

### Swami Vivekananda Advanced Journal for Research and Studies

Online Copy of Document Available on: www.svajrs.com

ISSN:2584-105X Pg. 103 - 108



# JUSTICE AS A PERSPECTIVE IN FUNDAMENTALS OF BUDDHISM AND THE VISION OF DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

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#### **Abstract**

This paper explores the centrality of justice within Buddhist philosophy and its profound influence on the life and work of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It argues that core Buddhist teachings, predating Western philosophical discourse on the subject, provide a comprehensive framework for justice across its social, economic, political, and legal dimensions. The paper examines the concept of justice as embedded in fundamental Buddhist principles, including the Five Precepts (Sila), the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path, which collectively advocate for a life of morality, wisdom, and mental discipline. Furthermore, it discusses the Buddhist tenets of the Law of Kamma as a form of natural justice, the importance of universal love (Mettā), and the promotion of equality through the rejection of the caste system and the inclusion of women.

The paper then draws a direct line from these Buddhist ideals to the vision and actions of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It posits that his lifelong struggle against the injustices of the caste system, his advocacy for liberty, equality, and fraternity, and his monumental work in drafting the Indian Constitution were all deeply informed by his study and eventual embrace of Buddhism. The text highlights how Dr. Ambedkar viewed Buddhism as the embodiment of justice and saw its principles as the foundation for a just and equitable society. By incorporating these values into the Indian Constitution, particularly in the Preamble and the sections on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, Dr. Ambedkar sought to institutionalize the Buddhist conception of justice for the nation. The paper concludes that Dr. Ambedkar's assertion that he derived the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity from his teacher, the Buddha, underscores the integral role of Buddhist philosophy in his quest for and establishment of justice in India.

Keywords: Justice, Buddhism, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Indian Constitution, Social Justice.

#### Introduction

In Buddhism, justice is one of the fundamental perspectives. The concept of justice occupies centre stage both in ethics and in legal and political philosophy. The concept of a proper proportion between a person's (what is merited) and the good and bad things that are allotted to him or her. From Plato to John Rowls everyone's central concern has been justice. It takes on different meaning in different practical context. In the one hand justice has to do with how individual people are treated. It gives way to values of equality, liberty, freedom, opportunity etc. and on the other hand justice is the opposite of arbitrariness. It requires that where two cases are relevantly alike, they should be treated in the same way. Justice has four major dimensions; social justice, economical justice, political justice and legal justice. Buddhism has given the clear and vast description of the justice in the Tipitaka, i,e., Pali literature even before the western philosophers. Let's see Justice as the Fundamental of Buddhism.

#### Justice in Sila

In the Buddhism, there are five precepts in the form of morality which need to fallow for the purpose to keep the peace in the society. The five precepts of morality are 1) not to kill, 2) not to steal, 3) not to commit sexual misconduct, 4) not to lie and 5) not to partake of intoxicating drinks or drugs. It is also called as *Sila*. *Sila* is the second *pārami* i,e. morality.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Justice in Four Noble Truth**

Buddhism adopted four noble truthsuffering, reason/cause, solution and the way to do it. Those who end this suffering achieve nirvana. In mahāsatipatthān sutta, the term 'nayassa adhigamaya' means for walking on the path of truth. Kavanupassanā, The path of truth is Vedananupassanā, Chittanupassanā Dhammanupassanā.<sup>2</sup> In the Sangha Vandanā of the pali chanting as, nayapatipanno bhagavato sāvaka sangho means the Sangh who following the path of truth. Truth is the reality, facts, certainty or genuineness. Here truth is nothing but the justice.

Buddhism is based upon the fact that ignorance is the cause of all worldly misery, and that only self-realization of the truth can combat this ignorance. The Buddha taught that out of ignorance is born evil and iniquity. The first of the four Noble Truth is suffering. We can see around us every day the result of their trying to avoid the responsibilities which they should assume. Buddha taught that man's sense of possession is his greatest enemy. The second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering. The great cause of misery is the desire to possess and the desire to preserve things possessed. The third Noble Truth is

freedom from suffering, which is attained by the annihilation of all selfish desire. The forth of the Noble Truth is the middle way of Eightfold Path, i,e., right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. All the points covered under the justice which are not for only the study but it is for the self-realization.<sup>3</sup> It is the way which shows that happiness comes only with wisdom, which alone is the result of right living. These paths and four noble truths are the principles which we broadly find in any evolved legal system.

#### Justice in Eight-fold Path

The Eightfold Path is the way to generate the justice in the person as well as in the society.

Panna (wisdom): It includes Sammā-ditthi (Right View) and Sammā-sankappa (Right Thinking). It is the forth parami. It means right understanding of the real nature of the world, seeing things as they are in reality. The Bodhisatta strives to acquire knowledge from every possible source.<sup>4</sup> He followed the justice in every steps of life for the welfare of the society.

Sila (morality): It includes Sammā-vaca (Right Speech), Sammā-kammanta (Right Action), and Sammā-ajiva (Right Livelihood). The second pārami is morality, the purity of his conduct. He would not kill, steal, lie or slander, and he would avoid unchastity, harsh speech, frivolous talk and intoxicants. However, it must not be understood that a Bodhisatta is wholly infallible and totally free from evil. 5 In short he lived justified life.

Samadhi (Concentration): It includes Sammā-vayama (Right Effort), Sammā-sati (Right Mindfulness) Sammā-samadhi (Right Concentration). To attain the enlightenment the Bodhisatta focus on the right concentration. In Mahāsatipattan Sutta, "nāyassa adhigamāya, nibbanassa, sachikiriyaya. Right Efforts is actually control the mind.<sup>6</sup> And on the right direction of justice, i,e. truth.

#### Law of Kamma as Natural Justice in Buddhism

The law of natural justice forced on the human being. As the *kamma* of the human being get the result as the justice. For instance some of us are wealthy, some are less wealthy, some are strong and healthy, others are disabled and so forth. There are many differences amongst living beings and even more so there are differences between animal and human being. These differences are due to *karma*. What we all share - desire, ill-will and ignorance - are common to all living being, but the particular condition in which we find ourselves is the result of our particular *karma* that condition the situation in which we find ourselves, the situation in which we may be wealthy, strong and so forth. <sup>7</sup>

#### Relation of Mettā with Justice in Buddhism

Buddhism is based on the universal love and compassion for all the living beings. Buddha gave his teachings "for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the World.<sup>8</sup> Buddhism gave importance to *metta* because metta generate because of the brotherhood. Brotherhood is the attachment of the heart to heart to generate love and compassion. Buddha wished the well-being of all beings with the expression "may all beings be happy" sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā". Most politicians and political philosophers wished only economic well-being of the people. But the supreme Buddha wished not only the economic wellbeing of all beings, but also the mental, physical wellbeing, and their well-being both her and hereafter. He also pointed out how these could be obtained through righteousness and non-violence.

#### Equality and oppose to Varna system

Buddha has given place to the equality in the sangha. All the people were equal and treated equal. By following this principle the Buddha had given first chance to the Upali, the barber to take entry in the sangha before his brother, the royal princes. In this way, Sunita, the sweeper, Sopaka and Suppiya, the untouchables Suprabuddha, the leper and other low caste peoples such as Sumangala. Buddha was the first challenger in the Indian society who tried for the annihilation of caste and verna system.

#### Gender Equality in Buddhism

There is place to the woman in the Buddhism as many women were the Nuns in the Sangha and open the way to woman for liberation. Lord Buddha liberated woman who did not have even human freedom. "What is wrong in being a woman, if that person is wise?" the Buddha asked. Once, when King Kosala was in conversation with the Buddha a royal courier came and whispered in the king's ear. The secret he communicated was that Queen Mallikā had given birth to a daughter. The king became distressed at this news. Seeing that the was distressed, the Buddha said to him, "O Great King, some woman are great, efficient and wise. Therefore the daughter born to you by Queen Mallikā should be very well looked after. The woman who is wise, virtuous, who treats her parents-in-law as deities, and is chaste, is a noble person. The son of such a woman may even rule a country. After that the king's displeasure disappeared.<sup>10</sup>

The conversion of women in the *Sangha* such as the *Mahāpajapati Gautami, Yeshodharā* and her companies. The conversion of the *Prakrati* and *Chadālika* is an example to take part of the *Sangha*.

#### Justice in Sangha as Code of Conduct

The teaching of the *Buddha* is for equal to all in the *sangh*. The *sangh* is also having importance

because of the uniformity. With heads is shaven, they became a group apart from lay people. Shaving takes away the sense of pride and gives them an appearance of humanity. They became a tranquil, harmless, nonviolence community. All members of this community had to have a simple way of life. Their cloths were yellow in colour that repels flies and mosquitoes. The temple he resides in, does not belong to him personally. It belongs to the brotherhood (the Sangh). The whole group of ascetics became silent and still. The Sangha Order (Bhikkhu Brotherhood) has been able to reach the highest rung from the point of view discipline obtained through codes of conduct. All postures- eating, drinking, coming, going sitting and standing –all these have to be done strictly in terms of the code of conduct.

#### Democracy as justice in Buddhism

In the *Sangha* parliament described as "*Sangha Sabhā*" (the Assembly of Monks) only those above twenty have the right to vote at a hearing of a disciplinary action on the monk. In other words, only monks who have acquired higher ordination possess the right to vote. Of those monks who have found guilty on some count, have no right to vote. A monk who cannot attend can send his vote through a monk who attends. <sup>11</sup> In the very democratic way the *Sangha* run there code of conduct. There is the right to question and answer and clarify the position of *vinaya* in the *Sangha*.

#### Patimaokkha of Vinaya-Text

Monks adopt in rules of *Vinava* (Discipline) are described as Vinayadhara (Experts in Law of Discipline). The wrong doer monk had to face the disciplinary action. All disciplinary action relating to monk are done through the code described as "four prior notice" (natty catuttha). Next, the Kamma Vākya (the Charge) should be read out three times. All the procedure followed as prescribed in the patimokkha, and it the monk fulfil as the code of conduct then only the monk had opportunity to include in the Noble Sangh. The punishment imposed on a monk who was proven guilty was quite in keeping with the law. It was democratic, humane and just. When a monk does something wrong the Assembly of Monks is summoned. The monk who is considered guilty is brought before the Assembly. The charge (complaint) against him is presented. He is made to understand that he is guilty under such and such Disciplinary Rule. The punishment due to him is read out three times. Next, the approval and unanimity of all the members are obtained for the punishment. Then the punishment in imposed. 12

#### Vajjin People are Follower of Justice

Ajātsatru, the King of Magadha wanted to attack on the Vajjin peoples. He called to the Vasakara, the Bramin Prime Minister of Magadha

and told to go to the Buddha and asked that how to destroy the Vajjins. The Blessed one asked to the Venerable Ananda, "Have you heard, Ananda, that the Vajjins hold full and frequent public assemblies"? Ananda replied positive answer. Buddha said, as the Vajjins hold these full and frequent assemblies; so long may they be expected not to decline, but to prosper. So long the Vajjins meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out their undertaking in concord. So long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has been already enacted and act in accordance with the ancient institution of the Vajjjins as established in former days. So long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the vajjin elders, and make it a point of duty to hearken to their words. So long as no women or girls belonging to their clans are detained among them by force or abduction. So long as the Vajjins respect and follow religion. So long, the Vajjins may be expected not to decline but to prosper and no one can destroy them.<sup>13</sup> The Vajjins were believed in democracy. These conditions are the condition of the welfare which is part and parcel of the justice.

#### **Justice as Fairness**

The fairness is nothing but the honesty as well as sincerity. Fairness and the honesty is the base of the justice. Or in another words we can say that the person who is following the justice become the honest and sincere. The people who follow the Buddhism become the free from the ill-will, hatred, animosity and generate the pure mind. The Buddhism is based on the honesty, sincerity, integrity, uprightness as well as fairness. The morality develops in the person who follow the Buddhism and he become the faithful, trustworthy, loyal and open. The corruption is automatically eradicate when he follow the Buddhism.

#### Liberty as the justice

Liberation took place of his own from the ill will, hatred and animosity by way of following the Buddhism. Buddhism demonstrates breathes in and breathes out. i. e. *anapan* and the meditation for the purpose of the liberation. Pure mind born out of the meditation practice of Buddhism. The pure mind of the one and another create the ideal society. Physical liberty is also important to thing as his own will. If there is no liberty there will be slavery. Buddhism purely oppose to the slavery. Slavery creates the slave mind and it cannot be free.

#### Opportunity as Justice in Buddhism

In the contemporary period of *chaturvarna*, the traditional work were allotted to the people and the people were only follow it for their livelihood. The *Brahmanic* tradition not permitted to change the work which was allotted. Therefore there were no opportunity to the people to change their practice and

occupation. In the Buddhism the opportunity created to take the knowledge and the further progress in the society.

#### Distribution of Wealth in Buddhism

Survival of the fittest: In the struggle for existence if inequality be recognized as the rule of the game the weakest will always go to the wall. What Society wants is the best and not the fittest. Is not that a better religion which promotes the happiness of others simultaneously with the happiness of oneself and tolerates no oppression? The religion of the *Buddha* is perfect justice springing from a man's own meritorious disposition.

#### Dāna as Justice in Buddhism

Generosity, giving, is the first *pārami*. *Dāna* in Buddhism is the donation by the person who is having the access wealth to the person who is economically poor in condition. *Anāthapindaka* is the rich merchant but he donated the property by purchasing the land against the gold coin spreading on the land of *Jeta* King. *Buddha* and *bhikkhu* also accept the lunch in the form of *Dana* from the householders. It helps to maintain the economical balance among the 'have' and 'have not'. Gift from the *Bimbisara* King, Gift from *Jeevaka* and *Ambapāli* as well as the gift from the *Vishakhaā* are the part of the *dāna*. <sup>14</sup>

A *Bodhisatta* is always ready to oblige others, but he will never stoop to beg a favour for himself. In abundance he gives, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, but selfishly he seeks nothing, for he is neither selfish nor self-possessive. He exercises this virtue of  $d\bar{a}na$  to such an extent that he is prepared to give away not only his wealth and other cherished possessions, but also his kingdom, his wife and children, even his limbs. He is ever ready to sacrifice his own life wherever such sacrifice will benefit humanity. <sup>15</sup>

#### Keshmutti Sutta (Conversation with Kalama)

Lord *Buddha* said that before you accept anybody's teachings as authoritative, do not go by the fact that it is contained in the scriptures, do not go by the subtleties of logic; do not go by considerations based upon mere appearances; do not go merely by the fact that beliefs and views preached are agreeable; do not go merely because they look to be genuine; do not go merely by the fact that the beliefs and views are those of some ascetic or superior. Then the Blessed one replied that you have to decide by your won will by applying the mind, whether it is wrong or right then only accept. <sup>16</sup> Here the justice of acceptance is explained by the lord *Buddha*.

#### Kingship under the Buddhism

The King *Bimbisāra* as well as the *Pasendi* was the follower of the Buddhism. The justice can be clearer if the '*Rājā Bhavatu Dhammiko*'. If the King follows the principle of Buddhism then the King becomes more sensitive towards the welfare of the society. He become well wisher of the subject i,e., society.

One of the greatest followers of the Buddha in the ancient India was King Ashoka. After the bloody conquest of the Kalinga, Ashoka adopted a policy that he called "conquest by dhamma" (i,e., by principles of right life). In order to gain wide publicity for his teaching and his work, Ashoka made them known by means of oral announcement and by engravings on rock and pillars at suitable sites. These inscriptions-the rock edicts and pillars edicts (e.g., the lion capital of the pillars found at Sārnath, which has become India's national emblem) mostly dated in various years of his reign- contain statements regarding his thoughts and actions and provide information on his life and act.<sup>17</sup> He was the great follower of the justice incorporated in the Buddhism. At Girnar (Gujrat) many rock edicts found where the massage for the society indicates to live peacefully and follow the rules as per Buddhism. King Kanishka and King Harshawardhan are some of the examples.

### Oppose to contemporary *Brahmanism* by Buddhism

During that day almost the totality of Indian society was build on *Brahmanic* thinking. There was no one to examine what was right or wrong in that system. There was no one brave enough, powerful enough, or wise enough to point out the right or wrong of those *Brahmanic* systems. All kings received counsel from *Brahmans*. In consequence, from the king down, everybody in society respected *Brahmanic* belief. Buddhism is only responcible to cleanse the Indian society of its fallacies, superstitions and corruption.

#### Oppose to Ishwara (God) in Buddhism

Who created the World is a common question. That the world was created by God is also a very common answer. And therefore the God is having the certain qualities of God such as certain moral qualities, God is said to be good, God is said to be just and God is said to be all-loving. The creation of God was for the benefits of the Brahmins themselves. Nobody has seen the God. People only speak of God. God is unknown and unseen. A religion based on God is, therefore not worth having. It only ends in creating superstition. In this way the justice is avoided to the people at large. This creates the demotion of the society and not the promotion.<sup>18</sup> The Buddha said that a religion based on God is based on speculation and truth. Buddha has made clear in his dialogue with the two Brahmin, Vāsettha and Bhārdvaja. After the concept of justice in Buddhism, we will see the justice and in the vision of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

## Impact of Injustice on Dr. Ambedkar since childhood

Dr. Ambedkar since the childhood suffers due to the untouchability as the caste of Mahar. On the journey for the *Masur* to the *Goregaon*, there was the time to spend in to the railway station. It is mentioned in the 'waiting for a visa'. As is usual among the Hindus the station-master asked us who we were. Without a moment's thought I blurted out that we were Mahar. He was stunned. His face underwent a sudden change. To go to the Goregaon, Dr. Ambedkar wrote that we were prepared to pay double the fare but we found that money did not work. He was ready subject to condition that we should drive the cart. It was the night time. In the mid way they search for water but the water really was no water. It was thick with mud and urine and excreta of the cows and buffaloes and other cattle who went to the pool drinking. In fact that water was not intended for human use. At any rate the stink of the water was so strong we could not drink it.19

While in the school I knew that children of touchable classes, when they felt thirsty, could go out to the water tap, open it and quench their thirst. "All that was necessary was the permission of the teacher. But my possession was separate. I could not touch the tap and unless it was open for it by a touchable person, it was not possible for me to quench my theist"...."Washing was done by my sister because we were untouchables and no washerman would wash the cloth of an untouchable. The work of cutting the hair or shaving the boys including myself was done by our elder sister who had become quite and expert barber by practising the art on us, not that there were no barbers in Satara, not that we could not afford to pay the barber. The work of shaving and hair cutting was done by my sister because we were untouchables and no barber would consent to shave an untouchable".20

#### Study of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity

Dr Ambedkar had been send to America by His Highness the *Maharaja* Of *Baroda* for higher education studied at Columbia University in New Yark 1913 to 1917. In 1917 he came to London and joined the post-graduate deportment of the School of Economics of the University of London.<sup>21</sup> In this period Dr. Ambedkar Has studied MA, Ph. D., D. Sc. Bar at Law and gain the very vast knowledge. He became the scholar in economics, political science, anthropology, history, law, education by taking the education in very famous universities in the world. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar became the strong thinker of the liberty, equality, fraternity and justice which was used in his further whole life.

#### **Fight for Justice**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar really became the worrier and started his work against the injustice, inequality, etc. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has started the news paper "Muknayaka" in the year 1920 with the help of Sahu Maharaj. Thereafter he established the "Bahiskit Hitkarni Sabha" in the year 1924 and started "Bahisrit Bhrat" in the year 1927. He organized the satyagraha at Mahad for water. This was the first step towards the justice. He burned Manushruti, the book of constitution of Hindu.<sup>22</sup>

There was no right to vote to the untouchables and depressed classes, then Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar went to Round Table Conference<sup>23</sup> in the year 1932 and fight with the Gandhiji.

#### **Encyclopaedia of Justice: Constitution of India**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar got the opportunity in the Constituent Assembly to prepare the Constitution of India. His physical health was not so good but rather than this he took the responsibility of the preparation of the constitution. The preamble of the Constitution of India itself clarified the position of the people in India. Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity is the base of the Constitution. Justice divided in to social justice, economical justice and political justice. In every articles of the Constitution justice is enumerated. Without liberty, equality and fraternity, the justice cannot be survived. The Constitution of India also ensures the dignity of the individual whereas dignity is the part of the justice.

Part III of the Constitution is about the fundamental rights which are incorporated in the articles 12 to 35 whereas Part IV of the Constitution is about the directive principles of state policies which are incorporated in the articles 36 to 51. Rest of the articles are the constitutional rights.

Article 21 is the protection of life and personal liberties. Declaring that the right to life included the "finer graces of human civilization" the Supreme Court in P. Nalla Thampi v. Union of India, AIR 1985 SC1133,<sup>24</sup> virtually rendered this fundamental right a repository of various human rights. Thus it includes:, the right to life with human dignity, right to healthy environment, pollution free water and air, protection against hazardous industries, free education upto 14 years of age, emergency medical aid, right to health, privacy, right to shelter, right to livelihood, timely medical treatment in Government hospital, right not to be driven out of a state, right to fair trail, right to speedy trial, right to free legal aid, etc.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said about the article 32, is the heart of the Constitution. It gives the remedies for enforcement of rights conferred by part

III of the Constitution. Habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari are the remedies to go to the court of law.<sup>26</sup>

#### Accepted Buddhism as the Justice

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the truth finder. He studied whole life and at the end of the life he embraced Buddhism. His viewed towards the Buddhism as the principle of justice. He gave Buddhism to the depressed classes as the justice because the concept of justice in real sense incorporated in the Buddhism. The Buddhism was open to all the people from the society. There was no importance to the specific caste and race. The people who are poor and rich are equal in the Buddhism. There was no discrimination at all therefore Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced the Buddhism. He wrote the 'Buddha and His Dhamma' to clarify the ideas about the Buddhism as it is very vast literature.

#### Vision of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Justice

Since first day to the last speech of the Constituent Assembly Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was particular with the justice. In the last speech dated 25 November 1949 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar explained the Parliamentary form of Government at the time of Buddha. "It is not that India did not know parliaments or parliamentary procedure. A study of the Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas discloses that not only there were parliaments-for the Sanghas were nothing but parliaments-but the Sanghas knew and observed all the rules of parliamentary Procedure known to modern times. They had rules regarding sitting arrangements, rules regarding Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Whip, Counting of votes, Voting by Ballot, Censure Motion, Regularization, res judicata, etc. Although these rules of Parliamentary Procedure were applied by the Buddha to the meetings of the Sanghas, he must have borrowed them from the rules of the Political Assemblies functioning in the country in his time".27

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has explained each and every aspect of justice very clearly. "Political democracy cannot last unless their lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy means? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be trade at separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality; equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things."28

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said about the fraternity as, "the second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indian-if Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. It is a difficult thing to achieve."<sup>29</sup>

#### Conclusion

Justice is the important perspective of the fundamental of Buddhism. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said that "I have taken liberty, equality and fraternity from my teacher Lord *Buddha*". Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar followed the Buddhism for whole life only to secure the justice and it incorporated in to the Constitution of India.

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