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# Ravidassia Religion

## A Journey of Separate Religious identity

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### Abstract

Satguru Ravidass Ji also known as Raidas, Ruhidas, Robidas was a great spiritual leader & social reformer of the medieval northern India bhakti movement, who influenced Indian spiritual and social thought through his message of Begumpura (equality, unity, and devotion to one formless God). His teachings challenged caste-based discrimination and emphasized the inherent dignity of every human being. Over time, his followers—who revered him as a ‘Satguru’ and spiritual guide—began to consolidate into a separate community known as the Ravidassias. The movement for a separate religious identity was started from over 100 years ago but the formal establishment of the Ravidassia religion happened in 2010, marked by the adoption of the ‘Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji’ as its Holy Granth (scripture). The formation of new Ravidassia Religion was announced on the auspicious occasion of the 633<sup>rd</sup> Birth anniversary of Satguru Ravidass Ji, at Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi. The declaration on January 30, 2010, during a large gathering, established Ravidassia as a distinct religion.

This research paper examines the journey of the Ravidassia community toward religious distinctiveness and its impacts on social and religious life. It explores how the assertion of a separate identity has self-respect, and empowerment among Dalit communities. Through historical, sociological, and theological analysis, the study highlights how the Ravidassia religious movement represents not only a quest for spiritual independence but also a transformative step toward social equality in contemporary India. It also represents the contributions made by the Saints of Dera Sachkhand Ballan in the formation of a separate religious identity and briefly engages with the question of who are Ravidassias and their religion.

**Keywords:** Satguru Ravidass, Ravidassia, Religion, Separate, Identity, Dera Sachkhand Ballan.

### Introduction

Religion has an eternal relationship with human existence—an unbreakable bond that can never be severed. All the rites and values associated with religion are deeply intertwined with every aspect of human life. Religion is not a recent invention; rather, it is as ancient as the world itself, as far back as human knowledge extends. From the time we begin to find evidence of human emotions and thoughts, it becomes clear that religion existed—that humans were, in fact, under the influence of religion. Nearly all ancient texts, wherever they were composed, are imbued with religious sentiment. In the words of Herder, “The roots of all great civilizations of our world lie in religious traditions, whether those traditions have been established through written or oral literature<sup>1</sup>.” The word ‘religion’ cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name.<sup>2</sup>

**Definitions of Religion:** According to Encyclopaedia Dictionary of Philosophy, “From the Latin word ‘Religare’ (to bind fast) typically the term refers to an institution with a recognized body of communicants who gather together regularly for worship, and accept a set of doctrines offering some mean of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate nature of reality”.<sup>3</sup>

- According to Concise Dictionary of Philosophy, “Religion is a strong faith in some supernatural spirit or God. Religion and reason cannot go together. The postulates of religious experience cannot be established by means of any investigation. They are accepted as a matter of faith. Every religion has its own ideas. For example, Hinduism believes in Moksa. Some say where reason ends, there faith begins.<sup>4</sup>
- According to James Martineau, “Religion is the Belief in an ever living God that is, in a divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind.<sup>5</sup>

**Satguru Ravidass Ji:** Satguru Ravidass Ji, (also spelled Ravidas) was a 15th–16th century Bhakti poet-saint born into a Chamar (leatherworker) family near Varanasi (Banaras) in what is now Uttar Pradesh.

He is celebrated as one of the foremost “untouchable Saint-poets of the North Indian Bhakti movement” of that era. His devotional hymns (kīrtan) emphasize a formless, compassionate God and the equality of all castes. Guru Ravidass ji became especially revered by Dalit (formerly “untouchable”) communities – Chamars and related groups—across North India. He explicitly identified his caste in verse –

Meri jaat kut bandhla dhor dhovanta nitahi Banarasi aas pasa!!  
Ab bipar pardhan tihi karah dandout tere Naam sarnai Ravidass dasa!!3!!1!!

(Amrit Bani Steek: 241)

People of my community who are living near by Banaras are engaged in carting away and skinning of dead animals, tanning and polishing of leather and making leather goods. Shri Guru Ravidass Ji says that O God! As I have taken shelter under Thy sacred feet, now even the head of the Brahmins bows down (Dandvatt Namaskar) before Thy devotee with respect. This entire glory is because of the worship and kind blessings of God.<sup>6</sup> “Acharya Prithvi Singh Azad”, in his book ‘Ravidas Darshan’, confirmed this date using a verse from a sakhi (story) written by ‘Karmdas’ in the 18th century, further validating the birth year mentioned above. The verse is as follows:

“Chaudah sai taithis ki Maagh Sudhi Prandas  
Dukhiyon ke kalyan hit pragate Sri Ravidas.”<sup>7</sup>

Based on available evidence and critical analysis, the most widely accepted birth date for Satguru Ravidass Ji is ‘Samva<sup>89t</sup>’ 1433, on the full moon day of the month of ‘Maagh’, which corresponds to Sunday (Ravivar) in the year 1377 CE. Consequently, the Ravidassīa community celebrates the birth anniversary (Gurpurab) of Satguru Ravidass Ji every year in Kashi (Varanasi) on this date, with great devotion and reverence.<sup>11</sup>

The teachings of Satguru Ravidass was a non-violent struggle for the freedom and empowerment of the oppressed. Though he combined mankind with spirituality, his concept of formless God shown a different image. Ravidass’s God was not humble at all in the typical sense of the term. He was not detached to the downtrodden. Satguru Ravidass’s God was rather bold who was not afraid of anyone. He uplifted and purified the so-called untouchables.

Aisi laal tujh bin kaun kareh!!  
Gareeb Nivaz Gusaiyan mera mathay chhatar dhareh!!1!!Rahaa!!

(O charming God! Who else can perform such miracles? O God you are the protector of the poor! Who else have awarded me with great honour today) (Amrit Bani Steek: 208)

Guru Ravidass Ji planned a society called “Begumpura”, meaning “a city without sorrow,” where there would be no place for any kind of discrimination, no taxes, and no fear— just an equality.

Begampura shahar ko naao!! Dookh andoh nahi teh thaa!!  
Na tasvis khiraj na maal !! Khauf na khata na taras jawal!!1!!

(Amrit Bani Steek: 73)

Satguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj says that he is a citizen of the world known as “Begumpura” that is free from every kind of sorrow. There is no place for any discomfort and worry in that world. There is neither worry nor tension of any kind in “Begumpura” city. No one has to pay any kind of taxes. All citizens of that “Begumpura” are without every fear, clash and scarcity and they are all one to God.<sup>12</sup> ‘Begumpura’ is so different in tone from most of the devotional Bani (Shabad) that it may well have been protected only because it was so remarkable, because it drew for its audience of the poor and deprived an image of the society they targeted for. It was an expression in the early modern era, of a heaven, originally in Indian literature. In some ways it seems to stand alone, yet it was an indication of the welfare of social vision that would sustain all the later struggles. For Satguru Ravidass ji Begumpura concept was an imagined city, free from boundries of geographical location, without a history. Satguru Ravidass, as a spiritual figure which Dr. Gail Omvedt called “the bhakti radical”, commands <sup>13</sup>a massive following among his caste fellows, especially the Chamars in Punjab, who recognize him their Guru, Satguru.<sup>14</sup>



**Some important facts relating to the life of  
Satguru Ravidass Maharaj**

<b>Date of Birth :</b>	Year 1377 A.D.(Magh Sudi 15, Bikrami Samvat 1433)
<b>Birth place :</b>	Seer Goverdhanpur, Banaras (Varanasi), U. P. – India
<b>Name of father :</b>	Shri Santokh Dass
<b>Name of mother :</b>	Shrimati Kalsi Devi
<b>Name of grandfather :</b>	Shri Kalu Ram
<b>Name of grandmother :</b>	Shrimati Lakhpati
<b>Name of wife :</b>	Shrimati Lona
<b>Name of son :</b>	Shri Vijay Dass
<b>Date of Brahmleen (Salvation) :</b>	Sangrand of month of Harh, Bikrami Samvat 1584, (1528 A. D.)
<b>Place of Brahmleen (Salvation) :</b>	Banaras (Varanasi)

14

Amritbani

(Amrit Bani Steek: 14)

**Ravidassias:** The followers of Satguru Ravidass are popularly known as Ravidassias, Ravidassi or Adharmis.<sup>16</sup> The leather working community of the Chamar caste, the famous occupation of Satguru Ravidass whom they also worship as a Guru, are known as Ravidassias. Satguru Ravidass further wrote in his holy Bani:

Meri Jaat Kut Bandhla Dhor Dhovanta Nithai Banarsi Aas Pasa  
Ab Bipar Pradhan Teh Karhai Dandaut Tere Naam Sarnaye Ravidass Dasa | |

(Amrit Bani steek : 101 )

(My community work is to cutting and making leather and on daily basis they also remove dead cattle from the city of Banaras. Yet reputed Brahmans now bow down themselves before me, since I the Ravidass have took shelter of your name, O, God.

(Amrit Bani Steek: 101).

Ravidassias are proud of their separate identity and are very much particular about their distinct faith believing in the teachings and bani of Satguru Ravidass whom they worship as Guru and bow in front of his image. They also touch the feet of the Sants of Ravidassia Deras and consider them as living Guru's. They worship Satguru Ravidass ji's image, recite his shabad (Holy Bani) every morning and night, celebrate his birthdays as the biggest religious event and show fully faith in his spiritual power.<sup>17</sup> They raise slogans such as 'Ravidass Shakti Amar Rahe' (may the spiritual power of Ravidass live forever)<sup>18</sup>. Ravidassias, the most uplifted Dalit community, over the last few decades, have started asserting their separate identity and have established their own Satguru or Guru Ravidass organisations, federations and Gurdwaras different from the Sikh organizations and Gurdwaras in every country of the world. But in official records, they are still just bracketed with Chamars.<sup>19</sup>

The religious symbol of Dera Ballan and of all other Ravidassia Deras is 'Har' (Supreme Being). This logo is also known as the 'Koumi Nishan' of the Ravidassia samaj. The symbol 'Har' is composed of a Sun-like circle with an image of forty rays on its round edge. The forty rays round the circle of the symbol signify forty hymns of Guru Ravidass. There is one more smaller circle within which 'Har' is written in Gurmukhi script with a sign of flame (Jot, Holy Flame) on the top of it. That flame represents the 'Naam' (word) that would enlighten the entire world. The sign of flame crosses over into the bigger circle. In between the bigger and smaller circles is written a couplet "Naam tere kee jot lagayi, Bhaio Ujiaaro Bhawan saglaare" (Your Name is the flame I light; it has illuminated the entire world). The symbol 'Har' represents the very being of Ravidass and his teachings. The logo. The Dalits, especially the Chamars of Punjab, proudly elevate flags with the print of symbol 'Har' on top of their religious places, and on vehicles during processions on the occasion of Guru Ravidass's birth anniversaries and other festivities and also on regular basis. The symbol 'Har' has become a proud symbol of a separate Dalit identity.<sup>20</sup> "We, as Ravidassias have different traditions. We are not Sikhs. Even though, we give utmost respect to 10 gurus and Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Ravidass Ji is our supreme. There is no command for us to follow the declaration that there is no guru after Guru Granth Sahib. We respect Guru Granth Sahib because it has our guru ji's teachings and teachings of other religious figures who have spoken against caste system, spread the message of NAAM and equality. As per our traditions, we give utmost respect to contemporary gurus also who are carrying forward the message of Guru Ravidass Ji. Guru Granth Sahib is a universal Granth. It has message for humanity. Holy Books

are for the mankind to follow and not for specific religious groups. Everybody can respect and follow them in their own manner".<sup>21</sup>

### **The role of Ad Dharm Movement:**

**Babu Mangu Ram** Muggowalia (14 January 1886 – 22 April 1980), is also known as **Babu Mangu Ram Chaudhry**, was an Indian freedom fighter, a great politician of oppressed classes from Punjab and one of the founder members of the Ghadar Party established in San Francisco. In 1909, he migrated to the United States and there became he started working with the Ghadar Party. After he returned to India in 1925, he became a leader of the low-caste people, he started organising them in opposition to the system of untouchability that oppressed them. He was the founder of the Ad-Dharmi Movement, an organisation dedicated to establish equality for Untouchables. He was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly (Punjab Vidhan Sabha) in 1946 and in 1972 received recognition in the form of a pension and an award from Indira Gandhi for his great work for Indian independence.<sup>22</sup>

"The Ad-Dharm Movement started by Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia in the year 1926, was an independent Dalit movement and their philosophy was very clear which aimed at the making of a new religion or qaum same like other religions. As Juergensmeyer (1988) explained, "Its main motive was novel: the idea that untouchables constitute a qaum, a different religious community similar to those of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, and that the qaum had existed from time immemorial."<sup>23</sup>

Manguo Ram and the early leaders of the Ad dharm recognize their first task to create of a new religion. Ad Dharm worked to represent the real figure of Satguru Ravi Dass and used his pictures as their symbol, his sayings as their sacred texts, and facts about his life as a picture of lower caste pride and power.<sup>24</sup> Each of the major religious communities in the Punjab has its own greetings: "Salam" for the Muslims; "Sat Sri Akal" for the Sikhs, and "Namaste" for the Hindus. The early leaders of the Ad Dharm recognized that to be a qaum they needed greetings too, and they adopted the salutation "Jai Gurdev" ("victory to the divine guru") to which the response was "Dhan Gurdev" ("blessed be the divine guru"). In this case the guru was understood as Ravidass or one of the other lower caste saints.<sup>25</sup>

According to Sant Sarwan Dass, Mangu Ram had gone to Sant Pipal Das in the early stages of the Ad Dharm movement for information about the writings and teachings of satguru Ravi Dass; he also visited another sant, Hira Das for the same purpose. These two saints helped out Mangu Ram to construct scripture for the Ad Dharm under the title "Sri Guru Ad Prakash Asankh Deep Granth" (The Lord's Original Scriptures of Infinite Light).<sup>26</sup> The Ad Dharm took the integrative myths and Ravi Das symbol and appropriated them for a separatist identity. His picture, his name, and his stories were salted throughout the literature and events of the movement. But Satguru Ravi Dass was still seen as the Chamar hero who was able to pull his weight among the Brahmans- but in developing their own interpretations of the myths, the Ad Dharm leaders placed more emphasis on Ravi Das's untouchable defiance than upon his Brahman acceptability.<sup>27</sup> The Ad Dharm's use of Ravi Das as a symbol allowed the movement to emphasize the separate religious tradition of the lower castes<sup>28</sup>

**Dera Sachkhand Ballan: Dera Sach Khand Ballan** ([Punjabi: ਡੇਰਾ ਸਚ ਖੰਡ ਬੱਲਾਂ](#) ([Gurmukhi](#)); [ڈیرہ پالیسیاں کان](#)

[Shahmukhi](#)), also known as **Dera Sant Sarwan Das** or **Dera Ballan**, is a Ravidassia dera based in the village of Ballan near Jalandhar, Punjab, India. It was founded by Pipal Dass soon after 1900, and it played a role in the Ad Dharm movement to popularize the image of Ravidas as a guru. It has since adopted the mission of spreading the teachings of Ravidas and advancing public education and healthcare in India.<sup>29</sup>

Sant Sarwan Dass gave the name Village Ballan Dera "Dera Ravidassia da" on (2nd February 1964 AD).<sup>30</sup>

"The Dera Sachkhand Ballan was established in the beginning of the 20th century by Sant Pipal Das, father of Sant Sarwan Das (February 15, 1895-June 11, 1972). Sant Sarwan Dass lost his mother Shobhawanti when he was only five years old. Thereafter, Sant Pipal Dass left home village Gill Patti, Bathinda Punjab in search of 'truth'. He took his son Sarwan Dass along with him on this mission.<sup>31</sup>

Finally they reached at Jalandhar railway station and from there they went to village Ballan. The place, in the outskirts of village Ballan, was a heavy forest. Both father and son spent many days in the forest and later took shelter in a mud house in the village Ballan during night time. Later on the mud house was converted into a temple, prominently known as Ad Mandir, and later a new concrete building was built in its place.<sup>32</sup>

Under the stewardship of Sant Sarwan Dass, a true emissary of Guru Ravidass, dissemination of the bani of Guru Ravidass and the proliferation of the Ravidassia faith became one of the most important missions of the Dera Sachkhand Ballan. He laid the foundation stones of various Ravidass Deras and bhawans. He sponsored construction of rooms in the Shri Guru Ravidass High School, Jalandhar; Arts and Crafts Training College, Jalandhar; Shri Guru Ravidass Technical College, Phagwara; Primary school, Raipur-Rasoolpur; Bhagwan Ravidass Ashram Nirmala Chowani, Haridwar; and High School, Village Ballan.<sup>33</sup>

**Background of Ravidassia Religion:** Each religious phenomenon has a historical background and originates from natural antecedents.

Vienna Austria Incident:- 'Ravidassias Dharm was formally announced on 30 January 2010. The announcement was made in response to the assault on the topmost saints gaddinasheens (holy persons/head of deras) of Dera Sachkhand Ballan (Dera Ballan hereafter) who were on their sermon tour in Austria. This unfortunate assault happened during a religious ceremony at a Ravidass Temple in Vienna on 24 May 2009. The attack left one killed and many injured, including Sant Niranjan Dass, the current gaddinasheen of Dera Ballan. The one who was killed was none else than the deputy chief of Dera Ballan, Sant Ramanand, popularly known as the soul of the Ravidass mission. The followers of Dera Ballan, mostly dalits, perceived the episode as a direct attack on their

emerging and distinct Ravidassia identity. Within hours, this event resulted in a massive backlash causing a huge loss to public and private property back home in Punjab. The situation was finally brought under control by imposing a curfew in the state.<sup>34</sup>

Enemies of humanity perpetrated a dastardly attack on Sant Niranjana Dass Ji Maharaj and Sant Rama Nand Ji at Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Vienna on 24th May, 2009. Because of that, Sant Rama Nand Ji attained immortal martyrdom for the sake of Ravidassia community and left for his heavenly abode in the early hours of May 25, 2009 to become immortal. There were spontaneous and forceful but peaceful protests all over the world by Ravidassia community to express their pain and dismay against this barbaric act of violence. There-after, announcement of new religion “Ravidassia Dharma” was made on the sacred occasion of 633<sup>rd</sup> birth anniversary of Jagatguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj from his Janam-Sthan Temple, Sir Govardhanpur, Varanasi in the presence of thousands of learned saints and devotees. More than 200 million people of Ravidassia community were delighted to get this novel identity. That night, Jagatguru Ravidass Ji Maharaj could be seen blessing people of the world from the largest visible full moon of the century.<sup>35</sup>

**The Formation of Ravidassia Religion:** The formation of new Ravidassia Religion was declared on the auspicious occasion of the 633<sup>rd</sup> birth anniversary of Satguru Ravidass Ji, at Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi (Banaras) U.P. The Amritbani (Sacred Granth) of Guru Ravidass was declared the religious Granth of the newly formed Ravidassia Religion. The declaration on January 30, 2010, during a large gathering, established Ravidassia as a distinct religion.

A unique congregation to celebrate the 633<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Guru Ravidass was organised at Birth Place Temple, Seer Goverdhanpur Varanasi, India, on 30th. January 2010. Lakhs of devotees from India and abroad were present on the auspicious occasion. In the presence of Sant Samaj, an historic decision was taken unanimously to form Ravidassia Religion. This decision was welcomed by all. The mammoth gathering adopted the new religion immediately. The principals of newly formed Ravidassia religion were accepted. Amritbani, containing the hymns of Guru Ravidass was declared the religious Granth of the newly formed Ravidassia religion. This holy Granth contains 140 Shabads, 40 Pade, Paintee Akhari, Bani Haftawaar, Bara Maas Updesh, Saand Bani, Shadi Updesh, Manglachar and 231 Shaloks of Satguru Ravidass. This Granth is available at present in two languages i.e. Devnagri and Gurmukhi scripts.<sup>36</sup>

The Ravidassia religion, which gained official visibility after the unfortunate assassination of Ravidassia saints in Vienna in 2009, has since developed as a distinct faith for many followers. Though historically considered a Bhakti saint within the broader Hindu or Sikh traditions, Guru Ravidass has now become the central figure of a separate religious identity for millions of Dalits. Key religious centers or dera such as Dera Sachkhand Ballan in Jalandhar have played a pivotal role in this transformation.<sup>37</sup>

#### Principles of Ravidassia Religion

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <b>Our Guru :</b>                         | Satguru Ravidass Maharaj  |
| 2. <b>Our Religion :</b>                     | Ravidassia  |
| 3. <b>Our Religious Granth :</b>             | Amritbani Satguru Ravidass Maharaj  |
| 4. <b>Our Religious Symbol :</b>             |   |
| 5. <b>Our Salutation :</b>                   | Jai Gurudev   |
| 6. <b>Our ultimate place of Pilgrimage :</b> | Sri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi (U.P)-India  |
| 7. <b>Our objects :</b>                      | To propagate the Bani and teachings of Satguru Ravidass. Besides the teachings and thoughts of Maharishi Bhagwan Balmik, Satguru Namdev, Satguru Kabir, Satguru Trilochan, Satguru Sain and Satguru Sadna would also be propagated.<br>To respect all religions, love the mankind and lead virtuous life. |

(Amrit Bani Steek: 15)

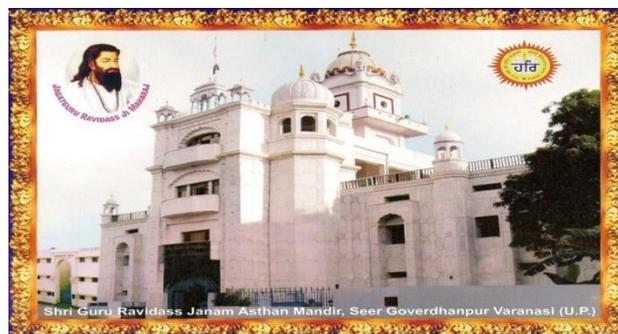
“What is most significant about this spiritual movement is the formation of a distinct Dalit identity—one that is not just about resisting caste but about affirming a rich legacy of spiritual thought, cultural pride, and social justice. Unlike earlier conversion movements, which often involved adopting completely new religious traditions (such as Buddhism or Christianity), the Ravidassia movement is rooted within the historical lived experiences of Dalits themselves. Guru Ravidass is one of their own, and his teachings are deeply aligned with their everyday struggles and aspirations. This identity formation is both internal and external. Internally, it is fostering a sense of

self-respect and unity within the Dalit community. Externally, it is challenging the religious and social status quo by asserting an alternative spiritual narrative that does not require validation from dominant caste ideologies.<sup>38</sup>

### Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi Banaras U.P

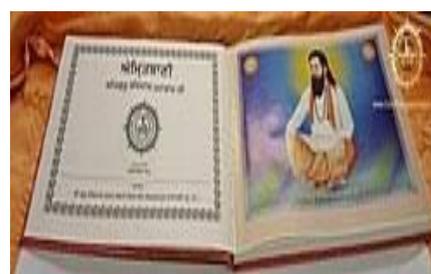
The saints of 'Dera Ballan' identified the birthplace of Guru Ravidass in the village of 'Seer Govardhanpur', located in the vicinity of Banaras. The 'All India Adi Dharam Mission' (New Delhi) also claims to have independently discovered this site. According to the Mission, its Research Committee—constituted in 1963—submitted its report on 14–15 January 1964, designating Seer Govardhanpur as the birthplace of Guru Ravidass. The foundation stone of the structure at this birthplace was laid on 14 June 1965 by Sant Haridas, who was then the 'Gaddinashin' (incumbent head) of Dera Ballan. Dera Ballan contributed a sum of 3 million rupees for the construction of the Guru Ravidass Birthplace Temple. The first section of the temple was completed during 1974–75, and the entire temple complex was finalized in 1994. On 7 April 1994, Babu Kanshi Ram of the Bahujan Samaj Party performed the ceremonial installation of the golden finial atop the temple. Subsequently, on 16 July 1998, the President of India at the time, Shri K. R. Narayanan, formally inaugurated the grand commemorative gate constructed along the approach to the temple.<sup>39</sup>

“Every year during birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass, the Mandir attracts millions of devotees from India and abroad. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan made special arrangements for the pilgrimage of Ravidass devotees to their Mecca at Seer Goverdhanpur (Varanasi). Special trains were arranged from Jalandhar city in Punjab to Varanasi especially to participate in the celebrations of the birth anniversary of Ravidass. This temple serves an important purpose in reminding Dalits of the silent 'social revolution' led by Ravidass in Varanasi, the headquarters of Hindu religiosity. Its unique contribution lies in symbolising a vision for the future and the forgotten history of the Dalit struggle for equality and dignity in medieval India. Amidst the erstwhile headquarters of the oppressive Hindu social order, 'Temple of Shri Guru Ravidass's Birthplace' has become an important cultural and religious site for the assertion of distinct identity where the ex-untouchables can move around with their heads held high and without the fear of being measured on the scale of caste hierarchy – in a way Begumpura in the making. In fact, this temple has turned out to be a repository of separate Dalit identity.<sup>40</sup>



**Amrit Bani:** Amrit Bani is the sacred Granth of Ravidassia Religion. This Granth contains the spiritual message and teachings of Satguru Ravidass Ji. On the 633rd Birth anniversary of Satguru Ravidass Ji, Amrit Bani Granth was declared the religious Granth of the newly formed Ravidassia Religion at Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir, Seer Goverdhanpur Varanasi (Banaras) U.P.

“Amrit Bani is the book of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj's own Amrit Bani. Taking inspiration from this, a new and changing form is being given to the society. People's activities like birth, death, marriage etc. are conducted socially and religiously according to the words of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj. There has also been a lot of change in the customs and traditions. He told that for naming the child at the time of birth, a name order is made, under which while opening the book, the name is given according to the first letter of the first page of the book. Similarly, for marriage, instead of pheras, ( seven holy rounds) the laavaan (four Holy round across Amritbani Granth) which is described in Amritbani (the Holy book of hymns of Guru Ravidass) four benefits are taken which are based on the basis of Bani. Similarly, blessings and messages for newly married couples are also recorded in the book so that people can conduct their lives as per Bani. At the time of death and Birth devotion is done and hymns are recited according to various specific musical ragas”.<sup>41</sup>



Images of “Amrit Bani” the sacred Granth

### Amrit bani Granth has:

- 140 shabads
  - 40 Pade
  - Paintee Akhari
  - Haftawaar
  - Baraamass
  - Updesh Saand Bani
  - Shadi Updesh
  - Maglachar and 231 Sholoks of Satguru Ravidass.
- Amrit Bani Granth available in many languages like Devnagri, and Gurmukhi, Dutch, French, English, German.<sup>42</sup>

### Some latest news about 'Ravidassia Religion' as separate Identity

Printed from **THE TIMES OF INDIA**  
**Now, demand for 'Ravidassia' as separate religion in Census**  
TNN | Jul 15, 2020, 03.40 PM IST

JALANDHAR: Dera Sachkhand, Ballan and a section of Ravidassia community saints have urged the Prime Minister to add 'Ravidassia' as separate religion in the Census. This brings out the split within Adi-dharmi/Ravidassia community, as already a section of sants and All India Adi Dharam Mission has appealed to the community members to mention 'Adi-dharmi' as their religion in the 2021 census.

"The dera has sent memorandums to the President, PM and Census Commissioner and we are also appealing to the organizations of the community to send similar memos to the PM," said Sat Paul Virdee, general secretary of Sri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthaan Public Charitable Trust. A joint statement was also issued on the letterhead of Akhil Bhartiya Ravidassia Dharm Sangathan with this appeal to the PM and it was signed by Dera Ballan head Sant Niranjn Dass, Sant Surinder Dass and 13 other sants. It also mentioned that they have their own religious granth "Amrit Bani Satugru Ravidass Ji", their greeting is "Jai Gurudev" and they have their own religious flag with "Har" written on it.

"As all the followers of Guru Ravidass Ji are called Ravidassia as they follow the Ravidassia religion, in the last population Census of 2011, lakhs of Ravidassias had to write Ravidassia in "Other" column. Therefore, we humbly request your good self to include a religious column and allocate a unique code for Ravidassia religion, in the upcoming population census of 2021 and in all future population census, so that the Ravidassia may be counted separately," reads the memorandum sent by Dera Ballan. The decision to send the memorandum was taken after a meeting at the dera on Monday which was attended by its trustees and over a dozen other sants.

Dera Ballan is considered the most influential dera of Adi-dharmi/Ravidassia community. In January 2010, it had announced to found "Ravidassia" religion with separate granth 'Amrit Bani'. However, the move was opposed by Sri Guru Ravidass Sadhu Sampardai Society, a representative body of several other sants and deras of the community and they announced to stick to Guru Granth Sahib. The differences had led to bitterness within the community but things had cooled down in the last few years.

In a statement issued on Sunday, All India Adi Dharam Mission president Sant Satvinder Heera had said that Adi-dharm was recognised as separate religion in the 1932 census. "It is not part of any other religion, it has its own customs and identity," he said.



### Conclusion:

In this paper we discussed about the journey of the Ravidassia religion toward foundation of a separate identity reflects a profound long struggle for social recognition, spiritual autonomy, and equality within the vast Indian religious landscape. The teachings of Satguru Ravidass ji are based on the concept of 'Begumpura', which emphasized the ideals of unity, equality, and the rejection of caste hierarchies. The declaration of religious independence and announcement of 'Amritbani' the holy scripture of Satguru Ravidass Ji and the assertion of separate religious identity performed by the Saints of Dera Sachkhand Ballan at the birth place (Seer Govardhanpur) of Satguru Ravidass ji in the presence of Sant Samaj from all over India.

The establishment of the Ravidassia religion shows us how faith can become religious freedom and by constructing a distinct religious identity, The followers of Ravidassia religion have challenged social exclusion and reclaimed a sense of belonging rooted in the ideal vision of Guru Ravidass. While this separation has started debates over religious boundaries. It also highlights the true nature of religious traditions in responding to historical injustices and social change. Ultimately, the Ravidassia religious movement's journey demonstrate how marginalized communities utilize religion not merely as a system of belief, but also for seeking recognition and equality by establishing a separate religious identity.

At the end we can say that this journey will continue to reshape the religious and social change for Satguru Ravidass followers across the world. The pathway that Satguru Ravidass laid centuries ago against the discrimination, is now enlightenment for humanity endeavour to break the boundaries of caste system.

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## Conflicts of interest

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