

THE VALUE OF A MAN IS AXIOMATIC, SELF-EVIDENT

“On 18th January 1928, a meeting was convened by the Depressed Classes at Trymbak, near Nasik, which is a place of pilgrimage of the Hindus, to consider a proposal for building a temple in the name of their great saint, Chokhamela. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was specially invited to preside over the meeting. Mr. B. K. Gaikwad, Bhalerao, Punjaji, Navsaji Jadhav etc. addressed the meeting. In addition to these Mr. Datar Shashtri from Nasik, Mr. Marathe editor ‘Swarajya’, and Mr. Vadekar, Mr. Thorat and Mr. Choudhary from Jalgaon also addressed the gathering.”¹

The meeting, after a full discussion, decided that the real memorial of the saint consisted in devoting themselves with unflagging energy rather to the removal of the blot of Untouchability than to the erection of a temple. The fact was that firstly, Dr. Ambedkar was in the innermost recesses of his heart against the idea of separate temples; secondly, the building expenses would have been a financial burdern; and thirdly, Dr. Ambedkar was more of a utilitarian than an idol worshipper.

It was Dr. Ambedkar’s view that the saint-poets of Maharashtra (1300-1600) belonging to *Bhagavat Dharma* did not preach directly against the Caste System which stood for the domination of one caste over others, for social inequality and social injustice. The efforts of these saint-poets were directed to establishing equality, not between a Brahmin as an individual and a *Shudra* as an individual, but between a Brahmin and a *Shudra* devotee of God. In this struggle the saints succeeded, and the Brahmins had to accept the superiority of the devotee irrespective of caste. Lastly Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed the meeting as the President. In his address he stated “Yet from the view point of the annihilation of caste,” “the struggle of the saints

¹: Bahishkrit Bharat, dated 3rd February 1928.

did not have any effect on society. The value of man is axiomatic, self-evident; it does not come to him as the result of the gilding of *Bhakti*. The saints did not struggle to establish this point. On the contrary, their struggle had a very unhealthy effect on the Depressed Classes. It provided the Brahmins with an excuse to silence them by telling that they would be respected if they also attained the status of Chokhamela.” As the followers of different cults of *Bhakti* were themselves filled with caste prejudices, Dr. Ambedkar proceeded, they not only turned a blind eye to their message of equality, justice and humanitarianism, but also described their incredible miracles with utmost exaggeration.

As regards the cult of Ramdas, he said that his followers were notorious for their caste prejudices since its inception, and their founder himself was obsessed with the ideas of Brahmin superiority. According to Ramdas, even a fallen Brahmin was superior to men of other castes in heaven and on earth ; nay, a Brahmin was one to whom even the gods made an obeisance.”¹

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¹:Keer, Pp. 109-110.