

## **The Teachings of Saint Rabidas: Is India prepared for a Casteless Society based on the Value of the same?**

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***Abstract :** Since the beginning of the time, Rabidas or Chamar community is described as untouchable. After independence, the community faced many Socio, Political, and Economical changes due to the enactment of various laws as per the guideline of the Indian constitution. The origin of the word Chamar is Chamada, it has various nomenclatures such as Ad-dharma, Ravidasia, Ramdasia, Jatav, Muchi, Charmakar, etc. in North India and seven southern states. Though untouchability has been abolished legally from Indian society this community is still facing the slur of this evil. In view of the above, it is now the opportune time to concentrate on the history, origin and cultural evolution of the 'Chamar community'.*

*The main aim and objective of this paper to highlight contemporary Socio-Cultural significance. The most interesting part is that it would be an insider's story of a movement that investigates a wide range of issues, like marginality, subordination, torture and the institution of caste. There are very few scholars in India, who have explored the links between the Chamar identity and the Ravidasia movement. More importantly, when there is an attempt on the part of some sections of the privileged to attract the Chamars to the process of Hinduisation, there should be concerted attempts to understand the pasts and presents of this movement as a part of cultural oscillation, which has had a long journey from the days of Swami Shraddananda, Swami Achutananda, the Harijan Sevak Sangha, construction of Birla Mandir, communist involvement in Chamars Mahallas in Delhi, the mobilization of the Chamars, Lal Beghis and Doms in the cause of the Hindu religion in the 1940s, Babu Jagjivan Ram and the nationalist identity of marginalized depressed castes, Congress' scheme of appropriation, the break with the Congress and the move towards Kanshi Ram's BAMCEF and the later day formation Bahujan Samajwadi Party. So now the question is "Is India is really ready for a casteless society even after different enactment laws in this regard by the Government as the Preamble of Indian Constitution?" at the same time scholar interesting and academic study for another reason since the Chamars have had a long social involvement with the city of Calcutta as émigré businessmen and leather*

*workers. But, in course of time, many of them taking advantage of the leather export market were able to amass wealth and their social mobility did not lead to any sub-caste formation, but an agglomeration in terms of a new affiliation with the Ravidasia.*

**Keywords:** Saint Rabidas, Casteless, Society, Chamar, Teaching, Untouchable, Value

*“ Man Changa To Kathauti Me Ganga”*

- Saint Rabidas

Over the last two decades, the proper nature and degree of ‘*Dalit Studies*’ have become a source of discussion among *Social scientists, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Politicians, Academician, lawyers, and Research scholars*. As we know Cultural anthropology is a branch of anthropology that focuses on the study of cultural change in humans. This includes both socio-cultural ethnographic culture and social anthropology. Cultures allow people to adapt to their environment in a non-genetic way, so people living in different environments often have different cultures. Local (special culture) and global (a universal human nature, or distinct place) Cultural anthropology has a rich methodology, including participant observation (often called fieldwork because it requires the anthropologist to spend an extended period at the research location), interviews, and surveys.<sup>1</sup>

Significant contributions have already been made by earlier scholars towards the reconstruction of history as well as the genesis of culture and religion in India. Simultaneously, some attempts have also been made to reconstruct the history and culture of India. In this regard, I would like to mention a galaxy of luminaries i.e. *Kabir* (15th century), *Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* (1486 – 1533), *Guru Nanak* (15 April 1469 – 22 September 1539), *Raja Ram Mohan Roy* (22 May 1772 – 27 September 1833). *Saint Rabidas* (15th to 16th century CE). The life details of Ravidas are uncertain and contested. Some scholars believe he was born in 1371 CE.<sup>2</sup>

Since the beginning of the time, Rabidas or Chamar community is described as untouchable. After independence, the community faced many Socio, Political, and Economical changes due to the enactment of various laws as per the guideline of the Indian constitution. Though untouchability has been abolished legally from Indian society this community is still facing the slur of this evil. In view of the above, it is now the opportune time to concentrate on the history, origin and cultural evolution of the “Chamar community”. The Chamar in the modern society is a caste of carriers, tanners, etc. Their name is derived from the Sanskrit word *chamna-kara* i.e. a worker in leather. It is also an example of a function-based class and was mainly formed by the indigenous population of the region. As the name suggests they are mainly concerned with leather-works. In villages he carries off the dead cattle and in return gives some leather and shoes. Later on, the function of

making shoes out of leather gave rise to a new class designated as Mochis. The Dom, Domra, or Domahra form the lowest rung of the Hindu social ladder. His kinsmen are the Chandaia and the Mochi. They belong to some indigenous populations of the region. An important function of a Dom is to prepare for the funerary rites of a deceased person. They are also involved in basketry, making door-screens, and also work on bamboo, reed, etc. Dusadh is a menial tribe found in the eastern districts of the region. Some of them regard themselves as descendants of Duhsasana, brother of Duryodhan of Mahabharata while others claim their descent from Bhimasvna one of the five Pandava brothers. They work as hired labourers. Ravidas has been an important place in India's medieval Saint tradition. Saint Ravidas is computed not only in India but in great saints of the world.<sup>3</sup>

According to Manu Samriti Hindus are divided into four categories (caste) in India. "Brahmin" comes to first whose work was to teach people and then comes "khsatrya" whose work was to defend the country, third was the "Vaishya" whose work was to do business and the people of the fourth category (Caste) were termed as "Shudra" whose work was to serve the people of the upper three castes. So this social structure was deadly against the Shudras. The higher castes people perpetuated their hatred against Shudras by exploiting them by different means. From the beginning of time Shudras were exploited by the people of the upper three castes and the above day by day hatred resulted in their transformation against the people of the upper class and forced many of them to leave Hinduism and embrace Buddhism or Jainism or in other kinds of religion as they thought the same will help them to become free from the clutches of caste oppression. This kind of transformation brings a good change in the lives of Shudras who thus converted. But despite changes in religion the mindset of the other communities has not changed and even today they are not treated at par with the original Buddhist and Jainees or original people of other religions. The same proved that the caste system is inbuilt in Indian society even after the change of religion. So now the question is **"Is India is really ready for a casteless society even after different enactment laws in this regard by the Government as the Preamble of the Indian Constitution?"**

First of all, we have to elaborate on the thinking of Indian society regarding the caste system Most of the peoples from the upper-class Hindu Society of Brahmins are now not in huge numbers but they exist as worshippers now the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas can't identify them properly but they exist in huge number. When it comes to the Shudras they exist in the society in every corner of our country. In recent Indian society, they are known as Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, or in some categories of Other Backward Classes (OBC), and it was done by our Government. So it is clear that even till today our Government is identifying them as Shudras and don't want to mix up them with the people of other categories (Castes) of Hinduism.

It is a reasonable assumption from the society that the internal condition of the "Rabidas" has been shaped by the process of their incorporation into the capitalist world system. According to the rules of pollution and purity, the Rabidas or Chamar belong to the "Jalachal" category, which means that upper-caste Hindus would not accept drinking water from them and avoid physical touch. The whole condition of Rabidas's life must be understood as an outcome of both their structural location as well as their ideological and political circumstances.

Saint Rabidas born in the most humble surroundings in a so-called low-caste family proved that **"Irrespective of caste and creed, all are equal in the eyes of God and only sinful actions bring a bad name and dishonour to a man."** Though the orthodox society was pitched against him, he never swerved from the path of truth and propagated the love of God. He preached love of God and religious harmony as the only panacea for the survival of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

The Rabidas generally argued that leatherwork is a God-given occupation. When he was a child, the Brahmin took to abusing and ridiculing him by addressing him with the derogatory name Chamar. Structurally the Rabidas had been bounded by the differences conferred upon them by outsiders. In the past, the main diacritical mark was their untouchability. A second mark was they are secluded by separate locality. With an estimated lifespan from 1450-1520 CE. Guru Ravidas is considered as one of the key social reformers of modern India who dedicated his life to struggling against birth-based stratification in the Indian society and served as an inspiration for all those who fought and continue to fight for the socially disadvantaged segments of our social ecosystem. Regarded as a poet, philosopher, social reformer and firm believer in God, Ravidas was pivotal to the Bhakti movement in India that resulted in the reforming of Hinduism and hence of 'Hindustan' altogether.

At the time of Rabidas, his community's older members constantly lamented the disappearance of unity and shared opinion. In comparison, the young are skeptical and believed that unity is a myth. However, the young and the old of these people believed that "The Community" is in the process of disintegration. There is a lack of solidarity in the community's decision-making, leadership to bind people, and decreasing participation and joint activities. The Gandhian ethos of Rabidas's self-reliance on the one hand and the new climate of entrepreneurial individualism on the other, have prevented them from exploiting their solidarity and low caste status.

Guru Rabidasji was very active and miraculous in his initial ages. He was different in habits and action comparison with an ordinary person. From the very early days, Guruji was devoted to the almighty God. As Rabidasji belongs to the lowest caste and at his time people of upper caste were committing atrocities upon them, Guruji came forward to preach for the

eradication of untouchability. Guru Rabidasji was the founder of Rabidassism. According to J. Sharma, his "Encyclopedia Indica" says that Rabidassism is a sect founded by Guru Ravidas. The founder must have enjoyed the celebrity status during his time as some of his works are included in the Holy Adi-Granth of the Sikhs".

The most striking fact about the social position of the Rabidas in their life is that they have shed the stigma of untouchability. The primary concern of the upper class was to settling down the lower caste. They settled all around the Rabidas, ending the physical isolation and visible marginality of the Rabidas. The people of upper-class societies found the descriptions of jobs and also an account of an appropriate social niche among the lower caste people. They had neither the knowledge of Indian people's treatment of the Chamar of the lower caste people in the society on any kind of sympathy with the notion of ritually prescribed untouchability.

Rabidas's who had transformed themselves were not considered as untouchable by the new settlers. The ideological transformation of the lower caste people was not strong enough for them to sever ties with the rest of the Guru Rabidas's followers. Rigid notions prevailed among the Rabidas community about the gender-specific tasks. The other major aspect of change among Rabidas the use of labour in the family. Guru Rabidasji knew that the people of the lower caste are oppressed by the tyranny of upper-class Brahmins. At his time Shudras were not allowed to visit Temples, Public Wells, and other public places. They have no permission to wear newly washed clothes. They were even prohibited from the consumption of good food. George Parinder said in his "*A Dictionary of Non-Christian Religions*" that lower castes were beyond the whole system, and subject to many prohibitions. He added by saying that according to the "Hymn of a Man" the Shudras came from the feet of cosmic Giantpurusha. In the laws of Manu, it is said that there was one occupation prescribed to Shudras, i.e. only to serve the other classes meekly.

Rabidasji could not bear this sort of injustice with his people and said God is common to all. Guruji believed that everybody has entitled to worship God as per his liking. Shri Anantadas, a writer who belonged to the Bhakti Poet-Saint Ramananda Cult, wrote a biography of major Bhakti poet-saints during 1600 CE. This text called the Parcais (or Parchais) included Ravidas among the great Santa's whose biography and poems were included in his text. Over time new manuscripts of Parctis of Anantadas were reproduced, some in different local languages of India. Winnand Callewaert observed that some 30 manuscripts of Ananta Das's biography on Ravidas have been found in different parts of India. These four manuscripts are complete, collected, and have been dated to 1662, 1665, 1676, and 1687.<sup>5</sup> The first three are close with some morphological variants without affecting the meaning, but the 1687 version systematically inserts verses into the text, at various

locations, with caste-related statements New claims of Brahmins persecuting Ravidas, notes on the untouchability of Ravidas, claims of Sant Kabir giving Ravidas ideas, ridicule of 'Nirguni and Saguni' ideas, and such text corruption.<sup>6</sup>

### **Saint Rabidas: Life, Teaching and Message:**

Saint Rabidas was born on the Maghi Purnima Day, Sunday in the year 1376 A.D. in a poor Cobbler family at the village "Seer Gobardhanpur" situated in the outskirts of Banaras. According to one view, he was born at Village "Mandua Deeh" situated on Grand Trunk Road about 2 Miles west of Banaras Cantonment Railway Station. And lived a long life of 151 Years and died in the Year 1527 A.D. The members of his family carried cattle carcasses on the outskirts of Banaras and engaged in the profession of Shoe making. The name of the father of Rabidas was Raghu and Mother Karma Devi.

From early childhood, Rabidas was much inclined towards spirituality. He would frequently go with his mother to attend holy discourses and showed great respect and devotion to holy men. When Rabidas was only seven years old, he attained maturity in devotion to God. The above behaviour of Rabidas worried about his parents. They tried to divert his attention by engaging him in their family profession. Thus Rabidas though learned and engaged in the profession of shoe making his love and devotion for God continued undiminished.

Such was his generosity towards Holy men and poor people that he would offer those pairs of shoes at a nominal price or sometimes at no price at all. The above attitude of Rabidas worried about his father. To make him more interested in worldly affairs, the parents of Rabidas decided to get him married. Thus at an early age, Rabidas was married to a girl named Loan. But the marriage also did not change the behaviour or attitude of Rabidas. Being completely disgusted his father separated Rabidas and his wife from the family and asked him to manage his affairs and even dislodged him of the legitimate share of the family property. He was made to stay in the backyard of the family house.

Rabidas very happily accepted and contended with the above arrangement because the above separation from his parents will allow him to spend time in devotion without being bothered. Rabidas carried on his ancestral profession of mending and repairing shoes throughout his life. Being a true Saint he always lived on his own earning, however meager they were. He would never kill animals for their leather, using only the leather of dead animals. He would buy such leather from the market and sell the shoes made out of it for a living. His income was very limited and he lived a life of poverty. His relatives and other men in his society used to ridicule him for the same. But this could never deter Ravidas from his generosity or his unstinted love and devotion for God. In his writings, Rabidas said, "The one who is dedicated

in this world with Devotion to God and dedication to work. His purpose in life is fulfilled; Thus doth Rabidas declare the truth" "Man Jab Changa Kathouti Me Ganga". If the mind is pure even water in a cobbler's pot is the water of the Ganges.

It is said that Rabidas was one of the twelve principal disciples of "Swami Ramanand" and "Bhakta Kabir" was one out of them. Rabidas and Kabir were contemporaries and both of them referred to each other with respect in their writings.

Like Kabir, Rabidas has not received any formal education. But his poems indicate a good knowledge of Hindi, Urdu, Persian, and many regional languages of India and are replete with Hindu religious LORE. His knowledge was mainly derived from the company of holy men, from his travels in different states of India, and above all from the inner spiritual experiences. In his Poems, he speaks of the futility of book learning and aspires to learn the "letter of wisdom" in the school of God: as said by him. "So long as the inner experience is not realized, Learning and Reasoning are of no avail"

He traveled widely in many states of India as evident from his poems which contain words of different regional languages. His followers are available in plenty in different states of India like Uttar Pradesh, Panjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujrat, and Maharashtra including other South Indian states. The memorial of Rabidas is found in many places like the Tirupati temple, at the foot of Balaji Hill, Ravidas Kund in Ellora in Hyderabad, and Junagadh in Kathiawar. In Chittor there is a footprint attributed to Ravidas covered by a sacred canopy called "Ravidas ki Chhatri"

Guru Ravidas met with frequent opposition from the priestly classes, yet he had a tremendous impact on society. Because of his birth in a low caste family, Ravidas was looked down upon by the Brahmins who considered him unqualified for practicing devotion to God. For a low caste Cobbler to preach and practice holiness was a Sacrilege in their eyes. Different researchers on the life of Saint Ravidas relate stories that demonstrate the utter humility and contentment of Ravidas and show how Brahmins had to recognize the futility of their rituals in the face of Ravidas's true love and devotion to God. The related stories prove the glory of and greatness of Ravidas's simple path of love and devotion to God and expose the absurdity of Traditional Caste superiority and external observances.

The ideology of Guruji was indeed a remarkable and astonishing phenomenon. So deep was his teachings that it inspired the devotion of **52 Kings and Queens of the earth while princely states of India adopt Him as their "Raj Guru"**. Even the Mughal Samrat Babar was so deeply impressed and influenced by his teachings that he subsequently repented for his **criminal assault on other religions**. Guru Ravidas was a protagonist of Equality, Human rights, Universal Brotherhood, liberty, fraternity, and

worship of one God. Guruji was a multifaceted personality. He was a suave socio-religious reformer, a thinker, a theosophist, a poet, a traveler and above all a towering spiritual figure before whom, even head-priests of Banaras lay prostrate to pay homage. He visualized governance in a world where there would be no discrimination on the grounds of Caste, Colour, Sex, Faith, and Country. All would be equal. He laid the foundation for the Socialistic Democratic Republic. **The United Nations has adopted his concepts and incorporated the same in the preamble of its Charter.** On this ideology, a new faith after Guru Ravidas was created 600 years ago and is still recognized universally to date. and further gaining momentum not only among the Dalits and suffering Humanity of India but also in abroad in the countries like UK, America France, Canada, Australia, Itali, New Zeeland, Spain, Netherland, Fizi, etc in the form of more than 50 Sri Guru Ravidas Temples and Ashrams. Sikh Community also honoured this great Saint by including 40 Bhajans (slokas) of Guruji in their sacred religious Book" Guru Granth Saheb"

To comprehensively analyze the mind of Ravidas, it is imperative to venture into his literary creations, including his simply worded yet blunt poems. His eloquent words were his strong message to society, and continue to be integral to the daily conversations of the Hindi belt of Northern India. A classic example is written below, in which he traverses from the individual to the society to the state and subtly communicates his egalitarian vision of the ideal society:

“मन चंगा, तो कठीती में गंगा ”

When the soul is pure one can feel the presence of the Holy water of Ganges even in the water pot of the cobbler. Ravidas was always against artificially created scenes of purity. With a belief that work done with integrity and commitment is holy, he held the view that the water used in his profession of cleaning shoes was as worthy as the holy river Ganga. It was, and remains, a powerful message to the masses that Brahmins or any other 'upper-caste are not the sole custodians of spiritual divinity. Rather, spirituality resides within everybody: a message that had a lasting impact on the minds of the disadvantaged. Ravidas's views on the relevance of the Dalit fraternity are another legacy he is reckoned by. He underlined that the divinity within two individuals is identical, irrespective of their caste, creed, or gender. While dividing individuals based on social origin is indeed criminal, it does not affect the spiritual core of the person:

" कह रविदास खलास चमारा, जो हम सहरी सो मीत हमारा।।।"<sup>7</sup>

A few other defining words by Guru Ravidas which reflect the great mind that he was and that has shaped an entire era are:

"रविदास जन्म होत न कोउ नीच। ओछे करम की कीच।"<sup>8</sup>

Deeds, not birth, decide your fate. Guru Ravidas conveys that one's caste and birth will not solely decide their worth. It will be their work and deeds.



**"जाति-जाति में जाति हैं, जो केतन के पात,  
रैदास मनुष ना जुड़ सके जब तक जाति न जात"**

Our society is divided into several castes. Even these castes are also divided into several sectional groups. But no eternal fruitful result can be achieved and the society cannot be united in this system.—Like the trunk of a Banana tree. Even we peel every layer of it one after one, in the end, no substance is left out and the trace of tree vanishes 'In protest against the then social cleavage, he writes that caste as an institution has eroded and divided humanity and emphasizes that anything that creates rift the human society would never sustain in the longer run.

**" ऐसा चाहूँ राज मैं, जहाँ मिले सबन को अन्न |  
छोट बड़ो सब सम बसै, रैदास रहे प्रसन्न || "**

A socialist ideology is visible in his thinking. In the before mentioned lines, he envisions a state where no one sleeps with an empty stomach and everyone is equal and content. His vision for society was vehemently opposed by the traditional orthodoxy and was accused of deforming the social order. Yet, he continued on the path of devotion undeterred by worldly influences. The Holy Adi-Granth of Sikhs and Panchvani of the Hindu warrior-ascetic group Dadupanthis are the two oldest authenticated sources of the literary works of Ravidas. In the Holy Adi-Granth, forty of Ravidas's poems are included, and he is treated as one of thirty-six contributors to this foremost canonical scripture of Sikhism. This compilation of poetry in Holy Adi-Granth responds to, among other things, issues of dealing with conflict and tyranny, war and resolution, and willingness to dedicate one's life to the right cause. Guru Ravidas's poetry covers topics such as the definition of the ideal state where there are no second or third-class unequal citizens, the need for dispassion, and who is a real Yogi. Jeffrey Ebbesen notes that just like other Bhakti saint-poets of India and some cases of Western literature authorship, many poems composed by later-era Indian poets have been attributed to Guru Ravidas, as an act of reverence, even though Ravidas had nothing to do with these poems or ideas expressed therein.<sup>9</sup> Once a hunter caught a deer and going to kill her to feed his children When Guruji came to know about that he told the hunter that he should free the deer and have pity on her instead to kill her. That is a lesson from the teaching of Guruji that we should not kill innocent animals. Guruji has taught us a lesson to love the animals and not to kill them.

One day as said, God came to the Guruji in the disguise of a very ordinary and quite old saint, and offered Guruji a magical stone (Paras Pathar or touchstone) which converts any iron into gold and requested him to utilize the same for prosperity Guruji was reluctant to keep it but at the insistence of the old Saint, he told him to keep the same at the roof of his hutment. When the old Saint again came back after one year and enquired about the stone

Guruji told him that it is kept in the same place where he kept it during his earlier visit. Guruji told the old saint that he is happy in his little hut and leaving with his own hard-earned money instead of staying in a big palace with big earnings. From this Guruji taught us that we should not be greedy in our life, and we should work hard to earn our livelihood. One day Guruji after selling the shoes made by him saw a hungry Saint. He spent all his above-earned money to feed the hungry Saint. So from this, we learn that we should also donate to our needy or religious institutions and social and charitable organizations where the money is spent for needy and poor people.

From the starting of society, Brahmins were exploiting the lower caste. Brahmins were wearing Dhoti and Janeu and putting a mark of Tilak on their forehead. Guruji also started putting each and everything like Brahmins. So the clash between Guruji and Brahmins came into the front. Brahmin's complained to the king that let him put a test before them by keeping an idol of God between them and Ravidas and said that the powerful will be he whose idol of God will float into the river. And after the trying of Brahmin, a miracle happened when the idol of Guru Ravidas after putting into the river moved floating towards the Guruji, which proved that everyone has the right to worship God as they like.

There was a Brahmin boy named Ramlal who was much closed to young Guruji and used to play with him. The Brahmins were jealous of that. They did not like a Brahmin boy playing with a lower caste boy. The Brahmins put the young Guruji before a hungry lion, but the hungry lion did not become fierce or harmed the young Guruji but rather the lion bowed down his head before the young Ravidas, It's all because of the divine power of Guruji. Guru Ravidas met with frequent opposition from the priestly classes, yet he had a tremendous impact on society. Because of his birth in a low caste family, Ravidas was looked down upon by the Brahmins who considered him unqualified for practicing devotion to God. For a low caste cobbler to preach and practice holiness was a sacrilege in their eyes. Deferent researchers on the life of Saint Rabidas relate stories that demonstrate the utter humility and contentment of Rabidas and show how Brahmins had to recognize the futility of their rituals in the face of Rabidas true love and devotion to god. The related stories prove the glory of and greatness of Ravidas' simple path of love and devotion to god and expose the absurdity of traditional caste superiority and external observances.



Fig-1 The Posts and Telegraphs Department feels privileged to bring out a special commemorative stamp in Honour and memory of this great saint, and reformer, Saint Ravidas. Issued on 24/06/2001<sup>10</sup>

Some dimensions of postage stamp i.e. *1. Instrument of Teaching 2. Picture Psychology 3. Reflection of Power Politics*. In this context the silent role of a postage stamp cannot ignore, in this circumstance, saint Rabidas reflected in the post stamp two times (1971 and 2001) in two sizes first one is triangular and the second one is the fore square. The think of saint Rabidas highlighted casteless and value-based society but unfortunately in practice the political power group motivation on election oriented by the caste-based and valueless system. The work of Guru Ravidasji is the source of inspiration for an equitable and egalitarian society. In the Brahminical social order, Bhakti is considered to be a privilege of the dvijas (upper castes) only<sup>11</sup> The process of Sanskritization facilitated the ambitious lower castes to improve 'its position in the local caste hierarchy by pretending to look like the higher castes that enjoy 'great prestige' in the hierarchically organized Brahminical social order.<sup>12</sup> The Bhakti approach of Ravidass was a non-violent struggle for the emancipation and empowerment of the Shudras. Though he combined humility with Bhakti, his concept of formless God reflected an altogether different picture.<sup>13</sup> Ravidass's God was not humble at all in the typical sense of the term. He was graceful. He was not indifferent to the downtrodden. His God was rather bold who was not afraid of anyone. He elevated and purified the so-called untouchables.<sup>14</sup>

By choosing Bhakti as a path of social protest, Guru Ravidass did not only challenge the Brahminical tradition of caste-based privilege but also laid the foundation of Dalit consciousness from below, perhaps for the first time in India. Guru Ravidass gave a new meaning to Bhakti by projecting it as a method of social protest against the centuries-old entrenched structures of Brahminical domination. He rejected all forms of religious rituals and sectarian formalities. He also commented graphically on the cursed and abject living conditions of millions of fellow downtrodden. Some scholars believed that though the devotional songs and hymns of Ravidass reflected the sufferings of the downtrodden, they lack the reformatory zeal and bitter condemnation of Brahminism and caste system that animated the poetry of Kabir and Tukaram (Dasgupta 1976:162; Omvedt 2003:191)<sup>15</sup>

After human rights, it is wrongly believed that the idea of equality emerged during the French revolution 250-300 years ago or during the Russian Revolution of the last century. The idea of human rights was first stipulated by Guru Ravidas 600 years ago. Neither the French Revolution nor the Russian revolution was involved in the stipulation of human rights. Guruji said that everyone is Equal. That idea was to challenges society. The Gurudwara radiates the light of knowledge discoursed by Guruji. Guruji wanted to save India from the curse of deep-rooted inequality. When he found Generations grow up and pass away but this system of inequality continues it hurt him a lot. Someone takes birth, constitution his life, and someday dies but the outcomes are the same which is affecting our society continuously. I had anticipated that the education class would get paid for this him they very

often indulge in the same unjust practices. I believe that promoting the teachings of Guruji among the young's team would help in eradicating this injustice. They should spread the thought of Guruji among the educated people so that they thought of Guruji may spread throughout the world. I think that you have a very important role in this movement. 600 years ago Guruji dreamt of a place where there would be no sorrow for example *Begumpura*. some lower-class people are still now tortured, beaten By the upper class belonging .the women were also been deprived and sometimes socially unjustified. It hurts me a lot. Today we talk about an egalitarian society. The reason for rampant unhappiness lies in the custom of inequality. It disheartens me when I see some people are tortured by others. That's why Guruji talked about a city without sorrow where every inhabitation would have equal status.

**Solution:**

'Man Changa to Kathouti Me Ganga'Sant Ravidas (When the soul is pure one can feel the presence of the Holy of Ganges even in the professional water pot of the cobbler) Saint Ravidas was always against artificially created scenes of purity. With a belief that work done with integrity and commitment is holy, he held the view that the water used in his profession of cleaning shoes was as worthy as the holy river Ganga. It was, and remains, a powerful message to the masses that Brahmins or any other 'upper-caste are not the sole custodians of spiritual divinity. Rather, spirituality resides within everybody: a message that had a lasting impact on the minds of the disadvantaged. Ravidas's views on the relevance of the Dalit fraternity are another legacy he is reckoned by. He underlined that the divinity within two individuals is identical, irrespective of their caste, creed, or gender. While dividing individuals based on social origin is indeed criminal, it does not affect the spiritual core of the person.

The problem is inbuilt in society. If we want to resolve the problem we have to demolish it from the very root. First of all the Government has to take steps regarding the abolishment of the Caste system. While the Government says that we are all same, we are all humans but at the same time, special provisions like creating of quota within quota are being continued. The constitution of India has provided 7 to 15 % reservations to Scheduled Castes in various states of India. But the benefit of this reservation is not reaching all the deserving people.

1. In terms of population, the biggest caste in India is Chamar. They are about 25% of the Indian population. The Chamar caste is spread all over India.
2. Their work was related to leather such as skinning of dead animals like tiger, lion, deer, cow, buffalo, horse, donkey, camel, etc., ready the raw leather into finished leather, make musical instruments, make

armour. Make leather water vessel, shoe, belt, jacket, etc.

3. They also known as different names as in Maharashtra they are Mahar and also have other three names, In Haryana, they are Jatav, in U. P. and Uttarakhand they are Jatav, Chamar, Ravidas, and also three other names, in Bihar, they are Chamar, Ravidas, and Mochi, in Bengal they are Muchi and Ruhidas.

So the aggrieved communities have raised voice against discrimination. If we want to demolish the caste theory from society then first of all we have to remove the mindset of the people and upper-caste society and the same will be possible if we educate our people, our children, our generation, and our society. Bhagwad Gita shows three paths of enlightenment i.e. Karma, Bhakti (Devotion), and Gyan (Knowledge). While it may seem that Ravidas and in general Dalits belong to the Bhakti Marg, he embodied Karma and Gyan with equal fervour. A man who lived by the philosophy that samvad (dialogue) and not confrontation is the path to an integrated and cohesive society is the man who truly represents what Dalits are and more importantly, what they can be. I conclude my write-up with mention B.R. Ambedkar quote 'Ours is a battle not for wealth; nor for power, ours is a battle for freedom; for reclamation of human personality.'

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