

Dr.Ambedkar's the Buddha and His Dhamma: A Scientific Point of View

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Abstract

Now a days certain news channels, some appointed spokespersons, few so called Sant are busy in proving that ancient mythical stories are scientific that the Pushpak was the first aero plane, that the Ganesha's was the first head transplantation and the first plastic surgery, that the children were preserved in ghee and were made alive when needed, some even suggested chanting certain mantras to defeat China. If this propaganda is supported by any government, then it is the worst part. It is unfortunate when such claims are made in the parliament. It shows that we lack scientific temperament. Democracy becomes mockery in the absence of scientific temperament and takes us back in the Stone Age. Religious belief is personal liberty, it must be respected .But when it turns superstition, and it becomes mass hysteria. It endangers the democracy which is earned through billions' efforts and millions' sacrifices. The time demands to spread scientific temperament among the people which is also the core part of government's education policy. To ensure this, The Buddha and His Dhamma by Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar invites enquiry and attention.

KEYWORDS: dhamma, scientific temperament, epistemology .

Preface:

The Buddha and His Dhamma (Henceforth BHD) is the unique literary piece by Dr.Ambedkar which does not support any miracle, supernatural, superstitious and unscientific or illogical episode. Buddhism is the only religion which can negotiate with science. It has compatibility to dialogue with the modern science. BHD by Dr.Ambedkar has scientific point of view true to its sense. Babasaheb made relentless efforts to free Buddhism from the clutches of superstitions and orthodoxy. He dared to fight even against his own people for the sake of noble aim. It needs a lot of courage to fight against one's own people. He criticized wrong practices not only Hinduism but also in Buddhism. Reading adulterated scriptures of Buddhism and reading Dr.Ambedkar's The Buddha and His Dhamma is different experience. A man of sound mind and scientific temperament cannot disagree with Dr.Ambedkar. Ven.Dr.Phamaha Chuen Phangcham writes "Buddhism copes with science. If there were any religions that would cope whole scientific need, it would be Buddhism."

Significant observations by eminent scientists:

Elbert Einstein remarked, "Buddhism covering both the natural and spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense and raising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description."

Following statements by notable scientists say smoothing more than the words:

A person behind the development of the Bohr Model of the Atom is Niels Bohr. He said that thinkers like the Buddha has already discussed the kinds of epistemological problems which are a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory and Lao Tzu have been tackled, when trying to corresponding our state as viewers and actors in the great drama of existence.

Nobel Prize-winning philosopher Bertrand Russell described Buddhism as a speculative and scientific philosophy, "Buddhism is a combination of both speculative and scientific philosophy. It promotes the scientific method and tracks that to a finality that may be called Rationalistic. The answers regarding mind and matter can be found in it. Of them, which is of greater importance? Is the universe moving towards a goal? What is man's position? Is there living that is noble?" It takes up where science cannot lead because of the limitations of the latter's instruments. Its conquests are those of the mind."¹

The American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer prepared a parallel to Buddhism when relating the Heisenberg uncertainty principle: If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say 'no;' if we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say 'no;' if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say 'no;' if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say 'no.' The Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the conditions of man's self after his death; but they are not well-known replies for the tradition of seventeenth and eighteenth-century science.²

Albert Einstein is the world famous eminent genius scientist. The credit to develop theory of relativity goes to him. He is also known for his mass-energy equivalence. He described Buddhism as containing strong cosmic element. "...there is found a third level of religious experience, even if it is seldom found in a pure form. He prefers to call it the cosmic religious sense. This is not easy to make clear to those who do not experience it, since it does not involve an anthropomorphic idea of God; the individual feels the vanity of human desires and aims, and the nobility and marvelous order which are revealed in nature and in the world of thought.

Scientific point of view in The Buddha and His Dhamma can solve many issues of India. But the people, politicians, so called philosophers, preachers of religion have to understand this fact. But their business of the religion is based on peoples' ignorance, superstitions, lack of scientific temperament. If the people of India start thinking in a scientific way, shop of religions with automatically will be closed. People at large in India failed to understand the zeal of Dr. Ambedkar behind this.

J.B.S. Haldane was a famous British scientist and author of famous essay scientific point of Views argues that adopting a scientific point of view is essential and beneficial for man, rather than adopting an emotional point of view. According to him, "A scientific point of view places everything and everyone on the same emotional level which is impartial and truthful." This is what the modern world needs. And there is a need to make people realize this fact. The Buddha and His Dhamma is an effort by Dr. Ambedkar to spread scientific way of thinking among Indians. He quotes the Buddha "I

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_and_science

²ibid

am not to be lured into a course of action for future reward,—my mind does not delight, O King, in future births; these actions are uncertain and wavering in their direction, like plants beaten by the rain from a cloud." (BHDp.55) He continues, "This is all I would say at the moment. This devotion of yours is for the sake of heaven—while my desire is that the ills of life on earth be probed and a solution found." (BHD p.65)

Buddha's Scientific Approach:

It cannot be denied that the Buddha inherited some of the important ideas from his teacher Kapila. His stated that: "Things that have evolved have a cause and the things that have not evolved have also a cause. But the source of both is uncaused and independent."³

The scientific temperament continues in BHD. Dr.Ambedkar targets certain ideas and quotes the Buddha.The fourth thesis of Brahmanic Philosophy was the doctrine of Karma. It was part of the thesis of transmigration of the soul. The Karma of the Brahmins was an answer to the question: "Where did the soul land on transmigration with his new body on new birth?" The answer of the Brahmanic Philosophy was that it depended on a man's deeds in his past life. In other words, it depended on his Karma. The Buddha was strongly opposed to the first tenet of Brahmanism. He repudiated their thesis that the Vedas are infallible and their authority could never be questioned. In his opinion, nothing was infallible and nothing could be final. Everything must be open to re-examination and reconsideration whenever grounds for re-examination and reconsideration arise. (BHD p.89)

The Buddha accepted the great grand law of cause and effect with its corollaries. (ii) He repudiated the fatalistic view of life and other equally foolish view that a God predestined as to what should happen for man and the world. (iii) He discarded the theory that all deeds committed in some former birth have the potency to produce suffering, making present activity impotent. He denied the fatalistic view of Karma. He replaced the view of Karma by a much more scientific view of Karma. He put new wine in old bottle. (iv) Transmigration (samsara) was replaced by the doctrine of re-birth. (v) He replaced the doctrine of moksha or salvation of the soul by the doctrine of Nibbana.⁴

The Buddha propagated the idea of Samma Ditti. " Samma Ditti requires giving up of belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies, to have disbelief in the sanctity of the Shastras." Samma Ditti requires the abandonment of superstition and supernaturalism. (BHD p.124-125)

In further discussion the Buddha reiterates his idea of cause and effect. "Again, it is said that the Absolute cannot be a cause. All things around us come from a cause as the plant comes from the seed; how can the Absolute be the cause of all things alike? If it pervades them, then certainly it does not make them. "Therefore, we argue that all things that exist are not without cause. However, neither Ishavara, nor the Absolute, nor the self, nor causeless chance, is the maker, but our deeds produce results both good and evil. (BHD 148-149)

The Buddha firmly declares with his authority that

³ ibid p.85

⁴ ibid p.104

- i) The world is in continual flux and change.
- (ii) The world has no protector or preserver.
- "(iii) We own nothing; we must leave everything behind."
- (iv) The world lacks and bankers, being enslaved to craving." (BHD p.159-160)

The Buddha admits that it may be that man is not able to discover the real cause of the occurrence of an event. But if he has intelligence he is bound one day to discover it. (BHD p.205)

The Buddha strongly opposed to the first tenet of Brahmanism. He repudiated their thesis that the Vedas are infallible and their authority could never be questioned. (p.89). as to infallibility of the Vedas, he said nothing is infallible, not even the Vedas. Everything, he said, must be subject to examination and re-examination. (BHD p.276) The most important part of Buddhist philosophy appears in BHD (p.277) The Buddha asserts his world famous thought .While addressing Kalamas He says, "But this, O Kalamas, is just what I have said. What I have said is " do not go merely by what you hear; do not go merely by what has been handed down from one to another; do not go merely by subtleties of reasoning; do not go by subtleties of logic; do not go by considerations based upon mere appearances; do not go merely by agreeable beliefs and views; do not go merely by the word of some ascetic or superior.

The Buddha continued, " Only when of yourselves you indeed know: These things are in salutary; these things are blameworthy; these things are reprehended by the wise; these things being done or attempted lead to ill-being and to suffering '—then, Kalamas, you should put them away."(BHD p.277) So interpreted it is easy to understand why the Buddha said that he was not an annihilationist. He believed in the regeneration of matter and not in the rebirth of the soul.

1. So interpreted, the Buddha's view is in consonance with science.
2. It is only in this sense that the Buddha could be said to have believed in rebirth.
3. Energy is never lost. That is what science affirms. Annihilation in the sense that after death nothing is left would be contrary to science. For it would mean that energy is not constant in volume.⁵

The Buddha scientifically explains the genetic behind the birth of man. He does not weave any cobweb of any divine intervention. He explains: What do we inherit from our parents? Starting with science the new individual begins when a sperm enters the egg. Fertilisation consists in fusion of the head of the sperm with the nucleus of the egg. Each human being takes its origin from the union of two bits of living matter, an egg from the mother which has been fertilised by a single sperm from the father. That human birth is genetic is told by the Buddha to a Yakkha who came to discuss the matter with him.⁶

⁵ ibid p.332

⁶ ibid p.340

Conclusion:

The Buddha advocates the theory of cause and effect and states that it may be that man is not able to discover the real cause of the occurrence of an event. But if he has intelligence he is bound one day to discover it. (250) The Buddha's view is in consonance with science. Energy is never lost. That is what science affirms. (p.332). The Buddha's preaching negotiates with science therefore; it becomes more acceptable for the modern minds.

The above discussion is sufficient to prove that the Buddha's philosophy communicates with the modern scientific age. It is our responsibility to bring out our new generation of orthodoxy, superstitions, irrationality and develop scientific temperament among them.