



Unveiling the Teachings of Saint Bhima Bhoi: A Case Study on Value Education

Debendra Bhue

Lecturer in Education, Department of Education,

Shree Ram College, Rampur, Subarnapur, Odisha, India

Affiliated to Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha, India

Abstract

Bhima Bhoi's poetry embodies a profound philosophical framework that merges idealism with humanism, inspiring us to envision a world characterized by greater empathy, compassion, and justice. Despite his blindness and lack of formal education, his work exudes a profound concern for the welfare of society and humanity as a whole. Bhima Bhoi's most renowned verse, immortalized on the walls of the United Nations Organization Hall in various languages, is a poignant testament to his unwavering commitment to the betterment of humanity. In the face of the countless afflictions plaguing the world, he declares with conviction that he alone will bear the cost of redeeming the world: "**Seeing the endless agony of all creatures, how can I stay silent? My life will be sacrificed, to redeem this world from suffering.**" Such selflessness and moral courage exemplify the greatness of his philosophy and serve as a timeless source of inspiration for generations to come.

Bhima Bhoi's philosophy transcends the boundaries of religion and region to encompass the entire cosmos, infused with the noble principles of fraternity, equality, social justice, freedom, love, humanity, purity, non-violence, and humility. These timeless tenets, rooted in the very essence of human existence, offer a path towards a more compassionate and just world, where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, and the bonds of love and brotherhood transcend all divisions. This article aims to uncover the transformative values and morals within Bhima Bhoi's poetries that can inspire a more equitable and compassionate world for all of humanity.

Keywords: Bhima Bhoi, philosophy, value education

Introduction

Bhima Bhoi was a 19th-century saint-poet from Odisha, India, who composed devotional songs and verses that expressed his philosophical and spiritual ideas. His works are considered to be an important part of the Bhakti movement in Odisha. He emphasized the importance of self-realization and believed in the equality of all human beings. Bhima Bhoi worked to eradicate the caste system, promote education and women's empowerment, and eradicate superstitious beliefs in society. He was a prolific poet and writer of devotional songs and hymns in the Odia language. Bhima Bhoi's teachings and legacy continue to inspire people in Odisha and beyond.

Bhima Bhoi's literary works are a testament to his spiritual caliber, devotion, and his never-ending quest for the ultimate truth. His literary canon is vast, including notable works like, **Stutichintamani, Brahmanirupana Geeta Bhajanamala, Adianata Geeta, Chautisa Madhuchakra, Astaka Bihari Geeta, Nirvedasadhana, Brahma Calak Geeta, Srutinishedha Geeta, Bangala Atha Bhajana** etc. Every word he wrote was infused with deep emotion and a sense of purpose, and his impact on the literary world is immeasurable.

Value Education

Value education is the process of imparting knowledge, skills, and values that not only enable individuals to live fulfilling lives, but also contribute to the greater good of society. It includes the acquisition of knowledge and the development of moral, ethical, and social values that guide an individual's behavior and decision-making. As modern society becomes more complex and challenging, the need for value education grows stronger in order to foster social responsibility, empathy, and compassion within individuals. Value education plays a crucial role in instilling values in students that contribute to a more equitable, just, and peaceful society. Additionally, it promotes intercultural understanding and global citizenship by enabling students to appreciate diverse perspectives and cultures. Ultimately, as an indispensable component of holistic education, value education prepares individuals to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives while making positive contributions to society.

Saint Bhima Bhoi and value education

Bhima Bhoi's poetry is a treasure trove of moral and ethical values that have the potential to transform society and inspire individuals towards a more fulfilling and meaningful life. His philosophy is deeply rooted in the principles of humanism, compassion, and social justice, which form the bedrock of value education. His writings highlight the importance of leading a life of purpose and selflessness, where one's actions are guided by the principles of empathy, compassion, and social responsibility. His poetry also emphasizes the need for individuals to embrace diversity and cultivate a sense of intercultural understanding, which is essential in today's globalized world.

Equality

Bhima Bhoi's verses on equality serve as a powerful reminder that all human beings are equal in the eyes of the divine, regardless of their material wealth or social status. His philosophy emphasizes the importance of treating every individual with respect and dignity, and his writings serve as a timeless source of inspiration for promoting equality and social justice. That is why he said,

The sun, the moon, and the stars shine equally for all,
without discrimination,
so too, should we treat all people equally,
without discrimination based on caste or creed.

(The Philosophy of Bhima Bhoi, p.89)

By acknowledging that these distinctions are artificial constructs, Bhima Bhoi challenged entrenched social and religious hierarchies. He called for all people to be united in love, recognizing that the solution to the division lies in recognizing our common humanity. In his words,

O lord, you have created us all equal,
but we have made distinctions of caste and creed.
We are all one, and let us be united in love.

(The complete works of Bhima Bhoi, p.153)

Freedom

Bhima Bhoi's concept of freedom is deeply rooted in his devotion to the divine. For him, true freedom is not simply a matter of external liberation, but a state of inner peace and harmony that can only be attained through spiritual practice and surrender to the divine. He stated it as,

Devotion and discrimination intertwined,
a truth that Bhima Bhoi did remind,
liberation not in worldly things,
but in divine love, that sets the soul free like wings.

(Bhima Bhoi Granthavali, p. 347)

Love

Bhima Bhoi's philosophy of love for all beings is rooted in the idea of oneness, where all beings are interconnected and share a common bond. This interconnectedness and oneness form the basis of a universal brotherhood that transcends all divisions based on caste, creed, race, or religion. Verses of Bhima Bhoi on love for humanity emphasize the universal nature of love and how it serves as the foundation of all religions. By embracing love for all beings, he encourages a sense of oneness and interconnectedness that seeks to alleviate the suffering of all humanity. He expressed it as,

Divine essence that flows through all creation
and the light that illuminates the path of truth.

(Selected Poems of Bhima Bhoi, Verse 13)

Purity

According to Saint Bhima Bhoi purity is not merely the absence of impurities or negative qualities, but rather the presence of something sublime - something divine that shines within us. It is like a mirror that reflects the pure and divine nature that exists within us. This divine essence is often clouded by our own impurities such as negative emotions, desires, and actions.

Therefore, to achieve purity, we need to work towards removing these impurities and cultivating positive qualities such as compassion, selflessness, and love. When we do this, we become more in tune with our true nature and the divine that exists within us. He said it as,

Purity is not just the absence of impurities,
it is the presence of something sublime.
It is the mirror that reflects the divine within us.

(Selected Poems of Bhima Bhoi, Verse 118)

Humility

Bhima Bhoi challenged the common misconception that humility is a sign of weakness. Instead, he suggested that humility is a source of strength that allows us to overcome our own limitations. He emphasized that true humility is not just a matter of outward behaviour or posturing, but is an inner state of being that comes from conquering the ego. By doing so, one can experience the divine both within and without. In his words,

Humility is the hallmark of a true devotee.
Only by surrendering our ego at the feet of the divine can we experience true bliss.

(Selected Poems of Bhima Bhoi, Verse 292)

Fraternity

In order to foster a sense of brotherhood and unity among all people, Bhima Bhoi said that it is necessary to recognize that all human beings share a common humanity and are essentially the same. The act of seeing oneself in others also involves recognizing and understanding the challenges and struggles that others face, and responding with compassion and empathy. It is an acknowledgment that one's own well-being and happiness are interdependent with the well-being and happiness of others.

He therefore suggested that true fraternity can only be achieved by recognizing the inherent humanity within all people and striving to create a world where all individuals can live in harmony, without discrimination, and with mutual respect and support. He stated it as,

To see one's own self in others
is the true essence of fraternity.

(Bhima Bhoi: The Greatest Saint of Odisha, p.40)

Non-violence

Bhima Bhoi stated that non-violence is not just the absence of violence, but an active principle that should guide one's thoughts, words, and actions. Non-violence is a positive virtue that should be cultivated and practiced towards all living beings, and involves empathy, compassion, and promoting peace and harmony. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need to work towards the well-being of all, not just oneself. That is why he said

Non-violence is not a passive trait,
but an active principle to cultivate,
compassion, love, and empathy, it imparts,
a way of life for all living hearts.

(Bhima Bhoi: The visionary sage, p.95)

Humanity

Bhima Bhoi suggested that serving humanity is the highest form of worship and prayer. He also emphasized on the idea that helping others and making a positive impact on the world is a way of honouring the higher power or the divine. The core ideology behind his poetry is that true spirituality should manifest in our actions towards others. He promoted the idea of universal brotherhood and highlights the importance of empathy, compassion, and altruism. By serving humanity, we are not only fulfilling our duty to our fellow human beings, but also connecting with something larger than ourselves. In his words

Humanity is the highest form of worship,
and service to humanity is the truest form of prayer.

(Bhima Bhoi: The Greatest Saint of Odisha, p.74)

Conclusion

Bhima Bhoi's literary contributions are an invaluable resource for value education. His works emphasize the importance of empathy, social responsibility, respect for others, and social justice. His deep understanding of the human condition and his efforts to raise awareness against the injustices in society continue to inspire readers to this day. His teachings serve as a reminder of the vital role literature and poetry can play in shaping individuals and society towards a more just, equitable, and a compassionate future.

References

Sambalpur Gezetter – Sambalpur dist -1971. pg-447.

He was born blind in the village Kankanpada of Rairakhhol about 1855.

Bhoi B. 2000. Bhima Bhoi Granthavali (Collected Works of Bhima Bhoi). Cuttack, Utkal Sahitya Press.

Bhoi B. 2010. Bhima Bhoi Granthabali (Collected Works of Bhima Bhoi). Dharmagrantha Store.

Stutichintamani

Chautisha Madhuchakra

Brahma Nirupana Geeta

Bhajanamala

Baumer.B. & Beltz J.(Eds.) 2010. Bhima Bhoi: Verses from the Void: Mystic Poetry of an Odiya Saint. Manohar Publishers.

Mahapatra S. 1983. Bhima Bhoi. Sahitya Academy.

Biswanath Baba 1965. History of Satya Mahima Dharma.

Panigrahi S.C. 1998. Bhima Bhoi and Mahima Darshana. Santosh Publication. Cuttack in collaboration with P.G. Department of Philosophy, Utkal University.

Sukla, A. C. 1993. The philosophy of Bhima Bhoi. Motilal Banarsidass

Mohanty, J. M. 2004. The complete works of Bhima Bhoi. Oxford University Press.

Mohanty, S. P. (Trans.) 1985. Selected Poems of Bhima Bhoi. Oxford University Press.

Das, C. 2015. Bhima Bhoi: The Greatest Saint of Odisha. D.K. Printworld.

Mohapatra, A. (Trans.) 1895. Bhima Bhoi: The visionary sage. Routledge

