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INDIAN HISTORY IS NOTHING BUT STRUGGLE BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND BRAHMINISM

While staying at Madras, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar got several invitations from various Institutions for delivering speeches. Among the invitees was Madras Rational Society which arranged his speech on "Rationalism in India" on Sunday the 24th September 1944 in Prabhat Talkies, Broadway, Madras, under the Chairmanship of Ex-Minister Ramanathan. On this occasion Sau. M. M. Muthu greeted Dr. Ambedkar.[1]

Dr. Ambedkar said,

"The subject of rationalism in India is undoubtedly of great interest to Indians and one of profound influence. So as the Hindu society and a social life are concerned, the subject has been completely neglected. There has been very many false notions about India's history which have been given currency to buy persons who have very great authority in the field of literature. It has been said by very profound writers of Indian History that India has had no politics at all and that all ancient Indian writers concerned themselves with writing about philosophy; religion, metaphysics and that they have not bothered about politics. It has been alleged that the ancient Indian people were not historical or a political race. That has been the opinion to this day. It has also been stated that India has no history at all and that though Indian life and society have been moving in a stereotyped steel frame which once fixed has remained as it has been, and consequently the historian of India has nothing else to do but to describe what the steelframe is. It has also been said that countries can be said to have some special and political revolutions undertaken with the object of changing the frame-work of political revolution before.

I have been only a politician and I can lay no claim for any profundity either as a student of literature or of history or philosophy. But I have elevated some part of my time to the study of an ancient history, and I have come to the opposite conclusions to these profounded by many scholars. My study has shown to me that the ancient Indians have political race that history has known. No country in the ancient past has had such

[1] : Khairmode, Vol. 9, P. 376.

revolution affecting the society morals. Government and philosophy which can be proved to have privilege of the ancient Indians. India probably was one of the countries which preached rationalism such as the kind of which the world before nowhere has seen. India has been a land of revolution in comparison to which the French Revolution would be only "Bagatella" and nothing more.

Differences between Brahminism and Buddhism

Students of Indian History, in my judgment, must bear one fact in mind and it is the one which has been completely neglected by the historians who have written about history of India. It is a fundamental fact and unless that was borne in mind, no one can understand the history of India. The fundamental fact is that there has in ancient India, a great struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism. The history of India is nothing if it is not one of great struggle. It is not even a struggle as has been repeated by professors of philosophy but a quarrel over some creed. It was not only a revolution in doctrine but a revolution in the political and social philosophy. The quarrel between Buddhism and Brahminism was on this one issue and that was "What is truth ? What can be accepted as truth ?" That is the bedrock of the question with which rationalism deals. The answer that Buddha gave as to what was truth was fundamentally different from the one which the Brahmins gave. Buddha said that truth was something to which any one of the "Dasa Indriyas" can bear witness. The Brahminic doctrine of truth was that it was something which was declared by Vedas (Laughter). They should make no mistake but that was the most important doctrine of Brahminism. The Buddhists were revolutionaries and Brahmins were counter-revolutionaries. That was the difference between Buddhism and Brahminism. Why the Brahmins from the ancient times insisted that the Vedas must be accepted as the Final authority of all social and religious doctrines, it is something difficult to say. But I am surprised that so clever a people like the ancient Brahmins should have insisted upon fastening such tremendous sanctity and authority on such books which consisted nothing else but tomfoolery.

Forgery in the Vedas

Dr. Ambedkar analysing some of the aspects of the Vedas by citing certain examples said that certain portions were a 'forgery' which were introduced at later stage. They did it because they wanted some kind of sacred sanction for their theory. That to his mind was the only reason why the Brahmins had insisted upon so un-rationalistic an approach to social theories. The struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism was for supremacy. When Buddhism evaporated, they lost tremendously. Buddha was the first person to preach the message of liberty, equality, fraternity in the history of the world. They had lost because the revolution was so overwhelmed by the counter-revolution. They has also lost the spirit of rationalism, and that was the reason why the whole of the Hindu Society was in grossest superstition ; idolatory and all sorts of evil practices, which were practised in the name of the religion. Buddha's rationalistic approach to truth had been lost. Today they were in the grip of counter-revolutionaries. The gospel of the counter-revolutionaries is the Bhagvat Geeta and Manu Smruti.

The tragedy of today is that the non-rationalistic ideology has even entered politics. Political leaders are on trial in every country. But what is the solution in India ? Mr. Gandhi is never on trial (laughter). Has he been on trial ? No. If he says something, everybody must accept it as though it is from the Vedas. If he says the opposite, we have got to accept it. Two years ago Mr. Gandhi said Pakistan was a sin. Congressmen said it was a sin. I have also written a book on Pakistan and I was called as one whose intelligence has been mortgaged to the Muslim League and prostituted ..... and all that. Today Mr. Gandhi says Pakistan is not a sin. This is only one illustration of irrationalism-which has not entered only our social and intellectual but also political thought.

I am sure unless we do something very quickly, we may bring greater disaster to this country ....."[1]

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[1] : The Liberator, Madras, dated 25-9-1944.