

**Seasonal Festivals
and
Commemorative Days**

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Dedicated to my wife



Phool Kaur

(August 18, 1928 to August 14, 2008)
life-partner through weal and woe
since March 13, 1949 for a span nearing sixty years

Death creates a vacuum
Which seems hard to fill
In memory one relives moments
That impart a sustaining thrill.

Seasonal Festivals
and
Commemorative Days 2010

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Foreword

Professor Hazara Singh is a meticulous scholar with a penetrating intellect. The book □ Seasonal Festivals and Commemorative Days □ reflects his rational approach for ascertaining the impact of periodic historical events on the celebration of important seasonal festivals of erstwhile Punjab that comprised a greater part of the pre-partition North- Western India. He builds up theoretical concepts that contrast the attitude of those Aryans towards nature, who migrated to India from Central Asia, with those who opted to march towards Europe. The main thrust of this book is on sifting and sieving off the superstitions which were floated by the priestly classes for sustaining their vested interests. Such an objective re-evaluation is essential for the socio-economic regeneration of society in a scientific era. Superstitious beliefs render the individuals and thereby society, as a whole, fatalistic in their mindset. They start to worship the elements of nature out of sheer awe instead of striving to evolve means to face boldly the problematic situations.

The throwing of sesame seeds and pieces of jaggery in the fire on *Lohri* night, for example, for propitiating gods to bless them with sons exclusively, holds no ground in the present situation. In fact there is need to impress preference for female children for balancing the gender ratio. The author stresses that *Lohri* be celebrated at community level instead of restricting the festivity to homes. It is an occasion to hail the approaching spring which marks the beginning of land leases afresh, necessitating the shedding of lethargy and acquiring of rigorous resolve towards agricultural pursuits.

While describing the festival of *Holi*, the author explains the etymological significance of the term *Hindu* detaching it from its prevailing acceptance on narrow communal lines. He also takes *Holi* out of mythological trappings by highlighting the impact of *Hola Mohalla* that physical fitness and moral steadfastness are the prerequisites for subduing the evil forces.

While elaborating the significance of *Baisakhi*, he refers to the tale of Amrit Manthan to enlighten that immortality can be assured through virtuous selfless deeds and not through ceremonial dips at holy *ghats*. The association of this harvest festival with landmarks of our socio- economic renaissance and the struggle against imperialism makes the description an informative text.

As technology is advancing, the ardency about the seasonal significance of *Jirjal Ekadshi* and *Teean* is fading fast . The chapter □ Changing Dates of Festivals □ imparts corrective information about solar and lunar years.

The author took active part in the freedom struggle during the historic years of 1942 to 1947. The importance of Commemorative Days has been, therefore, elaborated from the point of view of a freedom fighter for transforming political freedom into social uplift and economic betterment of masses consonant with the concepts of equality, fraternity and dignity of individual.

The poems in the Back Matter are quite elevating and educative. The children should be encouraged to recite them at selective occasions.

The book is an outcome of objective observations of a scientific mind and the yearnings of a social activist extending beyond eight decades for infusing the post- independence generations with zeal and constructive outlook.

While congratulating Professor Hazara Singh for the unique service he continues to render with his pen, I wish ardently that Indians, within as well as abroad, particularly the younger generation among them find time to share his nation-building aspirations.

S.S. Johl

Preface

It is necessary for the social regeneration of our country that people give up superstitious outlook and develop, instead, scientific way of thinking. Many beliefs which have outlived their utility need revision according to changed times. It will be a step in the right direction if the young are told about the good things in our old culture. This instils in them an urge to assess their heritage objectively. Seasonal festivals are an important aspect of our old culture. With the passage of time they lost a lot of their real significance as the priestly classes implanted many superstitions into them. Attempt has been made to trace the history of principal seasonal festivals and describe their significance in a scientific manner.

The last five chapters describe the importance of leading commemorative days. The topics are merely suggestive so that the keenness to know more about festivals and functions gets sharpened.

The text was planned to be published in early 2008. But the sudden illness of my wife, her demise and a chain of surgeries, I had to undergo myself thereafter, did not enable me to finalize the manuscript. I was able to give finishing touches to it during my trip abroad in the first half of 2010. Thanks to Providence that I am on the track again.

Hazara Singh

I**Seasonal Festivals**

Seasonal festivals reflect attitude of people towards nature. In Punjab, observance of such festivals has been as old as the advent of Aryans in India. Hence, in order to understand their historical significance, it is important to find out as to how the Aryans looked upon nature at the time of their migration from Central Asia to Punjab, the gateway to India from north-west.

Shepherding had been the principal occupation of Aryans then. Herds of grazing cattle deprive the soil of its natural cover. Their hooves loosen it further exposing it thereby to constant erosion. Shepherds with their nomadic way of life cannot safeguard forests. They rather resort to felling of trees to meet their fuel needs as well as to keep fire burning during dark nights to ward off the predatory wild animals. Such ravages lead gradually to the conversion of once green pastures into arid regions with denuded hills. That explains as to why there had been vast stretches of barren lands in Central Asia.

Long spells of drought and the land, rendered unproductive, compelled the Aryans to migrate in search of places where they could find water and grass. Some of them marched towards the European countries in the north-west and the others taking to south-east reached India. They were delighted to find green forests and rippling rivers. Nature was no longer harsh, but quite benevolent. Out of sheer joyous relief and gratitude they began to worship it. This was the beginning of myths. Every element of nature began to be regarded as a god or a goddess. This attitude towards nature explains the significance of seasonal festivals. Nature is a goddess; human beings should adore it and acknowledge its beneficence before partaking any of its gifts.

Hunting, shepherding and agriculture have been the successive professions which mark the march of man towards civilization.

They keep the human beings busy during day time. Night provides enough time for leisure and social gatherings. That is why, ever since the hoary past people have been celebrating the festivals at the fall of night around bonfire. Fire provides both warmth and light. That also suggests as to why all Indian festivals are observed according to the lunar movements. It is not the same day of solar calendar month as is customary in the West, but mostly the same night of lunar month on which an Indian festival falls. In the West, weather mostly keeps cloudy, foggy and cold, making it necessary to conduct all celebrations indoors. That explains as to why the movement of moon does not determine the date on which a particular festival falls there.

Life in the Western countries is a constant struggle against vagaries of nature like fog and snow storms. Hence, people there had not been looking upon nature as goddess. A short-lived change in their outlook came during eighteenth century after Rousseau had espoused his political views by giving the call 'Back to Nature'. But that inclination, at the most, resulted in the development of romantic traditions in literature. Even the poetic works of Wordsworth, who had been an ardent votary of nature, lost their appeal when the botanists on dissecting it found it to be soulless. Darwin's theory proclaiming survival of the fittest in the domain of nature appeared quite realistic to the Western mind.

Because the Western people had been looking upon nature as a group of elements hostile towards man, they developed the qualities of hardwork and adventure to overcome it. It is quite unlike India, where people had been worshipping nature, praying to it for favours and making offerings to please it whenever any natural calamity in the form of drought, pest, floods, etc. threatened them, which attitude made them fatalists and idle. In the West, people of old Greece and Rome had a similar outlook towards nature. In the Mediterranean countries the climate remains mostly temperate. Hence, like Aryans, the ancient Greeks as well as Romans worshipped nature and believed in myths. But after Aristotle, critical approach started influencing their way of thinking.

Seasonal festivals in India are mostly celebrated by feasting and the religious ones through fasting. This attitude developed later when the Aryans got settled firmly in India. As an expediency, society was divided into castes. Knowledge became the monopoly of Brahmins. As they were not required to do any manual work for their living, knowledge tended to become more metaphysical and less worldly. Life after death began to be attached more importance than the one on earth. The intelligentsia became more concerned about their individual salvation than the collective uplift of society. Meditation in seclusion, performance of pilgrimage, penance and fasting became accepted norms of spiritual life. With the passage of time the priestly classes introduced many wrong notions and superfluous rituals to perpetuate their exploitation of simple-minded masses.

The spirit of inquiry and reform enjoins that old Indian culture be purged of all irrational beliefs. The relationship between man and nature also needs to be reassessed. Worshipping of nature made human beings fatalists and did not let a spirit of adventure develop in them. A race for the conquest of universe as witnessed in the West, resulted in man's losing control over his inner self. This has given a serious set-back to cultural values there too as that society has become too much materialistic.

Lohri, Holi and Baisakhi are among the principal seasonal festivals of Punjab. The desire to ascertain true significance of all festivals became a matter of concern for me, when to my horror, I discovered as to how some superstitious beliefs attributed to the epic of Ramayana were manipulated to sanctify our subjugation to British rule.

A tale was fabricated that when Lord Rama went to recover Sita after the death of demon king Ravana, she praised a lot one of the maids, Trijta, posted to look after her during her captivity. Lord Rama got pleased and blessed that in *Kalyug*, Trijta and her descendants would rule over India.

After the 1857 uprising by the native troops, the British Government ended the rule of East India Company and Queen

Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India. The British did not accept that the revolt by native troops was an attempt for achieving independence of India. They rather believed that the religious sentiments of Hindu sepoys got outraged by the rumour that the cartridges being issued to them contained the fat of cow, an animal sacred for them. A story with an equally strong religious appeal was needed for keeping their loyalty steady in future. Hence a subtle campaign was carried on through battalion *prohits* that as per blessing of Lord Rama, Trijta took birth as Queen Victoria during nineteenth century, falling in *Kalyug*, and loyalty to her rule and that of her descendants was their religious obligation. The fabricated tale went a long way to fortify the loyalty of Hindu troops.

The researchers should take note of all such superstitious beliefs and pernicious manipulations while exploring the historical significance of our festivals.

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II

Importance of Lohri

Lohri is a popular seasonal festival in northern India. It falls on the last day of the month Posh of solar Bikrami calendar and corresponds usually with January 12 of Gregorian year. It represents winter at its peak and is celebrated around bonfire at the fall of night. The word 'Lohri' owes its origin to the old custom *til-rori*, which means throwing seeds of sesame (til) and pieces of country-made brown sugar *gur* (rori) into ceremonial fire.

In the past, means of recreation and occasions for change were scanty. People waited keenly for festivals and fairs for breaking monotony of their otherwise toilsome lives. Lohri provided fun and merrymaking for everybody, the young and the old as well as men and women. Daughters did not have right to succession under our customary law. Lohri had been and still is an occasion for parents to send gifts to newly married daughters. Feasts are extended to friends and relatives on the Lohri night to celebrate birth of a son. The custom had been prevailing since time immemorial, when phrases like family planning had not been coined and equality of genders was something quite unheard. The arrival of even seventh son used to be an occasion of great rejoicing in an Indian family, whereas birth of the very first daughter dampened the expectations of parents.

The reason as to why male children used to be preferred to female ones is not difficult to understand. Punjab had not only been gate-way to India from north-west, but also cradle of Vedic civilization. When Aryans migrated to India from Central Asia, they faced stiff resistance at the hands of native people, who inflicted a heavy toll on their male population. In days of yore every injunction and custom used to be presented in the form of a divine

prerogative. In order to make up the loss of male population, it was laid down in scriptures :

'It is duty of every Hindu to marry and produce a son. As long as a son is not born, his obligation towards ancestors remains unfulfilled, because their souls will remain thirsty in heaven due to break in the continuity of family line'.

For enabling every male Hindu to discharge this obligation, even polygamy was permitted. In the absence of a natural son, he could adopt one. This gave a setback to the position of woman in society. Her status deteriorated during Afghan raids, when young girls were abducted for being auctioned as slaves at Kabul. Many people began to kill their daughters as soon as they were born. This explains amply as to why birth of even the first daughter did not make her parents feel jubilant.

All sort of invocations are made around the Lohri bonfire. Feeding the fire with sesame seeds elder brother's wife sings :

'As many seeds of sesame, the elder brother's wife throws in fire, as many sons may be born to younger brother's wife'.

The prayer is for a horde of sons and not for a single daughter.

In these days of population explosion, such songs may appear to be odd. But they are reminiscent of times when rate of infant mortality used to be high. The practice of daughter-killing led to an imbalance in gender ratio. Unrecognised polyandry prevailed in many peasant families. Those who could afford, purchased brides from hilly areas. Even then the number of bachelors among working classes remained quite high. This explains as to why most of the folk songs of past are obscene and sexy. The unmarried males got their recreation as well as fulfilment of sexual crave through such songs.

Lohri also marks beginning of the agricultural year. All sort of cultivation leases are made after its advent. Elderly ladies sing this couplet around lohri fire :

*'Ring in the work and ring out idleness,
Let idleness be thrown into fire'.*

The month ending with Lohri is terribly cold. There are many sayings in Punjabi, vulgar no doubt, which describe the intensity of winter at that time. Days are short. Nights are long. In the past when there had been no scientific and technological progress, there was not much to be done in fields during autumn. Cattle could also be not taken out for grazing. Human beings seldom bathed and passed most of their time either in bed or sitting near fire. As cattle too remained tethered to their mangers, so the houses got awfully dirty. It used to be a period of general inactivity and squalor all around.

After December 23, days begin to get longer and have a message for people to shake off idleness. Hence the song on Lohri night 'Ring in the work and ring out idleness' used to be quite significant.

Month of Magh, which begins on the day next to Lohri has been extolled in scriptures. It is stated therein :

'Just as Brahmin is supreme among human beings, peacock among birds and pipal among trees, similarly Magh is sublime among months. If a person bathes daily early in the morning during this month, he will achieve salvation'.

Perhaps this belief had been put in the form of a sermon purposely, because early rising and early bathing keep people active as well as clean. Spring season, which comes at close heels of Lohri, requires people to be up and doing in their fields.

The impact of scientific knowledge and technological advances has changed greatly mode of living and the way of looking at nature. As old customs are losing their significance under the enforcement of progressive laws, governing marriage and succession, Lohri does not have its old charm for present generation. But the folk songs provide an occasion for socio- economic researchers to assess the transformation which our society has undergone. History of a nation is its biography, but history of its folk lore is its autobiography. A critical analysis of Lohri songs reveals the wonderful progress our agriculture and agro-industries have been making for the last few

decades. Let us take two popular couplets. The first beseeches:

'Lohri has come, Lohri has come. We shall not take grains of corn, but accept only a lump of gur'.

The second applauds Dulla, a country chieftain for the handsome dowry, he gave to his daughter:

'Dulla arranged marriage of his daughter Gave her in dowry two seers of brown sugar'.

These songs reveal as to how deficient our agriculture had been in production of sugarcane and what a deep desire and liking people had for *gur* and coarse sugar. The choicest sweet for celebrating Lohri had been the pounded mixture of sesame seeds and *gur*, called *kullar*. Almost every family on that night prepared rice-pudding in sugar-cane juice. Vegetable of mustard leaves '*sarson de sag*' and butter with corn bread of maize used to be the proverbial food of Punjab during peak days of winter. But at present, when with advances in industry and agriculture, the standard of living has gone up, such items of food and sweets appear to be a craving of folks having rustic taste.

As status of women has improved a lot in society, parents with progressive outlook have begun to celebrate here and there Lohri to rejoice at the birth of a daughter also. The custom of sending gifts to newly wedded daughters on the Lohri eve is also disappearing as not only the right to succession has been extended to daughters, but education also has tended to make girls less and less economically dependent on their parents and husbands.

The bonfires are scarcely lit, because means of recreation have increased a lot. But the charm of season remains unabated.

There is a strong case for reviving the old glory of seasonal festivals. People belonging to all communities should participate readily in their celebration. The social and educational organisations may arrange cultural meets and community dinners on such occasions. This will help to save many interesting aspects of our old culture from being forgotten.

III

Holi and Hola Mohalla

The word 'Hindu', a geographical term, through usage acquired a religious connotation, which needs to be rectified. Just as 'The English' mean people of England, likewise 'Hindu/Hindi' stood earlier for a resident of Hindustan*, now called India. If it is intended to refer to beliefs and traditions derived from the Vedas, it 'll be in order to call that religion 'Brahmanism' : a polytheist faith with its social structure based on four castes, viz. Brahmins (priests and preceptors); Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers); Vaisyas (trading classes) and shudras (manual and menial workers). The privileges had been defined and respective obligations prescribed on the basis of caste with utter disregard to an individual's aptitude or merit. Each caste had its own festival;

Raksha Bhandan for Brahmins, when they tied thread around the wrists of Kshatriyas beseeching their protection;

Dussehra for Kshatriyas, when they adored their arms;

Diwali for Vaisyas, when their financial year set in and they worshipped Lakshmi, goddess of wealth,

and

Holi for Shudras, with no privileges in society but burdened with servile obligations, who, with the spring season at its zenith, were allowed to indulge into frolic and fun.

*It is pertinent to refer in this context to the first and fifth couplets of 'Tarana-e-Hindi' by Dr Mohammed Iqbal:

*'Sare jehan se achha Hindostan hamara
Ham bulbilain hain is ki yeh gulstan hamara
Mazahib nihin sikhata apas main bair rakhna
Hindi hain ham, watan hai Hindostan hamara'.*

As knowledge used to be passed on orally by the preceptors and was not kept in written form fearing that lower castes, not entitled to education, might find access to it, it is not possible to authenticate the origin of festivals by referring to any historical source as enjoined by modern research. Even the Vedic hymns, believed to be composed around 1200 – 1000 B.C. were reduced to writing in the fourteenth century. A large number of events, mythological as well as historical, are said to have taken place on each of these festival days. The annual celebration of happenings, synchronising with the observance of a festival, continued to dilute its original significance.

Holi

The fifth day of the lunar month Magh, marks the advent of spring, *Basant Panchmi*. It reaches its bloom by the *pooranmashi*, full moon night, of the next month Phagun. The occasion is called Holi and celebrated with wild rejoicings. Etymologically Holi owes its origin to the Sanskrit word 'hola', which means both 'ear of wheat' and 'pod of gram'. The parched ears and pods of these cereal plants used to be the cherished fare for the Holi feasts. Such a seasonal significance of Holi is upheld by the classics like *Kam Sutra* and *Ratnavli*. Albiruni, a historian from Western Asia, who visited India during the eleventh century, described Holi as the most enthusiastically celebrated Hindu (used in geographical sense) festival. That the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan also used to participate in the Holi rejoicings is displayed by many Kangra paintings of the time. The puritanical and orthodox outlook of his successor Aurangzeb gave a lot of set-back to the advancement of art and aesthetics in general and the mirthful celebration of festivals in particular. Since then many among the Muslims began to disassociate themselves with the Holi festival. Rather the fanatics among them began to object to the joyous singing, hilarious dancing and sprinkling of coloured water, a part and parcel of Holi rejoicings, on the plea of their being anti-Islamic in concept. The English further exploited this bigoted sentiment to strengthen their policy of 'divide

and rule' with the result that often these festivities resulted in bloody communal riots.

Mythological Belief

There is a mythological belief associated with the festival of Holi. The demon king, Harnakush, having pleased Lord Shiva, got blessed that he would die under no perceivable circumstances and would not be killed by any conceivable creature. Having, thus, been assured of self-perceived immortality, he commanded his subjects to worship him as God. His son, Prahlad, refused to recognise the divine supremacy of his father. Holika, sister of Harnakush, had too been bestowed with a fireproof sheet by Lord Shiva, by wrapping herself into which she could save herself from being burnt, while sitting in fire. Harnakush desired her to sit in fire with Prahlad in her lap. He challenged his son to invoke his God to save him from being reduced to ashes. Prahlad was a devotee of Lord Vishnu, the Protector of virtue. As the bewildered and frightened people watched Holika sitting in fire with Prahlad in her lap, a strong gust of wind removed the fireproof sheet from her body, covering Prahlad instead with that. Prahlad, thus, got saved while Holika perished. It was the time when the sun had just set. Lo ! a creature half human and half bestial leaped from some where. It dragged Harnakush to a nearby threshold and tore him to death with its claws. Thus the cruel king met his death at the hands of a creature which was neither a human nor a beast, at a time that was neither day, nor night, and at a place, neither completely covered nor open to the sky, a blessing, he had sought from Lord Shiva for ensuring his immortality.

This happened on the Holi eve. People were besides themselves with joy on their deliverance from a tyrannical ruler and the miraculous safety of their beloved prince, Prahlad, in the ordeal thrust on him. The next morning, when the pyre of Holika had cooled, people applied the ash to their foreheads to express their thanksgiving. Thus may have started the practice of putting vermilion marks on the forehead of one another on the Holi day.

As the means of recreation had been scanty in the past and occasions for fun a few, the common people who could not afford to buy vermilion, began to celebrate the festival by sprinkling coloured water at one another. In our society the relationship between sister-in-law and brother-in-law (*deor* and *bhabi*) permits reckless fun-making. Even the throwing of mud and dung on each other among such relatives was not considered in any way vulgar and objectionable.

Holika Dahan

In some parts of India a ceremony called '*Holika Dahan*, burning of Holika, is still observed. Her effigy is taken to the outskirts of villages and towns and is burnt. Only the adult males take part in this mock cremation. They dance around the fire half-naked, hurling abuses at the demons, thus reminding them of the ignominious end of all evil creatures like Holika. The filthy songs commonly heard during the Holi week, owe their origin to the ceremony of Holika Dahan.

Hola Mohalla

When Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa in 1699 A.D. he disapproved the practice of indulging into obscene singing for deriding the evil. He impressed upon his followers the desirability of strengthening their muscles along with the purification of their souls to be able to subdue evil and overawe the enemy. He advised them to learn horse-riding, discus-throwing, wielding of arms and other physical feats, because an enemy cannot be frightened by mere abuses. Rather the obscene songs abet evil through display of vulgarity.

In 1702 A.D. on the day next to Holi, he introduced the festival of *Hola Mohalla*. Mohalla means a castle. Dividing his congregation into two groups, he arranged mock exercises in warfare. Since then the observance of *Hola Mohalla* became a regular annual gathering at Anandpur Sahib.

Historians observe that it was a subtle innovation of the Tenth Master for breaking the monopoly of caste privileges. Earlier only Brahmins could read scriptures (*shasters*) and the Kshatriyas alone wield the weapons (*shusters*). He exhorted the downtrodden that they were equal in all respects; could read scriptures and carry the weapons.

It is high time that the seasonal glory of Holi be revived. The scientific civilization has dragged the modern man away from the beauties of nature. He does not feel the thrill of change of seasons. Holi should be observed in open fields so that blooming verdure may brighten the otherwise dull minds. Coloured water be not sprinkled on any person, unwilling to join the hilarious celebration. Tournaments should be organised and community dinners be arranged to celebrate Holi, the festival of spring at its bloom. It will not only help the process of national integration, but also impress upon people that as long as they are physically strong and morally sound, they have no evil or enemy to fear.

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IV

Significance of Baisakhi

Baisakhi, the first day of Baisakh, second month of Vikrami solar calendar, which corresponds these days with April 13 of the Gregorian calendar, has not only a great seasonal significance in northern parts of India, but also is reminiscent of many an important land-mark which led to social regeneration and political awakening in the country as a whole. The envious appellations like ‘granary of India’, ‘sword-arm of the country’ and ‘land of sages and martyrs’ with which Punjab is complimented, have their origin linked with this day among the days.

Baisakhi marks the advent of harvesting season. The fields of ripened wheat appear to be glistening like gold. The sturdy, virile and hard-working peasants of Punjab give vent to their spontaneous joy through folk dances, attuned to the rhythmic beating of drum. Bhangra, the popular folk dance of Punjab, which has won acclamation all over the world, symbolises brisk activities of farmers during harvesting season, as they reap the ripened corn, thresh and winnow it.

Amrit Manthan

A mythological tale called *Amrit Manthan*, churning for nectar, describes the religious importance of Baisakhi. In the days of yore, the gods and demons joined to churn ocean for obtaining nectar from it. After the success of that grand operation, the nectar was stored in a pitcher, called *kumbh* in Sanskrit. The gods changed their mind to share nectar with demons, fearing that if the latter became immortal after partaking it, the former would have to live under their perpetual domination. The resplendent god, Sun, and the bewitching goddess, Moon, were entrusted with the task of playing a ruse with the demons while distributing nectar. The gods and demons were desired to stand in separate rows facing each other. While the Sun carefully poured drops of nectar in the mouths

of gods, he cheated the demons by inverting empty ladle, when they opened their jaws for receiving their share, with their attention diverted by the fascinating smiles of Moon, carrying the pitcher. Rahu and Kaitu, two of the demons, perceived the trick of distributors and quietly changed their row, without their having been seen by anyone. The Moon detected it quite late and before she could caution Sun, both had managed to touch their lips with the dipped ladle.

The gods got panicky and ran with the pitcher towards their resort in the Himalayas, with the demons giving them a hot chase. In the hide and seek that followed, a few drops of nectar fell into the river, Sipra, near Ujjain; later into the confluence of rivers, Jamuna, Sarswati and Ganges near Allahabad and last of all into Ganges near Hardwar. The scuffles at Allahabad and Hardwar took place on the days of Maghi and Baisakhi respectively. Almost all the demons with the exception of Rahu and Kaitu got killed, as they had not become immortal. Due to serious injuries these two, too, could not chase the gods beyond Hardwar. The belief goes that water of confluence at Allahabad and that of Ganges at Hardwar acquire the quality of nectar on the days of Maghi and Baisakhi respectively and a dip in them, then, helps in achieving salvation. The fair held on these occasions is called *kumbh*.

The superstition also prevails still that Rahu and Kaitu had not been able to forget the ruse played on them by Sun and Moon. They attack each occasionally to seek revenge and such raids result in solar or lunar eclipse depending upon the object of their attack.

The priestly class had been floating many such superstitious beliefs and thereby exploiting the simple-minded people. The Sikh Gurus led a crusade against this exploitation and discouraged blind faith. It is written in Sri Guru Granth Sahib :

“If salvation could be achieved through a dip in holy tanks and rivers, frog which is an aquatic creature would have been saved from the cycle of birth and death. Oh, mortal, in spite of your pilgrimages you will remain subjected to this cycle like frog.”
(Asa Kabir)

Guru Nanak preached that truth is great, but greater still is the truthful way of living. The latter does not lie in shunning society by taking refuge in forests and mountains, but enjoins leading a pure worldly life free from vices and superstitions.

Foundation of Khalsa

Accordingly Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master chose the day of Baisakhi in 1699 (March 30, 1699) to found the Khalsa, ‘the pure’, at Anandpur. He termed this initiation which aimed at the physical and moral transformation of his followers as ‘*Amrit Chakna*’ i.e. partaking of nectar. In the new order constituted by him all castes were abolished. His followers were enjoined to address each other as brother, ‘*bhai*’. Belief in superstitions was forbidden and the performance of religious rituals was declared unnecessary. The new order was to believe in one eternal God – the Creator, the Protector and the Destroyer – extending deference at the same time to all other faiths. Pilgrimage, impelled by superstitions, was declared as futile. Instead, a noble and useful domestic life, giving due respect to women, inclined to help the needy and pledged to protect the oppressed was prescribed to be pious way of living. That is why every disciple of the new order has been both a saint and a soldier, humble in mind but strong in determination.

While baptising his first five chosen ones, Guru Gobind Singh denounced the personality cult in very severe terms. He exhorted people that the real power belonged to them. This was the imparting of a touch of democracy to theology, which transformed religion into an effective instrument for the service of people. The impact of new order on Indian society led to a social and political revolution. The practice of social equality, recognition of worth and above all the restoration of long-denied human dignity forged, the Indian people into a budding nation. Nationalism, the first casualty of caste system, began to develop in India. Upto then, whosoever had invaded her from northwest easily trampled this land, ransacked the religious places, dishonoured the women and humiliated her people. But after the birth of Khalsa, the tide turned

its course. The sanctity attached to honest toil led to a wonderful economic advancement of Punjab. The new concept of sacrifice, which decries craving for personal glorification and gains, but enjoins a prayer and action seeking and striving for the welfare of all, has been inspiring the followers of new faith to become saints, sages and martyrs, leading at the same time virtuous household lives.

The Sant Khalsa

Ram Singh had been a soldier of the Khalsa Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After the demise of Maharaja in 1839, he got fed up by the intrigues of his survivors and the gradual departure from the lofty ideals of Khalsa Raj. In disgust, he left the army service in 1845 and returned to his native place, Bhaini, near Ludhiana. But after the annexation of Punjab by the East India Company in 1849, the provocative activities of patronised missionaries and the demoralization of the disarmed Khalsa Army awakened his national pride. He resolved to restore the glorious values of sovereign secular Khalsa rule. It was on the Baisakhi of 1857 (about four weeks earlier than the revolt of Bengal Sepoys on May 10) that Ram Singh founded the Sant Khalsa. It enjoyed a strict code of simple pious living attuned to *naam* (Name of God). The new sect began to be called accordingly Namdharis. As in their ecstasy, they often indulged into loud shrieks (called *kuks* in Punjabi) the epithet 'Kuka' also got added to Namdhari. They adored the founder of their sect as *Satguru* (preceptor of truth)

Because holding of kirpans was resented by the East India Company regime, the Kukas began to carry sticks (*lathis*). Mass physical drills formed a part and parcel of their congregation. The Namdharis were the first to start a parallel self-rule by introducing their own postal system for maintaining secrecy about their activities. They settled all mutual disputes through sabhas, (*panchayats*) instead of petitioning to courts. Child marriage, infanticide, sati and all such practices, derogatory to the dignity of women, were forbidden. Education through mother tongue was encouraged so that the taught remained acquainted with their

cultural heritage. The campaign was the forerunner of the noncooperation movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi from 1921 onwards. The British did not take kindly to the growing activities of Namdharis, as they were reviving the national pride and martial spirit of the ruled.

The opening of a chain of slaughterhouses by the British for providing beef to the colonial army was resented by the Namdharis. The sentiment for cow-protection was exploited by the foreign rulers to incite clashes between Namdharis and the local butchers. After one such encounter sixty six Kukas were blown off without any trial by L.Cowan, Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, on January 17-18, 1872. The executed included Bishen Singh, a teenager who was hacked to pieces. Satguru Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon where he passed away in 1885. As per its aims and goal, the foundation of Sant Khalsa on the Baisakhi of 1857 deserves to be acclaimed as the declaration of India's First War of Independence.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

It was again the day of Baisakhi in 1919, when Brig. Dyer a notorious British Army officer, committed the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre at Amritsar. More than twenty thousand people had assembled there to express their resentment against the Rowlatt Act, the repressive provisions of which legislation had disillusioned even, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi himself, a staunch loyalist like him, into an uncompromising non-co-operator with the British rule over India. He had earlier supported wholeheartedly the Empire during the Boer War in 1899, the Zulu Revolt in 1906 and the First Great War (1914-18) under the belief that such services might get status of equality for his countrymen within the Empire. But the Rowlatt Act, which gave extraordinary powers to the Government of India, empowering it either to confiscate the property of any Indian, whom it considered dangerous for the Empire, or to punish him through a summary trial, threw an open challenge to every Indian patriot. Gandhi ji described the imperialist rule as the worst crime against humanity.

On March 18, 1919, he issued an appeal to his countrymen to carry on a peaceful agitation against the Rowlatt Act, till that black legislation was withdrawn. A call for general strike was given for March 30, but was later postponed to April 6. The scenes of unprecedented communal harmony witnessed at Amritsar during the celebration of Id and Ram Naumi made the British Raj nervous. It was planned not to allow the display of such a solidarity during Baisakhi. Amritsar was placed under martial law so that Indians be taught a lesson in loyalty if they dared to congregate at any place defying the ban. The Jallianwala Bagh firing, in which according to the admission of British officers themselves, about 400 people had been killed and more than 2000 injured, was followed by crawling orders, public flogging and other humiliations perpetuated throughout Punjab. These appalling acts of cruelty and repression disillusioned even the moderates in India, who had been acclaiming the British Raj as a blessing. Rabinder Nath Tagore felt so much shocked on listening about these atrocities that he renounced the knighthood, conferred on him by the British Government in recognition of Nobel Prize won by him. The martyrdom offered by people of Punjab in the Jallianwala Bagh aroused the conscience of revolutionaries all over India and early twenties of that century witnessed a resurgent political awakening. Just as the destiny of India changed after the Tenth Guru founded the Khalsa on the day of Baisakhi in 1699, similarly the political future of India got greatly pushed towards its destination of independence after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. Mahatma Gandhi observed in this context :

'Plassey laid the foundation of the British Empire but Amritsar has shaken it'.

It was on the day of Baisakhi in 1968 that the Punjab Government introduced Punjabi as the official language of the State at all administrative levels. It was a red letter day in the sense that a neglected but rich language got its due recognition.

V

Nirjala Ekaadshi and Teean

A minor festival, known as Nirjal Ekaadshi, is observed in the lunar month of Jaith, when the intensity of summer with the scorching sun, blistering *Ioo* and raging dust storms is at its peak. 'Nirjal' implies not to use water for quenching thirst or taking bath even. Ekaadshi is the first *tithi* (time taken by the moon for rotating around its axis) of waxing moon. The Hindu scriptures enjoin their votaries not to use water for any of their physical requirements on the ekaadshi of Jaith. The purpose thereof has not been explained. It appears that as penance and fasting are the foremost among the rituals, prescribed for purification of soul by torturing the body, the observing of Nirjal Ekaadshi may have some such purpose.

But it has been found that the festival is celebrated by flouting the advised restraint. Sweetened water, whitened with milk, is freely offered to passers-by on the roads and streets; rather they are entreated to partake it. The priestly classes coax their followers to offer them seasonal fruits and milk-preparations. The gluttony into which they indulge has been ridiculed through this verse:

Quarter and hundred mangoes were sucked, eight hundred peaches eaten

Thousands of cucumbers and heaps of muskmelon were devoured

Four pots of curd and two pitchers of juice were gulped

Many baskets of ladoos and trays of milk-cake were consumed

*This is how Nirjal Ekaadshi was observed.....**

**Mahan Kosh*, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, 3rd ed., p.711.

Teean

Teean is the festival of rains, meant for women only. It begins on the third tithi of waxing moon of Sawan, when the rainy season normally sets in and goes on upto the fullmoon night, *pooranmashi*. With the arrival of rains, streams and rivers often got flooded, thus, obstructing the transportation of goods. It used to be a stay-in period for urban business community. Celebrated Sanskrit poet, Kali Das eulogised the rainy season as it afforded ample of pleasure-time to otherwise busy married couples and the long-separated lovers.

But the occupational requirements of rural people, predominantly agriculturists by profession, had been entirely different from those of urban commercial classes. If a farmer failed to attend timely to his fields to make use of rain water and preserving the dampness of soil for sowing purposes, his fortune would not smile. Hence an economic necessity became a social obligation to send newly fetched brides to their parental homes, so that their spouses could attend to their agricultural pursuits without any diversion. Otherwise too, a woman getting conceived in the month of Sawan would deliver the child near Baisakhi, when the harvesting season is at its peak. The rural people being awfully busy with the reaping, threshing and winnowing pursuits can not spare time readily for any such family obligation.

Hence an exclusively economic requirement was sanctified through the charming festival of *Teean*, a festivity lasting for more than ten days. As such mostly wedded girls visiting their parental homes dominated this celebration.

As the mechanization of agriculture and introduction of other means of irrigation have influenced the rural way of life as well, a few people care to learn about the origin and significance of such fading festivals. Those interested to know more about the songs, the girls sang, while swinging and the pranks they played, may read the last chapter of the Back Matter. As camels are no longer popular as means of traffic and the status of women in society has improved, the translation of that text into English would appear to be insipid.

VI

Changing Dates of Festivals

The 300th anniversary of the Khalsa fell on April 14, 1999 A.D. i.e. Baisakh 1, Vikrami Samvat 2056. Guru Gobind Singh founded it on the Baisakhi day of 1756 Vk which corresponded to the then Julian calendar day of March 30, 1699. Why has the date of this anniversary receded by 15 days ? The 5th centenary date of this historic event in 2199 A.D. will get pushed back by another day or so. For the last six years or so Baisakhi had been coinciding with April 13. The continual recession in the anniversary dates of Baisakhi and of a few related events, that took place during 1582–1752 A.D. is explained herein.

Baisakhi and Maghi are two seasonal-cum-religious festivals, the anniversaries of which are determined according to the solar calendar. All other ceremonies, Hindu as well as Sikh, are observed according to the lunar year which is shorter than its collateral solar year by about 11 days. Hence their anniversary dates keep changing from year to year. The uniformity in the numbering of solar and lunar year is brought about by adding an intercalary month of 29 days to the latter after about 34 months.

Three different solar years namely Gregorian, Vikrami and Shaka are in vogue in India. The Gregorian year, commonly numbered as B.C. (Before Christ) or A.D. (Anno Domini – in the year of the Lord) was called prior to 1582 Julian year as per calendar introduced by the Roman warrior, Julius Caesar, in 46 B.C. Through an inadvertent error he allowed the solar year about 11 minutes more than its normal duration. Pope Gregory XIII corrected that error in 1582. A.D. by omitting the accumulated deficit. The calendar year thereafter began to be called Gregorian instead of Julian. In common terms this correction is referred to as new style, whereas the Julian calculation is cited as old style. The English Church which had estranged relations with Popedom did not show

inclination to accept the change. But the growing international involvement necessitated for U.K. to adopt the new style which it did in 1752 (170 years later) by omitting 11 days, September 3-13. The English colonies (U.S.A. was then in British Empire) including India followed suit in due course. U.S.S.R. switched on to new style in 1917.

The chronological origin of the Vikrami and Shaka samvats is traced to two monarchical dynasties of the first century B.C. which had been in constant confrontation against each other for demonstrating the respective supremacy. King Vikramajit, also called Vikramaditya, a title of grandeur for a ruler of exceptional ability and adorable accomplishment, with Ujain in Central India as his capital, had become a household word for wisdom and righteousness. He introduced the Vikrami samvat (both solar and lunar) in 57 B.C., which preceded the Julian calendar by 11 years.

The seat of governance of the rival contemporary king, Salbahan, referred to as Brahampuri, had been at the present day Paithan on the bank of river Godavri. It is near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. The glory of Vikramaditya kept eclipsing the achievements of Salbahan, but one of his descendants overran the Vikrami kingdom during first century A.D. For commemorating his dynastic victory he introduced the Shaka samvat (solar) 135 years later than the inception of Vikrami one, to be precise in 78 A.D. But he could not devalue the captivating hold which Vikramaditya had acquired in folklore.

The Government of India after independence chose to adopt the Shaka samvat to correspond with the Gregorian year. The names of months in the Vikrami as well as the Shaka samvats are the same. Their first month i.e. Chaitra falls in mid March; that of Shaka preceding the Vikrami one by a week. For ascertaining the number of each, after the dawning of respective Chaitra, 78 is subtracted from the Gregorian number in the case of Shaka but 57 added thereto for the Vikrami.

As stated earlier Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa on

the Baisakhi day of 1756 Vk which corresponded to March 30, 1699 A.D. After the adoption of new style, this date got pushed to April 9 after 1752. The Indian solar year, according to Arya Bhatt (476-520 A.D.) has a span of 365 days, 6 hours, 12 minutes and 30 seconds. Pope Gregory XIII, while correcting the Julian error, determined its duration as 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and 46 seconds. Thus the Vikrami year is longer than the Gregorian one by 22 minutes and 44 seconds. This difference in the course of 63/64 years amounts almost to 24 hours or a day. Hence the Gregorian year being shorter advances over the Vikrami samvat by one day after every six decades or so, with the result that Baisakhi which corresponded to March 30 in 1699 got receded to April 14 in 1999.

The aforesaid modification applies to the allied historical dates also. The battle of Muketsar (Posh 30, 1762 Vk) was fought on December 29, 1705 and the cremation of forty Muktas took place a day thereafter on December 30 (Maghi) which now corresponds to January 14.

The Sikh festivals are observed according to all the three calendars in vogue :

- i Gurpurabs, martyrdom anniversaries, etc. according to Vikrami lunar year ;
- ii Maghi and Baisakhi as per Vikrami solar year, and
- iii Jor Mela of Sahibzadas in the last week of December.

The Government of India, in spite of its having adopted the Shaka samvat, observes national holidays, viz. Republic Day, Independence Day and birthday of Mahatma Gandhi according to the Gregorian calendar. It is desirable that a uniform pattern of festival anniversaries is evolved. The duration of solar year was determined by Arya Bhatt in reference to the planetary movements which continue to vary under fluctuating magnetic pulls. Telescopic observations provide precise information. It gets enjoined that duration of Vikrami solar samvat is corrected as was done by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

The Sikhs are settled almost all over the world. The festival

dates, circulated every year as per lunar calendar, create a lot of confusion for them. One such particular event is the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh falling on Posh sudi saptami i.e. 7th waxing moon tithi of the lunar month Posh beginning in December. After the insertion of an intercalary month this date gets pushed to the next Gregorian year. The birthday of the Tenth Master, thus falls twice with an intervening period of 354 days in that year. The S.G.P.C. has approved the Gregorian calendar dates of January 5 and November 24 for observing the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh and the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur respectively. As the foundation day of the Khalsa has become an event of international importance it is impressed that its anniversary date be also firmly fixed. In due course all festival anniversaries be ascertained according to the solar calendar instead of the lunar tithis. The priestly class has associated the tithis with many mythological beliefs and superstitions which are hard to be accepted by modern generation accustomed to scientific temper and rationalism. The priests do not favour even the holding of any festivity during an intercalary month for its being branded as *malmas* i.e. dirty. How could a corrective measure be polluting ?

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VII

Army Day

Last Monday of May is observed as Memorial Day in the USA. To begin with it commemorated those who were killed in the Civil War that broke out on the issue of abolition of slavery. A few southern states, which had been against it, did not show the required enthusiasm. It was considered discreet to keep including in that national remembrance all the Americans who lay down their lives from time to time in active service. The list is kept updated.

The corresponding event in India is Army Day which marks that an Indian officer took over as commander-in-chief of the army of independent India on January 15, 1949, fulfilling the aspiration of Indianization of army.

On January 26 (Republic Day) and August 15 (Independence Day) the Prime Minister of Socialist Secular Sovereign Democratic Republic of India, prior to his participation in the main celebrations, goes to Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate to lay wreath there. That monument commemorated those native soldiers who got killed in the first World War to save UK and its Allies from the onslaught by Axis Powers. Later the names of those who fell in the Second World War were also added. Both the wars were not a part of our freedom struggle. The title of the inscribed entries endorses that. The laying of wreath by the Head of the Government of India on that monument, in spite of its changed name, amounts to paying obeisance to our once fetters of slavery.

The national pride enjoins that a new memorial be erected. The remembrance list may begin from the day, the Indian Army landed at Srinagar to drive out the tribal raiders. History is the judge that the Indian army saved Kashmir and Kashmir in turn upheld the secular fabric of India.

The Diamond Jubilee of Independence of India falls in 2007*. It will be appropriate to raise a befitting memorial before these celebrations begin at national level.

A memorial be also set up to acknowledge the contribution of Indian National Army to our freedom struggle. The site for that be arranged near the Red Fort as 'To Delhi' was the war cry of INA. The existing memorial at India Gate be classified as a place of archives.

The school textbooks seek corresponding revision. The Saragarhi Post (NWFP) adventure (September 12, 1897) was an act of rare valour in which more than twenty native soldiers of Royal Indian Army laid down their lives while fighting against a besieging tribal horde. They were given each posthumously the highest gallantry award, Victoria Cross. The episode has been recently included by the Central Board of School Education in the textbooks. Do not we have any memorable event from our glorious freedom struggle for highlighting the deeds of patriotic zeal? The post-independence generations may feel thrilled on learning about the outstanding deeds of our martyrs, revolutionaries and the INA heroes.

The national celebrations should reflect the aspirations of an independent nation. The mentality of feeling proud of our achievements as staunch loyalists of the Raj needs to be discarded.

The pertinent comments received from the Army Headquarters in this context are shared as follows:

- 3 *Amar Jawan Jyoti was erected in 1972 as a tribute to our martyrs post independence. It has no relation to our colonial past. All the same, the contribution of our soldiers who participated in the World Wars and brought glory to our country and professionalism in our armed forces, should not of course be sidelined. With India's emergence*

*This text was written in June 2005, while the author was in USA. On his return to India it was submitted to the Chief of Army Staff for consideration. The reply received is reproduced in the Back Matter.

as a major economic and military power, we should actually also now come to terms with our history.

- 4 *As far as construction of National War Memorial (NWM) is concerned, the matter is under active consideration and a few prominent sites are being considered. We are following up various sites and interacting with relevant committees to find an ideal prominent site for a National War Memorial. We hope to succeed in the months ahead and thereafter will follow the design, planning and such other aspects.*
- 6 *Your point regarding inclusion of outstanding deeds of martyrs/ revolutionaries in textbooks is quite pertinent and will be referred to ministry of HRD for necessary consideration.*
- 7 *The issue of a memorial to commemorate INA contribution does not come under the purview of the Service HQ.*

Despite the renaming of India Gate as Amar Jawan Jyoti in 1972, the names of native soldiers who lost their lives in the World Wars continue to precede those of post-independence martyrs under the pretext of coming to terms with history. In fact the Constitution of India contains many provisions retaining and relishing our colonial links as pointed out below.

On the date of commencement of Constitution, the Preamble proclaimed the Republic to be sovereign and democratic. But article 105(3) contained that the powers, privileges and immunities of each House of Parliament of India and the members thereof, until defined by Parliament by law, shall be those of House of Commons of Parliament of United Kingdom. The same was reiterated regarding the state legislatures and their members vide article 194(3). It was intriguing as to how a constitution, subservient here and there to the practices observed by the parliament of our one-time ruling country, would reflect the sovereignty of the republic, adopting it. These offending provisions were suitably worded through 44th amendment in 1978. It took 28 years to remove a lacuna injuring national pride.

Though the Preamble proclaimed that the people of India had enacted and adopted the Constitution, yet its articles 331, 333, 336 and 337 protected interests of sections which had been staunchly loyal to the outgoing Raj and bypassed the expectations of those who had waged the struggle for freedom.

Article 336 laid down that during the first two years after the commencement of Constitution, the appointments of members of Anglo-Indian community to the posts in the railways, customs, postal and telegraphic services of the Union shall be made on the same basis as immediately before the fifteenth day of August 1947. Thereafter the reservation was to be adjusted in a phased manner. The four aforesaid departments had been vital for clamping a garb of secrecy on various moves of the Raj and hence were selectively manned by its most trusted sections. How painful that the preamble merely assured social, economic and political justice to the people of India, but the Constitution provided a mandatory protection to the already privileged Anglo-Indian community for reservation in services, provision for grant to their educational institutions and representation in the House of People and certain state assemblies through nomination upto two members.

The persons acquiring citizenship of India through birth or otherwise after the commencement of Constitution could have one nationality only i.e. Indian. The retention of the term 'Anglo-Indian' which implies that one of the parents is to be English, amounts to anachronism. The nomination to a house, elected on the basis of universal adult franchise, imparts it not only an undemocratic tinge, but perpetuates also in an otherwise secular society, a privilege on ethnic or racial consideration.

These two illustrations hold that though the Constitution was enacted in the name of people of India, yet there had been a lurking desire in the minds of its framers to keep the outgoing foreign rulers in good humour. It is surprising that these anomalies did not get the attention of even those who invoke Mandal or brandish tridents.

In the army the decisions taken are implemented promptly. Perhaps such a promptness is displayed at the field only. Red-tapism

seems to be persisting still in the offices. Though the observance of Army Day commenced on January 15, 1949, yet the shoulder badges of officers continued to display the symbol of Crown till August 1951, when it got replaced by national insignia of Trimurti.

The Army Headquarters had assured vide their communication dated January 12, 2006 that the construction of National War Memorial is under their active consideration, but no progress seems to have been made so far in that direction.

Many high ranking British officers of the Indian Army had been forewarning that our armed forces would collapse like a wall of sand as the Indian officers lacked the qualities of leadership. The opportunity for an armed force, labelled as colonial army, to transform itself into national army came in the last week of October 1947, with the invasion of Kashmir Valley by the tribal raiders, abetted by Pakistani Army. The fateful day on which the first Indian Army unit landed at Srinagar, while the raiders were at its outskirts, deserves to be celebrated as Army Day. The replacement of General Bucher by K.M Cariappa as Commander-in-Chief of Indian army on January 15, 1949, came much later. Nations feel proud of memorable events and not adore their offshoots

VIII

May Day

May Day, first day of the fifth month of Gregorian calendar, observed now as International Labour Day all over the world, had a special seasonal significance throughout Europe before the advent of industrial era. The old Roman beliefs and customs had been exercising a deep influence on European culture and literature till the Renaissance set in. The Romans worshipped 'Flora', the goddess of Verdure (vegetation) with abundant gaiety on the first day of May, which marked the advent of spring. The ceremony had been remnant of ancient agricultural and fertility rituals associated with seasonal changes. With the conquest of Europe by Romans these celebrations spread to Scandinavian and Celtic regions also.

May Day and Baisakhi

May Day, in reference to its seasonal significance, can be compared with our Baisakhi which has a similar importance in northern India. The fascinating beauty of nature during the month of Baisakh has been described by Guru Nanak in Baramaha (monthly cycle of the year) as :

'Beauteous Baisakh, when the bough adorns itself anew'.

Many historical events, such as foundation of the Khalsa, establishment of the Punjab Raj by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, etc. took place on the day of Baisakhi and thus transformed it from a merely seasonal festival to a historic landmark in the history of India. Likewise the march of industrial civilization in Europe and America raised the importance of May Day from a mere occasion of nature worship, to the establishing of a just equitable economic order.

May-Day Celebrations in England

The writings of Chaucer and others reflect that May-Day celebrations had been very popular during middle ages. Long before

sunrise, people, rich as well as poor, flocked to nearby woods and hills to fetch flowers and twigs. They returned home singing and dancing to rhythmic tune of drums and trumpets. They decorated their windows and doors with flowers and leaves. The most charming damsel of village or of locality was chosen as queen of the day. A crown of flowers was placed on her head. In cities, tall mast of a ship was transfixed in open ground. It was adorned with wreaths and multicoloured ribbons. Young boys and girls danced around it throughout the day. When after the Civil War the Puritan rule got established, it banned all merrymaking customs, because of its orthodox outlook. After the Restoration of monarchy, May-Day celebrations were revived. There is a common mention of them in the novels of Thomas Hardy.

May Day as Labour Day

In America and Canada first Monday of September used to be observed as labour day. The famous labour organisation of America known as 'Knights of Labour' was founded in 1869 i.e. about ninety years later than the establishment of American Republic. To begin with it was a secret organisation working for protection of its members against any form of persecution by employers. Its main demands had been :

- i Industrial safety measures ;
- ii Weekly pay;
- iii Worker's lien against vacancy in the event of illness and leave under exceptional circumstances ;
- iv Equal pay for both genders for equal work ;
- v An eight-hour work day followed by a weekly holiday;
- vi Ban on the importation of alien contract labourers, or the leasing out of convicts, etc.

In the earlier years of its struggle it was opposed to strikes and believed in resolving all disputes through arbitration. But manipulations by capitalists, hired press, courts inclined towards protecting the interests of employers and open sympathy of

administration with the rich compelled them to raise a strike fund. Within a few years 'Knights of Labour' developed into a mighty labour organisation. In 1886 'Hay Market Square Riots' at Chicago were manipulated by the employers in complicity with police. In the firing many labourers as well as policemen were killed and wounded. The protest procession taken thereafter laid foundation of a determined struggle by workers against well entrenched capitalists.

In 1889 a congress of world socialist parties was held at Paris. Fraternal sympathy was expressed therein with American labour movement. First May 1890 was chosen for holding demonstrations and carrying out processions to put forth the demands of workers. Since then May First is observed all over the world as International Labour Day. In socialist countries massive military parades are held on this day to demonstrate the strength of State.

May Day in India

Giani Zail Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, declared May First as a paid holiday for workers in 1972. The Janta Government led by Morarji Desai chose May 1, 1977 to discontinue the much detested Compulsory Deposit Scheme for the employees, introduced by Desai himself while he was Finance Minister during sixties.

India is one of the seven leading industrial countries of the world and May Day is an occasion to ponder as to how the working conditions in India can be improved. For securing justice, liberty and equality for all people, as pledged in the Preamble to Constitution, articles 41 and 43 should be shifted from 'Directive Principles of State Policy' to 'Fundamental Rights' for making them justiceable. They lay down as follows :

41 Right to work, to education and to public assistance.

The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provisions for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

43 Living wages, etc. for workers

The State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial, or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities, and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.

The survey conducted by various welfare agencies regarding minimum standard of living and corresponding recreational facilities, which people in developing countries should have, suggests:

balanced diet having a caloric value of about 2200 units for every adult per day, 30 yards of cloth per head per year, housing space of at least 100 square feet per head, provision of medical aid on the basis of one primary unit for 10,000 people
and
100 newspapers, 30 radio sets and 20 cinema seats for every 1000 people.

The demands on May Day all over the underdeveloped world should include the enforcement of such constitutional guarantees and legislative measures as may help in removing poverty upto the level suggested above.

The GNP (Gross National Product) of a country is worked out on the basis of resources, spent on essential services like education, health, social security, etc. Progress in that direction determines whether a country is developed or still underdeveloped.

IX

Teachers' Day

October 5 is being observed annually as World Teachers' Day since 1994. The 1966 recommendations of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization regarding the role of teachers in society were accepted on that day after deliberations stretching over about three decades. It reminds the teachers of their obligation to keep providing quality education, an indispensable source for human transformation, consistent with the march of time. Each successive annual celebration evaluates the progress made in this context. The World Teachers' Day 2009 pushed ahead this campaign with the exhortation, 'Build the Future ; Invest in Teachers Now'. It spotlighted the shortage of teachers at global level as well as laid emphasis on the challenges confronting them in developing matching competence in tune with the improving communication skills. More than a billion teachers are required to be trained even for the modest target of universal primary education. The future of society is determined by the quality of teachers it chooses and not by the quantity of lethal weapons it produces.

Progress in this respect faces stiff obstructions while the surging international terrorism, deriding the concept of equality and world brotherhood, is vandalizing even the existing institutions set up for human transformation. The global economic slowdown puts further restraints on the education budgets for providing requisite infrastructure.

Teachers' Day is observed in more than thirty countries on the days chosen according to the native aspirations and the sources of inspiration. It is encouraging that the developing countries dominate this list, thus demonstrating their resolve to reconstruct themselves after having been ravaged long by the colonial forces.

Celebration of Teachers' Day in India started in 1962. Birthday of Dr Sarvepali Radhakrishnan, a teacher par excellence, falls on September 5. Some of his students and admirers requested him to let them celebrate his birthday. He had been elected the President of Republic of India that year. He suggested that instead of felicitating him on his birthday in his then exalted position of Head of State; it would be a step in the right direction if September 5 is observed as Teachers' Day. Thus, from the adoration of a talented individual, it became a national celebration.

Teachers' Day provides an opportunity to the taught to express appreciation of their teachers in moulding their lives and an occasion for the latter as well to reassess their role as befitting models for the young. Dr S. Radhakrishnan personified the dictum,

'A teacher teaches, a good teacher explains, an excellent teacher inspires, but an ideal teacher through the co-ordination of his heart, head and hands practises his concepts before he presents them as precepts'.

This epitomizes what a teacher is expected to accomplish.

A vibrant society keeps re-evaluating its past and plans its present accordingly for achieving its aspirations of a golden future. Teachers' Day, falling on September 5, gives us an opportunity to ponder and plan with vision in this respect.

Three categories of persons are associated with the process of educating people, regarded as human resource in a democratic regime. They are; the educational philosopher, the educator and the educational administrator.

Of the trio, the first determines the goal for which the people are to be educated. Inspired by that philosophy, which aims at transforming the taught through emotional, intellectual and physical development, the governments as well as voluntary social welfare organizations start educational institutions with adequate infrastructure of buildings, libraries, laboratories, play grounds and above all by selecting qualified teaching staff. A dedicated teacher develops the competence of a capable administrator in due course.

Educational philosophy is mostly guided by the human attitude towards mundane affairs and the keenness to keep it improving according to the needs of time. In ancient India, there was no defined educational philosophy, as importance was attached to the life after death and not to the one on earth. Education had been the monopoly of a particular caste and was denied to the so-called lowborn. As the scriptures and complementary texts were not written documents, the emphasis had been on learning by rote. Any discussion with the preceptor was regarded as lack of veneration for him. So critical thinking got discouraged. This reflected on the rearing of family also where the children were groomed with stress on blind obedience to their elders. Tradition and not innovation became a way of life.

Due to the denial of equality by the rigid caste system, unifying factors like fraternity and collective welfare did not evolve. Indian society remained horizontally as well as vertically divided; touch-me-nots and the untouchables; the educated few and illiterate hordes. Sense of nationalism remained alien to Indians. Whosoever invaded India found the victory waiting for him. All our inherited social and political maladies are basically due to our past, which is adored still by many despite its shortcomings.

During the Mughal rule which spread over a greater part of India stretching beyond two centuries, stress was laid on erecting monasteries, monuments and palaces.. The promising few, within India and from abroad, flocked to cities, which held opportunities for seeking patronage of the high - ups and the consequent protected living. The rural areas continued to be ignored, perpetrating, thus, the jungle law of ‘might is right’.

When the English set upon their adventure of converting themselves from traders to rulers, they did not treat India as place of their permanent domicile, but a mere colony to be exploited. A plan for educating the middle class, primarily through English, was launched to produce English knowing native subordinates to tighten the colonial grip. Its basic purpose being to exploit the people and not to transform them, the educated, by and large, began to mimic

Western mode of life. In the words of Dr Annie Besant,* the educated got deprived of their self-respect, thus losing their native identity, while the masses got further pushed into the marsh of poverty, ignorance and misery.

The epithet ‘Baboo’ still used in India to address the superior as well as elders, has its origin in this voluntary game of being robbed of self-respect. East India Company started annexing Indian territory from its camp office at Calcutta (Kolkata) during the eighteenth century. The native clerks, when summoned by their English bosses, would go in donning a coat, despite the local humid climate. They would be derisively addressed as ‘baboons’ due to their mimicking behaviour. As the last letter in words in English is not stressed while conversing, the sarcastic mode of calling a junior as ‘baboon’, was misunderstood as an applauding epithet ‘baboo’. A derogatory word began to be accepted as a sort of recognition by the foreign superior. There could be no other degrading illustration of losing self-respect than, thus, feeling elevated in being called a ‘baboo’.

The performance of universities, set up under that educational scheme was adjudged according to the number of graduates qualifying for the central services, particularly the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S); the steelframe of imperial bureaucracy. The non-government institutions vied with each other in proclaiming that they had been set up to produce loyal subjects to the Crown. In independent India, the centres for higher learning have not been able to get rid of that colonial outlook. An institution is still graded, not according to its contribution to the research and teaching as per local requirements, but based on the number of its taught qualifying for admission to foreign universities. A negligible number of them

*Anne Wood (Dr Annie Besant) born on October 1, 1847 to Irish parents at London, on migration to Madras (Chennai) in India during November 1893 worked untiringly for the educational, social and political progress of India’s teeming millions as well as for reviving self-respect among the educated aping Western way of life; formed Home Rule Movement in 1914; was elected President of Indian National Congress in 1917; her zeal for Indian renaissance led to the foundation of a magnificent centre of learning, the Benares Hindu University.

care to come back to their developing motherland. How deplorable that prior to independence the colonies were exploited for their raw material and after getting liberated, they are willingly sending abroad the cream of their youth instead of harnessing them for their development! Its side effects are that the middle class families are facing the empty-nest phenomenon and the offspring of working classes are getting desperate to go abroad allured by the mirages of green pastures. The continual human drain, both of brain and brawn, is due to the flaw in the prescribed syllabi as the young are not educated about :

the lofty ideals of our freedom struggle against
colonialism ;
the pious goals enunciated for social uplift and
economic betterment is our Constitution
and
above all, the corresponding obligations for citizens
incorporated along with.

This imbalance reflects adversely also on our political system.

Teachers' Day is an occasion for the young as well as the old in this profession to assess as to how to get out of this marshy abyss. For a comprehensive diagnosis of this malady, some of my experiences and observations are shared.

I had been a member of Law Faculty of Panjab University, Chandigarh. An item on the agenda for one of its meetings was to fix the number of periods, a reader (associate professor) be required to take per week. A teacher of that cadre pleaded that it was not possible for them to have more than six periods in a week as an hour long period requires a lot of time for preparation on the previous night. Dr Mehar Chand Mahajan, retired Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, was the Dean of Law Faculty. He expressed his disappointment, caused by that plea observing that the long spell of summer vacation be availed for preparing lectures for the entire ensuing academic session and on the evening preceding a lecture, the latest journals and reports be consulted to update the knowledge on the subject. Many teachers at the college level prepare

their lectures with the help of guides which the students are advised to shun.

In many informal gatherings, it often got pointed out that many teachers, particularly, the senior ones did not evaluate themselves the scripts of examinees but got them marked from others, who do not know much about the subject. Some such other unethical practices like abetting in copying, replacement of answer books, etc. which crept in by and by can be better imagined than mentioned. This is how the examination system got reduced to a farce.

It is depressing that in the World University Ranking 2007, not a single Indian University finds place among the top 100 universities. This can be solely attributed to the casual attitude of teachers towards their profession and the callousness of educational administrators. A nation gets doomed if its education is entrusted to the mediocres and the mercenaries. There is no dearth of talent in India; if Indian researchers can win Nobel Prizes while working abroad, why adequate facilities are denied to them in India? How ridiculous that they are adorned with Bharat Ratna when they win laurels as foreign nationals, but are ignored while they seek corresponding facilities here!

In the 1950's a few agricultural universities were under the process of being established in India. The concept of integrating teaching, research and extension was not then practised. A team from Ohio State University, USA visited the Government Agriculture College, Ludhiana, as its upgrading to a university was under active consideration. Its teaching staff consisted of about a score of teachers, mostly of the cadre of assistant professors and a few research officers as ex-officio professors. The Principal introduced the senior most among us to the leader of visiting team detailing his academic attainments and stressing on the length of his teaching experience 'more than twenty years'. The guest observed tersely, "Oh! one year's experience repeated more than twenty times". What a thought provoking observation! Our teachers had been dictating notes in a commanding voice from their dog-eared copies, which they had scribbled while as students. So the

observation 'one year's experience repeated more than twenty times' exposed that the timeworn ideas picked up about fifty years earlier were kept being passed on, even in their distorted form, to the succeeding generations of the taught.

No discussion is encouraged in the class room. Reference books are rarely suggested, because many teachers themselves are not given to going to library to consult the latest journals and publications. In many colleges, the libraries, if any, remain locked. They are merely producing white-collared youngsters who are conditioned to get things done instead of doing themselves and who seek to be taught, moved, treated or guided rather than learn, move, heal and find their own way.

The replacement of annual system of evaluation through external examiners by internal assessment on the semester pattern appears to be a healthy move. It has yielded encouraging results in agricultural universities where it had been adopted since their establishment. The concept that

one hour's contact with the teacher in the classroom ought to keep the student busy at least for two hours in the library for making the latter self-reliant instead of a spoon-fed

and

the post-graduate students be enjoined to complement their course-work with a research based thesis

keeps the teacher as well as the taught actively involved.

The compulsory seminars, related to the research topic, where the students present their project reports with findings:

help them to improve their oral expression;
sharpen their ability to reply to penetrating queries and above all enable them to overcome shyness which often retards progress in later life.

The administrators should encourage the teachers to participate in the refresher courses, subject seminars and the conferences. They should be desired to subscribe as well as contribute to Journals.

A teacher at the university level takes about five years to establish unimpeachable classroom reputation. He teaches as well as learns from inquisitive students. He ought to keep in mind that like teachers of yore, he is not the sole source of knowledge for the taught. The media, print as well electronic, communicates the latest advances in every field, challenging often the prevailing concepts. He should keep himself abreast with all such auxiliary channels of information, lest he be caught unaware in any question-answer exercise. After becoming a competent teacher, he becomes eligible to guide research along with. Thus a flourishing phase begins for him.

Consulting journals sharpens the eagerness to contribute to them. He should be prepared to cope with the hesitation of editors to entertain his initial attempts. With perseverance, he'll find that quality work is bound to earn recognition. In another span of five years, his works start to be cited by other contributors.

He, thus, reaches a stage after which he is invited to review the latest publications, present papers at seminars, conduct group discussions and even chair sessions of conferences of his subject. He begins to be quoted in treatises. The scholars feel inclined to undertake research on his publications for higher academic attainments. He ought not craze for awards and recognition. Often they are posthumous. This should be the goal of an ideal teacher. It is imperative that during all these stages he does not get detached from his anchor, the classroom.

A teacher retires from services but seldom retreats from the field. He remains a fountain head of knowledge, acquiring it and sharing it generously as a seer. After active service, he is expected to:

produce quality text books;
inspire his successors in the field to accept the challenge that Indian universities get raised to the status of premier ones in the world

and

strive that the textbooks compiled by native writers find as much acceptability as the ones by foreign authors.

How deplorable that Indian universities are still profitable markets for foreign publishers!

Our textbook boards too have not been able to discard the colonial legacy. So often the creative work of Indian writers in English compares with, if not excels, that by writers whose mother tongue is English. Even then the native creative writers are not assessed by the textbook boards as the former are not the clients of leading publishing houses within India and abroad.

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Children Day

Fourteenth November is celebrated every year as Children Day all over India. It synchronizes with the birthday of late Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru¹. Pandit Nehru a great humanitarian and an enlightened statesman, as he was, believed literally in the adage that a child of today is the citizen of tomorrow and our future is shaped the way, we bring him up. It was an article of faith with him that the love and care for children be a part of social regeneration of India. In spite of his busy schedule of eighteen hours' arduous work a day, he found time to attend the rallies of children to cheer as well as advise them. He encouraged the press to have special features for children to cater to their imagination and healthy development. Children were also very fond of Pandit Nehru and reciprocated his affection by calling him 'Uncle Nehru'. The observance of Children Day on 14th November, the birthday of Pandit Nehru, has a special significance. It inspires children to become as great and beneficent as Pandit Nehru was. It also puts parents to serious thought as to how to improve the bringing up of their children to achieve this lofty end².

Every progressive nation pays the foremost heed to create healthy and beneficial environments for the growth of children, as its future depends upon their proper and careful bringing up. That is why a child is called the father of man. If children are neglected, they will constitute a generation of delinquents.

1 Jawahar Lal Nehru (November 14, 1889 to May 27, 1964), Prime Minister of India from August 15, 1947 to the date he died.

2 Refer to in this context to 'Jawahar Lal Nehru' (Poem for Children) and 'To a Child: A Father's Pledge' in the Back Matter.

Three factors influence the physical, moral and intellectual development of children. They are the home, the school, and the social environments. Of these three, the first is the most important and the pivotal one. Parents in India require a lot of education in the art of bringing up children who are the most important biological result of marriage. Many of our notions about children have become time-worn and need re-evaluation.

The ancient culture and wisdom of India are the product of monarchical rules. Such a regime is based on the fear of king and the consequent mandatory blind obedience offered to him by the ruled. Our country is a democratic republic now. Democracy flourishes on independent thinking. Education in a democratic country should not be imparted through fear and punishment. Such notions as ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’, ‘The hoe and the child work well, if sharpened occasionally’, and ‘The child and watermelon flourish in dust’, that have been guiding the rearing of children have to be discarded. Neither a hoe nor a melon has personality. A child is an imaginative being who eagerly observes what his elders do and promptly follows their example*. If children are brought up in an atmosphere of fear, their personalities will be ill-developed. They may be suitable as loyal subjects to a king, but will not be able to function as useful citizens of a democratic state. Monarchy believes in the concept that an average man is bad by nature and requires fear of punishment and coercion to make him obey the laws of State. Democracy puts forth that a majority of people observe the law, not because they fear punishment, but as they sincerely feel that it is improper to violate it. Our old notions about children no longer suit our present needs. How wicked it had been in India to compare a woman to a pair of shoes which could be discarded at will, and a child to a melon which would develop in an atmosphere of neglect while playing in dust.

* Refer to the poem ‘I Am Child’ in the Back Matter

All the four important human relations around which society revolves, viz., those between the ruler and the ruled, the teacher and the taught, the parents and their children, and the husband and the wife, require an immediate re-evaluation to let the democratic outlook develop in India. In a democracy every citizen has equal social, economic and political rights. The people can change their government at will through the polls. In a monarchy the word of monarch is law, his pleasure a blessing and his wrath a calamity. It breeds an all-round inequality. Subjects bow before their monarch, adoring him as their bread-giver. A teacher similarly expects blind obedience from his pupils, as he regards himself a lord in the school. A wife is enjoined to regard her husband, even though he may be a debauch, as her supreme lord, because the belief prevails that man is for God, and she for the god in man. Absolute obedience to parents, even though they may be wrong, is prescribed for children in the same strain. That is why, the ruled, the pupils, the wives and children occupied an ill-deserved place in our old society. Equality and fairness are the touchstones of democracy. We have to organise all these four relationships according to the principles of equality. If we do not, our claims and actions will be inconsistent. Chaos, resentment and sullenness will infect our social life.

Home is centre of the environments which influence the development of personality of a child. A happy home radiates the warmth of mother. If she is respected and is happy, the home is heaven itself. If on the other hand, she is pushed to an inconsequent place, hell is not worse than that home. The terms like mothertongue and motherland acknowledge the deep influence which a mother casts on the learning process of her child and the consequent shaping of society. It is rightly said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the nation. Rig Veda, an ancient scripture of India, says ‘Mothers and motherlands are as high as heaven’. Great mothers produce great children who make a country great. Hence, the restoration of woman to her proper place is very necessary, if children are to reflect her dignity and dedication.

In the complex society of today, man alone is not the breadwinner for the family. The wife also, in many a case, shares the responsibility. Even if she does not, the household chores keep her overworked. It affects her physical and mental health. If the husband lends a helping hand to her, it will not only add to her zeal but also ensure the welfare of their children, who otherwise may tend to be neglected. A collective onus of both the parents in this direction makes the investment of time and care on children all the more rewarding.

It is commonly believed in India, that a child is an inevitable blessing of God. People do not realise the importance of planned families. In a large family, children are neglected, ill-fed, ill-clad and consequently ill-trained. As the situation prevails, the eldest son commands great consideration in a family, the youngest child tends to exhaust all the affection of parents and the middle ones are usually regarded as by-products. They are often neglected, bullied and disregarded with the result that many of them become indifferent and sullen. Parents in India should understand the importance of planned families. Children no doubt are a natural biological product of marriage, but they must be regulated according to the economic and physical condition of parents. A family without a child for long is soulless. A single child in a family begins to suffer from loneliness. Two children make it an ideal unit as this also helps in controlling the growth rate of population. With three children a family looks like a crowd, four turn it into a mob, and five or more render it a yelling demonstration.

As enjoined by the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India, every State Government is introducing compulsory and free primary education. The crusade against illiteracy, ignorance, and superstitions, for its success will depend upon the quality of teachers whom we entrust with this responsibility. The teacher is still, by and far, a neglected member of our society. He is inadequately paid. His profession is looked down upon by others, because it does not carry the glamour of an executive job. For an average

Indian, a policeman is more important than a school teacher. The best people shun to adopt this nation-building profession. The educational administrator too tries to pacify the teachers with hollow promises. The teachers are coaxed that they should be proud of their noble undertaking, in spite of their low salaries, because in ancient India Brahmins, the professional educators, did not care for money. Such dignitaries ignore the fact that it was really intoxicating to become the preceptor of a prince in that caste-ridden society, because respect, influence and power came by themselves to that position. It is not attractive at all today to become an insufficiently paid teacher of neglected urchins, whose parents have mostly sent them to school to get rid of them for some time. We have in our schools, teachers who have no commitment or aptitude to teach, and children who have not been sent there for being taught. The position of a teacher needs to be re-adjudged according to the democratic values. The fact should not be ignored that a teacher also, like other people, wants to live well and rear his family with requisite facilities of life. If due attention is not paid to the proper re-organisations of schools, political and social equality will simply remain a high-sounding and meaningless slogan. Children of the poor who throng to such ill-equipped schools will not be able to compete with those of the rich, who are enjoying the benefits of education in public schools. Education should be democratized, keeping in view the fact that a teacher is the pivot of school and the entire efficiency of an institution is to revolve around his ability, aptitude and concomitant devotion to duty.

In a democratic country, society and the government play collateral roles. The government should not feel complacent that it has discharged its obligation by introducing free and compulsory education. In our country satisfactory arrangements for the recreation of children are not freely found. In the past the traditional amusement for children was provided by loose-stringed stories about kings, queens, giants, fairies and various birds narrated at bedtime. Those tales served as lullabies to induce children to sleep

and seldom stirred their imagination. It would be helpful for the emotional and mental growth of tender listeners if such narrations instill in them a spirit of inquisitiveness, adventure and fellowship instead of making them believers in fate and chance.

There is dearth of literature for children in all the Indian languages. Whatever periodicals are brought forth for them are not satisfactory. All India Radio broadcasts its programme for children once or twice a week. Its features, like 'Nani di Patari' and 'Jadoo da Ghora' need considerable improvement. The Government of India has set up the 'Children Book Trust' to bring out books for children in Hindi and English. The network is being extended to include other regional languages in a phased manner. The step is commendable but not adequate. The television may also share this responsibility towards children. Being both audio and visual in its performance, it can go a step further. It should cater to the fantasy of children as well as impart them information about practical aspects of life. The fact should not be ignored that it will defeat the realisation of democratic values, if all such needs of children are left to be met by the publicity media of government. Such is the practice under totalitarian regimes. In a democratic country, the universities and other organisations working for social welfare should attend to this responsibility also. It is gratifying that the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana which has revealed new horizons in many other fields is not lagging behind in this direction as well. Its college of Home Science has a department of Child Development. The behaviour of children is observed in its nursery school and experiments on child nutrition are conducted.

The government through its various agencies should spare no effort to provide a sufficient number of children parks. The programme should not be kept confined to cities only. The aim should be 'Unto This Last'. The facilities for games, exercise and recreation should fairly correspond to the number of children in a locality. An average house in India is so cramped that a child feels like a sardine in a tin.

The industry of toy-making in India should be properly organised. Every child has an irresistible desire for toys. The toys should create an artistic taste in a child as well as sharpen his intelligence. They should be within the purchasing power of average parents. At present, the toys are either very repulsive and horrifying, or their possession is the exclusive hobby and the proud display of children of the rich.

The family's primary aim is to provide innovative and warm atmosphere, so that a child grows up into a balanced and happy individual. The strength of society lies in the number of stable and happy families constituting it.

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Published by College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in connection with the celebration of Children Day on November 14, 1973. Of late certain other evil practices like child labour, sexual abuse, kidnapping for extorting ransom, female foeticide, etc. have been highlighted. They ought to receive remedial consideration by law-enforcing and social welfare organizations. It may be worthwhile to go through the text 'Live-in-Couples' and the poem 'A Girl Child' in the Back Matter.

National Holidays

January 26, August 15 and October 2 are observed as national holidays in India, as Republic Day, Independence Day and the birthday of Father of Nation, M.K. Gandhi respectively. The first two need to be described in their chronological order because it is after achieving independence, that a country adopts the political system, symbolizing its aspirations.

India had been conquered by the British from 1757 onwards by and by and the Punjab was the last to be annexed in 1849. About two decades thereafter, the rule of East India Company was replaced by that of British Government i.e. Crown, also projected as Raj, through a parliamentary legislation. History bears testimony that one may succeed to get humane and benevolent consideration from a depredator, but to expect justice from a nation, bearing the mask of democracy, is hoping against hope. The British colonial system had been racist, plundering, divisive and evasive.

When the First World War (1914-18) broke out the colonies, where the Whites were in majority or held economic sway viz. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, were granted dominion status(self governance). In South Africa, a thin minority of Europeans enjoyed political rights which were denied contemptuously to the natives and the coloured migrants. All other colonies in Africa and Asia were assured of favourable consideration of their aspirations on the basis of their loyalty during war. It was a discriminating approach based on the colour of skin exclusively.

The measures enforced all through to destroy the native cottage industries amounted to a systematic plunder by the Raj. The rule of British democracy under the insignia of Crown was more ruthless than the depredations of East India Company. Agriculture in India was made subservient to the British industrial requirements, thus, exposing it to constant starvation and occasional famines.

The communal passions were cunningly fanned whenever the patriotic fervour posed any challenge to the British.

Each announcement by the Crown would be evasive i.e. to be operative after a decade provided it got assured that the Indians had acquired matching experience to shoulder responsibility and the communal harmony was not likely to be disturbed.

After the war, the demand for dominion status at par with White colonies began to gather momentum. The Government of India Act 1919, legislated by the British Parliament, contained a provision that a commission would be appointed after ten years to advise the British Government as to what administrative reforms could be introduced in India. A commission of seven members, exclusively the English in its composition, headed by a jurist Sir John Simon, was sent to India in 1928. The infuriated public opinion demonstrated against this commission every where in India.

The Indian National Congress in its Calcutta session (December 1928), resolved to declare complete independence of India as its goal if dominion status was not granted within a year. As the British Government which treated the colonies as mere serfdom did not heed the resolution, the Congress in its Lahore session (1929) resolved that from January 26, 1930 it would pledge itself to the achieving of sovereignty of India. Thereafter January 26 used to be observed as Independence Day with growing zeal reiterating that pledge.

After the Second World War (1939-45) the British colonial system in spite of its having won the war along with other Allies, got considerably weakened. Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of U.K. announced that the British would withdraw from India by June 1948. Rear Admiral Mountbetan was sent to India in March 1947 to expedite the transfer of power. His predecessor Lord Wavel, the outgoing Viceroy and Governor General of India, handed over to him a confidential file, marked as 'Operation Madhouse', which urged that the evacuation of British with bag and baggage be his successor's priority and exclusive consideration as none could save India from the engulfing chaos. Mountbetan had been the Supreme

Commander of the Allied Forces at the Burma Front in India when the Japanese succumbed to surrender on August 15, 1945 after the second atomic explosion on its soil. It may be recalled that the Second World War had been initiated by Germany and had resorted also to the most heinous genocide against the Jews during the war. But the deterrent nuclear bomb was tried on a Yellow race and not a White one, the principal offender.

August 15, 1947 was chosen deliberately as the date of independence for the subcontinent through partition as it coincided with the second anniversary of the surrender by the Japanese, an event which Mountbatten was keen to commemorate. The hasty partition amounted to virtual scissoring of a map. The fads of victors waded through the misery of vanquished indeed! Thereafter August 15 began to be celebrated as the Independence Day of India.

The Constitution of India was adopted on November 26, 1949. India ceased to be a dominion and became a Sovereign Secular Socialist Democratic Republic. Only the provisions relating to the President with a few related ones became operative on that day. The Constitution as a whole commenced from January 26 next in recognition of this day's being a landmark in the annals of freedom struggle of India. Since then it is celebrated as Republic Day. It is history that no celebration was held on January 26, 1948 as well as in 1949.

Any social or political system which denies equality, robs economic justice and grudges dignity of individual is branded as oppressive. Such discriminating practices which persist still in latent form, emanate from the prejudices based on birth, colour of skin, religious intolerance and totalitarian ideologies, both racial and political. The oldest among such oppressive afflictions is the caste system which evolved in India and still holds its sway despite social reforms and the constitutional protections. Its drawbacks have been highlighted in various earlier chapters and are not being repeated*.

*The readers keen to know more about the social distress and mental subjugation inflicted by the caste system are suggested to refer to Chapter IV 'Social Backwardness and Caste', Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Report) 1980.

The Blacks suffered the most due to the colour of their skin. The once prevailing institutions like slavery in the USA and apartheid in South Africa are the horrendous chapters of their depredations.

The genocide by the Nazis under the misconceived notion of being a super race and the political repressions inflicted by totalitarian regimes are the tales of these inhumane campaigns.

Religious intolerance which has acquired the monstrous form of international terrorism is the outcome of Cold War that persisted between the postwar super powers, USA and USSR. The latter got disintegrated under its impact and the former is still caught deep in this abyss. The bane of international terrorism holds the threat of imminent doom to the entire human race, notwithstanding geographical boundaries, religious beliefs and impregnable defences.

Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi (1869-1948) waged a unique campaign against three of these offensive orders, namely caste system, apartheid and religious intolerance, which were being exploited as tools by the colonial regimes to perpetuate their sway.

M.K. Gandhi felt the pinch of indignity hurled at the coloured by the Whites during his stay in South Africa. His conscience revolted, but he calmly considered as to how far he was justified in protesting against the supercilious behaviour of the Whites, when in his own country one fourth of population was treated in still a worse manner on the plea of their being low by birth and thus being condemned as untouchables. After his result-yielding campaign in South Africa he returned to India determined to devote his energies to the removal of untouchability, forging of communal harmony and above all restoring to women the position, long denied to them. His countrymen impressed by his sincerity of purpose started addressing him thereafter as Mahatma.

Subsequent to the resolve of Indian National Congress in its Lahore Session (1930) to declare sovereignty of India as its ultimate goal, the British contrived to wreck the aspirations by introducing

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separate electoral representation for the backward classes. Earlier they had resorted to the game of divide and rule by introducing communal representation for Muslims in the legislative bodies. If the Crown had succeeded in this game, it would have been able to deflate the freedom struggle through legislative manipulations in the native forums. M.K. Gandhi resolved to fast unto death to frustrate the cunning move of the Raj and was successful.

Earlier his spinning wheel and the stress on swadesi had held a successful passive challenge to the dominating textile industry in U.K. But like all pathfinders for humanity, he could not escape the bullet of an assassin who did not appreciate his assertion, that despite the partition of subcontinent on the basis of two-nation theory, free India would remain a secular country. He was shot dead by a co-religionist fanatic while he was on his way to address his usual evening prayer meeting on January 30, 1948. The impact of his precepts and practices on Indian people is so great that his birthday falling on October 2 is celebrated as national holiday and he is adored as Father of Nation.

From October 2, 2007 it is also being observed as International Day of Non-Violence as decided by UN General Assembly.

It was M.K. Gandhi who showed us light
Truth was his guide, righteousness his path
Pride or hate was not known to his pursuits
He kissed instead the hand that slapped
An apostle of peace, crusader for goodwill
Though frail in frame yet strong in mind
Clear about goal, given to rightful deeds
Softened the racial ego with moral strength
Preached and followed the gospel of Lord:
'The lowest also has the right to equity'.

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लेफ्टिनेंट जनरल एम जी गिरीश
ए वी एस एम, वी एस एम
महानिदेशक, अनुशासन, समारोह एवं कल्याण
कर्नल कमान्डेंट कोर ऑफ़ ई एम ई

Lt Gen M J Girish
AVSM, VSM

Director General
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17214/MGG/DGDC&W

Dear Puffenor,

एडजुटेंट जनरल शाखा
सेना मुख्यालय
डी एच क्यू पी ओ, नई दिल्ली-110011

Adjutant General's Branch
Army Headquarters
DHQ PO, New Delhi-110011

12 Jan 2006

1. Please refer to your letter dated 27 Sept. 2005 addressed to COAS.
2. The points given in your letter and your concerns are highly appreciated by the defence fraternity. We greatly appreciate your interest in the issue raised and your desire for national recognition of martyrs. We have analyzed the issue raised and our comments are given in the succeeding paragraphs.
3. Amar Jawan Jyoti was erected in 1972 as a tribute to our martyrs Post Independence. It has no relation to our colonial past. All the same, the contribution of our soldiers who participated in World Wars and brought glory to our country and professionalism in our armed forces, should not of course be sidelined. With India's emergence as a major economic and military power, we should actually also now come to terms with our history.
4. As far as construction of National War Memorial (NWM) is concerned, the matter is under active consideration and a few prominent sites are being considered. We are following up various sites and interacting with relevant committees to find an ideal prominent site for a National War Memorial. We hope to succeed in the months ahead and thereafter will follow the design, planning and such other aspects.
5. Army Day has got a unique status. It is celebrated by organizing highly dignified Army Day Parades and other ceremonies at various locations in the country.

6. Your point regarding inclusion of outstanding deeds of martyrs/ revolutionaries in textbooks is quite pertinent and will be referred to Min of HRD for necessary consideration.
7. The issue of a memorial to commemorate INA contribution does not come under the purview of the Services HQ
8. We remain grateful for your kind indulgence.



Prof Hazara Singh
3-C, Udham Singh Nagar
Ludhiana-141001

2
Jawahar Lal Nehru
(Poem for Children)

Jawahar Lal, pearl and diamond, two-in-one
Was rich Moti Lal's only, but diligent son
Friend of the poor, torchbearer of peace
Practised truly what he did boldly preach.

Rest was rust but work worship for him
Yet led full life beaming fresh and trim
Fond of children, an admirer of nature
God, give us soon guide of his stature

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3

LIVE-in-COUPLES

According to the latest figures released by US Census Bureau, there are 6,085,284 unmarried opposite sex partners in America. They are called live-in-couples. As they are adults, parents of such unmarried daughters living in voluntary cohabitation, feel compelled to overlook and accept the growing practice, which does not offend any law.

The male view favouring this way of life is based on the advantage to have sex, where and when, without any conjugal or paternal obligation. The permissiveness of female partners has a flimsy consideration: exploring compatibility to avoid divorce after marriage. It has come out that barely 19% of such live-in-couples marry, resulting in large scale desertion of pregnant females which results in a single-parent family. The offshoot of such a quest for compatibility, which would have been pitied as *dhool ka phool* in a traditional society, is adored as a love child in the U.K., where the local council assumes the responsibility of providing home and maintenance to the unmarried mother and the fatherless child. In USA such mothers are offered assistance under AFDC i.e. Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Even among the live-in-couples, which marry, the divorce rate is 33% higher than those who enter wedlock through courtship. The former, for their shifting attention every now and then from one partner to the other, find a lower quality, both in choice and commitment. The gluing elements like kids, legal documents, shared finances, etc. are not there. Such a cohabiting ends frequently in violence and the risk of catching sexually transmitted diseases, likely to be passed on to children.

Forty four per cent unwedded mothers, in spite of their being

This feature was written in 1995 during author's first trip to USA for *India Journal*, L.A.; published in India by *The Tribune*, Chandigarh and reproduced by the journals *Practical Psychology*, Amritsar and *Better Life*, Delhi.

assisted under AFDC live in poverty and their children, being victim of neglect, fall an easy prey to a life of crime. That is why the incidence of crime in the American cities is the highest all over the world. The sexual abuse of children has been clandestinely on the increase, because a stepfather has no qualms in coercing the children of his wife from her earlier marriage into sexual indulgence. Thus a disturbing number of males are paedophiles i.e. fond of having sex with children.

Many paedophilic maniacs, when they find the local laws stringent, go for hunts to Asian countries like Thailand, Philippines and Sri Lanka where every year thousands of girls and boys, often as young as four, are abducted or allured to be sold to bars and brothels for attracting paedophile tourists. According to Bangkok based international organisation, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) there are about half a million prostitutes, sixteen years old or younger, in the three aforesaid Asian countries, called vacation paradise for tourists. The paedophile bulls from affluent countries including Japan visit once or twice a year the selected resorts in Asia with expert service provided by NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) formed in 1970's. Exploiting fully the American constitution's guarantee for free expression. NAMBLA advocates paedophilia through its meetings and publications. It is striving for the elimination of age of consent for children to have sex with adults. What sort of right for children in the Land of Liberty! Preaching of paedophilia even through pornography is not a crime, because of the freedom of expression. Legal machinery gets into action only after a paedophilic crime has been committed i.e. the personality of victim child has been scarred. Any paedophilic offence reported against any American citizen from abroad becomes cognizant only if he indulged into it in the premises of an embassy or army base.

The paedophile tourists find a hey day in Asian countries where the mighty dollar corrupts further the low-paid enforcement departments. Many government high-ups there believe that dollars are more important than child welfare.

4

To a Child: A Father's Pledge

Dear child, my ties with you are a solemn bond
Not of mere flesh and blood, but to groom you
As an earnest, upright and benign human being.
In anger or conceit I shall never rebuke you
For that may induce you too to berate others.
I will not let anyone be overbearing with you
As it may repress your sense of co-operation
Which extends to all a deserving consideration.

I shall cheer you to add to your confidence
May reprove you seldom, for to err is human
A child so jeered gets timid and diffident.
Even when found struck in deeds not wrongful
I will not chide you so that you may learn
To confess without any hesitation or guile.
I 'll see that acts of others, petty or vile
Do not prompt you to be relentless likewise.

I shall commend your performance on merit
Correct you at once with words and deeds,
While you go wrong, so that you learn too
To appreciate others when they excel you.
I shall be watchful to make you righteous
Not let my fondness condone what you lack
So that you do not lose sense of fairness
Which we need to refine the modes of life.

I shall arrange security only, if required
To teach you to be steadfast but truthful
May advise, if asked, but not impose my will.
Your acts in good faith may not need my nod
As the understanding, based on mutual faith
May create in you the endearing team spirit.
Thus, I shall endeavour to redeem my pledge
To bring you up as an exalting human being.

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5
I Am Child

I am child, not a hoe that needs sharpening
I am not spoiled if love replaces the rod.
I am not a melon that grows in dust and mud
Man may be made of dust, but is not mere dust.
Oh! my dear parents and wise nation builders
Better to discard all such obsolete beliefs
Hoe is lifeless and the melon has no brain
'Child is father of man' is a meaningful saying.

The poem challenges the sayings like 'Spare the rod and spoil the child'; 'A child and a hoe, if beaten occasionally, remain sharp'; 'A child and a melon develop better while rolling in dust' and 'A child is an inevitable blessing of God', which being obsolete are not in tune with the modern outlook based on persuasion, affection and precept-based practice.

Punishment prompts me to pretend or deceive
It spoils the rare wealth that exists in me
It fills my innocent mind with fear and hate
Curbs fine instincts and the joy I could feel.
If education aims at making me good and noble
Do your precepts and acts lead to that effect?
What you preach, so often, you do its opposite
Such a gap in your words and deeds repels me.

Dear parents! if you got me by pledge or prayer
You deceived yourselves and were unfair to me.
I am neither a divine gift nor a mark of fate,
I am also not a legacy of your earlier lives,
I am a product of your social urge and needs.
I follow the path that your footsteps mark,
If I am good, it reflects our mutual success,
If deficient, my bringing up missed something.

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6 A Girl Child

I am a girl child, an endangered gender
Hailed willy-nilly by some on my birth
As Lakshmi, legendary goddess of wealth.
So often was destroyed as soon as born
As priestly rituals kept presenting me
A mere piece of property, held as trust.
Used to be married off early in childhood
To shift the onus of protection to others.
Some parents did not mind even selling me
Or offered me to a temple to appease gods.

Decries the growing evil of female foeticide in
male-ridden societies

Progressive ideas and their gradual impact
Helped a lot to remove the unjust barriers.
Right to equality restored the lost dignity
Laws ensuring overall entitlement were made
Such equitable acts created the woman power
But dowry demands and inner desire for sons
Diluted the effect of various welfare steps.
Earlier widows were burnt as customary rite
Now brides are burnt impelled by dowry greed
Even rigorous laws have failed to protect me.

Science crusades against outdated beliefs
Proves hollowness of many whims and myths
Helps man to determine his precise worth
Assists law in locating mysterious crimes
Pinpoints evidence to substantiate wrongs.
Despite wonderful service it gives to man
It abets in denying me the right to be born.
Earlier gender got known on being delivered
Now scanning tests show it even in the womb
Leading to my destruction long before birth.

ਤੀਆਂ ਤੀਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਫੇਰ: ਅਲੋਪ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਤਿਉਹਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਝਲਕ

ਜੇਠ ਹਾੜ੍ਹ ਦੀਆਂ ਤਪਦੀਆਂ ਲੂਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸਾਵਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਦਾ ਆਨੰਦ ਮਾਣਨ ਲਈ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਪਿੰਡਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਤੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਤਿਉਹਾਰ ਮਨਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਤਿਉਹਾਰ ਸਾਵਣ ਦੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦੇ ਚਾਨਣੇ ਪੱਖ ਦੀ ਤੀਜੀ ਤਿਥੀ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਪੂਰਨਮਾਸ਼ੀ ਤਕ ਚਲਦਾ ਹੈ। ਤੀਆਂ ਸਾਵਣ ਦੀ ਤੀਜ ਤੋਂ ਬਣਿਆ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਹੈ। ਤੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਪੰਜ ਸੱਤ ਦਿਨ ਪਹਿਲੋਂ ਹੀ ਭਰਾ ਸਜ-ਵਿਆਹੀਆਂ ਭੈਣਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਹੁਰੇ ਘਰ ਜਾ ਪਹੁੰਚਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪੇਕੇ ਪੁੱਜ ਕੇ ਸਹੇਲੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਮਨ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਨਾਲ ਝੂਮ ਉਠਦੇ ਹਨ ਤੇ ਸਾਵਣ ਦੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦਾ ਜੱਸ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਗਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਸਾਵਣ ਬਖਤਾਵਰਾ, ਤੂੰ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਕਰਦਾਂ ਮੇਲੇ”

ਕੁਝ ਖਾਸ ਰੁਝੇਵਿਆਂ ਕਾਰਨ ਜੇ ਭਰਾ ਨੂੰ ਪਹੁੰਚਣ ਵਿਚ ਦੇਰ ਹੋ ਜਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਭੈਣ ਕੋਠੇ ਤੇ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਡਾ ਕੇ, ਚੂਰੀ ਪਾ ਕੇ, ਭਰਾ ਦੇ ਆਉਣ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁਛਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਵੀਰ ਦੇ ਆਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਵਿਹੜੇ ਵਿਚ ਪੁੰਨਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਚੰਨ ਚੜ੍ਹ ਜਾਏ:

“ਉਡ ਉਡ ਕਾਵਾਂ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਘਿਉ ਦੀ ਚੂਰੀ ਪਾਵਾਂ
ਜੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਵੀਰਨ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੋਵੇ!
ਵੀਰਾ ਆ ਵੇ ਭੈਣ ਦੇ ਵਿਹੜੇ
ਪੁੰਨਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਚੰਨ ਬਣਕੇ।”

ਜੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਵੀਰ ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਨਾ ਆਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਦੂਰੋਂ ਉਡਦੀ ਧੂੜ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਵੀਰ ਦੇ ਦੌੜੇ ਆ ਰਹੇ ਬੋਤੇ ਦਾ ਭੁਲੇਖਾ ਖਾ ਬੈਠਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਉਡਦੀ ਧੂੜ ਦਿਸੇ,
ਬੋਤਾ ਵੀਰ ਦਾ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਨਾ ਆਵੇ।”

ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਸਚਮੁਚ ਹੀ ਵੀਰਨ ਦਾ ਬੋਤਾ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਮਾਣ ਨਾਲ ਜ਼ਮੀਨ ਉਤੇ ਪੈਰ ਧਰਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਜਦੋਂ ਦੇਖ ਲਿਆ ਵੀਰ ਦਾ ਬੋਤਾ,
ਮੱਲ ਵਾਂਗ ਪੈਰ ਧਰਦੀ”

ਸਹੁਰੇ ਘਰ ਆਏ ਵੀਰਨ ਦੇ ਬੋਤੇ ਨੂੰ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਘਰ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਕੀ ਡੰਗਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਗੱਡੇ ਕਿੱਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ ਵਰਤਦੀ, ਸਗੋਂ ਭਰਾ ਦੇ ਬੋਤੇ ਲਈ ਤਾਂ ਰੰਗੀਨ ਕਿੱਲੀਆਂ ਗਡਾ ਰਖਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਬੋਤਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਦੇ ਸਰਵਣਾ ਵੀਰਾ,
ਕਿੱਲੀਆਂ ਰੰਗੀਨ ਗੱਡੀਆਂ”

ਪਰ ਵੀਰਨ ਵੀ ਬੋਤਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੋਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਭੈਣ ਨੂੰ ਮੱਥਾ ਟੇਕਣਾ ਤੇ ਹਾਲ ਚਾਲ ਪੁਛਣਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਭੁੱਲਦਾ :

“ਮੱਥਾ ਟੇਕਦਾ ਅੰਮਾ ਦੀਏ ਜਾਈਏ,
ਬੋਤਾ ਭੈਣੇ ਫੇਰ ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਲਉ”

ਪੇਕੇ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਸੁਨੇਹੇ ਲੈਂਦੀ ਨੂੰ ਸਹੁਰਾ ਘਰ ‘ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਦੇਸ’ ਜਾਪਣ ਲਗ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਜਾਂਦੇ ਵੀਰ ਦਾ ਬੋਤਾ ਸਿਆਤਾ,
ਆਉਂਦੇ ਵੀਰ ਦਾ ਖੇਸ,
ਵੀਰਾ ਲੈ ਚਲ ਵੇ, ਮੈਂ ਖੜੀ ਬਿਗਾਨੇ ਦੇਸ”

ਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਭੈਣਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੱਬ ਨੇ ਵੀਰ ਦੀ ਇਸ ਮਿੱਠੀ ਦਾਤ ਤੋਂ ਵਾਂਝਾ ਰਖਿਆ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਪੇਕੇ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਮਨਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਨ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਬੂ ਵਿਚ ਨਾ ਰਖਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਅੰਦਰ ਵੜ ਕੇ ਚੋਰੀ ਛਿਪੇ ਰੋਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਭੈਣਾਂ ਰੋਂਦੀਆਂ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਖੜਕੇ,
ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਘਰ ਵੀਰ ਨਹੀਂ”

ਕਈ ਵਾਰ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਰੁਝੇਵਿਆਂ ਕਾਰਨ ਜੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਵੀਰ ਇਕ ਅੱਧ ਦਿਨ ਪਛੱਤ ਜਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਸੱਸ ਵੀ ਨੂੰਹ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਹਣੇ ਦੇਣੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਬਹੁਤੇ ਨੀਂ ਭਰਾਵਾਂ ਵਾਲੀਏ,
ਤੈਨੂੰ ਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੈਣ ਨਾ ਆਏ”

ਮਾਣ-ਮੱਤੀ ਭੈਣ ਵੀ ਇਹ ਦੋਸ਼ ਵੀਰਨ ਦੇ ਸਿਰ ਨਾ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਸੱਸ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਕਸੂਰ ਕਢਦੀ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਵੀਰਨ ਜਾਂ ਪੇਕੇ ਘਰ ਦੀ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਉਹ ਕਦੀ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੁਣ ਸਕਦੀ :

“ਸੱਸੀਏ ਵੜੇਵੇਂ ਅੱਖੀਏ, ਤੈਥੋਂ ਡਰਦੇ ਲੈਣ ਨਾ ਆਏ।
ਮੇਰੀ ਸੱਸੋ ਜਾਨ ਕੱਢ ਲੈ,
ਪਰ ਵੀਰ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਦਾ ਨਾ ਬੋਲੀ”

ਸਹੁਰੇ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਰੁਝੇਵੇਂ ਕਾਰਨ ਜਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਪੇਕੇ ਘਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਆ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਰਾ ਸੰਧਾਰਾ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਆਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਤਿਓਰ, ਗੁੜ ਦੇ ਗੁਲਗੁਲੇ, ਸ਼ਕਰ, ਚਾਵਲ ਤੇ ਇਕ ਰੁਪਿਆ ਸ਼ਗਨ ਵਜੋਂ ਭੇਜਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ।

ਅਣ-ਮੁਕਲਾਈਆਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਧਾਰਾ ਸਹੁਰੇ ਘਰੋਂ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਤਿਓਰ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਰੰਗੀਲੇ ਸੂਤ ਦੀ ਪੀਘ ਝੂਟਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਪੀੜੀ ਭੇਜੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸਰਦੇ ਪੁਜਦੇ ਸਹੁਰੇ ਨੱਕ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਲੋਂਗ ਜਾਂ ਤੀਲੀ ਭੇਜਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਿਆਰੀ

ਪੇਕੇ-ਘਰ ਪਹੁੰਚਦਿਆਂ ਹੀ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਿਆਰੀ ਲਈ ਹਾਰ ਸ਼ਿੰਗਾਰ ਕਰਨੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ । ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੱਥਾਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਮਹਿੰਦੀ ਲਗਾ ਕੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਖਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਖੂਬ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਸ਼ੋਰ ਨਾਲ ਗਿੱਧਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕੇ । ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਮਹਿੰਦੀ ਦਾ ਜੱਸ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਗਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਮਹਿੰਦੀ ਮਹਿੰਦੀ ਸਭ ਜੱਗ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ
ਮਹਿੰਦੀ ਬਾਗ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ
ਬੋਲ ਸ਼ਰੀਕਾਂ ਦੇ, ਮੈਂ ਨਾ ਬਾਬਲਾ ਸਹਿੰਦੀ”

ਗਿੱਧੇ ਵਿਚ ਤਾਲੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਛਣਕਾਰ ਵਧਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਹੱਥਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੱਚ ਦੀਆਂ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਚੜ੍ਹਾਉਣੀਆਂ ਵੀ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਸਰਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ :

“ਆ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ, ਬਹਿ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ
ਕਿਥੇ ਨੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਘਰ ਵੇ
ਚਾੜ੍ਹ ਬਲੋਰੀ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ,
ਤੇਰੀ ਝੋਲੀ ਦੇਵਾਂ ਭਰ ਵੇ
ਭੀੜੀ ਵੰਗ ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਚਾੜ੍ਹੀ,
ਮੈਂ ਜਾਊਂਗੀ ਮਰ ਵੇ!”
“ਵੀਣੀ ਪਤਲੀ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਮੋਕਲੀਆਂ,
ਇਹ ਵੰਗਾਂ ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਂ ਨੇ ਚੜ੍ਹਾਈਆਂ
ਰੱਖਾਂ ਕਲੇਜੇ ਲਾ, ਵੰਗਾਂ ਪੋਕਲੀਆਂ”

ਕੇਸੀਂ ਨਹਾ ਕੇ ਸਿਰ ਗੁੰਦਾਉਣਾ ਵੀ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਾਰ ਸ਼ਿੰਗਾਰ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਅੰਗ ਹੈ । ਨੈਣ ਨੂੰ ਬੁਲਾ ਕੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੋਢੀਆਂ ਪਵਾ ਕੇ ਸਿਰ ਗੁੰਦਾਏ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਵਿਚ ਨੱਚਦਿਆਂ ਗੁੱਤਾ ਖੁਲ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਵਾਲ ਖਿਲਰ ਨਾ ਜਾਣ। ਨੈਣ ਸਿਰ ਗੁੰਦਾਈ ਲਈ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਹੁਨਰਵੰਦ ਸਮਝੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਵੀ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਅਬ ਨਾਲ ਸਿਰ ਗੁੰਦਣ ਲਈ ਕਹਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਸਿਰ ਗੁੰਦ ਦੇ ਕੁਪੱਤੀਏ ਨੈਣੇ
ਉੱਤੇ ਪਾ ਦੇ ਡਾਕ ਬੰਗਲਾ”

ਪਰ ਨੈਣ ਵੀ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਵਰਤਦੀ ਤੇ ਕਹਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਸਾਥੋਂ ਡਾਕ ਬੰਗਲਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਣਾ,
ਉੱਤੇ ਪਾ ਦਊਂ ਮੋਰ ਘੁੰਗੀਆਂ”

ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਗੁੱਡੀਆਂ ਪਟੋਲਿਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਸ਼ਿੰਗਾਰੀਆਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਪਿੱਪਲਾਂ, ਬੋਹੜਾਂ ਤੇ ਅੰਬਾਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਪੰਘਾਂ ਪਾ ਕੇ ਝੂਟਦੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਪਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ । ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੱਥਾਂ ਦੀ ਥਾਪ ਤੇ ਅੱਡੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਠੋਕਰ ਨਾਲ ਧਰਤੀ ਕੰਥ ਉਠਦੀ ਹੈ । ਕਿਣਮਿਣ ਵਿਚ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਮਚਲਿਆ ਮਨ ਨੱਚ ਨੱਚ ਕੇ ਬਉਰਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਬੱਦਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਾਲੀ ਘਟਾ ਤੇ ਕਣੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਨੱਚਦੀਆਂ, ਮੋਰਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਪੈਲਾਂ ਪਾ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਜੰਗਲ ਦੀਆਂ ਹਿਰਨੀਆਂ ਜਾਪਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਕੱਠੀਆਂ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਆਈਆਂ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਵਿਚ
ਇੱਕੋ ਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ
ਚੰਦ ਦੇ ਚਾਨਣੇ ਇਉਂ ਚਮਕਦੀਆਂ
ਜਿਉਂ ਸੋਨੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਤਾਰਾਂ।
ਗਲੀਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਰੇਸ਼ਮੀ ਕੁੜਤੀਆਂ
ਤੇੜ ਨਵੀਆਂ ਸਲਵਾਰਾਂ
ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਇਉਂ ਨੱਚਣ
ਜਿਉਂ ਹਿਰਨਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਡਾਰਾਂ”

ਸਰੀਰ ਰਬੜ ਦੀਆਂ ਗੁੱਡੀਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਲਚਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਪਤਲਾ ਲੱਕ ਨੱਚ ਨੱਚ ਕੇ ਦੂਹਰਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਨਾਚ ਵਿਚ ਉਹ ਸੰਕੇਤਾਂ-ਫਸਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੀਜਣਾ, ਗੋਡੀ ਕਰਨਾ, ਵੱਢਣਾ, ਬਲਦਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੱਕਣਾ, ਪਾਣੀ ਭਰਨਾ, ਚੱਕੀ ਪੀਹਣਾ ਆਦਿ ਝਾਕੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਕਾਰ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ।

ਸਮਾਜੀ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਉਤੇ ਵਿਅੰਗ

ਸੱਸ-ਨੂੰਹ ਤੇ ਨਨਾਣ-ਭਰਜਾਈ ਦੇ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਾਫੀ ਤਣਾਓ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਸੱਸ ਨੂੰਹ ਨੂੰ ਅੱਖੇ ਤੋਂ ਐਖਾ ਕੰਮ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਸਦੀ ਛਿੰਦੀ ਧੀ ਬਹੁਤੀ ਅੱਖੀ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ। ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿਚ ਚੱਕੀ ਪੀਸਣਾ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਅੱਖੇ ਕੰਮਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਗਿਣਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ ਤੇ ਚਰਖਾ ਕੱਤਣਾ ਸੌਖਾ ਰੁਝੇਵਾਂ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਇਕ ਕੁੜੀ ਨੂੰਹ ਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀ ਸੱਸ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਨੂੰਹ ਸੱਸ ਦੇ ਝਗੜੇ ਦੀ ਝਾਕੀ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਆਪ ਸੱਸ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੇ ਬੈਠਦੀ,
ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੈਨਤਾਂ ਚੱਕੀ ਵਲ ਮਾਰੇ
ਚੱਕੀ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਚੱਕੀ ਪੀਸਣੀ,
ਚੱਕੀ ਪੀਹਣ ਸਹੁਰੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਜਾਈਆਂ”
ਸੱਸ ਤਾੜਨਾ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ :
“ਚੱਕੀ ਤਾਂ ਤੂੰ ਆਪੇ ਪੀਸੋਗੀ,
ਜਦੋਂ ਭੰਨੀਆਂ ਮਲੁਕ ਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਹੱਡੀਆਂ”

ਸੱਸ ਦੀ ਇਹ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਤੀ ਕਈ ਦਫ਼ਾ ਬਰਦਾਸ਼ਤ ਦੀ ਹੱਦ ਵੀ ਟੱਪ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਤੰਗ ਆਈ ਨੂੰਹ ਦਿਲ ਵਿਚ ਸੱਸ ਦੀ ਮੌਤ ਦੀ ਤਾਂਘ ਨਾਲ ਉਡੀਕ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ :

“ਸੱਸ ਪਿਟਣੀ ਪੰਜੇਬਾਂ ਪਾ ਕੇ,
ਲੋਕੀਂ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਕਰਨ
ਸੁੱਥਣੇ ਸੂਫ਼ ਦੀਏ, ਤੈਨੂੰ ਸੱਸ ਦੀ ਮੜੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਉਣਾ”

ਸਹੁਰੇ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਘੁੰਡ ਕਢਣ ਦੀ ਅੱਖਿਆਈ ਨੂੰ ਸੌਖਾ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਢੰਗ ਵੀ ਇੱਕ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੁੱਝ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਕੋਰੀ ਕੋਰੀ ਕੁੰਡੀ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਰਚਾਂ ਰਗੜਾਂ,
ਸਹੁਰੇ ਦੀ ਅੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਪਾ ਦੇਨੀ ਆਂ
ਘੁੰਡ ਕਢਣੇ ਦੀ ਅਲਖ ਮਿਟਾ ਦੇਨੀ ਆਂ”

ਜੇਠ ਲਈ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਭਰਿਆ ਸ਼ਰੀਕਾ ਉਹ ਗੀਤਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਅਸਾਂ ਜੇਠ ਨੂੰ ਲੱਸੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਣੀ
ਦਿਓਰ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਦੁੱਧ ਪੀ ਲਵੇ”

ਇਸ ਦੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਜੇਠ ਦਾ ਮਜ਼ਾਕ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਉਡਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਧੋਲੇ ਦੀ ਮੈਂ ਰੂੰ ਪਿੰਜਾਈ
ਉਹ ਵੀ ਚੜ੍ਹ ਗਈ ਛੱਤੇ
ਨੱਚੇ ਨੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਹਾਣ ਦੀਓ
ਮੇਰਾ ਜੇਠ ਪੂਣੀਆਂ ਕੱਤੇ”

ਪੰਜਾਬਣ ਮੁਟਿਆਰ ਦਾ ਦਿਓਰ ਲਈ ਪਿਆਰ ਦਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਦੇ ਗੀਤਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਫੁਲ ਫੁਲ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਦਿਓਰਾ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਧੁੱਪ ਲਗਦੀ, ਮੱਚਦਾ ਕਾਲਜਾ ਮੇਰਾ”
“ਲੈ ਡੋਰੀਆ ਗੰਢੇ ਦੀ ਛਿੱਲ ਵਰਗਾ,
ਰੋਟੀ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਦਿਓਰ ਦੀ ਚੱਲੀ”

ਕਈ ਜਵਾਈ ਸ਼ਰਾਰਤਾਂ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਇੱਕਠ ਵਿਚ ਜਾ ਵੜਦੇ ਹਨ। ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਵੀ ਇਸ ਜੀਜੇ ਦੀ ਚੰਗੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਖੁੰਬ ਨੱਪਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਦੇ ਪਿੜ ਵਿਚ ਧੂਹ ਕੇ ਲੈ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਪਹਿਲੋਂ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਉਪਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਹੱਕ ਜਮਾ ਕੇ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਨੱਚਦੀਆਂ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਉਪਰੋਂ ਵਾਰਨੇ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਪਰੇਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਜੀਜਾ ਖ਼ਾਲੀ ਜੇਬ ਹੀ ਨਿਕਲ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਖ਼ੁਬ ਮਜ਼ਾਕ ਉਡਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਜੀਜਾ ਵਾਰ ਦੇ ਦੁਆਨੀ ਖੋਟੀ
ਵਿਚ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਾਲੀ ਨੱਚਦੀ
ਜੀਜਾ ਵਾਰ ਨੱਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਜੋੜੀ
ਵਿਚ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਾਲੀ ਨੱਚਦੀ
ਮੈਂ ਵਾਰੀ ਫੁਲਕਾਰੀ
ਜੀਜੇ ਨੇ ਮਾਂ ਵਾਰੀ”

ਵਕਤ ਦੀ ਰਫ਼ਤਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਟੌਪਿਆਂ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਠਣੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਈ ਗੰਦੀਆਂ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋ ਗਈਆਂ। ਜਦੋਂ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ ਨੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਦੀ ਲਹਿਰ ਚਲਾਈ ਤਾਂ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਨਾਚਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਯੋਗ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਦਾ ਸੁਝਾਅ ਦਿੱਤਾ

ਗਿਆ। ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਨੋਰੰਜਨ ਤੋਂ ਵਾਂਝਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਇਸ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਵੀ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਰੋਸ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ :

“ਮਰ ਜਾਣ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭੀਏ
ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪਿੰਡ ਦੇ ਗਿੱਧੇ ਬੰਦ ਕੀਤੇ”

ਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਦਾਇਗੀ

ਨੱਚਦੀਆਂ ਟੱਪਦੀਆਂ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਅਖੀਰ ਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਦਾਇਗੀ ਦਾ ਦਿਨ ਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦਿਨ ਤੀਆਂ ਮੇਲੇ ਦਾ ਰੂਪ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰ ਲੈਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਇੱਕ ਕੁੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਲਾੜਾ ਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਲਾੜੀ ਬਣਾ ਕੇ ਵਿਆਹ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੂਰੀਆਂ ਰੀਤਾਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਅਗੇ ਅਗੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਨਾਲ ਵਾਜੇ ਵਜਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਨੱਚਦੀਆਂ ਟੱਪਦੀਆਂ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਰਸਤੇ ਵਿਚ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਢਾਠੀ ਡਾਕੂਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਡਾਂਗਾਂ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਰਾਹ ਰੋਕਣ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰ ਖੜੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਜੰਵ ਤੋਂ ਡੋਲਾ ਖੋਹ ਲੈਣਾ ਜਾਂ ਲੁੱਟ ਮਾਰ ਮਚਾ ਦੇਣੀ, ਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਅੰਤਮ ਰਸਮ ਸਮਝੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਟੋਲੀਆਂ ਬਣਾ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਬਾਪ ਦਾਦਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਖੇੜੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੀ ਵੱਸਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਅਸੀਸਾਂ ਦੇਂਦੀਆਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਚਲੀਆਂ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ :

“ਸੁਖ ਵੱਸਦੀ ਵੇ ਬਾਬਾ ਤੇਰੀ ਨਗਰੀ
ਜੀ ਸੁਖ ਵੱਸਦੀ
ਬੋਡੇ ਹੱਥ ਕਟੋਰਾ, ਬੋਡੇ ਮੁੱਖ ਜਲੇਬੀ
ਬੋਡੇ ਸਿਰ ਪਰ ਕਲਗੀ ਸੱਜਦੀ ਜੀ
ਬਾਬਾ ਬੋਡੀ ਨਗਰੀ”

ਜਦੋਂ ਇਹ ਟੋਲੀਆਂ ਪਿੰਡ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਜਾ ਪਹੁੰਚਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਸੱਥ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਚਾਚੇ ਤਾਇਆਂ ਤੇ ਵੀਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਣਾ ਕੇ ਅੰਤਮ ਗੀਤ ਗਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ :

“ਖੜੋਤੀ ਕੁੜੀਏ ਚੁੱਕ ਲਿਆ ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਦੋਹਣਾ
ਵੀਰ ਦਾ ਕਮੀਜ਼ ਕੁੜਤਾ
ਬੈਠਾ ਲਗਦਾ ਸਭਾ ਵਿਚ ਸੋਹਣਾ
ਖੜੋਤੀ ਕੁੜੀਏ ਚੁੱਕ ਲਿਆ ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਰਿਓੜੀ
ਅਸਾਂ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਨਿੱਤ ਆਵਣਾ
ਚਾਚਾ ਖੋਲ੍ਹ ਦੇਹ ਮਥੇ ਦੀ ਤਿਓੜੀ”

ਆਖਰ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਵਣ ਦੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਨੂੰ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਮੁਟਿਆਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨੱਚਣ ਟੱਪਣ ਤੇ ਸਹੇਲੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਾਥ ਮਾਣਨ ਦਾ ਮੌਕਾ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ, ਸ਼ਰਧਾਂਜਲੀ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਛੋੜੇ ਪਾ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਭਾਦੋਂ ਲਈ ਘਿ੍ਣਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ:

“ਸੌਣ ਵੀਰ ਕੱਠੀਆਂ ਕਰੇ
ਭਾਦੋਂ ਚੰਦਰੀ ਵਿਛੋੜੇ ਪਾਵੇ
ਭਾਦੋਂ ਕੱਟੜ ਚੜੀ, ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਪੈਣ ਵਿਛੋੜੇ”

ਤੀਆਂ – ਆਰਥਕ ਆਧਾਰ

ਤੀਆਂ ਸੌਣ ਰੁੱਤ ਦਾ ਤਿਉਹਾਰ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਕਵੀ ਕਾਲੀਦਾਸ ਨੇ ਬਰਸਾਤ ਦੀ ਬੜੀ ਉਸਤਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਆਮ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਇਸ ਰੁੱਤ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਛੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮਕਾ ਦੇ ਮਿਲਣ ਦੀ ਆਸ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਜ਼ਮਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਹਿਰੀ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਬਰਸਾਤ ਦੇ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਰਸਤੇ ਬੰਦ ਹੋਣ ਕਾਰਨ ਵਪਾਰ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ-ਕਾਜ ਢਿੱਲਾ ਪੈ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਤੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਹਲ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮਕਾ ਦੇ ਮੇਲ ਲਈ ਢੁਕਵਾਂ ਰੁਝੇਵਾਂ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਪਰ ਖੇਤੀ-ਬਾੜੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਤੇ ਤਕਨੀਕੀ ਢੰਗਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਚਲਾਉਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਸਭਿਅਤਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੋੜਾਂ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਵਖਰੀਆਂ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਜਿਹੜਾ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਬਾਰਸ਼ ਦੇ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣੇ ਖੇਤਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵਕਤ ਸਿਰ ਨਾ ਪੁੱਜਦਾ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਕਿਸਮਤ ਉਸਦਾ ਸਾਥ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਦਿੰਦੀ। ਕਿਸਾਨ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਸਮਾਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮਕਾ ਨਾਲ ਪਿਆਰ ਕਲੋਲ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਸੌਣੀ ਬੀਜਣ ਤੇ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਂਭਣ ਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਆਰਥਕ ਲੋੜ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਸੱਜ-ਵਿਆਹੀਆਂ ਵਹੁਟੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਪੇਕੇ ਘਲ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਗ੍ਰਹਿਸਤੀ ਖਿੱਚ ਤੋਂ ਵਕਤੀ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਦੂਰ ਕੀਤੇ ਪਤੀ ਖੇਤੀ-ਬਾੜੀ ਦੇ ਕੰਮ ਵਲ ਪੂਰਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਦੇ ਸਕਣ। ਉਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੀ ਪਤੀ ਪਤਨੀ ਦੇ ਸੌਣ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਮੇਲ ਤੋਂ ਹੋਏ ਬੱਚੇ ਵਿਸਾਖ ਵਿਚ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣਗੇ, ਜਿਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਘਰ ਜਨਮ, ਵਿਆਹ ਆਦਿ ਰੁਝੇਵਿਆਂ ਵਲ ਖੁਲ੍ਹਾ ਸਮਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਠੋਸ ਆਰਥਕ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਲੋੜ ਨੂੰ ਤੀਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਰਮਣੀਕ ਤਿਉਹਾਰ ਦਾ ਰੂਪ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ।

About the Author



Name : Hazara Singh

Date of Birth : November 30, 1922

Qualifications: M. A. , LL. B.

Teaching Career : Started as Lecturer in English at Khalsa College, Amritsar on October 3, 1950.

Retired as Head, Department of Journalism & Languages, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in November, 1982.

Educational Achievements : Was awarded Rattigan Gold Medal by Khalsa College, Amritsar for standing first in B. A. (1945).

The scholarship won on the result of Intermediate Examination (1943) was confiscated by the then Punjab Government for his having taken part in the Quit India Movement.

Participation in Freedom Struggle: Was sent behind the bars thrice during 1942-45 for active participation in freedom struggle.

President, Punjab Students Congress (1945)

Membership of Educational Bodies:

Fellow, Panjab University, Chandigarh, (1956-62).

Published Work : Writes in English , Urdu and Punjabi.

(a) Bulletins

- 1 Guru Nanak Dev (S.G.P.C., 1969; G.N.D.U., Amritsar, 1987)
- 2 National Service by the Youth in a Welfare State (PAU, 1973)
- 3 Children Day (PAU, 1973)
- 4 Autonomy of Universities (PAU, 1979)
- 5 Reassessing the Role of Mass Media (PAU, 1981)
- 6 Teaching of English at PAU, 1981
- 7 Reminiscences of Quit India Movement, 2007

(b) Manuals

- 1 On the Use of Library (PAU, 1973)
- 2 Style in Writing Technical Papers and Theses (PAU, 1976)
- 3 Correct Pronunciation of English Words Commonly Mispronounced, 1981
- 4 Gurmukhi te Shahmukhi Lippy vich Punjabi Likhna Parhna, 2006

(c) Books

- 1 Sikhism and Its Impact on Indian Society (S.G.P.C., 1971, Revised 1999)
- 2 Aspirations (Poems), 1980

- 3 Yearnings (Poems), 1987
- 4 Expectations (Poems), 1999
- 5 Lala Lajpat Rai - An Appraisal, 2003
- 6 Happy Meaningful Life, 2004, 2009
- 7 Destination (Poems), 2007
- 8 Freedom Struggle against Imperialism, 2007
- 9 Apostle of Non-Violence, 2007
- 10 Seasonal Festivals and Commemorative Days, 2010

(d) ***Wall Charts***

- 1 Let Us Pledge to Reconstruct India of Their Dreams, 2004, 2006
- 2 New Man in New World, 2004
- 3 Significant Events of Freedom Struggle and Thereafter, 2004, 2006

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