



Ambedkar Times

Weekly

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Relevance of Tathagat Buddha in Contemporary Times

Prem Kumar Chumber

(Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba)

Tathagat Buddha started his search for an answer to 'dukha' (suffering -physical, mental, moral & social) by abandoning palace and seeking the company of the known recluses of his time. His sufferings did not begin out of either scarcity of material resources or of any physical ailment. It was the outcome of subtle realization on his part after a chance encounter of sickness, old age, and death. It went deep into his rational mind that if someone faces sickness, turned old and become dead then this will be the fate of every human being irrespective of his status, age and place. In this way, Buddha's suffering was the outcome of his encounter with the sufferings of others. In other words, it was contagious! So it cannot be designated as moral or something else. May be, we can call it impersonal-personal- suffering that he attributed to his very inner being after the chance encounter. Nevertheless, it occurred despite the presence of all comforts at his end. And this impersonal-personal-suffering led him to renounce his palatial living, King father, beautiful wife, a very small son and to live a mendicant life full of self-invited sufferings. He began his search for the emancipation of sufferings of all sorts outside the palace and in the company of the known renouncers. He did what was told to do to attain the 'truth'. He practiced every formula, yogic exercise and put himself to self-severe physical afflictions to the extent of turning his body frame into a mere skeletal. Living for days just on a single grain. None did work. Finally, I became clear to him that answer to suffering cannot be found outside. It might have occurred to him that how come an answer to sufferings that experienced within could be located in the outer-world? This led him do perform a new journey in search of the 'truth', - a journey within his very self. It also made him realise that on this journey, the best way is the middle way - in between extreme indulgence and total renunciation! But what distinguished Tathagat Buddha from all other practioners of spiritual way of finding truth is his scientific approach to know 'thyself'. He taught us there is dukha in life. It has a cause. The cause can be tracked down. And the answer to get rid of that could be found.

Another insight of the realized truth that he shared with the humanity is that all human beings are same. There is no upper and lower caste. Freedom, equality and social justice are the fundamental foundations for the journey to launch within by each one of us. Suffering begin in craving and it never ends at any stage of life. The only exit is to light one's own lamp within. Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar found the noble way to the emancipation and empowerment of the lower castes in embracing Buddhism, which for him not a religion of rituals but of social justice, freedom and equality. It taught us to struggle for salvation through our own efforts. It did not ask for any mediator between the sufferers and the God. It called upon us to understand what caused our suffering and to find a way out. The way he suggested is: Educate, Agitate, and Organize!

Article 25: Misconceptions, Reality, and Dr. Ambedkar's Vision

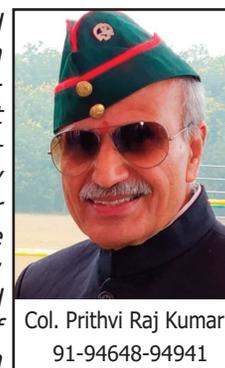
When India achieved independence, the framers of the Constitution were faced with the monumental task of building a society rooted in liberty, equality, and justice - values that were not always reflected in the religious and social practices of the time. One of the most pressing issues was the deeply entrenched caste-based exclusion from Hindu religious institutions. In this background, the Indian Constitution enshrined religious freedom as a fundamental right, reflecting the nation's commitment to pluralism and secularism. Article 25 stands at the core of this guarantee, ensuring freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion. However, this Article, especially its Explanation II which includes Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains within the ambit of "Hindus" for specific legal and social reform purposes, has been the subject of intense debate and criticism. Critics, particularly some sections of the Sikh community and others argue that it unjustly subsumes Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism under the term "Hindu," thereby denying their independent religious identity. Expressing deep concerns about this clubbing, they view it as a threat to their distinct religious identities, holding Dr. Ambedkar directly responsible for this clause. They also question the non-inclusion of Islam and Christianity in the Explanation.

This article aims to analyze the purpose, scope, and rationale of Article 25 and Explanations thereunder. It attempts to clarify the true import of the Article by delving into its language, explanations, legislative history, Constituent Assembly debates and the role played by Dr. Ambedkar particularly in the drafting of the Article, and the socio-political context that led to the inclusion of Explanations I and II. It also highlights why other religions like Islam and Christianity are not specifically referenced and how the framers ensured that no religious group would be diminished under the law.

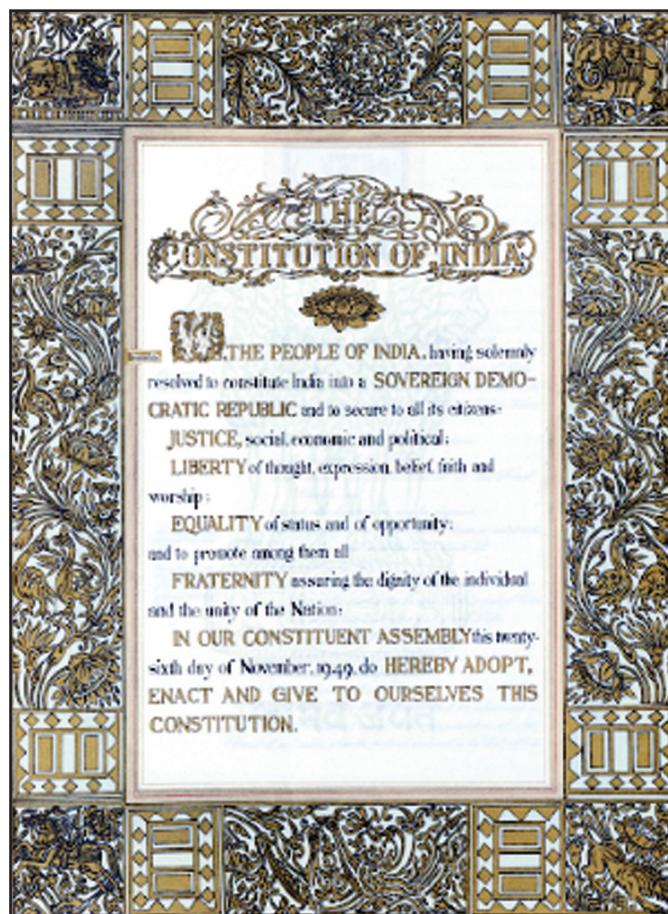
The argument that inclusion of Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists in the term "Hindus" denies their independent religious identity, unjustly subsumes them under the term "Hindu," thereby denying their independent religious identity, reflects seemingly a serious misreading and misconception of both the text and the spirit of the Article as well as the philosophy of the Constitution. It also appears to misrepresent the intent, wisdom, and deliberations of the framers, particularly of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect revered as father of the Constitution, who was deeply conscious of religious plurality and the need for legal safeguards for all communities.

The Article 25 captioned "**Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion**" states: (1) Subject to public order, morality, and health and to the other provisions of this Part (Part III, Fundamental Rights) all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the

right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. (2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law— (a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political, or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Explanation I: The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion. Explanation II: In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly."



Col. Prithvi Raj Kumar
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To appreciate the true intent and context of the Article, one must look beyond a literalist interpretation and into the philosophical and legal framework that guided the Constitution-makers, notably Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The Article guarantees that all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality,

health, and other provisions of Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution. It also allows the State to regulate or restrict any economic, financial, political, or secular activity associated with religious practice and provides for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. This clause is a cornerstone of India's secular framework. It protects not just belief but also practice, and ensures that no religion is given special treatment under the law. The Explanation I makes it crystal clear that Sikhism is a separate exclusive religion in which wearing and carrying of kirpans (sword-religious symbol) shall be deemed to be included in the profession of this religion. Explanation II says that the reference to "Hindus" in sub-clause (b) of clause (2) shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

The key controversy arises from the Explanation I and II, particularly Explanation II which states that references to "Hindus" shall be construed as including persons professing the Sikh, Jaina, or Buddhist religion. The careful and objective analysis of the Article and Explanations reveals that this inclusion is not theological but legal and contextual. It ensures

(Contd. on next page)

Article 25: Misconceptions, Reality, and Dr. Ambedkar's Vision

(Continue from page 2)

that beneficial legislations particularly those dealing with temple entry, personal laws and religious endowments extend to these communities who historically shared social practices with Hindus. This was a conscious decision to allow the application of reform laws like the Hindu Code Bills to these communities without needing separate legislation for each. The intention was not to homogenize these religious communities but to enable inclusive social reforms without infringing on their religious autonomy. Explanation II must be understood in its limited, legalistic sense, and not as a denial of identity but as a tool for social justice and administrative inclusion. Rather than weakening the fabric of religious freedom, it reflects the deep constitutional commitment to unity in diversity, a vision that Dr. Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly labored to enshrine.

This issue was discussed at length during debate on the Hindu Code which was also applicable to the Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. Several Sikh members, notably Sardar Bhupinder Singh Man and Sardar Hukam Singh objected that clubbing of Sikhs with the Hindus diluted Sikh identity and amounted to religious assimilation under Hinduism. Referring to the statements of Justice Teja Singh of the Lahore High Court, Sardar Iqbal Singh, Lawyer, and Justice Harnam Singh of the Punjab High Court made before the Rau Committee formed to draft and recommend reforms in Hindu personal laws, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that they had no objection to the clubbing because it was for legal purpose only, and did not aim to interfere with religious freedom or identity². Underlining the significance of the Hindu Code and social reforms, Dr. Ambedkar said: "To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex which is the soul of Hindu Society untouched and

to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap."³

The original draft Article 19 (later Article 25) was discussed in depth in the Constituent Assembly on 6th December 1948. Dr. Ambedkar, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, T. T. Krishnamachari, K.M. Munshi, H.V. Kamath, K.T. Shah, Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, K. Santhanam, Mohamad Ismail Sahib, Naziruddin Ahmad and others extensively debated all aspects of the Article. Prof. K.T. Shah suggested to add Jain, Buddhist, or Christian after the word "Hindu" in sub-clause (2) of article 19. He said the possibility of all religious institutions being accessible and open for all communities would promote harmony and brotherhood amongst the peoples following various forms of beliefs in this country. Some members expressed fear that it could be perceived as an attempt to undermine the independent religious identities of these communities. In response, Dr. Ambedkar clarified that the inclusion was not theological, but socio-legal. He made it clear that the definition was a matter of practical jurisprudence, not of spiritual homogenization. Other members such as K.M. Munshi and Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer supported this position arguing that the inclusion of Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains under the term "Hindus" in specific legal contexts was not an attempt to erase their unique identities but a practical measure to ensure equitable access to religious institutions and legal protections. Dr. Ambedkar's clarifications and the Assembly's deliberations highlight a commitment to unity in diversity, ensuring that administrative necessities do not compromise religious freedoms. Thus, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Article and Explanations to ensure that the State's power to make laws for social welfare and reform especially laws open-

ing public Hindu institutions could be extended to include those religious communities that had traditionally been part of the Hindu cultural and historical fabric. This inclusion was never intended to deny or dilute their separate religious identity and doctrines, but to enable inclusive and equitable legal reform.

The criticism directed at Dr. Ambedkar for adding Explanation II to the Article is largely misplaced. Far from undermining any community's identity, Ambedkar's drafting sought to ensure equality before law and access to public religious institutions without doctrinal imposition. In fact, Dr. Ambedkar's record on religious freedom is among the strongest. He championed individual choice in matters of belief, supported minority rights, and himself embraced Buddhism as a matter of personal and political conviction⁵. His commitment to the recognition of religious diversity was unwavering, but he was also aware of the need for legal clarity in a pluralistic society.

The exclusion of Muslims and Christians from this grouping was deliberate, recognizing their distinct religious practices and legal systems. Unlike Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains, whose practices had historically intertwined with Hindu customs, Muslims and Christians are rooted in different historical, theological, and legal traditions from those of the Indian-origin religions. These faiths developed their own well-defined and distinct personal laws, religious institutions, and community practices that were largely unaffected by the social customs and religious reform movements within Hindu society. These communities maintained strong organizational and legal autonomy. Moreover, the Constituent Assembly recognized that while Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains had emerged as distinct religious movements, they had historically been part of the broader Indic cultural matrix.

They shared many common philosophical grounds with Hindu traditions and, in practice, had overlapping social customs, rituals, and caste-based structures that required reform. Hence grouping them for the purpose of legal reform under the term "Hindu" allowed the State to ensure equity in social justice measures. The forced clubbing of Islam and Christianity with "Hindus" would have likely been perceived as coercive interference in their religious affairs, violating the very spirit of Article 25. Thus, their exclusion from Explanation II was a deliberate constitutional decision, rooted in respecting religious diversity while enabling social reform within culturally interrelated communities.

Article 25 and its Explanations stand as a cornerstone of India's secular and inclusive constitutional framework. It represents an effort to harmonize India's religious diversity with constitutional guarantees and legislative clarity. The inclusion of Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists under the term "Hindus" must be understood in its limited, legalistic sense - not as a denial of identity but as a tool for social justice and administrative inclusion. Rather than weakening the fabric of religious freedom, it reflects the deep constitutional commitment to unity in diversity, a vision that Dr. Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly labored to enshrine. Understanding this context is not only essential to appreciate the vision of the framers, especially Dr. B.R. Ambedkar but also to uphold the constitutional commitment to both individual freedom and social justice in a pluralistic society.

(Reference: 1. BAWS, Vol.14, pt.1, p.51, BAWS, Vol.14, pt.2, pp.798,802; 2. BAWS, Vol.14, pt2, pp. 1170-1175; 3. BAWS, Vol. 14, pt.2.p1326; 4. CAD, Vol.VII, pp. 826-830; 5. BAWS, Vol.17/3, pp.528-545.)



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Fighting for Victims of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a heart-breaking and unacceptable reality. As a legislator, I believe we have a moral ob-



ligation to protect the most vulnerable among us, especially children and survivors of exploitation. That's why I'm proud to report progress on AB 1375, a bill I authored to strengthen protections for trafficking victims in child custody cases — and why I'm deeply disappointed in the Assembly's failure to pass real consequences for those who buy sex from minors in AB 379.

AB 1375: Protecting Survivors in Family Court

This week, AB 1375 passed its first legislative hurdle, advancing out of committee with strong support. My bill would ensure that in any child custody case where human trafficking is alleged, courts are empowered — and required — to consider whether a child or parent has been a victim of trafficking, or whether one parent has trafficked the child or the other parent. If the court finds that a parent has engaged in human trafficking, there will be a rebuttable presumption that awarding them custody is not in the best interest of the child. Additionally, the bill calls for new judicial training to better equip judges to identify and support victims of trafficking in the courtroom. I am happy to have Sacramento Assemblymember Maggy Krell as a bipartisan coauthor on this important piece of legislation, as she is a devoted fighter to combat the horrific issue of human trafficking in our state.

B 379: A Missed Opportunity to Get Tough on Predators

Unfortunately, while we made progress with AB 1375, we saw a devastating setback on AB 379, a bill originally introduced by Assemblymember Maggy Krell. As written, the bill would have made it a felony to purchase sex from a 16- or 17-year-old. It was a clear, direct response to the exploitation of children, and it had bipartisan support. But on the Assembly floor, the bill was stripped of its strength. Key provisions were replaced with vague language about "intent," which will make prosecution significantly harder. Instead of holding predators accountable, the amended version shifts the burden onto teen victims to prove they were trafficked. That is not justice — it's injustice in disguise.

Assemblymember Krell, the bill's original author, spoke out against these amendments and voted no on the amended version. Governor Newsom even came out stating, "The law should treat all sex predators who solicit minors the same, as a felony, regardless of the intended victim's age. Full stop." You can

watch my full comments from our floor session on this bill here.

When it comes to human trafficking, there is no room for half-measures. We need laws that protect children and survivors — not predators. AB 1375 is a step in the right direction, and I will continue fighting to see it signed into law. At the same time, I will not stop advocating for stronger penalties against those who buy children for sex. The failure to pass AB 379 in its original form is a stain on our legislature, but it doesn't have to be the end of the story. California must stand for justice.

Protecting Educational Access

The Assembly Education Committee hearing brought forth a few important bills that would seek to shape the educational landscape in California. My goal is always to bring forward common-sense solutions to improve education for California students, especially those who are underserved by our current system. While not every proposal ended in a victory, I remain committed to fighting for transparency and excellence in our schools.

The first bill I wanted to bring to



your attention is AB 1062, which I introduced because I believe our education system should fund students, not systems. Currently, California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) blocks charter schools from receiving the full benefit of concentration grant funding, even if they serve large numbers of English learners, foster youth, or low-income students. That's not fair. AB 1062 would have given charter schools the ability to apply for a waiver so their funding could truly reflect the needs of the students they serve. This was a targeted, responsible effort to fix a funding injustice and ensure that high-need students aren't shortchanged just because of the type of school they attend. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass out of committee. But I will continue to advocate for equitable funding that puts students first.

I also stood firmly against AB 84 — a bill that I believe represents bureaucratic overreach and a step backward for innovation and parental choice. AB 84 would impose a mountain of red tape on nonclassroom-based charter schools, including enrollment caps, funding penalties, and new layers of state-level bureaucracy. These schools serve tens of thousands of students who thrive in flexible, personalized learning environments. We should be supporting these families, not making their options harder to access. I was delighted to see so many parents come out and voice their opposition to this bill. Unfortunately, the bill passed through its committee hearing,

but I will continue to fight to protect charter school students and families.

Lastly, one area where I found common ground with colleagues on both sides of the aisle was on AB 1454, a bill I have coauthored. California currently ranks 50th nationwide in literacy, an unacceptable reality for a state that used to lead the way in so many ways. AB 1454 helps by making sure teachers are trained with the most effective, research-backed methods for teaching kids how to read. It also helps update classroom materials for reading and writing, and makes sure future school leaders are trained to support phonics-based reading instruction in their schools. Reading is foundational. If we want to close achievement gaps, we must give our teachers the tools and training they need to help every child become a confident, capable reader.

Whether it's standing up for charter families, opposing bad policy, or championing early literacy, I remain committed to putting students first — always.

Alzheimer's Community Education Seminar

Join me and experts from the Alzheimer's Association as we host an important and timely community education seminar that will include valuable presentations designed to inform and empower individuals and families impacted by Alzheimer's disease or concerned about memory loss.

As your representative in the State Assembly, I believe that access to health education is critical for building strong, informed communities. Alzheimer's disease affects millions of families across California, including many right here in our district, and I want to ensure that residents have the tools they need to recognize early warning signs and make informed decisions about care and treatment.

Event Date: Friday, May 23, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Location: Orangevale Library, 8820 Greenback Ln, Orangevale, CA 95662

Space is limited, so please RSVP in advance at the link here or by calling my District Office at 916-294-9774. Whether you're caring for a loved one,

concerned about your own cognitive health, or simply want to learn more, I encourage you to join us for this important conversation.



Assemblyman Hoover

Del Campo High School Visit

It's always a pleasure speaking with the next generation, and last week I had the opportunity to visit Del Campo High School to speak with students from Mr. Quintin Levesque's Environmental Science class. I couldn't have been more encouraged by the thoughtful questions and high level of engagement from these amazing students.

It is imperative that we connect with young people, especially as they begin to think critically about the policies shaping their futures. During our time together, we discussed the role public policy plays in environmental decision-making, the importance of civic participation, and the ways students can get involved in shaping the issues they care most about. What stood out to me was how informed and passionate these students were—not just about climate science, but about the systems and structures that govern how we respond to environmental challenges. These are exactly the kinds of conversations we need to be having with the next generation of leaders and voters.

This visit was part of an ongoing effort by Mr. Levesque and the Del Campo faculty to connect students with decision-makers and provide real-world context for what they're learning in the classroom. I want to thank Mr. Levesque for the invitation, and for his commitment to educating not only future scientists—but future community leaders.

Orangevale Students Visit the Capitol

I had the honor of welcoming another remarkable group of students from House of Bread Christian Academy to the California State Capitol. As part of a school tour, these bright young scholars traveled from Orangevale to Sacramento to learn more about how our state government works—and to witness firsthand the place where laws and policies are shaped.

House of Bread serves students from Transitional Kindergarten through 10th grade, and the school provides a rigorous academic experience grounded

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India and Pakistan – What Next?



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

With the Pahalgam terrorist attack and massacre, India and Pakistan are once again facing each other with a worrisome and dangerous intent. Pakistan has willfully created this mess to address its internal geo-political situation – Baluchistan issue, Relations with Afghanistan and Iran, Integration of J&K with India, Deteriorating situation in POK and fast dwindling socio-economic standing resulting in loosening of army control on the overall administration of the country. With this, obviously, Pak-

a lesson to the hostile neighbor to end these day to day provocations avoiding the 'outright war'. It is easy to say than done as we are to deal with a 'rogue state' called Pakistan. Pakistani rulers say Pak Army intends to divert Pak public opinion about the problems of Pakistan both internal and external and also their deteriorating economic situation. India comes handy to carry forward their nefarious designs. On the other hand, India is a democratic country with a clear agenda of development and welfare of

clear order and authority to its armed forces and other security agencies to take whatever necessary actions are needed to give a befitting response to Pakistan's proxy war against India. What could be our response? Let us see and discuss –

the so called super powers of the world.

All said and done, there cannot be two opinions on the fact that the situation is grim and difficult. India as a peace loving country does not intend to escalate the tensions but India has to defend and guard its security and sovereignty at all costs.

- i) Kinetic action to liberate POK – India will be well within its right to respond and destroy the 'terror machinery' in and around POK hosted by Pakistan. Pakistan has already unilaterally suspended the Simla Agreement of 1972.



istan has increasing become a hot potato for the international community. There is a saying in Punjabi 'MajhDudh Na Deve Tan Katte Dian Lattan Bhano – If buffalo does not allow milking, punish the Katta (child of Buffalo)'. The armed forces of Pakistan are in a hurry to retrieve their stronghold on Pakistan in one way or the other – either by escalating tensions with India, their traditional foe or preparing for over-throwing of the so-called democratic government like General Zia-ul-Haq and General ParvezMusharaf, the predecessors of General Asif Munir.

its huge population. How shall we deal with this hostile neighbor? It is difficult proposition. India is a peace loving country of Gautama the Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi. PM NarendraModi's government has been made to do a tight rope walk. But there is no way out. We need to respond not only to save and defend our security and sovereignty but also to address the pent up anger of the people of India. India has enough strength and capacity to defeat Pakistan in a conventional war on ground and a sound diplomatic machinery to face them in the international arena. The only thing which is required today is political will and leadership. The armed forces and the people are in a hurry to do the job and show the enemy its place. No half-hearted approach would work, it seems. It has to be a well planned and executed 'Aar-Paar Ki Ladai' to put it in PM AtalBehari's words. The GOI is fully mandated to take decision in this regard to teach a lesson to the hostile neighbor. We have full faith in PM Narendra Modi's government. As of now, GOI has given a

The so called LoC is no more sacrosanct. We would be claiming our own territory illegally occupied by Pakistan.

- ii) Naval blockade of Pakistan – The maritime interests of Pakistan should be hit by tightening the noose in the Arabian Sea. It is needed to hit Pakistan not only economically (trade etc.) but also its energy needs (gas and oil).
- iii) Support liberation and independence of Baluchistan, the only unfinishedagenda of partition of 1947. India may engage with Iran and Afghanistan in the surgical strike as both Iran and Afghanistan are equally fed up of the Pakistani hegemony in Baluchistan.
- iv) Engage with international community to ward of the danger of Pakistan becoming another Somalia. The danger of nuclear button going in the hands of terrorists and unbecoming centers of power is real in the emerging situation. The unscrupulous rulers of Pakistan tend to blackmail not only India but also the international community with the threat of 'nuclear power'. This threat needs to be called immediately and urgently by

One thing is clear and the GOI and 'We the people of India' must understand that nobody would help us and we are to do and defend ourselves on our own. Everybody is busy and interested in watching and ensuring one's own interest. All big and small powers would cry from the roof tops to 'exercise constraint'. Pakistan is a past master in exploiting the situation and would tend to conveniently walk away.

India should not permit it happen, come what may. Pakistan has no capacity and guts to pass the nuclear threshold, if still it opts for self-destruction, let it be. Pakistan shall not be permitted to resort to 'nuclear blackmail' and get away. Pakistani bluff has to be called off to live in peace.

India is united and standing with and behind the duly elected and mandated GOI to save and defend the country and peace in the region.

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Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

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in faith values. Their commitment to raising thoughtful, purpose-driven leaders is evident in every student I had the privilege of meeting. I look forward to seeing how they continue to grow in both knowledge and character, and I have no doubt they will make a difference in their communities and beyond.

District Ribbon Cutting
My team had the honor of attending and celebrating the grand opening of The REAL Institute (Relationship Elevation and Learning) in Folsom. This

new center is committed to supporting personal and relational growth through compassionate, professional care.

The REAL Institute offers a wide range of therapeutic and educational services, all provided by skilled, licensed professionals. Their approach is client-centered and deeply rooted in the empowerment of each individual. By fostering introspection and encouraging the exploration of new perspectives, they help clients gain greater understanding, resilience, and emotional well-being.

Thank you to the Folsom Chamber of Commerce for hosting this wonderful event. We are excited to welcome this valuable resource to Folsom and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will make in our community.



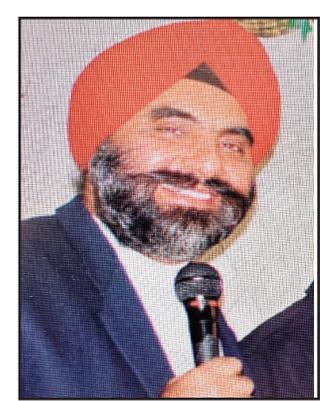
Where Do We Come From?

Where do we come from-
No one truly knows,
Yet we shaped the Divine,
Created heaven and hell alike.

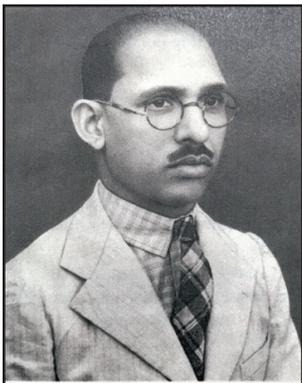
Hatred is easy to learn,
Love is hard to grasp,
War comes without effort,
Peace is the greatest challenge.

Why do humans inflict pain on the innocent?
What do they gain in return?
Only endless sorrow,
This is the true hell on earth.

My heartfelt plea is this:
Learn to love,
Embrace your differences,
For this is the greatest joy-
This is your true heaven.



Jasbir Patialavi
(Dr. Kang)



Ishwar Das Pawar
District and Sessions Judge (retd.)

Remembering Shri Ishwar Das Pawar on his birth anniversary

Unfortunate Incidents

Of the hundreds of students on the rolls of our school, three were Muslims—Nurdin; Jan Mohd, nicknamed Jani; and Nawab Khan. Nurdin was tall, of average description, and looked smart and shrewd. His father, Fazla, was a well-known thief. An equally well-known thief was Mangu. They belonged to the neighboring villages, Basdehra and Jakhera, respectively. People had spun legends about them. It was said that they, and in particular Mangu, could enter a house and escape from there after accomplishing their job even if it were through an incredibly narrow hole. They were also regarded as past masters in the art of dodging and duping the police. People in general made appreciative references to them as they posed no danger to the common man; they selected the houses of rich persons. There were only moderately rich persons in our ilaqa (area). The main booty they had in view were money and ornaments of gold and silver.

Nurdin's father did not like that his son should enter the same trade as he himself was carrying on. Therefore, in order to wean him away from the environments, which were of his own creation, he sent him to school. After the completion of the village school education, Nurdin was admitted in our school. But his mind was not in his studies. It wandered about, and his thoughts were fixed on the occupation of thieving, of which he also had some experience. Even in the school, he would do small exploits of the trade. Fazla got scent of the aberrations in his son, and one day he came to the school with a long, threatening lathi (big stick). Sensing danger from his father, Nurdin took to his heels, but the father was too much for him. He chased and overtook him in the very premises of the school. He gave the boy so severe a beating with the lathi that Nurdin alone could bear.

Probably he took that very harsh incident in his stride, considering it a rehearsal for the coming episodes, for such incidents were inherent in the profession he intended to adopt. He was likely to meet with a much harsher treatment at the hands of the police. This incident did not deter him from cherishing the thoughts that were gripping his mind. Finally, he quit the school.

Jan Mohd was a tall, slim, and charming boy. He belonged to a poor family and was my close neighbor in the village. His father Idu was known for his gentlemanliness. Jani was candid in his likeable behavior and boisterous in his laughter. On the various functions of the school, he used to sing Arya Samaji (person belonging to Arya Samaj "noble society," a Hindu reform movement founded by Swami Dayananda in 1875) songs and would take part even in religious matters like

sandhya (prayer). He matriculated from the school and then got into service at the Ripon Hospital at Simla. The communal disturbances of 1947, however, took him to Pakistan. Since then we have lost track of him.

Here we are particularly concerned with Nawab Khan. A stocky and handsome young man. He was a little older in age than an average student of the school. He was soft spoken and had mild manners. His uncle Mian Dalipu was a hakim (physician) of repute and was a good friend of my father. He served as our family physician, and we had great faith in him. It must be observed here that there was no distinction between the Muslim students and others. In those days, the monster of communalism had not yet raised its ugly head. There was complete harmony and amity between different communities, and people regarded each other with respect and brotherly feelings. Nawab Khan came from quite a well-to-do family which had branched off sometime back from the original Hindu Rajput princely family of the small hilly state of Bangarh, situated in the neighborhood of our village Dehlan. An ancestor of the Nawab Khan family had married a Muslim woman, and as a result, so the story goes, the family was excommunicated from the brotherhood; and under compelling situations, the members of the family embraced Islam. Nawab Khan had been cherishing a desire to go back to the Hindu fold, and while in the school, he opened his mind to the headmaster who was a devoted and true Arya Samaji. He felt happy at the idea of his pupil. Without entering into the details of what transpired among the concerned Arya Samajis, it will suffice to say that the stage was set for the next step—shuddhi (meaning purification, but in this case, it meant conversion). The ceremony was held on the school premises, and after the investiture of Yagyo-Pavit (a sacred thread worn by a Brahman), Nawab Khan was given the new name Ranbir Singh. Even before his conversion, Ranbir Singh used to perform all the

Arya Samaji rituals including sandhya—prayers in Sanskrit—twice a day. Now he became formally a full-fledged Hindu. There was, however, a small group of students who had some personal grudge against him and were in search of an opportunity to wreak vengeance on him. The above event gave them the needed opportunity.

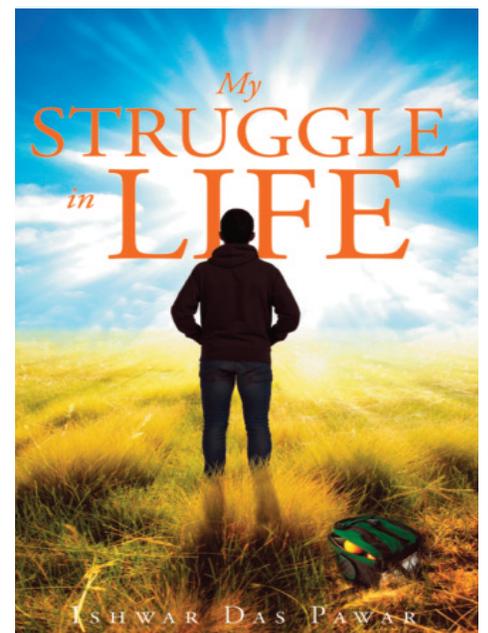
Due to shortage of accommodation in the boarding house some of the boarders including myself and Ranbir Singh were accommodated in the classrooms of the school. The group opposed to Ranbir Singh hit upon a plan. At about midnight one day, they came with a hurricane lamp and woke me up. On seeing them at such an odd hour, my heart throbbed. "Something serious was in the offing," I thought. They told me that they wanted to have a talk with Ranbir Singh and asked me to accompany them to his room, which was two rooms away from

mine. I had no idea as to what all this was about, and they would not tell anything in advance. I agreed to go with them as my going with them would do no harm, and if anything, it might help avert anything untoward happening. I had nothing but love and affection for Ranbir Singh.

The door of the room where Ranbir Singh was sleeping was bolted from inside. He was woken up and made to unbolt the door. Though a young man of courage, he looked terror-stricken. Then the warning group started unfolding their plan. They called upon him to say, "I am not Ranbir Singh. I am Nawab Khan." Prudently enough, Ranbir Singh, a new convert to Hinduism, faithfully repeated these not only once, "I am not Ranbir Singh. I am Nawab Khan". Prudence at the time was the better part of valor. Then the group showered a volley of mostly filthy abuses on their target and asked him sternly to repeat the abuses upon himself. It was a very bitter pill indeed to swallow. But again, he yielded to expediency and repeated verbatim what he was required to say. Ranbir Singh's attitude, though not of defeat but of rare prudence, proved disarming. All through this dirty drama, I stood there amazed, apprehending physical harm to Ranbir Singh. But the group retreated, uttering more abuses.

It was a great relief. The situation had been saved from worsening; anything could have happened. The headmaster was informed early next morning of what had happened in the night. He came to the school earlier than usual, grim and with all signs of anxiety writ large on his face. Except the erring group, the sympathies of all were with Ranbir Singh. But the mischief and the harm had been done. The headmaster handled the situation with tact but with firmness as well. The recalcitrant group, however, started a small scale demonstrations after school hours. The name of Tek Chand Syal, a classmate of mine, needs special mention in this context. A young man of liberal views and brilliant understanding, he openly sided with Ranbir Singh. The demonstrators made him also a target of their vilification.

But Tek Chand remained undaunted and weathered the storm bravely. This incident created a stir in the school as well as among the local Arya Samajis for several days. Gradually the agitation subsided, leaving behind a trail of bitterness and rancor. The wounds inflicted were never to heal. The final tenth class students on preparatory holidays were busy with their studies. University examination was nearing fast. As customary, the outgoing students were to be given a farewell party. I was also to appear in the final examination and Ranbir Singh too. Contributions were collected for the function. The mischief mongers were again on their job. We knew about their plans to spoil the solemnity of the function. My brother and myself decided to stay away from the func-



tion, and if I recall correctly, Jan Mohd also joined us. We left for Rakkar in the morning as usual for studies and decided to come back only after the function was over.

The function started with a sad background. There was a large quantity of sweets to be distributed among the students and the staff. The dissident group had made a settlement with the sweeper of the school. The students belonging to the Arya Samaj families took their share of the sweets and ate their fill. And so did the staff. But the said group had their own way of dealing with the sweets.

They accepted their share at the spot but gave it to the sweeper who was, according to the understanding, a little distant, possibly out of sight, from others with a spacious cloth spread on the earth. Other wavering students and also many others sided with the dissident group and dropped their share of the sweets on the chaddar (bed sheet) of the sweeper. The function had lost its charm and meaning. Everybody felt humiliated and downcast. But it could not be helped.

We learnt about all this on coming back in the evening. We felt satisfied with our decision to evade the function. Ranbir Singh again became Nawab Khan. We even, thereafter, addressed him as Ranbir Singh, but nobody could change the hard fact that he had been relegated to the Muslim fold. He carried with him both names: Ranbir Singh and Nawab Khan. His children had been married into Muslim families. But all honor to him, he, along with his family, continues here in our country in spite of what happened in the communal disturbances of 1947.

This incident is still fresh in my mind, and at times, it evokes feelings of disappointment, disgust and abhorrence. It reminds me of the ass-and-cow story about Akbar the Great, whether true or merely a cock-and-bull story, it is full of significance.

Akbar wanted to be converted to Hinduism. Consequently, he expressed his desire in this regard to the Hindus. The votaries of casteism, however, planned differently to meet the king's wish. The story goes that the Hindus brought an ass to the darbar (royal court) and, in full view of Akbar, started washing the animal. When the king enquired what all that was about, they replied, to his great astonishment, that they were going to convert the ass into a cow.

BABA SAHIB DR. AMBEDKAR (A Revolutionary)

W"e will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction or else those who suffer inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously built." These are the words which Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar spoke on 25th November 1949 while addressing the Constituent Assembly after completing the Indian Constitution piloted by him which he presented to the President of India Dr. Rajindra Prasad on 26th January 1950 in the presence of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and other prominent leaders.

In my view, these words were more directed towards the sufferers of inequality i.e. downtrodden and unprivileged of India rather than administrators of it. Baba Sahib extremely worked hard to frame the constitution and get it passed with its preamble;-

JUSTICE Social, economic, and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, and worship;

EQUALITY of status and opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuming the dignity of the individual; Inter alia he included the Fundamental Rights, such as Equality before law (ART 14); Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or the place of birth (ART 14); Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (ART 16); Abolition of untouchability (ART 17); Protection of traffic in human beings and forced labor (BEGAR) (ART 23); Remedies for enforcement of fundamental rights (ART 32, 226); by the judiciary i.e. the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts of States. Besides this, the directive principles of state policy under which states shall endeavor to secure social order for promotion of welfare of the people were also provided.

These principles specially include an adequate means of livelihood to all citizens, men or women, equally (ART 39); Rights to work, to education, and public assistance in certain cases (ART 41). Living wage etc. for workers (ART 43); and promotion of educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward sections (ART 46).

This all would show that all these provisions have been made especially to confer, to protect, and safeguard the basic rights upon and for the S.Cs. and S.Ts. who had been hitherto deprived of them for centuries under the Manu's Laws contained in the Manu Smiriti due to which these communities became downtrodden, unprivileged and untouchable. So that such castes, tribes may not be ignored, their list was drawn out later on by the President of India in consultation with Governors of the States and made a part of the Constitution as directed by it under articles 341 and 342. To further insure the amelioration of these classes, a particular section has been added as part XVI to the constitution

under the caption, special provisions relating to certain classes under which seats shall be reserved in the house of people and legislative assemblies of the states in proportion of their population in the states, for S.Cs* and S.Ts, (ART 330).

Reservation of S.Cs, and S.Ts in the services and posts has been provided under article 335 in connection with the affairs of the Union and the States. To watchdog and safeguard the interests of the S.Cs. and S.Ts., a National Commission (ART 338) consisting Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and three other members has been provided.

Considering the concerted effort accompanied by versatile genius put in by Baba Sahib in framing the constitution and unique leadership of the downtrodden, Mr. Sharad Pawar the former chief minister of Maharashtra, paid his heartiest tribute to Baba Sahib in his Foreward of "Ambedkar's Writings". In the following words;

In Baba Sahib Ambedkar, we have not only a crusader against the caste system, a valiant fighter for the cause of the downtrodden in India but also an elder statesman and national leader whose contribution in the form of Constitution of India will be cherished forever by posterity. In fact, his fight for human rights and as an emancipator of all those enslaved in the world gave him international recognition of a liberator of humanity from injustice, social and economic. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then prime minister of India paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Ambedkar while moving a condolence resolution in the parliament as follows, "Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive feelings of the Hindu society," (Foreward to Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches) Pt. Nehru once said that he was accidentally born in a Hindu family to indicate that he did not believe in casteism and its edicts.

But during his lifetime he did not shed off Hinduism. As against this Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar, after thoroughly studying the Hindu religion and its social and cultural tenets took the vow that though he was born a Hindu because it was not in his power but he would not die as a Hindu. To keep his solemn vow, Baba Sahib embraced Buddhism and took, "Diksha on Dusehra Day in 1956. Before his death on 6th December 1956. Baba Sahib adopted Buddhism because it is the most secular and scientific religion in which there is no caste and class prejudice but equality, fraternity, love, and affection." The former prime minister Indira Gandhi also said, "The life of Dr. Ambedkar gives a lesson to us



**R. C. Paul (Late)
(Retired Judge)**

that most of evils in our society can be eliminated by domestic reforms as introduced by this great leader." In framing new constitution, Baba Sahib was undoubtedly a larger than life persona. This is established from further words of Sharad Pawar," Dr. Ambedkar incorporated the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the Constitution of free India, it is a living tribute to his juristic genius and social conscience that over the years, the high courts and supreme court have shaped the law to serve the social ends of governmental efforts to improve the lot of the poor."

In pursuance of edicts, of the constitution, certain laws have been enacted and certain ordinances/directions have been promulgated for the upliftment and welfare of the S.Cs. and S.Ts but little has been achieved so far. Protection of Civil Rights Act

1955 and S.Cs and S.Ts. (Protection of Atrocities) 1989 have been passed but despite this the offences

to attract these provisions are still being permitted in Indian societies. Very few cases are registered, tried, or result into conviction due to general prejudice.

Reservations in central or state appointments proportionate to the population of these caste or classes have been notified but their quotas have not been fully filled up. There is a great backlog, though there is no dearth of qualified candidates among the SCs and STs for appointment on such posts. There is no reservation in private sector. Now the state trading is also being squeezed to be picked up by private firms and agencies. This will further limit the appointment scope of the SCs. and STs. candidates on key posts.

The reservation in legislation of course is fully implemented but the MLAs and MPs belonging to the SCs and STs are doing nothing tangible to better the fate of the castes or tribes whom they are supposed to represent, because they occupy the reserved seats for and on their behalf on reserved quotas. They are elected on the tickets of national or regional parties of non- S.Ss, and non STs, financially supported by the millionaires and as such they never raise any point in the parliament or the state assemblies for the welfare of the S.Ts. and S.Cs. to whom they are expected to represent. They are after filling their own coffers with money by indulging in corruption. They are in a way running with the hares and hunting with the hounds.

Ours to be elected members do not form a strong independent party to press for the fulfilment of the demands of our people on account of whom they contest the reserved

seats in the elections. They do not gain the political power which is most needed in the words of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar as expressed by him in the following lines/Political power is the most precious thing in the life of the community especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its position" (in Pakistan or Partition of India) According to Baba Saheb, "lost rights are never regained by begging and by appeals to conscience of usurpers. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition." He has asked us, "write down on the walls of your houses that you were Dasses (slaves) of yesterday but want to be Rulers of tomorrow." During more than 6 decades from the adoption of Indian constitution there has not been caused an appreciable dent in the abysmal plight of S.Cs. and S.Ts. Also untouchability has been abolished by the constitution it still exists in some parts of India. Yet it exists in the mind of caste Hindus and non SCs. who feel ill at ease in the matters of reservation in the appointments and the posts. There is lack of education among the S.Cs. and S.Ts. due to poverty and unemployment. The schemes of their welfare are not fully implemented. The funds earmarked and given the disposal of the states by the central govt. for the purpose are either misappropriated or mis-utilised. Most of the S.Cs, and S.Ts. constitute labor class but suffer from unemployment.

The higher education and medical facilities have become out of their reach being most expensive. Still these people have not blown up the structure of political democracy as prophesied by Baba Saheb. This is because they have not united under one banner. Their population in all the states is not less than 25% of the total population. In Punjab it has risen up to 32%. In case they all get together and form a compact unit like Sikhs in Punjab and BSJ? in U.P and make alliance with some national or regional parties, they can have balance of power in their hands to form the govt, of their choice and rule as contemplated by Baba Saheb. Let a better sense prevail upon the S.Cs. S.Ts. and their leaders to recollect Baba Saheb's philosophy and attain political power. Let them shed off fatalist notion that they are born to suffer the atrocities at the hands of Hindus due to their mythological previous deeds. They should learn the universal truth, "The fault does not lie with our stars but with us that we are underlings" in the words of Shakespeare.

According to Baba Saheb, "The political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community, especially if its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting the challenge. Political power is the only means by which it can sustain its power".

UNPUBLISHED PREFACE THE BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA

Source Courtesy: Columbia University
www.columbia.edu

April 6, 1956

[Text provided by Eleanor Zelliot,
as prepared by Vasant Moon]

A question is always asked to me: how I happen[ed] to take such [a] high degree of education. Another question is being asked: why I am inclined towards Buddhism. These questions are asked because I was born in a community known in India as the "Untouchables." This preface is not the place for answering the first question. But this preface may be the place for answering the second question.

The direct answer to this question is that I regard the Buddha's Dhamma to be the best. No religion can be compared to it. If a modern man who knows science must have a religion, the only religion he can have is the Religion of the Buddha. This conviction has grown in me after thirty-five years of close study of all religions.

How I was led to study Buddhism is another story. It may be interesting for the reader to know. This is how it happened.

My father was a military officer, but at the same time a very religious person. He brought me up under a strict discipline. From my early age I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi, though his father was Ramnandi. As such, he did not believe in Murti Puja (Idol Worship), and yet he performed Ganapati Puja--of course for our sake, but I did not like it. He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house to hear the Katha. This went on for a long number of years.

The year I passed the English Fourth Standard Examination, my community people wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a public meeting to congratulate me. Compared to the state of education in other communities, this was hardly an occasion for celebration. But it was felt by the organisers that I was the first boy in my community to reach this stage; they thought that I had reached a great height. They went to my father to ask for his permission. My father flatly refused, saying that such a thing would inflate the boy's head; after all, he has only passed an examination and done nothing more. Those who wanted to celebrate the event were greatly disappointed. They, however, did not give way. They went to Dada Keluskar, a personal friend of my father, and asked him to intervene. He agreed. After a little argumentation, my father yielded, and the meeting was held. Dada Keluskar presided. He was a literary person of his time. At the end of his address he gave me as a gift a copy of his book on the life of the Buddha, which he had written for the Baroda Sayajirao Oriental Series. I read the book with great interest, and was greatly impressed and moved by it.

I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist lit-

erature. After this, I was determined to ask my father this question. One day I did. I asked my father why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and repeated the stories of the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "You must not ask such silly questions. You are only boys; you must do as you are told." My father was a Roman Patri-



arch, and exercised most extensive Patria Pretestas over his children. I alone could take a little liberty with him, and that was because my mother had died in my childhood, leaving me to the care of my auntie.

So after some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had evidently prepared himself for a reply. He said, "The reason why I ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana is this: we belong to the Untouchables, and you are likely to develop an inferiority complex, which is natural. The value of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana lies in removing this inferiority complex. See Drona and Karna--they were small men, but to what heights they rose! Look at Valmiki--he was a Koli, but he became the author of [the] Ramayana. It is for removing this inferiority complex that I

ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana."

I could see that there was some force in my father's argument. But I was not satisfied. I told my father that I did not like any of the figures in [the] Mahabharata. I said, "I do not like Bhishma and Drona, nor Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did quite the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. His life is nothing but a series of frauds. Equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine

was the only religion which a society awakened by science could accept, and without which it would perish. I also pointed out that for the modern world Buddhism was the only religion which it must have to save itself. That Buddhism makes [a] slow advance is due to the fact that its literature is so vast that no one can read the whole of it. That it has no such thing as a bible, as the Christians have, is its greatest handicap. On the publication of this article, I received many calls, written and oral, to write such a book. It is in response to these calls that I have undertaken the task.

To disarm all criticism I would like to make it clear that I claim no originality for the book. It is a compilation and assembly plant. The material has been gathered from various books. I would particularly like to mention Ashvaghosha's Buddhavita [= Budhacharita], whose poetry no one can excel. In the narrative of certain events I have even borrowed his language.

The only originality that I can claim in [=is] the order of presentation of the topics, in which I have tried to introduce simplicity and clarity. There are certain matters which give headache[s] to the student of Buddhism. I have dealt with them in the Introduction.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to those who have been helpful to me. I am very grateful to Mr. Nanak Chand Rattua of Village Sakrulli and Mr. Parkash Chand of Village Nangal Khurd in the district of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) for the burden they have taken upon themselves to type out the manuscript. They have done it several times. Shri Nanak Chand Rattu took special pains and put in very hard labour in accomplishing this great task. He did the whole work of typing etc. very willingly and without caring for his health and [=or] any sort of remuneration. Both Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Mr. Parkash Chand did their job as a token of their greatest love and affection towards me. Their labours can hardly be repaid. I am very much grateful to them.

When I took up the task of composing the book I was ill, and [I] am still ill. During these five years there were many ups and downs in my health. At some stages my condition had become so critical that doctors talked of me as a dying flame. The successful rekindling of this dying flame is due to the medical skill of my wife and Dr. Malvankar.

They alone have helped me to complete the work. I am also thankful to Mr. M. B. Chitnis, who took [a] special interest in correcting [the] proof and to go [=in going] through the whole book.

I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism. The other books are: (i) Buddha and Karl Marx; and (ii) Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.

B. R. Ambedkar
26 Alipur Road, Delhi
6-4-56

his conduct in the Sarupnakha [= Shurpanakha] episode [and] in the Vali Sugriva episode, and his beastly behaviour towards Sita." My father was silent, and made no reply. He knew that there was a revolt.

This is how I turned to the Buddha, with the help of the book given to me by Dada Keluskar. It was not with an empty mind that I went to the Buddha at that early age.

I had a background, and in reading the Buddhist Lore I could always compare and contrast. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and His Dhamma.

The urge to write this book has a different origin. In 1951 the Editor of the Mahabodhi Society's Journal of Calcutta asked me to write an article for the Vaishak Number. In that article I argued that the Buddha's Religion



**Supervisor
Rosario Rodriguez
District 4**



Fixing Sacramento County Roads Must Be A Priority

Since taking office in January, I've had countless conversations with residents across Sacramento County who are fed up with the condition of our roads—and I don't blame them. From crumbling pavement to massive potholes, our infrastructure is showing its age. This is not just an inconvenience. It's a safety issue, and one that I am committed to addressing head-on.

The scale of the problem is significant. Our current deferred maintenance backlog for county roads is nearly \$1.4 billion, and that number continues to grow each year we fail to act. To put it into perspective, Sacramento County's average pavement condition score sits at a dismal 41 out of 100. We currently invest about \$30 million annually in road repairs, but experts say we need at least

The reality is that we didn't get into this situation overnight, and we won't get out of it overnight either. But make no mistake—this is one of my top priorities. I will continue to push for smarter, more effective investments in our infrastructure, and I'll make sure your voices are heard as we shape the future of transportation in Sacramento County.

We all want safe, smooth, and reliable roads. With the right focus and the political will to follow through, I believe we can get there.

If you'd like to share your thoughts or concerns with me, you can always reach my office at 916-874-5491 or email me at SupervisorRodriguez@sacounty.gov.

BizX Returns For Small Business Week

Entrepreneurs, small business owners and industry professionals are invited to join BizX 2025 on May 7 from 3 to 6 p.m., where local business leaders will share their inspiring path from startup to success.

Hosted annually as part of Capital Region Small Business Week (CRSBW), BizX is the premier business resource and networking event, hosted by the Sacramento County's Office of Economic Development and City of Sacramento's Office of Innovation and Economic Development. This year's theme, "Dream Big, Start Small," highlights the journeys of entrepreneurs who turned their ideas into thriving enterprises.

"BizX is a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels Sacramento County's economy," said Crystal Bethke, Sacramento County Director of Economic Development. "As part of Capital Region Small Business Week, this event is more than a networking opportunity, it's a chance to gain real insight, connect with fellow business owners and access valuable small business resources."

Keynote speaker Ginger Elizabeth Hahn, a luxury chocolatier, will share how she built her renowned brand through passion, perseverance and dedication. Following the keynote, a dynamic panel of local business leaders will offer their firsthand insights. Panelists include: Ernesto Delgado, Restaurateur & Owner of Tequila Museo Mayahuel, La Cosecha Sacramento, Octopus Baja Sacramento and Mesa Mercado Carmichael Susan O'Brien, Owner of The Kitchen Table Dante Williams, Roaster & Owner of The Black Coffee Roastery

In addition to the speaker lineup, attendees can explore a variety of small business resource booths, connect with service providers and meet peers from across the Capital Region. Light refreshments will be served.



\$60 million per year just to keep the problem from getting worse.

Importantly, Sacramento County is the only jurisdiction in the region that contributes General Fund dollars toward fixing roads. In the current budget, that contribution is \$20 million, with the remaining \$10 million coming from other sources like state and federal transportation funds. That General Fund investment shows how seriously we take this issue—but even with it, we're still playing catch-up.

Some have suggested a new local tax measure to address the shortfall, but I'm approaching that idea with caution. Time and again, we've seen these measures fail at the ballot box, and with good reason. Instead of focusing squarely on repairing our roads, past proposals have spread funding across a wide array of projects like bike lanes and public transit. While I absolutely believe those components have their place in a healthy transportation network, they don't reflect what the majority of residents are asking for right now. When voters are told they're paying to fix roads, the money needs to go to fixing roads—not to projects policymakers think the public should want.

In the meantime, I want residents to know that we are taking immediate action where we can. Potholes reported to the County are typically filled within days—sometimes sooner. If you see one, I encourage you to call 311, or reach out to my office directly. We'll make sure the right crew gets dispatched quickly. It might not solve our long-term challenges, but it does make a difference in the day-to-day lives of our residents.

The first 100 registrants will receive free parking validation and a complimentary box of Ginger Elizabeth truffles.

Event Details:
Location: The Assembly at Aggie Square
Address: 200 Aggie Square, 2nd Floor, 4480 Second Ave., Sacramento
Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2025
Time: 3 – 6 p.m.

Tickets: \$10 per person
Register here

For a full lineup of CRSBW activities and events, visit the official Capital Region Small Business Week website.

For more information about BizX 2025, visit the City of Sacramento website.

Mental Health Rehab Approved

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors approved a significant step forward in the creation of a new Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC) for adults. The Board authorized the execution of a 30-year lease agreement and sublease with WellSpace Health for a new facility at 6790 Stockton Boulevard in Sacramento. The lease will run from Jan. 1, 2027, through Dec. 31, 2056.

This proposed facility, approximately 24,700 square feet in size, is expected to be completed by Dec. 31, 2026. It will feature a 32-bed, 24-hour residential program designed for individuals 18 years or older living with mental disorders. The program will provide intensive support and rehabilitative services to help residents develop skills to become self-sufficient, with the hope of increasing levels of independence and developing skills to reintegrate back into society.

WellSpace Health, the nonprofit organization partnering with the County, will manage the facility, ensuring that it provides the highest level of care for those in need. The lease agreement also ensures the County's first right of refusal on available beds, allowing for the County to place individuals in need of care directly into the facility.

The \$23.57 million needed for the construction of the MHRC will come from Round three of the State of California's Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) grant. In addition, the County will provide a required grant match of \$1.98 million, which will come from the County's Patient Care Revenue, along with up to \$1.5 million in possible cost overrun funding.

The new facility is an essential part of the County's commitment to improving mental health services and addressing the growing need for mental health care across the region. By providing a stable and supportive living environment for individuals in recovery, the County is helping to break down barriers to mental health treatment and support.

For more information, visit the Department of Health Services website

Big Dream, Big Apple, Congratulations, Cam!

I couldn't be more excited to congratulate Cam Skattebo on being



drafted by the New York Giants! Cam, your grit, heart, and relentless drive have brought you to this incredible milestone. You've made your family, your community, and all of us in District 4 proud.

Wishing you all the best as you take the field in the NFL — we'll be cheering you on every step of the way!

Make An Impact Locally This Big Day of Giving

Many nonprofit organizations serving our communities are participating in this annual regional effort, hosted by the Sacramento Region Community Foundation. Your donation helps ensure these groups can continue their important work that strengthens our community.

Donating is simple and secure. Visit www.bigdayofgiving.org to discover and support over 850 nonprofits across the region. Whether you give a little or a lot, every dollar makes a difference.

Give early—donations are accepted now through May 1. Learn more at www.bigdayofgiving.org.

Upcoming District Happening

Family Paint Night
FRIDAY, MAY 2ND
6:00 PM TO 8:00PM
RIO LINDA COMMUNITY CENTER
810 OAK LN. RIO LINDA
\$15 PER PERSON
EACH PARTICIPANT WILL RECEIVE ALL THE MATERIALS NEEDED TO CREATE THEIR OWN MASTERPIECE, INCLUDING PAINT, BRUSHES, AND A CANVAS.
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED
SCAN TO REGISTER

Join The City of Citrus Heights for the 4th Annual
CITRUS HEIGHTS TOOLS of the TRADE PUBLIC WORKS
Free Event!
Thursday, May 8, 2025
2-5 p.m. Van Maren Park
Building the Future of Public Works
Education & Career Fair
• Local job opportunities
• Technical schools
• Trade schools
Fun for All Ages!
• Meet the machines
• Hands-on demonstrations
• Giveaways & treats!