

Red Salutes to Comrade Baldev Singh Mann

While I was in Amritsar, I met Sonia Mann daughter of late Baldev Singh Mann. Comrade Mann was killed by a terrorist gang of Khalistan group. Comrade Mann had dedicated his life for social change. He is widely remembered and is an inspiration for millions of people of Punjab. Every year Kirti Kisan Union Punjab, affiliated to AIKMKS organises memorial meeting in memory of Com. Mann. Sonia Mann, the daughter of Baldev Singh Mann, attended the meeting and delivered a very inspiring speech. I requested her to send her speech in English language and the letter her father wrote to her. That letter itself is a remarkable one. Red salute to Comrade Baldev Singh Mann.

– **Subodh Mithra**, Convener, AIKMKS

'My darling daughter!'

Welcome to the world my darling daughter! I got the news of your birth from your dadi (paternal grandmother) on the 18th (September 1986). While intimating to me the news of your birth, your grandmother did not express the joy that she undoubtedly would have shown had a son been born in your place. Because you are a girl, your birth did not bring joy to our home. "So, the guddi (doll) has arrived", said your aunts in a sad tone as if nature had given me an unfair deal. Your uncles did not even speak to me today. Perhaps they think it's best to say nothing in the circumstances. I am sure that my friends and comrades who share or empathise with my ideology will congratulate me and demand a party in celebration of your arrival. Your dadi is surprised by the congratulatory messages she has received from your mother's natal family. "Whoever sends congratulatory messages on the birth of a girl?" is how she sees the situation. Your dadi is saddened by the fact that I stand 'diminished' with your arrival; a son, on the other hand, would have 'added' to my status. My darling, I am not in the least surprised by their reactions for I am aware that in the present social system a girl is considered a burden, a source of



Comrade Baldev Singh Mann was born on 9 July 1952. He was the son of Inder Singh. He lived in the village Bagga Kalan Tehsil Ajnala, Amritsar. He completed his primary education at the village school, he matriculated from government high school at Raja Sansi. He then went to Khalsa College, Amritsar, where he had to face detention from the college during the time of 'Emergency', and graduated in 1983.

Two years before his death, Mann married Paramjit Kaur, with whom he had a daughter.

On September 26th, we commemorated the 35th anniversary of martyrdom of Comrade Baldev Singh Mann, who succumbed after waging a valiant battle against the Khalistani terrorism. On the night of 26th September he fell to the bullets of the Khalistani Commando force.

indebtedness. I had heard and read a lot on the subject. Today, I am having to live through the same experience. Perhaps your dadi is even more saddened because in her view I am unemployed and useless. So, at least, you should have been born to someone with a proper source of livelihood. This is how society has been for centuries. The enslavement of women is an integral part of the feudal, capitalist system.

Dear daughter, your father is neither a good for nothing, nor worthless. He is busy in the struggle to change the present social setup where the birth of a girl like you is greeted not with joy but sorrow. There is no doubt that even many progressive-minded people, who are regarded as path-breakers and leaders, have in their practical life behaved in much the same fashion as is to be expected from hard-core reactionaries. But I have resolved to live my life in a fashion where there is no dichotomy between word and deed.

My lovely one, it will perhaps be a long time-only after you've grown up - that you appreciate the ideal of my life and the struggle that I am engaged in. Perhaps I have been unsuccessful in explaining to your mother till date that I am not killing time but am in fact investing it in the fulfillment of very lofty aims. I am struggling for the birth of a social order in which the shackles that enslave human beings are broken to bits, where the oppressed can heave a sigh of relief. The struggle is on for the emancipation of starving children, of women who are forced to sell their bodies in order to feed their bellies, of workers who trade their blood for bread, of peasants groaning under the crushing burden of debts. And in this battle for a new world, your father, too, is playing his humble role.

In the times in which you have been born, Punjab stands divided along communal lines. In some places people are being killed because they do not grow their hair long enough, while in others people are being burnt alive for precisely the opposite reason. Humanity is being butchered in the name of religion. Having created divisions among people, having initiated a Holi that's being played with blood, the Devil is having a good laugh from a distance. My baby, in the moment of your birth your father is engaged in a battle against the forces of darkness. Such forces are conniving to banish every sun that could bring light into this world.

My darling young one, it is absolutely essential to struggle against such an evil conspiracy, even at the risk of one's own life. I cannot be certain that in this search for light, I too will not be done away with. Whatever may happen to me my little one, you will forever be proud to be born to a father who battled against the evil storm. Perhaps I will be unable to provide you with the comforts or fulfill the responsibilities that are expected of a father. But the legacy of principles I will leave behind will be precious. You are the flame of a candle that is destined to spread light. Beware, do not ever get misled by the devils that conspire to torch homes of the poor in the name of humanity.