



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's *Buddha and His Dhamma*: Omission for the Expurgation of Miracles

Dr. Umesh B. Bansod

Associate Professor of English

J.M. Patel College, Bhandara

Email-umeshbansod526@gmail.com

Abstract

We are, no doubt, a democratic nation. And if we believe in democratic values, there is no scope for superstitions, miracles and hypocrisy. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar's *The Buddha and his Dhamma* is an important and interesting post-colonial literary work. The work underlines the importance of writer's own consciousness, responsibility towards own nation, scientific temperament, logical interpretation and work complementary to Indian constitution. Two important major works by Dr. Ambedkar i.e. the constitution of India and *The Buddha and His Dhamma* are complementary to each other. Both are reflections of each other. While writing *Buddha and His Dhamma*, Dr.Ambedkar must have realized the need to filter fact and fictions related to the Buddha's life. The present research justifies the omission of miracles in Buddha and His Dhamma by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar.

Key words: Buddha, Dhamma, miracles, expurgation.

Buddha and His Dhamma is the entirely different creation of Dr. Ambedkar. He has shown an entirely different façade of his writing style, temperament, and approach while handling the saga of Gautama Buddha. But at the same time, a well-disciplined writer and logically equipped lawyer in him is conscious while entering into various inquiries related to Buddha's life and teaching. He clears his intentions of the book in the introduction itself. *BHD* is one of the most important books ever written by Dr. Ambedkar. In this book he not only glorified the life of Buddha but also raised many questions and traditional problems and tried to answer them most logically and historically.

Buddha and His Dhamma is the culmination of Dr. Ambedkar's writings. Dr. Ambedkar has shown entirely different façade of his writing style, temperament and approach while handling the saga of Gautama Buddha. But at the same time a well disciplined writer and logically equipped lawyer in

him is conscious while entering in various enquiries related to Buddha's life and teaching. He clears his intentions of the book in the introduction itself. *The Buddha and His Dhamma* This book is one of the most important books ever written by Dr. Ambedkar. In this book he not only glorified the life of Buddha but also raised many questions and traditional problems and tried to answer them most logically and historically.

Dr. Ambedkar's interpretations constitute his doctrinal legacy to followers of Buddhism in modern India and world. He interpreted so to bring truth to highlight. Dr. Ambedkar re-interpreted canonicals of Buddhism and also the Bhikku Sangha and had emphasized social aspects than the spiritual dimensions. Even the life of Buddha is depicted in the light of socio-political orientations, as an ideal social reformer, have a social message than merely religious- philosophical considerations. Thus socio-

ethical principal is the priority of his interpretation than philosophical and mystical.

The Buddha and His Dhamma is an objective and scientific historical text on Buddhism. While speaking about the books, Dr. Ambedkar himself pointed, "books to be examined and tested by the accepted rules of evidence without recognizing any distinction between the sacred and the profane and with sole object of finding the truth"

The miraculous is occasionally reported as when there was a thunderstorm, rain, and the end of famine as soon as the Buddha entered Vesali, the land of Vajjis. But it is not called Miracle; it is recounted rather as a coincidence, and Dr. Ambedkar concludes, 'it was natural that the people of Vesali should give him arm response'. (Fiske, *The Use of Buddhist Scriptures in B.R.Ambedkar's The Buddha and His Dhamma* Christoph Emmrich 102)

Ordinarily Dr. Ambedkar omits miracles ,deities ,demons , heaven and hell , even *archonship* .The conversion of the five *Parivrajakas* is demythologized into their acceptance of the Buddha as a social reformer ,in whom one feels a projection of Ambedkar himself: On the contrary The *Mahavagga* describes the same incident with supernatural ,mythical elements. ¹The Buddha never resorted to the superhuman or the miraculous in propagating his doctrine. The miraculous wonders of psychic power that accompany the conversion of Angulimala, the robber, are omitted. The episode of walking versus standing still that in the text implies an actual occurrence in given an ethical allegorical sense. (Fiske 103)

Dr.Ambedkar omits the cosmic effects of righteousness that the text adds – the course of moon, the stars, seasons, devas, rain, crops. The miraculous marks of the Buddha are mentioned with restraint. The magical travel of the seer Asita who 'deported by the way of the wind as he had come ... in his flight', is retold simply in the words, 'Asita [...] departed for his hermitage.' But in large number of the places Dr. Ambedkar himself has used marvels. Perhaps he felt the need to win his readers by some of the wonders which they were accustomed to seek

in religion, before mitigating them into his own rationalism. For example, he speaks of how at the Buddha's birth, Asita in the Himalayas hears the gods shouting 'Buddha' through space, sees them waving their garments, and has a vision of a shining child. (Fiske 104)

Dr.Ambedkar's new version of the mustard seed tale of Kisagotami involves both rationalization and deletion. He omits the facts of her 'rebirth' in a poor family and the disdainful treatment she received until her son's birth. The child's death leaves her distraught .As she goes from one door to door seeking medicine, each interview is recounted dramatically. In Dr. Ambedkar's account , the child dies of snakebite and the young mother does not realize that the little red spot could cause death .The search for medicine is omitted , as is her insanity .Instead of being miraculously restored to reason ,she is quietened by the conviction that death is the common lot . Instead of leaving the dead child in the charnel field to be devoured by dogs , she cremates the body ; instead of renouncing the world and becoming a *bhikkhuni* , she reaches the conclusion that 'all is impermanence ; this is the law . (Fiske 104)

Divine being is rarely mentioned by Ambedkar. Even 'joy in a heavenly body' is replaced by joy in charitable actions. The *Naga king* in the *Mahavagga* is a savage and venomous serpent with magical powers whom the Buddha overcomes with his greater magic, conquering 'the Nagas Fire by his fire' and throwing him into his alms bowl .Dr.Ambedkar rationalize that snake into a *naga king* whose non-human traits are underplayed and who ends by worshipping the Buddha in his peace and serenity. (Fiske 105)

To separate the substance from the chaff he used his own Nikayas, such as only those thinking may have emanated from Buddha himself which are rational and logical. Any argument which is not in the favour of man's welfare cannot be attributed to the teachings of the Buddha. Anything which is contrary to these two tests was taken as the later additions. There is also a third test and that is Buddha stated

his views definitely and conclusively regarding matters about which he was certain. On the matters about which he was not certain he only tentative views.

The Buddha and His Dhamma appeals to man's reason. Dr. Ambedkar discards the traditional "Four-sights theory of the Buddha's Parivraja or renunciation. The traditional explanation is not plausible and does not appeal to reason. He doubts whether they form part of the original gospel, or are they a later accretion by the monks? Or intrusion of Brahmanism? And therefore he propagates the theory based on the dispute relating to the Rohini river-water as the probable cause, instead. There are several places; he has given evidence of his rationalistic approach. It is for the first time he made distinction between Dharma and Dhamma.

The important aspect of *The Buddha and His Dhamma* is that there is no place for God in the Buddha's Dhamma. "Morality takes the place of God." "Morality is the essence of Dhamma. Without it there is no Dhamma" (Ambedkar, *Buddha and His Dhamma* 322). It does not require the sanction of God. It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own good that man has to love man. (Ambedkar 323)

Whatever the orthodox doctors of Dhamma or Dharma may say, Dr. Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, taken as a whole epitomizes his philosophy of life, a philosophy he lived, a socio-ethical philosophy for the good of mankind, for after all, his own people, the "Untouchables" could not live isolated from the rest of the people. At the same, like Moses of the Old Testament, Babasaheb had to resurrect his people from the thralldom of Hinduism, hoping that one day all Indians would be persuaded by the teachings of the Buddha to change their ways, and accept the principles of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Like the Buddha, he showed the way, the Buddha's way.

Works Cited

- Ambedkar, Dr. Babasaheb *Writings and Speeches-Vol.11*. The Education Department. Government of Maharashtra-Bombay, 1992.
- B.R. Ambedkar-*Buddha and His Dhamma: A critical Edition*. Edited introduced and annotated by Akash Singh Rathore and Vijay Verma. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011.
- Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar-*A Biography of His Vision and Philosophy*. Edited by Virender Grover. Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1998.
- Fiske Adele and Christoph Emmrich: *The Use of Buddhist Scriptures in B.R. Ambedkar's The Buddha and His Dhamma*
- Naik, M.K. *Dimension of India English Literature*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi-1984.
- Rathore, Aakash Sing & Ajay Verma B.R. Ambedkar – *the Buddha and His Dhamma: A Critical Edition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2013.