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Buddhismuskunde

Einladung zum Vortrag

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B. R. Ambedkar and Reconceptualizing Idioms of Politics

Freitag, 25. Mai 2018, 15h c.t.

Seminarraum 1, Bereich Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde
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Popularly known as Babasaheb, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was, like Gandhi, an activist-cum-theoretician. A votary of inclusive social existence, he raised his voice against social exclusion which, he strongly felt, was an outcome of well-entrenched prejudices, upheld by the upper caste Hindus for protecting their selfish interests. It was a system that drew sustenance from the distorted interpretation of the so-called authentic texts supportive of Hindu social order. In so doing, he deployed newer conceptual categories which he evolved, of course, on the basis of his understanding of the basic values of the Enlightenment Philosophy besides the context in which he was born and nurtured. The primary concern here is to discern and elaborate some of those dominant ideas that form the core of Ambedkar's politico-ideological discourse which radically altered the texture of the nationalist politics as soon as it unfolded.

A liberal *par excellence*, Babasaheb endeavoured to constitutionalize India in accordance with the core principles and values of the Enlightenment Philosophy. Sources are manifold: his existential experiences of being born as a Mahar in a highly caste-conscious Maratha society; his exposure to Western liberal values both as a student and an activist, and finally, the unquestionable influence of his academic mentor, John Dewey, at Columbia University in the US. There is no denying that his ideas were an offshoot of his involvement as an activist in various campaigns and also his sustained effort in understanding the historical-sociological roots of social exclusion in India. A careful scan of his writings show that while questioning the prevalent system of social prejudices, which are argued to be axiomatic, he also evolved his mode of conceptualization which creates a new genre of thought raising newer issues and uncomfortable questions.