practise of untouchability, the most important 'structural factor' (Oommen, 1977: 16) in mobilising the untouchables in the 1920s, has been curbed to a significant extent. Moreover, the articulate leaders of the Scheduled Castes were co-opted into the Congress system which operated as an umbrella to incorporate various political orientations and organisations. In the post-colonial phase, the Congress also delivered what the Ad Dharm had aspired for during the British period. Even Mangoo Ram had acknowledged this:

Thanks to the Congress regime for bridging the gap between the lower and the higher. Mahatma Gandhi did a lot of social service to bring the downtrodden at par with the other communities.<sup>25</sup>

However, before the revived Ad Dharm movement was lost in the whirlpool of militant fundamentalism in Punjab in the 1980s, fresh efforts were made to keep the struggle alive by publishing souvenirs, journals and weekly news bulletins to glorify various aspects of the movement. In January 1985, the Mangoo Ram Mugowalia Souvenir Committee released a souvenir<sup>26</sup> in commemoration of the 99<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mangoo Ram. The purpose of the souvenir was to generate an awareness among the Scheduled Castes about the protagonists and sympathisers of the Ad Dharm Mandal. Moreover, as sequel to the *Adi Danka* of the 1920s and *Ravidas Patrika* of the 1970s, a Punjabi monthly named *Kaumi Udarian* was launched from Jalandhar in December 1985,<sup>27</sup> seeking to give a wide coverage to different aspects of the Ad Dharm movement of the 1920s and emphasise its contemporary relevance. In January 1986, a special issue of the *Kaumi Udarian* was published on the birth anniversary of Babu



Mangoo Ram. Likewise, on 12 January 1997 the Bahujan Samaj Bulletin (a weekly newspaper of the Bahujan Samaj Party) also focused on various themes of the Ad Dharm movement. It was in fact through the columns of souvenirs, journals and news bulletins that many of the rare official documents of the Ad Dharm Mandal were made public. In addition, on 14 April 1986 the Ambedkar Mission Society, Punjab, posthumously honoured Babu Mangoo Ram with the title of *Kaumi Messiah* (saviour of the community). The important factor which distinguished the revival of the Ad Dharm movement in the 1980s, particularly under the BSP, was that it laid less emphasis on the appeal of religion to seek support for the movement. It is politics which has now acquired centre stage, pushing religion into the background. No doubt the movement, right from the very beginning, had shown an interest in gaining political power for bringing about basic social transformation,<sup>28</sup> as witnessed during the Assembly elections in 1937 and 1946-47. The Ad-Dharmis found it convenient to use religion as a strategy to political power, but their real objective was to create an egalitarian social structure where Ad-Dharmis would be proud of their community.

The BSP has become active in Punjab since 1985 with the aim of achieving the same objective. Of late the Party has claimed that the ideology of Ad Dharm has become the spine, heart, brain, eyes, feet and arms of the struggle of the BSP (*Bahujan Samaj Bulletin*, 12 January 1997: 8). In 1996, it won three of the thirteen parliamentary seats and recorded leads in as many as seventeen assembly constituencies in Punjab (Verma, 1999). Kanshi Ram, founder of the BSP, was elected to the Lok Sabha (1996) from Hoshiarpur constituency, from where, 50 years ago, Babu Mangoo Ram, founder of the Ad Dharm movement, had been elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1946. Interestingly, it was in Hoshiarpur that the BSP celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the Ad Dharm movement on 28 February 2001. On this occasion, Kanshi Ram in his address exhorted the Bahujan Samaj to follow the principles of the Ad Dharm movement of which the BSP has now become the torch-bearer.

The pamphlet issued by the BSP<sup>29</sup> also emphasised that the Party had taken forward the mission of the Ad Dharm movement. It reiterated that although Dr Ambedkar had tried to provide political freedom to the downtrodden by granting them the constitutional right to vote, in actual practice it could not be realised fully. Further, the Pamphlet stressed that the 'Manuite regimes' have conspired to deprive the Dalits of their hard-earned rights by proposing to amend the constitution. The BSP, which drew inspiration from Ad Dham and Dr Ambedkar, strongly condemned such moves and sought support in its tirade against the 'manuite' government. Simultaneously, efforts have also been made to revive the spirit of the Ad Dharm abroad. *Begumpura Times Quarterly*, a bilingual publication of the Ad Dharm Brotherhood Intl., Wolverhampton, UK (started in 1999), has carried a series of articles on various aspects of the Ad Dharm movement and the steps taken for its revival. The Ad Dharm Brotherhood Intl. also celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of the Ad Dharm movement at Shri Guru Ravidas Community Centre, Wolverhampton, on 11 June 2000. Earlier, on 25 July 1976, it had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Ad Dharm in UK, where Babu Mangoo Ram was invited as the chief guest and also honoured with a pension of Rs 100 per month (Sain, 1985: 37). In India, the Platinum Jubilee function of the movement was organised at the Desh Bhagat Yaadgar Hall, Jalandhar, on 11 June 2000. On this occasion, Mr Chumber released the 1931 report of the Ad Dharm Mandal (in Punjabi and Hindi)<sup>30</sup> which included the names of 500 members and fifty-five missionaries of the Mandal. The purpose of publishing the names of the members and missionaries was to acknowledge their contribution in the upliftment of the Dalit community and also to generate an active interest among the younger generations of their families. The report also made a call to the Scheduled Castes to record Ad Dharm as their religion in the 2001 Census, as was done in the 1931 Census. A similar appeal was made by the Ad Dharm Brotherhood Intl., UK. (It may be mentioned here that the Ad Dharm movement of

the 1920s had also received support from the emigrant Ad-Dharmis settled in New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, UK, etc. [McLeod, 1986: 110, see also Manak, 1985: 8.] As the ideology and principles of the Ad Dharm movement had greatly influenced the Dalits of the Doaba region, most of the immigrants who support the movement from abroad also hail from this region. The present BSP under the leadership of Kanshi Ram, which claims to fight for the rights of Dalits in the framework of the Ad Dharm movement, has high hopes from the Doaba region. With the rising level of political awareness among the Dalits in the state of Punjab, where they constitute 28.31 per cent of the total population (against 16.32 per cent at the all-India level), the party gradually intends to emerge as Dalit political alternative in Punjab.

### **The Impediments**

What has prevented the Dalits in Punjab from emerging as political alternative despite their numerical strength is the fact that they have not been able to consolidate themselves as a homogeneous group. In fact, they form a conglomerate of thirty-seven distinct Dalit castes<sup>31</sup> with different sub-identities and diverse religious affiliations. The rules of grammar of caste hierarchy are also followed by Scheduled Castes in the state. A fieldwork-based study has found that 76.6 per cent of the Dalit respondents ranked Ad-Dharm at the top of the hierarchy of Scheduled Castes in Punjab. Being conscious of their superior status, the Ad-Dharmis practise endogamy to maintain their distinctive identity vis-à-vis other Dalit castes. The same study reported that 91.6 per cent of the Ad-Dharmis had married within their own caste (Kamaljot, 1996: 33-35). Another empirical study reveals a high degree of caste consciousness among the Balmikis and Ad-Dharmis in Punjab, a factor which further undermines Dalit unity (Saberwal, 1973: 256).

According to the 1981 Census, in terms of their numerical strength the Mazhabis (the Sikh counterparts of Balmikis, also known as Chuhras), were at 13,66,843; Chamars (also called Ramdasias, Ravidasis, etc.) at 12,21,145; Ad-Dharmis

at 6,80,132; Balmikis at 5,32,628; Dumnas at 1,24,929; Bazigars at 1,20,250; Meghs at 78,405; Bawarias at 62,624; Sansis at 61,986; and Kabirpanthis at 56,888, followed by Scheduled castes in smaller denominations (Jodhka, 2000: 400-401; see also Jodhka, 2002). Out of the thirty-seven castes, the Punjab government declared thirteen as 'Depressed Scheduled Castes'. Seven of these thirteen Depressed Scheduled Castes are identified by the Punjab government as the 'De-notified Tribes' or the 'Vimukta Jatis', who were declared by the colonial administration as 'Vagrant and Criminal Tribes'. These thirteen castes together constituted only 11 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population (Jodhka, 2000; 394). Chamars, Mazhabis, Ad-Dharmis and Balmikis together constitute nearly three-fourths of the total Scheduled Caste population of Punjab.

Economic inequalities among the Dalits of Punjab are no less significant. The Ad-Dharmis of the Boota Mandi in Jalandhar, who control the leather industry, are the richest among the Scheduled Castes of Punjab. Moreover, a group of Scheduled Castes has established its hold over the surgical tool manufacturing units in Jalandhar. Likewise, a small number of Scheduled Caste households also own cultivable land (around 0.40 per cent of the total holding in Punjab), something that sets them apart from most other Dalits whose livelihood depends on their income as manual and landless labourers. Similarly, some sections of the Scheduled Castes, particularly the Chamars and Ad-Dharmis, have acquired administrative positions in the state administration. The above analysis shows that the Dalits of Punjab constitute a motley group of castes, economic strata and religious identities. Besides, the Dalits lack an all-Punjab leader to mobilise them across religious and regional divides. It was precisely because of these intra-Dalit cleavages that they could not emerge as a cohesive force to reckon within the politics of Punjab. In the absence of a common platform, some of the Dalits and their local elites seek their salvation through different political outfits, including the Congress and the Akali Dal.

## Conclusion

Dalit consciousness was born in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to seek justice and equality for Dalits. It has never been an exclusive domain of Dalits, however, and has intermittently continued to receive inputs from non-Dalit quarters as well. Whether as a phase of the Bhakti movement, of Sufism, or of the Indian renaissance or national freedom movement, there is ample evidence of the efforts of non-Dalits for the eradication of untouchability. However, almost all of them sought the removal of untouchability without doing away with the inegalitarian social structure, leading to a sharp division between the orientation of the Dalits and the higher-caste protagonist of social reform movements. The rise of the Ad Dharm movement and the Gandhi-Ambedkar dispute are testimonies to such polarisation between the Dalits and the twice-born. This division in turn further strengthened the process of consolidation of Dalit consciousness in a framework of 'we' and 'others', and was probably the main reason for the continuance of the ideology and principles of the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab through the efforts of the BSP.

More curiously, Dalits became victims of their own Dalit consciousness which, instead of transcending caste and caste-based hierarchies, strengthened caste identities. Until very recently they (Dalits) were condemned as untouchable because of their low-caste status; now they have been given favours constitutionally by virtue of being low caste. Hence, as far as the social status of Dalits is concerned, no significant change has really taken place and the blatant untouchability of the past has taken on a more subtle form. A Scheduled Caste person may succeed in raising his economic status through reservations, but he finds absolutely no avenues to improve his social status as well. He then desperately seeks to borrow religious and sometimes even respectable sub-caste titles. Such assumed identities may haunt him incessantly. It is in this context that the contributions of Ad Dharm movement is crucial. It has helped the Scheduled castes to seek social recognition through the process of cultural transformation on the one hand, and spiritual regeneration on

the other. It has carved out a new identity and given them a new name: Ad-Dharmi. The very title of Ad-Dharmi instils in the minds of the Scheduled Castes a sense of pride, reminding them of their pristine and rich heritage and of their historical subservience to the twice-born. The Ad Dharm movement succeeded in raising the consciousness of the downtrodden people of the Doaba region of Punjab in particular, and of the entire state in general. It gave them gurus to believe in, a *qaum* to belong to and a sense of history to relate with. It envisions the possibility and potentiality of social change for the Scheduled Castes. The process of cultural transformation and spiritual regeneration started by the Ad Dharm movement under the leadership of Mangoo Ram has continued to reverberate in the cities and villages of Punjab into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through different platforms and political formations.

### End Notes

1. Some of the close associates of the Ad Dharm movement, however, did not approve the closure of the movement in 1946. They were of the opinion that Ad Dharm continued to play an important role for the upliftment of the untouchables even after 1946. In 1946 Mangoo Ram had grown fairly old. According to Chanan Lal Manak, a close associate of the movement, Ad Dharm could not produce anyone of the calibre of Mangoo Ram to replace him. The rank and file of Ad Dharm were interested in their individual interests than in the upliftment of the Dalits as a community. However, till his death Mangoo Ram did not surrender the Herculean task that he had taken on his shoulders. Interviews with Ishwar Das Pawar, Chandigarh, 23 April 2001; Chanan Lal Manak, Jalandhar, 1 May 2001; and Chattar Sain, son of Mangoo Ram, Garshankar (Distt. Hoshiarpur), 27 April 2001.
2. Interviews: Chanan Lal Manak, Jalandhar, 1 May 2001; K C Sulekh, Chandigarh, 1 July 2001.
3. Interview with Chattar Sain, son of Mangoo Ram, Garshankar (Distt. Hoshiarpur). 27 April 2001: see also Ram, 1971:4.
4. Interview with Chattar Sain; see n.3.
5. Interview with Chattar Sain; see n.3.
6. A signed pamphlet by Mangoo Ram in the name of his *qaum*, entitled *Punjab de Achhut Parth nu vadhai: Meri walon sandesh* (Congratulations to the Untouchable Brotherhood of Punjab: My Message), reproduced as such in the monthly *Kaumi Udarian* (Punjabi), vol. 1, no 2, January 1986, pp 23-24 (Jalandhar, C L Chumber, ed.).

7. One of the teachers of the school was a Muslim, Walhi Mohammad, and one was Brahmin, who was later on converted into a Shudra. In a conversion ceremony, an earthen pot (*douri*) which contained water mingled with sugar balls (*patasha*) and stirred with leather-cutting tool (*rambi*) was used to convert Brahmins into Shudras. (Interview with Chattar Sain. See n. 3) Nowadays, the school land has been declared as *Shamlat* (common land) and no remnants of the building exist except the old dilapidated structure of its well.
8. The All India Ad Dharm Mandal was merged with the organisation led by Dr Ambedkar in 1933. Some years later Mangoo Ram closed the office of the Ad Dharm Mandal and changed its name to Ravidas Mandal (Juergensmeyer 200:232). However, close associates of Ad Dharm movement have contested this observation. They say that Ad Dharm Mandal was not changed to the Ravidas Mandal. In fact, later on the Ravidas School was opened up on the premises of the Ad Dharm Mandal building. So it was merely Ravidas School which came to occupy the space of the Ad Dharm Mandal building, rather than its being taken over by Ravidas Mandal. Interview with: the late Chanan Lal Manak, Jalandhar, 29 May 2001; K C Shenmar I G (P) (retd.), Chandigarh, 28 April 2001.
9. In 1952, Mangoo Ram was offered a ticket by the Congress to contest the assembly elections as its nominee. As he refused to contest the election on the Congress ticket, it was given to Kartar Singh of village Ligari of Hoshiarpur district. (Interview with Chattar Sain; see n. 3.)
10. Mugowal, Hoshiarpur district, the Ad Dharm School: First Annual Huge Public Meeting, 11-12 June, Sunday-Monday 1927, as per the Local calendar 30-31 of the first month of the year 1984. However, in various writings about Ad Dharm, the year 1926 is referred to as the year of the First Annual Meeting of the Ad Dharm. Reproduced as such in the monthly *Kaumi Udarian* (Punjabi), vo. 1, no 2, January 1986, pp. 21-22.
11. The text is in the form of poetry (in Punjabi). Translated by the author and Seema Goel.
12. However, no record is available to substantiate this thesis (Juergensmeyer, 1988:23).
13. The Lothian committee (Indian Franchise Committee) was constituted in December 1931 under the Chairmanship of the Marquess of Lothian, C H., Parliamentary under Secretary of State for India. It consisted of eighteen members of whom Dr Ambedkar was one. The committee began its work of hearing the views of the parties concerned and the provincial franchise committees constituted by the respective Provincial Legislatures on 1 February 1932 at Delhi. It conducted its enquiries in Lahore on 31 March and 1 April 1932. The Ad Dharm Mandal delegation consisted of eighteen members, including Mangoo Ram (President), Hazara Ram Piplanwal (General Secretary), Hans Raj

- (Vice-President), Ram Chand Khera (Editor, *Adi Danka*), Pt. Hari Ram and Sant Ram Azad (Ahir 1992: 8-9).
14. In the 1937 Assembly elections in Punjab, eight seats were reserved for the Scheduled castes. The Ad Dharm contested on all seats with the help of the Unionist Party. Ad Dharm candidates won seven seats. One seat (Hoshiarpur) went to a Congress candidate, Moola Singh, who defeated Hazara Ram Piplanwala of Ad Dharm with a margin of seven votes (Manak 1971: 8).
  15. As spelt on the top of the letter pad of Ad Darm Mandal. One such letter is in the possession of K C Shenmar, IG (P) Punjab (retd.), on which Mangoo Ram gave him a testimonial. K C Shenmar has kindly passed on a photocopy of the testimonial to the author.
  16. *Ad Prakash Granth* contains, 1,248 pages which include hymns of Guru Ravidas, Maharshi Valmiki and Kabir, apart from many other Adi Gurus (Banta Ram, Joginder Bains, Shri Prakash Granth Trust, Hoshiarpur; see Ram and Bains 1985). Also see interview with Chattar Sain, n. 3.
  17. The report of the Ad Dharm Mandal, 1926-31, was published on 15 May 1931 in Urdu, and has been translated into English by Mark Juergensmeyer and Surjit Singh Goraya (Juergensmeyer, 1988). C L Chumber translated it into Hindi and Punjabi (Chumber 200). The Hindi and Punjabi translations include the names of the 500 members of the Ad Dharm Mandal and its fifty-five missionaries, which were included in the English translation.
  18. Interview with K C Shenmar, I G (P) Punjab (retd), Chandigarh, 28 April 2001.
  19. Pamphlet (see n. 6).
  20. Boota Singh, also known as Ramdasspura, is situated on the Nakodar road in Jalandhar. It is populated by Ad-Dharmis who had come from different villages to settle there for leather work and trade.
  21. Interview with K C Shenmar, Chandigarh, 9 July 2001.
  22. Interview with K C Sulekh, Chandigarh, 12 July 2001.
  23. Interview with K C Shenmar, Chandigarh, 14 July 2001.
  24. Ad-Dharmi is one of the thirty-seven castes listed as Scheduled castes (*Census of India* 1991, Section 17, Punjab).
  25. Pamphlet (see n. 6; see also Juergensmeyer 200: 232, n.21).
  26. *Souvenir*, 1985: Babu Mangoo Ram Mugowalia 99<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary (New Delhi 1985: 41).
  27. Jalandhar was the headquarters of the Ad Dharm Mandal. *Adi Danka* and *Ravidas Patrika* were also published from there.
  28. See n. 10
  29. The pamphlet was made available to the author by C L Chumber.
  30. The report of the Ad Dharm Mandal 1926-31, translated by C L Chumber in Hindi and Punjabi and circulated through *Saptahik Adi Dharm Parveshank* (Jalandhar), 11 June 200, pp. 1-54.

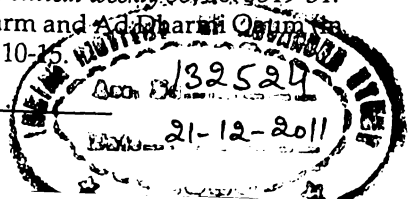


31. The thirty-seven castes are: Ad-Dharmi, Balmiki (Chura, Bhangi), Bangali, Barar (Burar or Berar), Batwal, Bauria (Bawria), Bazigar, Bhanjra, Chamar (Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar, Ramdasi, Ravidasi), Chanal, Dagi, Darain, Deha (Dhaya, Dhea), Dhanak, Kabirpanthi (Julala), Khatik, Kori-koli, Marija (Marecha), Mazhabi, Megh, Nat, Od, Pasi, Perna, Pheera, Sanhai, Sanha<sup>1</sup>, Sansi (Bhedkut, Manesh), Sansoi, Dhogri (Dhangri, Sigg), Dumna (Mahasha, Doom), Garga, Gandhila (Gandeli), Sapela, Sareta, Sikligar, Sirkiband (*Census of India 1991, Series 17-Punjab*).

## References

- AHIR, D.C. 1992. *Dr Ambedkar and Punjab*. Delhi: B.R. Publications.
- BAHUJAN SAMAJ BULLETTIN., 1997. No 9, 12 January (Jalandhar).
- BAKSHI RAM, PANDIT. n.d. *Mera jivan sangharsh* (My life struggle). Punjab Pradesh Balmik Sabha.
- CHANDRA, BIPAN ET AL. 1989. *India's struggle for Independence: 1857-1947*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- CHUMBER, C.L. 1986. Interview with the editor of *Adi-Danka* (in Punjab). *Kaumi udarian* 1, 2: 49-52.
- 2000. Report of the Ad Dharm Mandal, 1926-1931 (trans.in Hindi). *Saptahik Adi-Dharmi Parveshank*. 11 June: 1-54.
- JODHKA, SURINDER S. 2000. 'Prejudice' without 'pollution'? : Scheduled castes in contemporary Punjab. *Journal of Indian school of political economy* 12, 3&4: 381-403.
- 2002. Caste and untouchability in rural Punjab. *Economic and political weekly* 37, 19: 1813-23.
- JUERGENSMEYER, MARK. 1988. *Religious rebels in the Punjab: The social vision of untouchables*. Delhi: Ajanta.
- 2000. Ad Dharm Movement. In Harsh K. Puri and Paramjit S. Judge, eds, *Social and political movements: Readings on Punjab*, pp 221-37. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat.
- KAMALJOT. 1996. Religious reform and social mobility: The case of Ad Dharmis of Punjab. Unpublished M.Phil thesis, Department of Sociology, Punjab University, Chandigarh.
- KOTHARI, RAJNI. 1998. Rise of the Dalits and the renewed debate on caste. In Parthea Chatterjee, ed., *State and Politics in India*, pp. 439-58. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- MALHOTRA, S.L. 1976. Hindu politics and untouchability in the Punjab, 1900-1935. *The social sciences research journal* 1, 1: 74-88.
- MANAK, CHANAN LAL. 1971. Ad Dharm bare (About Ad Dharm). *Ravidas patrika* 8.
- 1985. Krantikari Aagoo: Babu Mangoo Ram Ji Mugowalia Atey Ad Dharm Lehar (Punjabi). *Souvenir: Babu Mangoo Ram Mugowalia 99<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary* 41: 3-8.
- MANUQU, CHANAN SINGH. 2003. Bharat samaj ek thahriya hoyaya dhancha (Static structure of Indian society). *Begumpura Shaher* 41: 5.

- MCLEOD, W.H. 1986. *Punjabis in New Zealand: A history of Punjab migration, 1890-1940*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.
- MOHAN, KAMLESH. 1992. Constructing religion and caste and manipulating identities (19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century). *The social sciences research journal* (n.s.) 1, 1&2: 139-76
- MUGOVALIA, CHATTAR SAIN. 1986. Mahatma Gandhi banam Babu Mugowalia (Mahatma Gandhi versus Babu Mugowalia). *Kaumi udarian* 1, 2: 19-20 and 35.
- MUKHERJI, PARTHA NATH. 1977. Social movement and social change: Towards a conceptual clarification and theoretical framework. *Sociological bulletin* 26, 1: 38-59.
- OMVEDT, GAIL. 1994. *Dalits and the democratic revolution*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Oommen, T.K. 1977. Sociological issues in the analysis of social movements in independent India. *Sociological bulletin* 26, 1:14-37.
- PAWAR, I.D. 1993. *My struggle in life* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn.) Chandigarh: Author Publisher.
- PIPLANWALA, BABU HAZARA RAM. 1986. Lothian Committee and Ad Dharm Mandal. *Kaumi udarian* 1, 2: 10-15.
- RAM, BANTA and JOGINDER BAINS. 1985. Shri AD Prakash Granth Trust. Anandgarh. Dr. Mahilanwali Hoshiarpur. Ad Dharm, Ad Prakash Granth, Ad Dharmi Qaum. *Souvenir. Babu Mangoo Ram Mugowalia 99<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary* 41: 19-20.
- RAM MANGOO. 1971. Meri videsh yatra and mera jivan birtant (My foreign travels and my life story). *Ravidas patrika*: 4.
- SABERWAL, SATISH. 1973. Receding pollution: Intercaste relations in urban Punjab. *Sociological bulletin* 22, 3: 234-59.
- . 1976. *Mobile men: Limits to social change in urban Punjab*. New Delhi: Vikas.
- SAIN, CHATTAR. 1985. Ghadri tuan Ad Dharmi: Babu Mangoo Ram Ji Mugowalia (From Ghadrite to Ad Dharmi: Babu Mangoo Ram Ji Mugowalia). *Souvenir: Babu Mangoo Ram Mugowalia 99<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary* 41: 35-37.
- SHARMA, S.K. 1985. *Social movements and social change: A study of Arya Samaj and untouchables in Punjab*. Delhi: B.R. Publishers.
- SURESH, V. 1998. The Dalit Movement in India. In T.V. Satyamurthy, ed., *Rigion, religion, caste, gender and culture in contemporary India*, pp.355-87. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- TANWAR, RAGHUVENDRA. 1999. *Politics of sharing power: The Punjab Unionist Party, 1923-1947*. Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- VERMA, P.S. 1999. Akali-BJP debacle in Punjab: Wages of non-performance and fragmentation. *Economic and political weekly* 35, 50: 3519-31.
- VIRDI, HARCHARAN DAS. 2001. Ad Dharm and Ad Dharmi Qaum (in Punjabi). *Begumpura times quarterly* 3, 2:10-15.





*Critical Quest* is a mini publication venture that seeks to make available the best and the relevant of social science writings in India and abroad to individuals - students, teachers and the general reading public. It also attempts to retrieve and sustain within current discourses the, rational-liberative articulation in history and culture. Its objective is not only to inform and enlighten readers but also to impel them towards emancipatory engagement with the society at large. It hopes to function as a tool both of deconstruction as well as reconstruction of socially relevant knowledge. The attempt is not profit oriented and invites co-operation and participation of all committed to socio-political transformation of the Indian societies towards greater social inclusion and more egalitarian social practice.

Ronki Ram is Reader in the Department of Political Science, Panjab University. His areas of specialisation are International Relations Theory, Indian Political Thought and Dalit Politics.



**Library** IAS, Shimla

305.5688054552 R 669 M



00132524

ISBN: 978-81-89524-36-4



978-81-89524-36-4

Price Rs. 20/-  
US \$ 2



***Critical quest***

**New Delhi**