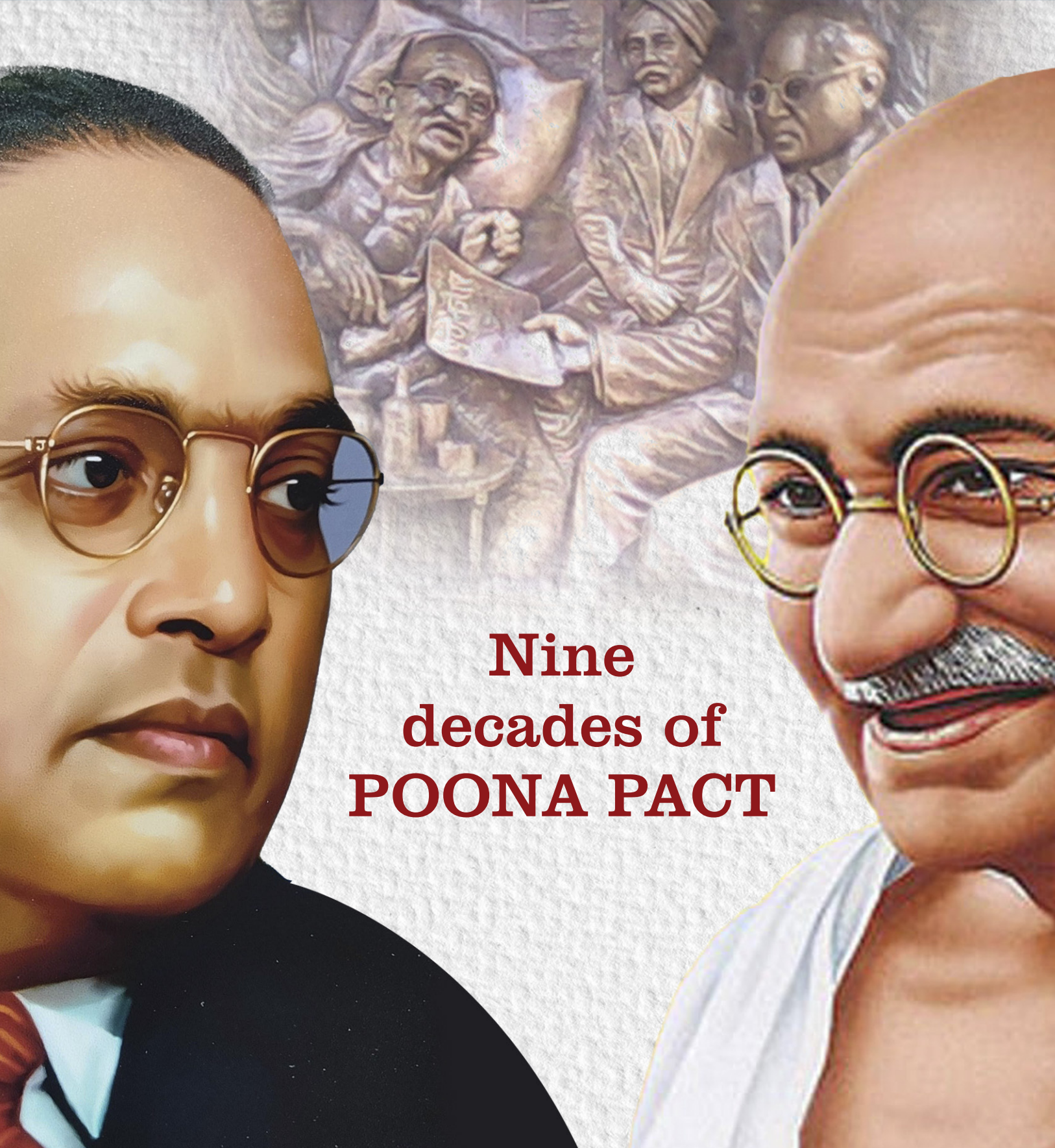


UNHEARD VOICES

14 SEPTEMBER 2023 | Year 3 | Vol. 6



Nine decades of POONA PACT



Bharat/India - Asserting Roots

Nation is currently intensely debating what we should call ourselves – India or Bharat. The debate is not new as it has been going since independence. Record of constituent assembly discussion indicates that supporters of both the sides vehemently pushed their views and the proposal was finally put for vote. The current provision 'India that is Bharat' resolution was passed with majority. We need to remember two factors. Firstly, this decision needs to be seen against the backdrop of compelling internal and international situations prevailing at the time of independence. Secondly, and more importantly, members of constituent assembly, particularly, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar did not disown or drop 'Bharat'. It necessarily means that constitution makers accepted the existence of Bharat as a nation since ancient ages. In other words, we, as a nation, did not disconnect ourselves from the past at the time of independence from British rule.

India or Bharat signifies altogether two different mindset or attitude. It is a reality that 'India' is largely associated with colonial mindset. It reminds us of political slavery, which was a dark period in the nation's life. It seeks to suggest that we were born in 1947. It denies our existence as a nation since ancient times. Is it a reality? Certainly not. We ought to remember all the time that we withstood as a nation despite consistent and continuous attacks by the intruders for centuries. These attacks were not merely political, as portrayed by some intellectuals, but cultural and religious in nature. Unfortunately, we are yet to recover from after effects of these attacks even after 75 years of independence.

Bharat is acknowledgement to the existence of our nation for centuries. But here is the slippery place. We need to motivate ourselves from our glorious achievements and have to have robust introspection at the same time. Many have genuine fear that Bharat is revival of old social structure, which was marked by some absolutely undesirable social ills like caste discrimination, untouchability and oppression of women. As against this, India

stands for modern technology and post-industrial revolution ideas. Here lies the crux of the issue. It is the responsibility of every one of us to ensure that inhuman, humiliating and disgraceful customs and traditions have no space in Bharat. This is the duty and responsibility of all of us to give up undesirable parts of the past while remembering glorious aspects of history. Human values like equality and fraternity have to be experienced in real life. While brushing aside outdated ideas and accepting modern values, we should honestly admit the fact that the country has a glorious history and tradition of fighting against social ills even before British rule. It is not the gift of British rule. For example, we have a very rich tradition of social reformers like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Tukaram, Sant Kabir, Ravidas, Ramanuja, etc. Bhakti movement was necessarily a social reformation movement by essence. It has left a deep impact on the Indian psyche. Why should we have resentment to accept this reality?

Going back to the roots is a global phenomenon. Be it at individual level or at social. Modern psychologists have supported this phenomenon, which they feel, is a natural manifestation of desire for self-esteem. We have several examples like Turkey to Turkiye, Czech Republic to Czechia., Swaziland to Eswatini, Holland to the Netherlands, Ceylon to Sri Lanka and Siam to Thailand wherein respective nations have embraced historical identity. It will be a sign of intellectual maturity and emotional intelligence to give up undesirable elements of ancient civilization, embracing contemporary ideas and stay deeply rooted at the same time. This is necessary for a healthy and strong nation. We cannot disconnect ourselves from the past, which includes achievements and shortcomings as well. Similarly, we should gracefully accept the role of non-indigenous forces in shaping the country. This needs to be seen as a process of shaping human kind. This process necessarily denotes giving up elements, which obstructed healthy development of the nation. We should never forget that the path of future is determined by past and present. Let us accept reality.

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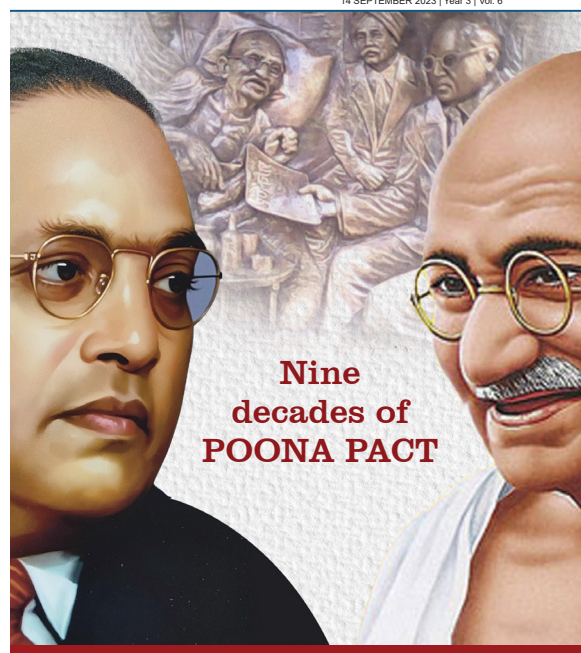
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E-PERIODICAL

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Appeal for financial assistance



Social Studies Foundation (SSF) is working with the prime objective of conducting social studies and research of the society in a multi-disciplinary fashion. SSF focus, however, is on those people, who have been facing discrimination and are deprived of benefits of the development and democratic process. SSF logo, thus says, "Knowledge for Empowerment".

"UNHEARD VOICES" is a small step in this direction. It provides a platform to all those people, who have to be listened to by the Indian citizens to make this country united and integral. We will raise the voice of these people fearlessly. Social Studies Foundation has currently a small set-up to carry out its objectives. We, however, need financial support from our well-wishers, who agree with our objectives. We appeal to the readers and well-wishers to donate generously to the foundation.

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Relevance of Poona Pact signed by Gandhi and Ambedkar



1932

MK GANDHI AND DR B. R. AMBEDKAR AGREE TO THE POONA PACT

The Poona Pact was formulated under diverse and difficult political and social scenarios. The objective and intention of Mahatma Gandhi was to save Hinduism at the pretext of social cohesion at the cost of rights and dignity of the depressed on one hand and on the other Babasaheb Ambedkar was concerned about the welfare and empowerment of suppressed and oppressed people of India. It was a challenging situation.

Ramesh Chander



Poona Pact of 1932 was signed on September 24. It is less appreciated and forgotten but of significantly important. It was signed by Babasaheb Ambedkar and upper caste Hindus led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi, who had undertaken a fast unto death to oppose the Communal Award of PM Ramsay MacDonald. In the aftermath of the Round Table Conference to address the communal issue, PM Ramsay MacDonald gave the award on August 16, 1932 in which all the minorities including the depressed classes were given separate electorates to elect their representatives to the provincial and central legislatures.

Mahatma Gandhi opposed Dr. Ambedkar, who pleaded for separate electorates for depressed classes, termed him as “unrepresentative” of the depressed classes even at the second Round Table Conference. After failing to convince the British rulers, Mahatma Gandhi resorted to the coercive and clever method of fast unto death, to undo the communal award. The entire leadership of the Congress party and hardcore Manuwadis stood against Dr. Ambedkar and even threatened him of dire consequences to the extent of endangering his life. The emotions were raised to a sort of frenzy, terming Dr. Ambedkar as an ‘anti-national’ and ‘anti-Hindus’. Mahatma Gandhi was of the view that the separate electorates to depressed would “slowdown the integration of the depressed classes into the society”. He did not oppose separate electorates to other classes but only to depressed. It was a clever play as some critics observed that it

was to keep depressed people under the subjugation of upper castes as ordained in the traditional texts of Hindus. While promising to undertake the issues of untouchability and empowerment of the weaker sections of the society, Mahatma Gandhi opposed the communal award tooth and nail and said that it was an “injection of poison that is inculcated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatsoever” to the society.

The Poona Pact was formulated under such diverse and difficult political and social scenarios. The objective and intention of Mahatma Gandhi was to save Hinduism at the pretext of social cohesion at the cost of rights and dignity of the depressed on one hand and on the other Babasaheb Ambedkar was concerned about the welfare and empowerment of suppressed and oppressed people of India. It was a challenging situation. Dr. Ambedkar was a nationalist to the core. He was a spiritual person with a strong moral standing. Dr. Ambedkar succumbed to the pressure and machinations of Mahatma Gandhi and other Hindu leaders, who were raising the bogey of saving the life of Mahatma Gandhi who was continuing his fast unto death in the Yerwada jail in Pune. The Poona Pact, a turning point in Indian history, which determined the position and space of the depressed in the polity and society, was signed. Mahatma Gandhi ended his fast unto death. Some analysts termed it as “Ambedkar won the battle but lost the war to safeguard the rights of depressed” to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi and maintain the



social cohesion and also the momentum of struggle for independence from the British as a true nationalist and human par excellence.

The Poona Pact carried forward the concept of reservations propounded by William Hunter and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule in 1882. It has nine clauses stipulating, inter alia, 148 reserved seats for depressed people under the joint electorates as against 71 seats reserved for depressed under the separate electorates as provided in the communal award of PM Ramsay MacDonald. It was provided to give special consideration to depressed people in civil services and sufficient educational facilities. The Hindu leaders under Mahatma Gandhi agreed to launch a movement against untouchability and care for the empowerment of the depressed with a view to integrate them with the mainstream of the society. These pronouncements were made by the leaders at a conference in Mumbai on September 25, 1932 in which Dr. Ambedkar also participated. He endorsed the Poona Pact in the larger interest of the country and the society. The necessary and relevant provisions of the Poona Pact were duly incorporated into the subsequent legal framework including the constitution of free India. The rest is history.

Since the Poona Pact of 1932, much water has flowed into the Ganges. It is time to have an appraisal of the pact in the given and current socio-political and even socio-economic status of depressed people in India even after almost nine decades. Not long after the signing of the pact, the depressed people, led by Dr. Ambedkar expressed their regret and dismay on the outcome and results and even behaviour of the upper castes to address the real problems of the depressed. All India Scheduled Castes Federation of Babasaheb Ambedkar in its then Madras (Chennai) session in 1944 passed a resolution and demanded separate electorates for the depressed. Dr. Ambedkar took up the matter with Lord Irwin and Winston Churchill appropriately to get the separate electorates as stipulated in the communal award. The reason for such a change in their approach was the non-serious attitude of the upper castes and the society at large to address the issues of untouchability and empowerment. Moreover, it was felt that the reservation of seats in the joint electorate tended to promote and elect stooges and yes-men, who were not the true representatives of the suffering masses. Even after independence and provisions in the constitution of India, the question of true representation and social acceptability of the depressed continues to be unresolved. Babasaheb Ambedkar, along with his several followers, converted to Buddhism in October, 1956 to end the social and spiritual subjugation of depressed people. The subsequent developments and leadership under the likes of Babu Kanshi Ram underlined the ground reality and demanded to rectify the situation appropriately to get the true representatives of the depressed elected to the

legislatures and parliament. Babu Kanshi Ram's book "Chamcha Age" published in 1982 addressed the issue threadbare. The question of reservations in services and educational institutions attracted the attention of the community and its leadership in the face of unplaced clamour and opposition of the so-called general classes. These issues tend to generate avoidable heat and animosity in the society, which is termed as 'unwarranted and dangerous'.

Let us try to find answers to some of the relevant questions in this regard. In spite of constitutional provisions, has untouchability and the caste system been abolished? The answer is a big NO. Did political reservation in the legislatures help? Again, the answer is a big NO. In the given political arrangements, the depressed class representatives are nothing but glorified 'Chamchas or Stooges' as termed by Babu Kanshi Ram. Reservation in the general electorate has no meaning. It seems a separate electorate is the answer. Political polarization of the depressed on the basis of issues pertaining to their empowerment and integration into the mainstream of the society is much needed to address the issues of caste, social, economic, educational and political marginalization of depressed people. The so-called general class or Brahmanwadis oppose reservation in the services and educational outfits. Is it justified? Not at all. Are they interested in abolishing caste discrimination? Do they tend to claim their share in the dirty work like manual scavenging and going down the sewer? No, they want to have the cake and eat it too. The general class must know that these special provisions or reservations for the weaker sections of the society were not given voluntarily by the sweet will of the rulers and the society. They were obtained by a relentless and right struggle by the suffering humanity under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar and his associates. His heirs are interested in maintaining these till the lofty ideals of 'Equality, Liberty and Justice' as enshrined in the constitution are attained to usher the country into much needed 'Harmony'. Could we succeed in transforming our political democracy into a social and economic democracy, as visualized by Babasaheb Ambedkar and other leaders? Again, the answer is in the negative.

Let us have an honest introspection to answer these questions on this day of the anniversary of the Poona Pact, which was an instrument to preserve the social and political order and to maintain the momentum of our struggle for freedom from the British rulers. The issues of depressed class people should be addressed with all sincerity before it gets too late. They contributed much in sacrificing their 'identity' under the Poona Pact in the larger interests of the country to defeat the often alleged 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British. We will ignore this historical background at our own peril.

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Nine decades of Poona Pact

Poona Pact was an agreement between Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi signed on September 24, 1932 at Yerwada Central Jail in Pune, to break Mahatma Gandhi's fast unto death. Poona pact was the result of communal award granted in 1932 by the British government. It provided asked for allocation of 148 seats to depressed classes in the provincial legislature. In the Central Legislature, 19% of the seats would be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

Communal Award and the subsequent Pune Pact were significant milestones; they did not end Dr. Ambedkar's fight. He continued his political and social struggle to ensure rights for the deprived communities, which culminated in his pivotal role in framing the Indian Constitution. In summary, while Dr. Ambedkar saw the Communal Award as an opportunity to further the cause of the deprived classes, the unfolded events made him wary of mainstream politics. They reinforced his belief in the need for independent representation and safeguards for his community.

Vijendra



In the annals of Indian history, the Pune Pact of 1932 stands out as a significant event, intertwining the fight for independence with the parallel struggle for social justice. The pact, signed between Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, had long-standing implications for the political representation of deprived classes in India.

The Historical Backdrop:

The situation leading up to the Pune Pact of 1932 was a complex interplay of social and political tensions in colonial India. To appreciate the significance of the Pune Pact, it's essential to understand the backdrop against which it took place. By the 1930s, the Indian National movement had gained significant momentum. The Indian National Congress, with leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, was at the forefront of this struggle against British colonial rule. One of the strategies employed by the British was the policy of 'divide and rule'. They aimed to amplify divisions among Indians by institutionalizing communal electorates. This began

with the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, granting separate electorates to Muslims. The concept was to allow communities to elect their representatives without interference from the majority community.

In the early 20th century, we witnessed a rise in the political consciousness among the deprived community (then known as the 'Depressed Classes'). Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emerged as a leading voice, advocating for the rights and representation of them. Given various communities' demands for more excellent representation, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, announced the Communal Award in 1932. This award proposed separate electorates not just for Muslims, Sikhs, and other minorities but also for the Depressed Classes. This would mean that the Depressed Classes would elect their own representatives, separate from the Hindu majority.

Dr. Ambedkar, conversely, supported the idea of separate electorates. He believed that given the deep-seated caste prejudices in Indian society,



separate electorates were the only way for the Depressed Classes to get genuine representation. Having witnessed and experienced the oppression of the caste system firsthand, Dr. Ambedkar believed that the separate electorates would empower and provide them with a simple model free from the hegemony of the upper castes. The traditional caste hierarchy, with centuries of discrimination against the lower castes, was a significant backdrop to this discussion. The idea of separate electorates was seen by many as an opportunity for the marginalized Depressed Classes to break free from the shackles of upper-caste dominance.

Dr. Ambedkar's views:

The Communal Award, by providing for separate electorates for Depressed Classes, recognized them as a distinct political entity. For Dr. Ambedkar, this validated the long-standing grievances and concerns of the depressed classes. It provided them with an opportunity to break free from the hold of upper-caste Hindu politics. Dr. Ambedkar viewed the separate electorates as empowering the deprived community. He believed this provision would allow them to elect leaders, who represented their interests without being overshadowed by the majority. The backdrop to the Communal Award was the resistance by the traditional Hindu leadership to the idea of separate electorates for deprived classes.

Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, viewed it as a division of the Hindu community. On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar saw this as a genuine opportunity for deprived classes to break free from centuries of oppression and discrimination. This situation, marked by heightened tensions, political

manoeuvrings, and the urgency of Gandhi's fast, set the stage for the eventual compromise of the Pune Pact in 1932. The pact symbolized a coming together of different factions but also highlighted the underlying and long-standing tensions within Indian society.

Mahatma Gandhi was firmly against the idea of separate electorates for the deprived classes, seeing it as a further division of the Hindu community. He believed that the 'Harijans' (a term he coined, meaning children of God) were an integral part of Hinduism, and separating them would be detrimental to the religion and the nation. In a dramatic turn of events, Mahatma Gandhi, while imprisoned in Yerwada jail in Pune, began a fast unto death in September 1932 as a protest against the Communal Award's provision for separate electorates for deprived classes. His fast led to a massive outcry and intensified negotiations between the leaders of various communities.

Compromise with the Pune Pact: In the wake of Mahatma Gandhi's fast unto death opposing the separate electorates for deprived classes, the Pune Pact was signed. With a heavy heart and under immense pressure, Dr. Ambedkar agreed to give up the demand for separate electorates in favour of reserved seats within a joint electorate. While this was a compromise, it ensured increased reserved seats for the deprived community in the legislative assemblies. The episode surrounding the Communal Award and the subsequent events leading to the Pune Pact deepened due to Dr. Ambedkar's distrust of the Hindu orthodoxy. He believed that the upper castes,



Artistic presentation of Poona Pact, displayed in Pune.



when given a chance, would always act against the interests of the deprived community.

While the Communal Award and the subsequent Pune Pact were significant milestones, they did not end Dr. Ambedkar's fight. He continued his political and social struggle to ensure rights for the deprived communities, which culminated in his pivotal role in framing the Indian Constitution. In summary, while Dr. Ambedkar saw the Communal Award as an opportunity to further the cause of the deprived classes, the unfolded events made him wary of mainstream politics. They reinforced his belief in the need for independent representation and safeguards for his community.

The Pact Emerges:

Mahatma Gandhi's fast precipitated a crisis.



With national attention focused on this issue, a meeting was arranged between Dr. Ambedkar and the leaders of the caste Hindus. The discussions culminated in the Pune Pact.

The pact stipulated:

1. There would be a single Hindu electorate with reserved seats for the deprived classes.
2. The number of reserved seats for deprived communities in provincial legislatures would be increased.
3. Thus, while deprived communities did not get a separate electorate, they secured an enhanced representation within the joint electorate.

The Implications of the Pune Pact:

The Pune Pact was more than just a political agreement; it reshaped deprived communities' politics in India.

Unified Hindu Electorate: The pact maintained a unified Hindu electorate. While this was seen as a win for national unity, deprived communities remained part of the broader Hindu fold, for better or worse.

Enhanced Deprived classes Representation: The increased reserved seats ensured that they had a louder political voice. This was a significant

achievement, given the historical suppression of their voices.

Dr. Ambedkar's leadership: Despite the compromise, Ambedkar emerged as a formidable leader. He continued to champion the rights of the oppressed, and his pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution ensured that it enshrined principles of justice, equality, and fraternity.

Foundation for Future Politics: The pact laid the groundwork for future discussions on reservations and representation in independent India. These provisions have played a crucial role in uplifting marginalized sections of the society.

In essence, while the Pune Pact was signed nearly a century ago, its implications are deeply embedded in India's sociopolitical landscape even today. The pact serves as both a historical touchstone and a modern reference point in the ongoing dialogue about social justice, representation, and the upliftment of historically oppressed groups in India.

Post-independence, the influence of the Pune Pact was seen in the framing of the Indian Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar, as the chief architect of the Constitution, included provisions for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in legislative bodies. The essence of the Pune Pact, ensuring representation for marginalized groups, was thus enshrined in the Constitution. The ethos of the Pune Pact can be observed in India's continued commitment to affirmative action policies. The reservation system has been extended to various sectors including education and jobs, ensuring opportunities for marginalized communities. Political parties focusing on deprived communities' rights, like the Bahujan Samaj Party, have emerged and gained prominence, indicating a political realization of the empowerment ideals advocated during the Pune Pact. The pact continues to be referenced in debates surrounding social justice, representation, and the rights of marginalized groups. It serves as a reminder of the historical injustices faced by deprived communities and the steps taken to address those injustices.

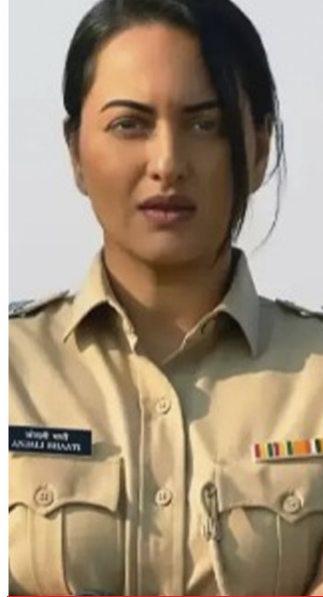
Conclusion:

The Pune Pact of 1932 serves as a reminder of the complexities of India's struggle for independence. While the fight against colonial rule was paramount, the internal challenges – social and political – were equally pressing. In retrospect, the pact symbolizes unity, where two stalwarts representing diverse interests found a middle ground for the greater good. However, it also underscores the underlying tensions and the intricate dance between social justice and national unity. In the end, the Pune Pact did not just determine electoral politics; it set the stage for the journey of an independent India, seeking to balance the ideals of unity and diversity, representation and integration.

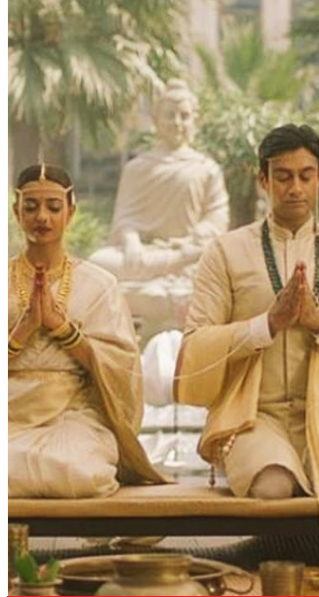
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Kathal



Dahaad



Made in heaven



Taali

OTT: Erasing stereotyped representation of subaltern section

The contemporary mainstream cinema industry is undergoing a transition, moving from elite to oppressed and from local to global in its effort to include narratives and experiences of marginalized communities. The web series features sub-characters hailing from depressed and lower castes, portrayed in positive roles with impartiality. It presents depressed women as awakened, educated, and empowered. This marks a transformation in the cinematic industry concerning the portrayal of subaltern oppressed and marginalized sections, presenting them in apt perspective.

Dr. Chandrakant



Indian cinema is shifting the representation and portrayal of marginalized communities through OTT platforms. Some recently released web series and OTT movies serve as excellent examples for examining the depiction of marginalized lives and experiences. `Taali`, released on Jio-Cinema, and `Kathal` streaming on Netflix, address depressed class women's issues with an assertive approach. Similarly, the web series `Dahaad` portrays a depressed class woman as an active police inspector and is available on Prime Video. Other web series, namely `Inspector Avinash` and `Made in Heaven`, remarkably depict subaltern oppressed and marginalization on the silver screen.

Kathal

`Kathal` represents a work of social satire, featuring Sanya Malhotra in the role of depressed class police officer Mahima, a determined policewoman assigned to investigate the theft of prized jackfruits from a local upper-caste politician's residence within a small-town setting. The central narrative of Kathal revolves predominantly around the disappearance of these jackfruits, owned by an upper caste political figure,

and Mahima's unwavering dedication to solving this peculiar case as a means to establish her competence. In her relentless pursuit of resolving the Kathal case, she gradually unveils the intricacies and enigmas embedded within a small-town milieu.

The plot of Kathal follows a straightforward trajectory, bolstered by commendable performances from the ensemble cast, with Rajpal Yadav, portraying an impassioned journalist, particularly shining in his role. His introduction into the narrative, where he endeavours to interview policewoman Mahima, provides an early glimpse of the engaging experience awaiting the audience.

Sanya Malhotra demonstrates her acting prowess by effectively embodying the character of a depressed empowered woman, displaying meticulous attention to nuances in dialect and mannerisms. The movie Kathal underscores the prevailing issue of casteism in India, with a particular emphasis on the notion that individuals in positions of authority often find themselves shielded from its repercussions.

However, viewers may discern similarities



between 'Kathal' and 'Dahaad'. It provides a significant opportunity for marginalized characters to be portrayed as empowered individuals rather than victims, thanks to the efforts of emerging filmmakers in the realm of OTT platforms. OTT platforms, being democratic in nature, possess the capacity to maintain high standards in their film productions. A notable influence of OTT platforms has been the integration of regional and marginalized film artists into the mainstream film industry.

Mahima, positioned at the intersection of caste and gender dynamics, is introduced as an inspector, who led a significant operation against a local criminal but was denied due recognition during a press conference. Her competence, outspokenness, and perpetual sense of bewilderment serve as a moral compass for the audience, highlighting the dearth of self-awareness within the police force. Moreover, she confronts the challenges of being a woman and an oppressed woman simultaneously, forming a complex web of experiences. Mahima holds a powerful position, which is why she has not personally encountered the traumas experienced by lower-class rural women. She has to face literate casteist people. However, as oppressed class men and women, we face the dual challenges of caste-based and gender-based exploitations and discrimination.

Nonetheless, from the different perspective, Kathal, rather than fully capitalizing on the opportunity to shed light on the fresh perspective and empathy offered by an individual from a marginalized background, who observes a lacklustre, discriminatory, insensitive, and corrupt police force primarily composed of upper-caste individuals, opts for a somewhat shallow satirical approach. This approach oversimplifies issues related to caste and gender oppression, both within the professional and personal spheres.

In his directorial debut, Yashowardhan Mishra inadvertently falls into the familiar trap often encountered by media productions attempting to expose the pervasive caste-based biases plaguing numerous institutions in India. Kathal reduces these multifaceted systemic problems to mere jests concerning one's caste, ultimately seeking resolution through the hero's righteous actions by the film's conclusion.

Dahaad

Sonakshi Sinha delivers an outstanding portrayal of Anjali Bhatti, a police officer from the oppressed class, who is stationed in Mandawa, a fictional outpost designated for disciplining errant police personnel. Anjali, a local woman hailing from a marginalized community, is well-known in the town, thanks to her progressive father, who, before his demise, ensured his daughter's empowerment. Her mother, portrayed by Jayati Bhatia with a touch of frustration, holds a contrasting viewpoint, desiring just one thing for her non-conventional and rebellious daughter: marriage and the pursuit of a traditional

domestic life. This perspective underscores the prevailing societal notion that a woman's future lacks fulfilment without a husband.

Sub-Inspector Bhatti's duty involves tracing the whereabouts of young women, who fall victim to deceptive marriages, often eloping and subsequently disappearing. As her investigation unfolds, she uncovers a sinister pattern: approximately 27 of these women have been brutally murdered, their lifeless bodies discovered in public restrooms. Bhatti's suspicions centre on Anand Swarnakar (Vijay Varma), a seemingly upstanding individual. Amid her professional responsibilities, Bhatti contends with personal challenges, including issues related to her identity, professionalism, and marital status. 'Dahaad,' which translates to 'roar,' is the creation of Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar, directed by Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi. The caste and gender issue effectively addresses a range of societal ills that serve as motivations for the crimes depicted and influence character development. Anjali, hailing from a backward caste, confronts instances of caste-based discrimination, gender bias, and familial pressure to conform to traditional marriage norms, often resulting in her mother's distress.

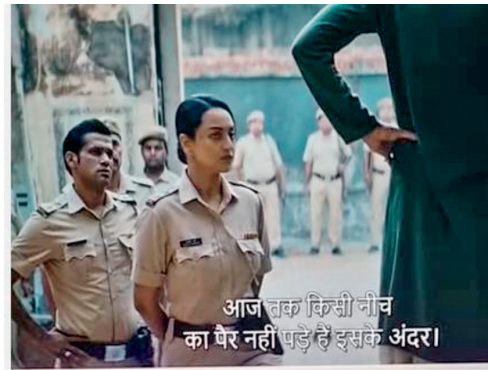
At times, Anjali's mere presence is met with resentment due to her background, highlighting the persistence of societal prejudices. Compared to Kathal one could not find Savarna gaze through the entire season one of Dahaad. As Bharti has faced multi challenges of casteist upper-caste community and individuals.

Taali (I won't clap, but make everyone else clap)

Taali is a biographical film that draws inspiration from the life of Sreegauri Sawant, formerly known as Ganesh, a transgender woman, who played a significant role as one of the petitioners in the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) case. This case, initiated in 2013, ultimately culminated in the 2014 Supreme Court decision, officially acknowledging transgender individuals as the third gender in India. The film Taali serves as a portrayal of Gauri Sawant unwavering determination and her pivotal role in the legal battle that resulted in the official recognition of the third gender on Indian official documents.

Gauri, enacted by Sushmita Sen, a former Miss Universe winner, in the lead role of the web series 'Taali', enhances its commercial and promotional appeal. The series endeavours to serve as an exemplar by depicting a transgender individual's journey towards assuming a leadership role within the marginalized transgender community in Mumbai. It is noteworthy to delve into the marginalized and often neglected transgender community in India.

The commonly used term 'eunuch' or 'Hijra', which is employed to describe individuals, who are considered sexless, has traditionally been defined as a castrated man. The concept of a hermaphrodite pertains to an organism possessing both male



and female reproductive organs. In contrast, a transvestite refers to a person, who chooses a gender identity different from their biological sex. Empirical evidence indicates that individuals with a neutralized or neutral gender identity are relatively uncommon. The Hijra population in India exhibits a structured group dynamic with regional affiliations, often led by a group leader. The majority identifies with the female gender. Within the eunuch community, instances of incestuous relationships are rare.

Many have engaged in sex work at some point in their lives. Serena Nanda's research reveals that some individuals labelled as Hijra in India combine roles as prostitutes and participants in rites of passage. The series dealt with the independent identity of the third gender and the fight for civil rights as provided by the Indian constitution. Gauri Sawant, born as a boy and later transitioning into a transwoman, has had her life journey depicted in a dramatic manner by Marathi film director Ravi Jadhav. As a transgender individual, she becomes a social activist, who frequently encounters multilayered discrimination from both

her own family members and society. Director Ravi Jadhav challenges the stereotypical representation of transgender individuals in Indian cinema. Throughout Indian cinema's history, they have been portrayed as comedy creators, sex workers, and second-class citizens by so-called progressive upper-class filmmakers. Despite this ostensibly sanctioned role in Indian culture, Hijras encounter significant harassment and discrimination from the broader society, lack organized sources of income, and often face arrest for begging, one of the few means of livelihood available to them. Featuring a real-life transgender woman had the potential to be transformed into an engaging biopic film. However, the incorporation of fictional elements and the portrayal by a former Miss Universe, who embodies the archetype of the most beautiful transgender in the world, dilutes the gravity of the topic. Disregarding the protagonist's beauty, the commendable performance by Sen, and the slender plotline that neglects the fundamental premise of its title, 'Taali' could have evolved into a distinctive cinematic masterpiece. However, it



might tend to change perspectives, encouraging the view of gender lessness or the establishment of egalitarianism through the screen. The journey from being Ganesh to becoming a transwoman (Gauri) involved facing exclusion from her own home and society, government authorities, and ultimately gaining a third gender identity. The end of the web series Gauri Sawant Said,

"Give me hurdle you can' God
I will overcome it
Give me the scratching stand
I will turn it into greenery
Build Mountains in my path
And I will build tunnels in them
Hit me with lightning and thunder
And I will be the rainbow in the end"

Inspector Avinash

According to the NCRB, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have the highest rate of crime and violence in India. Drawing inspiration from the real-life accomplishments of the accomplished law enforcement figure Avinash Mishra, 'Inspector Avinash' delineates the steadfast endeavours of a determined police officer in addressing a spectrum of societal issues plaguing the state of Uttar Pradesh during the late 1990s. These multifaceted challenges encompass pervasive corruption, the clandestine arms trade, and the burgeoning influence of local criminal factions. Mishra and his specialized task force grapple with both personal and professional tribulations as they strive to reestablish tranquillity and concord within the state. Central to their strategy is the establishment of a dependable network of informants, which eventually becomes known as the Mayajaal, aiding the state police overarching objective of transforming Uttar Pradesh into a crime-free territory.

Regarding its narrative structure, 'Inspector Avinash' does not introduce any particularly innovative elements. The series attracts viewers primarily due to the inclusion of Randeep Hooda, whose capacity to differentiate between various depictions of the idealistic law enforcement officer, combined with his proficient acting abilities, elevates the show's attractiveness. Nonetheless, the artistic choice of having Hooda break the fourth wall and engage with the audience directly represents a stylistic decision that may elicit a range of reactions.

Nevertheless, the contemporary mainstream cinema industry is undergoing a transition, moving from elite to oppressed and from local to global in its effort to include narratives and experiences of marginalized communities. The web series features sub-characters hailing from depressed and lower castes, portrayed in positive roles with impartiality. It presents depressed women as awakened, educated, and empowered. This marks a transformation in the cinematic industry concerning the portrayal of subaltern oppressed and marginalized sections, presenting them in apt perspective.

Made in Heaven

Another significant effort by Dalit filmmaker Nijar Ghauawan involves narrating stories centered on deprived classes and marginalized sections. His previous film, 'Geeli Pucchi', explores the life of a progressive depressed class widow, who grapples with caste and gender discrimination in an urban setting.

His latest work, titled 'Made in Heaven' takes a step further in representing depressed from an Ambedkarite perspective. Made in Heaven explores issues related to marriage institutions in the digital era, representing a commendable effort to reevaluate the expectations of both the traditional mindset of parents and the modern metropolitan generation. Nijar Ghayawan has striven to establish alternative aesthetics through the portrayal of a girl from deprived class, portrayed by Radhika Apte, who seeks marriage with her upper-caste lover as a Buddhist marriage ceremony.

The endeavours undertaken by self-proclaimed progressive filmmakers in the realm of cinema appear to be focused on perpetuating a longstanding narrative that emphasizes the victimization of the lower-caste community. This concept of lower-caste victimhood has deep historical roots embedded in Indian society, dating back to significant periods. Nevertheless, the origins of this narrative can be traced to a somewhat ambiguous period, situated between history and mythology, during which narratives were crafted depicting deprived classes as figures subjected to victimization, often portrayed as ascetic beggars or individuals deemed incapable of procreation.

It becomes evident that contemporary progressive filmmakers were essentially reiterating this victimhood narrative concerning the lower-castes. Despite that, from the OTT platforms regional and marginal film artists are entered into mainstream film industries for erasing the stereotypical portrayal of depressed. They are remarkable contributing the inclusive and diverse representation of marginalization through the positive perspective.

While the web series and movies in question addresses a broad spectrum of societal issues, including casteism, sexism, misogyny, patriarchy, queerphobia, transphobia, ageism, disabilities, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and cultural disparities, it predominantly frames these issues through the lens of upper-caste perspective. It is essential to highlight that the majority of India's population, estimated to account for approximately 85% to 90%, comprises Bahujan's. Nevertheless, from the OTT platform the scenario has started to change for inclusive and diverse representation in cinema.

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A Tribute to Bindeshwar Pathak

Bindeshwar Pathak (April, 1943 – August, 2023), a man of sterling worth in the field of sanitation, health and environment, passed away on August 15, 2023. Pathak Sahib was a social reformer and a social entrepreneur particularly with regard to the vulnerable sections of the society commonly called the Safai Karamcharis belonging to the lowest strata of the Hindu society in the caste ridden social order of India. Bindeswar Pathak first came to understand the plight of scavengers in 1968 when he joined the Bhangi-Mukti (scavengers' liberation) Cell of Bihar Gandhi Centenary Celebrations Committee. During that time, he travelled throughout India, living with scavenger families as part of his Ph.D. research.

Drawing on that experience, he resolved to take action, not only out of sympathy for the scavengers but also in the belief that scavenging is a dehumanizing practice that would ultimately have a destructive impact on Indian society. He established Sulabh International, a social service organization in 1970. The organization worked to promote human rights, environmental sanitation, and non-conventional sources of energy, waste management and social reforms through education. He was the Brand Ambassador for Swachh Rail Mission of Indian Railways. His work is considered pioneering in social reform, especially in the field of sanitation and hygiene. He received various national and international awards for his work with this organization. He was presented with the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration, Academics and Management for the year 2017. He was conferred with Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian award in 1991.

Bindeshwar Pathak was rightly called a social entrepreneur. The Tribune in its obituary to the departed soul said, "Sulabh reported a turnover of Rs 490 crore in the fiscal 2020. Not just toilets, Sulabh has set up a number of vocational training institutes. Here, liberated scavengers, their sons and daughters and persons from other weaker sections of society are given training in various vocations like computer technology, typing and shorthand, electrical trade, woodcraft, leather craft, diesel and petrol engineering, cutting and tailoring, cane furniture making, masonry work, motor driving. The purpose of imparting vocational training to them is to give them new means of livelihood, alleviate poverty and bring them into the mainstream of society.

From setting up an English medium School in Delhi for children of manual scavengers to providing financial assistance to the abandoned widows in Vrindavan or establish a museum of toilets in the

national capital, Pathak and his Sulabh have always worked towards the upliftment of the marginalized." The Obituary added, "A pioneer of public toilets in India, Bindeshwar Pathak came to be known as the "Toilet Man of India" long before the Swachh Bharat Mission made toilets a part of public discourse, even as he was often ridiculed, including by his father-in-law, for the work he was doing.

Subsequently, PM Narendra Modi started the new project to address the issues dear to Pathak Sahib under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan also called as the Clean India Mission or Clean India drive, of course a laudable initiative. Swachh Bharat Mission, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, or Clean India Mission is a country-wide campaign initiated by the Government of India



in 2014 to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management. The program also aims to increase awareness of menstrual health management. An estimated 1.3 million people from deprived class in India take out a living through the most degrading practice of manual scavenging, an occupation which involves cleaning open toilets and dry latrines and carrying human excreta with bare hands. In cities and towns, the workers are often employed in the maintenance of sewer systems, sweeping of roads and collection of garbage. Apart from being employed to clean toilets in individual households, they are also engaged in cleaning community dry latrines, roadside open toilets, railway stations, government hospitals and other public places.

I had an occasion to meet and interact with Bindeshwar Pathak some years ago at a seminar on Guru Ravidass at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. I was impressed by his clarity of thoughts and conviction to carry forward his lofty mission to empower the weaker sections of the society; particularly the Safai Karamcharis. India needs a few more sons of the soil like Bindeshwar Pathak.

*Courtesy by blog diplomatic titbits
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Mukta Salve's pioneering work



In the last month issue we published an article on Mukta Salve, niece of Krantiveer Lahuji Salve, is known for carrying forward legacy of her uncle. Here is the concluding part.

Prof. Bhagwan, Maharashtra



We, the poor Mangs and Mahar's, were chased away... We were made to drink oil mixed with red lead and buried in the foundations of buildings and thus our genocide was committed. Though we are human beings, we are considered even lower than cows and buffaloes... If any Mang or Mahar happened to pass in front of a gymnasium, they would play a game of 'bat and ball' with their head as a ball and swords as bats on the grounds of Gultekdi. where was the question of getting an education? If anybody would learn to read, and if Bajirao came to know about it, he would say, if Mang and Mahar read, are the Brahmans to hand over their official duties to them and move around with shaving kits, shaving the heads of widows? With such remarks, he would punish them.

Secondly, did they stop prohibiting us from learning? Not at all... The people who proudly roam around in their so-called holy clothes consider themselves purer than some other people... How much do we suffer so much just on account of being labelled untouchables? Do these stony-hearted people ever feel even a frisson of compassion? Not at all... O Pundits, fold up your selfish, greedy hollow wisdom and priestcraft and listen to what I have to say.

When our women give birth to babies, they do not even have a roof over their heads. How they suffer in the rain and the cold!... Try to understand it from your own experience. The merciful God has bestowed on us and sent this benevolent British government here...

Earlier, Gokhale, Apate, Trimkaji, Andhala, Pansara, Kale, Behre, etc., who showed their bravery by killing rats in their homes, persecuted us, not spared even water and executed even the pregnant women. This has stopped now... Human sacrifice for the foundation of forts and mansions has stopped... Earlier, if any Mang or Mahar wore fine clothes, they would accuse us of stealing and say that only Brahmans should wear such clothes. They would say the religion would vanish if Mang or Mahar would wear it and tie them to a tree and punish them. They would behead the Mang or Mahar. That has stopped...

Excessive and exploitative service exacted by the persons in power without giving remuneration for it has stopped now ever since the rule of the unbiased British government has come... The same Brahmans, who earlier used to torture us, incessantly struggle to free us from our sufferings... Not all the Bahmans though. Those who are influenced by Satan continue to hate us like before. And they target and outcast my beloved brothers who are trying to liberate us.

Our beloved brother (Mahatma Jyotiba Phule) has started schools for children of Mangs and Mahar's...

O, the Mangs and Mahar's are plagued by poverty and suffering, if you are sick, take medicine of knowledge. Then you would be knowledgeable. It will take you away from ill-conceived beliefs and you will become righteous and moral. It will stop people from treating you like animals. So please study hard. Then you will become knowledgeable and not succumb to wild beliefs.... Otherwise, you



will remain Mang and Mahar.

Of the seven parts mentioned above, I shall deal with only two parts.

Part 1: -

"While invoking the name of the God, who has filled the heart of me, a poor and powerless girl like me, with the realization of the pain and suffering of my people - the Mahar's and Mangs, considered to be even lower than an animal, I have undertaken the uphill task of writing this essay to the best of my capabilities."

Mukta Salve admits that she gets the inspiration to put forth the anguish of the social strata considered to be even lower than an animal from the realization of the pain and suffering of the untouchables and outcast masses. Here she uses the term "Maker of the Universe" instead of the term "Creator". The term "Maker of the Universe" is similar to "Creator". It is clear that Mukta Salve, who writes that God has filled my heart with the realization of the pain and suffering of Mangs and Mahar's, had a clean and pure heart. Human beings are the ultimate truth on Earth and the mind is the most important part of a man. Realization takes place in the core of one's mind and that leads to new creations. That is why Mukta Salve undertook the task of writing an essay on the pains and sufferings of Mangs and Mahar's intentionally. Great men of the depressed masses have engineered some incidents intentionally.

In this country, one does not become impure by touching animals but human beings are considered impure. Animals are free to move about and touch anywhere in temples, water or anything else. Dogs and cats lick the oil and Naivedya offered it to God. God, religion, men, water, food, Naivedya and beliefs never become impure due to the touch of animals, but the touch of untouchables pollutes them.

The Mangs and Mahar's, who are thus considered lower than animals, are deprived of knowledge, wealth, rights, thoughts, education, and fearlessness. Mukta Salve objectively puts forth the real sufferings of Mangs and Mahar's, who have been banished totally, deprived and left to suffer poverty saying, "We do not have a book of religion. We are without any religion. Let the religions, which discriminate, vanish from the earth and it never enters our minds to boast of such a religion."

Part 2: -

The second part of Mukta Salve's essay is vitally important. Mukta Salve says, "To rebut the arguments advanced by those who hate us citing the authority of the Vedas... these gluttonous Brahmins claim that the Vedas are their domain, their exclusive property. If we consider this, it shows that we do not have the book of religion if the Vedas are only for the Brahmins... Is it not seen that if we have no freedom to see the book of religion, we are without any religion?"

Rebel needs to be launched against the conventional thousands-of-year-old social system,

the culture and customs imposed by that system. At times, we need to have conflict against ourselves to come up with new hopes, new realizations and new values and adopt them. Such conflict is for social, educational, economic, and cultural transformation. Such conflict brings a new nation, a new society and a new man. It leads to the birth of a new culture having different social beliefs. Such creations are called transformations. Transformationalists have engineered such transformations for liberating mankind from time to time from the Vedic era till this date. Mukta Salve and her essay need to be looked at as an important part of such transformation in the 19th Century.

Mukta Salve renounces the Vedas, Manu Smriti and all other books of religion. She questions the monopolists of the Vedas, "If an untouchable sees, reads or analyses the Vedas, it is considered a grave sin. Under such circumstances, what would happen if he lived by the Vedas?" The 33 crore deities have no answer to this question, nor do the Brahmins have it. If conduct as per the Vedas is a grave sin, why should one tolerate the slavery of the Vedas which have enslaved all people other than the Brahmins and the Brahmins, who are monopolists of the Vedas?

Only a legendary revolutionary like Mukta Salve can express her aspiration to let the religion that does not treat men like human beings and any other such religions vanish. She can show such courage because she is a disciple of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule. That is why she dares to deny the existence of God and religion, violates the rules of religion and expresses her aspiration that let such religions vanish from the earth, let there not be even a trace of the religions that promote orthodoxy and wild beliefs. She says, "Let it never enter the minds of I or our Dalit masses to boast of such a religion." What should we be proud of? We should be proud of our self-honour, victory, dignity, truth and ethics and not of insult, humiliation, indignity and life lower than that of animals. Therefore, we are not going to be proud of such a religion. She is the Indian lady who curses from the bottom of her heart that let such religions vanish from the Earth. We must be proud of this curse by Mukta Salve forever.

Mukta Salve's essay is relevant even today. Thoughts that are relevant to the prevailing social conditions become philosophy. Therefore, Mukta Salve's essay and philosophy advanced in it is eternal. Indeed, only the thoughts and thinkers relevant to their era remain relevant for that period. Given the conditions prevailing in India today, there is an immense need for total revolution to take forward the constructive role played by Mukta Salve in the intellectual revolution by advocating the philosophy that she propagates in her essay. **(Concluded)**

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Srimanta Sankardev, the Luminous Beacon of Assam's culture and spirituality

Srimanta Sankardev was not merely a spiritual personality. He was a social reformer, poet, dramatist, artiste, dancer and music composer from Assam in 15th and 16th century. He introduced several experiments, which enriched life of Assam. We recall his contribution on the occasion of his birth anniversary, which falls on September 26.

Prajvalant



To understand Assam and its rich heritage, one needs to understand the life and legacy of Srimanta Sankardev. He was not just a spiritual personality, scholar, or reformer but was the beacon that guided Assam for centuries of change, ensuring its unique identity remained intact. His teachings, both spiritual and social, are still relevant even though they were of the 15th century.

In Sankardev, Assam found its truest reflection, and in his legacy, it continues to find its path forward. In the tapestry of India's spiritual and cultural heritage, few figures shine as brightly as Srimanta Sankardev. Born in 1449 in Alipukhuri, Sankardev remains not just Assam's most celebrated son but also the keystone in the edifice of its socio-cultural and religious identity.

Early life and spiritual evolution:

Srimanta Sankardev was born in the Shiromani (chief) Baro-Bhuyans family at Alipukhuri near Bordowa in Nagaon district. His early years were fraught with personal losses. He lost his parents by the age of 12. However, these adversities took young Sankardev towards spiritual introspection. A pilgrimage across India, spanning almost 12 years,

deepened his spiritual insights and exposed him to various philosophical tenets.

Contribution to Literature and Culture:

Sankardev's vast literary creations have left an indelible mark on Assamese culture. He introduced the written script in Assam and wrote extensively in the Assamese language. His translation of the Bhagavata Purana and the composition of plays like 'Cihna Yatra' are groundbreaking works of Assamese literature. He also pioneered the Neo-Vaishnavism movement in Assam. Sankardev's version of Vaishnavism, rooted in devotion to Lord Krishna, was characterized by its inclusiveness and accessibility. He advocated for a casteless society, where devotion was the only pathway to the divine. Furthermore, Sankardev was a maestro in the field of cultural art forms. He introduced the Sattriya dance form, a classical dance that narrates stories from ancient scriptures, particularly the life and deeds of Lord Krishna. The art form, now recognized nationally, is an intrinsic part of Assamese culture.

Institution of Satras:

Sankardev established Satras, or monastic centres, as a focal point of spiritual, cultural, and



social activities. These Satras became hubs for the propagation of Neo-Vaishnavism and acted as cultural centres where art, music, and dance flourished under the patronage of Sankardev and his disciples. The influence of Satras can still be seen in Assam, with many continuing to be pivotal in the cultural and spiritual lives of the people.

Social Reforms and Legacy:

Sankardev's vision was not just limited to spiritual salvation. He envisioned a society free from caste discrimination and superstitions. He propagated the philosophy of personal devotion (Bhakti) to God without the need for elaborate rituals or mediators. This democratization of spirituality made Neo-Vaishnavism immensely popular among the masses, transcending caste and class barriers.

Legacy in Contemporary Times:

In contemporary Assam, the influence of Sankardev permeates every sphere of life. His teachings continue to guide the socio-cultural practices of Assam, fostering a sense of unity and shared heritage. Festivals like Raas Leela, which celebrates the life of Lord Krishna, are a testament to Sankardev's enduring legacy. Additionally, his literary works serve as a backbone for Assamese literature, influencing generations of writers and poets. The Sattriya dance, with its graceful movements and spiritual themes, is a proud representation of Assam in the national cultural scene. In the realm of spirituality, Neo-Vaishnavism continues to be the dominant force in Assam, guiding millions in their spiritual pursuits. Srimanta Sankardev, often referred to as Shankardeva in some texts, was a towering figure in the cultural and religious landscape of Assam. His contributions spanned across literature, music, dance, and philosophy. Most importantly, he is remembered for spearheading the Neo-Vaishnavism movement in Assam, a socio-religious reform that played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and spiritual ethos of the region.

Neo-Vaishnavism Movement:

Focus on Devotion to Lord Krishna: At the heart of Sankardev's Neo-Vaishnavism is the unwavering devotion to Lord Krishna. Drawing inspiration from the Bhakti movement that was sweeping across India during the medieval period, Sankardev emphasized personal devotion to Krishna as the supreme path to salvation. He propagated the message of the Bhagavata Purana, translating and adapting its teachings to cater to the Assamese populace. One of the most transformative aspects of Sankardev's movement was its egalitarian approach. Rejecting the rigid caste hierarchies and discriminations prevalent in society, Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam under Sankardev's leadership preached that everyone, irrespective of caste or social standing, had equal access to God. This had a profound social impact, promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

To propagate the teachings of Neo-Vaishnavism and to act as centres of cultural and religious

activities, Sankardev established Satras or monastic institutions. These Satras played a dual role. They were not only religious centres but also hubs of cultural activities, fostering music, dance, and literature that echoed the principles of Neo-Vaishnavism. Along with his religious teachings, Sankardev introduced the Sattriya dance, a classical dance form that became a medium to narrate tales from the scriptures, especially the life and acts of Lord Krishna. This dance, recognized as one of the eight classical dances of India, is deeply embedded in the Neo-Vaishnavism ethos.

Sankardev enriched Assamese literature with his extensive writings. He penned plays, poetry,

He advocated for a casteless society, where devotion was the only pathway to the divine. Furthermore, Sankardev was a maestro in the field of cultural art forms. He introduced the Sattriya dance form, a classical dance that narrates stories from ancient scriptures, particularly the life and deeds of Lord Krishna. The art form, now recognized nationally, is an intrinsic part of Assamese culture.

and prose that not only propagated Vaishnavite philosophy but also became foundational texts for Assamese literature. His literary and artistic creations were tools for spiritual and moral teachings, emphasizing virtuous living, devotion, and social equality. Sankardev introduced the concept of 'Namghar' or the House of Chants. These were community prayer halls, where people gathered to sing devotional songs and hymns. These congregations played a significant role in community bonding and the propagation of Neo-Vaishnavite teachings.

Srimanta Sankardev's socio-religious movement was not just a spiritual endeavour but a comprehensive cultural revolution. His Neo-Vaishnavism movement left an indelible mark on Assam's societal fabric, promoting unity, equality, and an enriched cultural tradition that remains influential to this day. Through his teachings and institutions, Sankardev ensured that the principles of devotion, social justice, and artistry became deeply embedded in Assamese society. Today, Sankardev is not just remembered as a sant or scholar but as a reformer who moulded Assam's socio-cultural fabric. He laid the foundation for an inclusive society in which unity and harmony prevailed over divisive forces.

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Dalit Literature: Illuminating the Path of Social Transformation

I was an ordinary seven or eight-year-old. In the pages of my school textbook, lay a profound revelation, my first encounter with 'Dalit literature'. In the midst of the dark night under the dim streetlight, my elder brother Devendra was engrossed in reading a stanza from the lesson 'Tara Antra' by Shankarao Kharat from an English textbook, and he eagerly translated it into Marathi for all of us. Across the nation, depressed communities have witnessed significant intellectual, social, cultural, economic, and political transformations, all driven by the powerful impact of autobiographies, poetry, songs, stories, and insightful essays. It was the literary legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution and the champion of suppressed class's rights, laid the foundation for this profound change.



'Dalit literature' has grown into a formidable force, influencing the lives of uneducated, marginalized, oppressed, and downtrodden individuals, giving them the strength to rise, assert their identity, and challenge the established norms. It has provided a voice to those, who were silenced for centuries, igniting the spark of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision to uplift the oppressed. This literary movement has had a significant impact, not just in India but also beyond its borders.

The epicenter of this transformation can be traced back to Maharashtra, where the roots of Dalit literature took hold. Maharashtra became the breeding ground for Dalit literature, and Daya Pawar's *Baluta* marked the beginning of a new era. It was the first time that the voices from the slums found their way into literature. This pain and agony were not new to literature, but it was different this time. The descriptions of slums and the lives of those who lived there had never been portrayed before. These narratives were a stark rejection of the social discrimination that Dr. Ambedkar had fought against. Dr. Ambedkar, the true voice of ostracized India, had found his spiritual successor in these words.

Dalit literature gave rise to a wave of awareness and change. From the lowest rungs of society, individuals like Vaman Dada Kardak and Vitthal Umaphule began to emerge, shaping the narrative through their stories, poems, songs, and essays. Through their

works, they prepared the collective consciousness of the Ambedkarite movement and Dalit society. Dr. Narendra Jadhav, in his autobiography, 'Amcha Baap aan Amhi' claims that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is the real hero of his struggle. Dr. Suraj Yengde has redefined the contours of modern casteism. The question is not about the feelings; it is about expressing them. This expression can be seen in the works of Mohandas Namishray, Omprakash Valmiki, Kaushalya Vaisnathi, Mata Prasad, Sushila Takbhavre, Prem Kapadiya, Jayprakash Kardam, Dharmaveer, DP Varun, Ramjilal Sahayak, Gurucharan Singh, Rupnarayan Sonkar, Satyaprakash, Surajpal Chauhan, Kusum Meghwal, and many more. These writers brought to light the injustices and atrocities faced by Dalits.

Dalit literature was not born overnight. It was preceded by thousands of years of struggle and resistance. 'The enemy of the nation' (originally written in Marathi *Deshache Dushman*) is an essential document to understand how discrimination can persist even after death. In the book, authors Jedhe and Javalkar narrate the story of how they struggled to install a statue of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule in Pune. Three decades after the death of Mahatma Phule, casteist individuals opposed the installation of his statue in Pune. So-called Sanatani leaders opposed the statue, saying, 'Why in Pune, install Phule's statue in Shahu Maharaj's Kolhapur'. This casteist mindset indicates that Dalit icons are still humiliated even after their demise.

Dalit literature is not just a literary movement; it's a social revolution in the making. It is a mirror reflecting the deepest and darkest corners of society, highlighting the enduring oppression faced by the marginalized. It empowers individuals to question the status quo, dismantle the age-old caste-based hierarchies, and strive for social justice and equality.

In conclusion, Dalit literature has emerged as a powerful catalyst for social change and has played a pivotal role in the Dalit movement. It has given a voice to the voiceless, inspired countless individuals to stand up against discrimination, and paved the way for a more equitable and just society. Through the words of Dalit writers, the world has witnessed the resilience, strength, and unwavering determination of a community that refuses to be silenced. As we continue to explore the rich tapestry of Dalit literature, we must recognize its profound impact and its ongoing contribution to the fight for a more inclusive and equitable India.

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Anti-Caste Discrimination Bill passed in California Senate

California has achieved a groundbreaking milestone by becoming the first U.S. state to pass a bill explicitly banning caste-based discrimination. The legislation, known as SB 403, successfully cleared the California State Senate with a resounding margin of 31-5 votes. The bill seeks to extend legal protections against caste-based discrimination, providing crucial safeguards for individuals from the South Asian subcontinent, who were previously not covered by existing anti-discrimination laws in the country.

SB 403 will mark a significant stride toward addressing a deeply entrenched hierarchical system within the Hindu religion, known as caste. Democratic State Senator Aisha Wahab, who sponsored the bill, expressed her pride in standing in solidarity with those who have experienced caste discrimination in California and stressed the importance of putting an end to such discrimination. This legislative development is expected to have far-reaching implications for anti-discrimination efforts in the United States and could set a precedent for other states to follow suit in combating caste-based discrimination.

Horrific Assault on woman in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh

In a harrowing incident in Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh, a woman has reportedly been subjected to a nightmarish ordeal, which includes allegations of being drugged, sexually assaulted and coerced into consuming beef. The shocking incident transpired when the survivor's friend, who is accused of being complicit in the crime, lured her to a hotel under the pretext of repaying a debt amounting to Rs 30,000.

According to police reports, a young woman residing within the jurisdiction of the Prem Nagar police area had extended a loan of Rs 30,000 to her acquaintance. On September 1, the said acquaintance summoned her to a hotel under the pretext of settling the debt. Inside the hotel room, the woman's friend, known as Shifat, was allegedly accompanied by two accomplices named Nadeem and Shoaib. They purportedly coerced her into consuming beef and administered a cold beverage laced with sedatives, rendering her unconscious. It is alleged

that in her unconscious state, she was subjected to sexual assault, with Shifat reportedly recording the abhorrent act. Subsequently, the accused individuals attempted to blackmail the survivor, demanding Rs 50,000 and threatening to release the incriminating video. The horrific incident came to light when Shifat, the survivor's friend, shared the explicit video with her fiancé, who immediately alerted the authorities. One of the accused, Shoaib, is identified as a B Pharma student, while Nazim works as a barber. There are suspicions that the trio had plans to flee to Kashmir, where Nazim is said to operate a barbershop. All three accused individuals have been apprehended by the police.

Tamil Nadu: Two men die while cleaning septic tank

In a tragic incident on September 7, two men, C Devan (53) and K Moses (39), lost their lives due to asphyxiation while cleaning a septic tank at the Ordnance Clothing Factory (OCF) in Avadi, Tamil Nadu. Devan and Moses, along with two other workers, were hired for this task by contractor Sampath and supervisor Mano Thirupal. Devan entered the nearly 20-foot deep tank and suddenly fainted, falling inside. Moses attempted to rescue him but also succumbed to the toxic fumes. Prompted by their colleagues, Fire and Rescue personnel and the police retrieved the two men from the tank. Sadly, Moses died at the scene, while Devan passed away in the hospital. Devan being from the SC community and Moses a Christian. The police have filed a case under relevant sections of the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and other laws.

IIT Bombay accused of denying reserved seats in PhD admissions

IIT Bombay has been accused of denying 80 seats to SC, ST, and OBC students while admitting 95 additional general category students in its 2023 PhD admissions. This information was revealed through a Right to Information (RTI) application by the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC).

The study circle alleges that IIT Bombay has violated reservation norms despite claiming to implement them. The data shows that numerous departments have not admitted any ST, SC, or OBC students this year, raising questions about the institute's adherence to anti-discrimination guidelines issued after a student's alleged caste-based suicide.

The APPSC highlights that even departments like the Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA) have not admitted ST students for nine consecutive years, casting doubt on the institute's commitment to these guidelines. The study circle emphasizes the need for greater accountability and equitable admissions processes in educational institutions.

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Ahilyadevi's contribution to literature, art, and well construction

Rambhau Lande



After seeing the Shiva-Linga shaped constructions across the country, only one radiant figure stands before everyone's eyes - Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar. Ahilyadevi, during her reign as the ruler of the Holkar dynasty, gave respect and justice to every aspect of society, which is considered the highest honour for a sensitive heart. The poet of Sangamner in Maharashtra Anant Fandi, presented folk arts like Lavani, Katav, Phatke, etc., through the medium of theatrical performance like tamasha. While Anant Fandi was on his way to Maheshwar, he was caught by the Bhils in the forest. He informed them that he was on his way to meet Ahilyadevi. On hearing this, the Bhils not only released him but also respectfully escorted him to Maheshwar and sent a message to Ahilyadevi through him, seeking her forgiveness. Before meeting Ahilyadevi, Anant Fandi realized the immense respect even forest robbers had for her. In Queen Ahilyadevi Holkar's court in Maheshwar, Fandi sought permission to showcase his art and narrated the incident he had with the Bhils. In the court, after Anant Fandi presented a sensual (Shringarik)

Ahilyadevi financially supported many authors for manuscript creation and had hundreds of handwritten manuscripts preserved by having them rewritten. Ahilyadevi Holkar undertook the restoration of several dilapidated temples across the country. She invited expert craftsmen and approved architectural designs proposed by them, ensuring that they were consistent with the style of the original structures. She believed that while constructing new structures, it was crucial to represent Indian culture, religion, and traditions through embedded artwork.

description and his praises for Ahilyadevi, she advised him, A human body is transient and will perish one day, so instead of depicting sensual themes, one should devote the art to Godly devotion. She urged him to lead people towards the path of devotion using his voice and art, and dedicate his poetry written in her praise to the Narmada River. She also gifted him gold coins for his artistry and awarded him a piece of land in Sangamner as a token of appreciation.

Ahilyadevi was known far and wide for her generosity and benevolence. Because of this, poets, writers, and bards from all over the country would visit Maheshwar seeking her patronage. Gradually, Maheshwar became a prominent center for culture, religion, and arts, much like the holy city of Kashi. It became known for the frequent visits of saints, ascetics, sages, artists, etc. Nobody who came to Maheshwar left empty-handed.

Ahilyadevi commissioned Khushaliram to write the Volume Ahilya Kamadhenu during her lifetime. The Ahilya Kamadhenu Volume was written by Pandit Khushaliram. Handwritten copies of the text can be found at the Shinde Research Centre in Ujjain, near Kashi in Brahmhapuri, and at the residence of the Royal priest Dr. Vijay Kavthekar. About Ahilya Kamadhenu,



Khushaliram stated that the personification of talent, the essence of the Vardhishnu Dharma, and the atomic details of the principles were incorporated into this text in the form of a book. The text was crafted thoughtfully and skillfully. It includes references from various texts on each subject and the conclusions drawn from them. This makes the text a treasury of the then-renowned and accepted knowledge, time, and their proponents. The size of the Ahilya Kamadhenu text is 117 x 7 inches, with twelve lines on both sides of each page. The handwriting on the paper is in black ink, with at least 30 characters per line. The entire text is divided into eight sections, namely: 1) Vows 2) Charity 3) Rituals 4) Determination of Gotra lineage 5) Decision on Shraddha 6) Residential Architecture 7) Lake and Ram Utsarg 8) Deity Installation.

Ahilyadevi financially supported many authors for manuscript creation and had hundreds of handwritten manuscripts preserved by having them rewritten. Ahilyadevi Holkar undertook the restoration of several dilapidated temples across the country. She invited expert craftsmen and approved architectural designs proposed by them, ensuring that they were consistent with the style of the original structures. She believed that while constructing new structures, it was crucial to represent Indian culture, religion, and traditions through embedded artwork. Numerous letters related to the construction of the fort near the Shri Malhari temple in Jejuri provides evidence of her meticulous care towards the architecture.

The letters suggest that special care was taken from the base to the pinnacle of the construction, as instructed to the craftsman Shankaraji Narayan Rajapurkar. The temple in Jejuri, the memorial stones of Thorale Subhedar Malharrao Holkar, his mother-in-law Dwarakabai, and sister Banabai, the pond, and the Holkar mansion took several years to complete. Since the Malhari Martand in Jejuri was the family deity of the Holkar's, members of the Holkar royal family frequently visited Jejuri for darshan of the deity and festivals. Thorale Subhedar Malharrao Holkar's birthplace, Hol Murum village, also saw the construction of a Mahadev temple and the memorial of Khanduji Veerkar initiated from Jejuri.

Ahilyadevi constructed more than ten thousand new wells across the country and renovated thousands of old ones. Even today, after seeing a well, people remember Ahilyadevi. The well in Ahilyapur in Khandesh is particularly significant. Subhedar Malharrao Holkar received the Laling region in 1752, and on September 20, 1755, he obtained the royal decree for the Jahagiri of Khandesh. The Holkar army was stationed in Shirpur in Khandesh. A permanent settlement was later established on the site of this army camp.

Ahilyadevi Holkar constructed a five-story well for the army in Ahilyapur. This well is expansive, spread over three parts like a mansion and has five levels. The well features a total of 13 arches. Made from brick and stone, the well covers an area of 10

Guntha (approximately 1/4 of an acre) and had a 12-bull wide entrance on the east side. It was designed to accommodate water drinking needs for a hundred bulls at once. The middle section of the well was used for military arrangements. Additionally, the well had two gates, and one could descend into it via 100 steps. Inside the arches of the well, there were alcoves containing various deities.

Places like Shirpur, Waghadi, Sangvi, and Ahilyapur were part of the domain of Subhedar Malharrao Holkar and his wife Rani Harkunwarbai Holkar. The five-story well made for the army also had specific people assigned for its protection. Many of those appointed were related to Harkunwar. Later, this settlement was named Ahilyapur. Harkunwar also had a wooden mansion. There was a checkpoint in the village of Sangvi for couriers traveling from Maheshwar to Pune. Due to the essential stopover for security reasons at Ahilyapur following Sangvi's courier route, Ahilyapur gained significance.

Traders traveling from Khandesh to Malwa were also provided with facilities to halt with their goods at Ahilyapur. The recruitment for the Holkar army took place in Ahilyapur. Shrimant Harkunwar Mavshi was a key figure in the Holkar dynasty and played a crucial role in this regard. She ensured tight security for the route leading south to Malwa. Regions and forts like Laling, Thalner, Ambe, Adavad, Utran, Mungathi, Nyahalod, Bateli, Mowar, Sangvi, Daheevad, Sultanpur, Sonagir, Karvandi, Thalner, Bhadgaon, Galna, and Bhavargad were under the Holkar dominion. From the Galna fort, provisions for horses, camels, bulls, and elephants in the army were supplied. Inscriptions are present on the wells in Tuljapur and Grishneshwar. She constructed four types of wells, named Nanda, Bhadra, Jaya, and Vijaya, at various locations and ensured that water was available for travellers as well as animals and birds.

For the construction of wells, local materials like clay and stone were used, providing employment opportunities for the locals. It is observed that the wells had a dedicated space for deities. The construction of these wells prevented many innocent women from accidental deaths and eliminated the need for long treks to fetch water. To ensure the health of the village through water, medicinal plants were grown around the wells. The essence of these plants seeped into the well water, providing protective health benefits to the people. Staircases made of stone were built for easy access to the water, and arrangements were made for people to sit around the well at various places. Ahilyadevi Holkar, while constructing these wells, envisioned a brighter future and performed actions beneficial for public welfare, strengthening the cultural and religious traditions of the country. The impact of her work is so profound that even after three hundred years, people remember her name with respect and bow down in reverence.

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DIN VISHESH

Remembering Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia



12th October

Ram Manohar Lohia Death Anniversary

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was an influential Indian political leader, thinker, and freedom fighter, noted for his unique role in Indian socialist politics. Born in Akbarpur, Uttar Pradesh, Lohia was deeply involved in the struggle for India's independence and later emerged as a vocal critic of the Indian National Congress and its policies. His radical thoughts and fervent passion for social justice made him one of the prominent architects of modern Indian socialist thought. He earned a Ph.D. from Humboldt University of Berlin. His doctoral research on the topic of Indian salt tax and British colonialism provided him profound insights into the deep-rooted issues within the Indian colonial system.

Ram Manohar Lohia was a vehement critic of the caste system. He championed the cause of the lower castes and marginalized sections of society, emphasizing their upliftment. Lohia emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's rights. He believed that the progress of a nation was directly related to the status of its women.

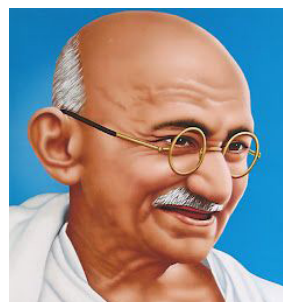
Ram Manohar Lohia's contribution to Indian politics and society is significant. He relentlessly fought against socio-economic inequalities and worked towards creating a just and inclusive society. Lohia's principles and ideas continue to inspire several political movements and leaders in India. Despite facing criticism and imprisonment multiple times for his bold views and actions, Lohia remained undeterred and is remembered as a fearless and principled leader in Indian history.



26th September
Shankardev
Birth Anniversary



27th September
Raja Ram Mohan Roy
Death Anniversary



2nd October
Mahatma Gandhi
Birth Anniversary



11th October
Sant Tukdoji Maharaj
Death Anniversary

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