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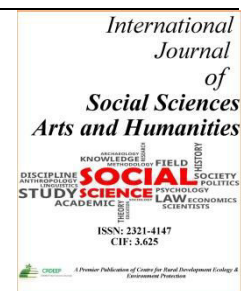
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**Review Research Article****Life and Works of Dr Krishna Maruti Rao Kamble****Shura Darapuri**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the life and works of Dr. Krishna Maruti Rao Kamble, a renowned oncologist and a social reformer from Wardha, Maharashtra. Deeply influenced by the philosophies of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Gautama Buddha, Dr. Kamble's career is a testament to the integration of Ambedkarite pragmatism, Buddhist humanism, and scientific rationalism. His achievements in medical education, institutional development, and rural healthcare underscore a lifelong commitment to the empowerment of marginalized communities through education, health, and ethical citizenship. Through academic pursuits in Buddhist and Ambedkarite studies, and active engagement in social movements, Dr. Kamble created a unique model of socially responsive medicine. This paper explores how his life's work exemplifies the practical realization of Buddhist compassion and Ambedkar's ideals of social justice, offering important insights for contemporary medical ethics and public health reform.*

**Introduction**

The life and works of Dr. Krishna Maruti Rao Kamble (Dr KM Kamble), a distinguished medical professional and social reformer from Wardha, Maharashtra, offer a compelling case study of how Ambedkarite pragmatism and Buddhist humanism can be synthesized within the domains of contemporary medical practice and social activism. His career trajectory reflects an evolving praxis committed to the democratization of education, the expansion of public health infrastructures, and the advancement of social justice. Underpinning his life's work are two major philosophical traditions: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's pragmatic approach to institutional reform and empowerment through education, and Gautama Buddha's humanistic ethics emphasizing compassion, rational inquiry, and the alleviation of suffering. Ambedkar's pragmatism, distinct from classical Western pragmatism was rooted in a moral realism that demanded direct engagement with oppressive structures through legal, educational, and social means. It prioritized actionable change over mere ideological assertion, insisting that social transformation must be achieved within and through the mechanisms of the state and civil society. Parallely, Buddhist humanism, particularly in its Navayana articulation championed by Ambedkar, foregrounds a rational, ethical, and socially engaged vision of human life. It emphasizes dignity, interdependence, non-violence, and compassionate service as ethical imperatives. In the context of medicine, this translates into an approach that sees patients not merely as clinical subjects but as whole beings embedded within social and existential realities.

Dr. Kamble's integration of these traditions positions him within what scholars describe as "social medicine", an approach that treats health disparities as products of broader socio-economic and political structures rather than purely biological phenomena. His work in revitalizing medical institutions, advocating for marginalized communities, and promoting public health education reflects a medical philosophy that is both technically proficient and socially conscious.

Thus, the study of Dr. Kamble's life invites a broader reflection on how philosophy, ethics, and social reform can meaningfully intersect with medical practice to create more just and compassionate healthcare systems. His model challenges the technocratic and depersonalized tendencies of modern medicine, advocating instead for a practice grounded in moral responsibility, civic engagement, and an unwavering commitment to human dignity. The present work draws on information directly provided by Dr. Kamble himself when he was alive, supplemented by details gathered from various publicly available online sources, in order to present a comprehensive account of his contributions and vision.

### Early Life and Education

Born on November 26, 1949, Dr. Kamble was raised in modest circumstances following the early loss of his mother. Inspired by the Government Medical College (GMC), Nagpur, he developed a strong ambition to pursue a career in medicine. Despite encountering a procedural setback during the entrance examination process, he navigated the challenge through an institutional appeal, demonstrating a composed and rational approach to overcoming systemic hurdles. Admitted to GMC Nagpur in 1969, Dr. Kamble initially aimed to specialize in Tuberculosis, but due to institutional constraints, he shifted to Radiology. His willingness to adapt in the face of changing circumstances underscores a practical and determined approach to professional growth.

### Medical Contributions and Professional Achievements

Recognizing the inactivity within the Radiotherapy Department at GMC, Dr. Kamble revitalized the program through significant personal initiative. His academic credentials include a DMRD (Diploma in Medical Radio diagnosis) from GMC Nagpur, specialized training at Tata Memorial Hospital Mumbai, an additional DMRD from CPS (College of Physicians and Surgeons) Mumbai, and an MD in Radiotherapy from Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bangalore. His pursuit of continuous professional development embodies Ambedkar's emphasis on education as a means of empowerment.

In clinical practice, Dr. Kamble prioritized marginalized populations, particularly women and children afflicted by cancer. His success in acquiring a Cobalt radiotherapy machine for GMC Nagpur marked a pivotal advancement in regional cancer care. His organization of rural health camps and thematic conferences on death and bereavement integrated Buddhist compassion with scientific medical practice.

### Public Engagement and Social Reform

Dr. Kamble's commitment to social reform extended far beyond the clinical setting, reflecting a holistic vision of healthcare that integrated ethical citizenship, public education, and civic activism. Recognizing that systemic inequalities in health outcomes were deeply intertwined with broader patterns of social marginalization, Dr. Kamble used popular media like newspaper columns, public lectures, and conferences as critical platforms for education and mobilization. By writing on topics such as Buddhism, Ambedkarite social philosophy, and public health, he sought to cultivate public consciousness about the structural determinants of health and the emancipatory potential of education and social solidarity.

In aligning Buddhist ethical principles with Ambedkarite pragmatism, Dr. Kamble's public engagements reflected an understanding of social reform as both an individual moral duty and a collective political project. Dr. Kamble advocated that International Childhood Cancer Day should be celebrated with the same enthusiasm and widespread recognition as Valentine's Day, emphasizing the need to channel public attention towards the struggles and resilience of children battling cancer. Through this intervention, he reframed the popular imagination of love to include altruism, collective compassion, and responsibility towards vulnerable populations, particularly children suffering from cancer. Such efforts not only addressed immediate healthcare needs but also attempted to reshape cultural narratives towards more inclusive and ethical forms of citizenship.

While he appreciated the government's initiatives towards promoting cleanliness, he firmly believed that underlying issues such as education and social inequalities also required urgent attention, as they were intrinsically connected to the prevalence of unclean habits among the populace. In other words, his appeal for cleanliness was not merely a hygienic imperative but a call for civic ethics rooted in equality, dignity, and mutual respect. Overall, Dr. Kamble's public engagement reflects an applied Ambedkarite philosophy that emphasizes the transformation of social structures through reasoned dialogue, mass education, and ethical action. His interventions challenge the compartmentalization of medical professionalism from broader societal responsibilities, proposing instead a vision of the doctor as a public intellectual and civic leader committed to the principles of social justice and human dignity.

### Academic Pursuits in Buddhist and Ambedkarite Thought

In addition to his distinguished contributions to medical science, Dr. Kamble demonstrated a sustained commitment to the humanities, particularly in the domains of Buddhist philosophy and Ambedkarite thought. His academic achievements including Master's degrees in Pali Studies, Buddhist Studies, and Ambedkar Thought, as well as an M.Phil in Buddhist Studies reflect not merely an intellectual curiosity but a strategic and ethical engagement with traditions of emancipatory knowledge. This dual orientation towards science and the humanities situates Dr. Kamble within a lineage of scholar-practitioners who recognize the inseparability of technical proficiency from moral and social responsibility.

Through his advanced studies in Pali, the canonical language of early Buddhist texts, Dr. Kamble accessed the philosophical foundations of Buddhist humanism in its original articulation. His focus on Buddhist Studies and Ambedkar Thought further enabled him to critically engage with the reinterpretation of Buddhism as a rational, socially engaged ethical system, a project initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his seminal work *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (1957). Dr. Kamble's academic pursuits can thus be understood as part of a broader intellectual movement seeking to revive and contemporize Buddhist principles to address modern social, ethical, and political challenges.

His doctoral research, titled *The Relevance of Buddhism in Medical Sciences*, represented a pioneering effort to bridge ethical philosophy and scientific inquiry. In exploring how Buddhist concepts such as compassion (*karuṇā*), mindfulness (*satī*), and interdependence (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) could inform medical ethics, patient care, and public health practices, Dr. Kamble hoped to

advance a vision of healthcare that transcended biomedicine's often reductive focus on pathology. His work aimed to contribute to emerging interdisciplinary fields such as narrative medicine, bioethics, and socially engaged Buddhism, emphasizing that technical expertise must be accompanied by an ethically grounded commitment to human dignity.

As a part-time faculty member in the Department of Buddhist Studies at Nagpur University, Dr. Kamble left no stone unturned to continue to extend the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar's vision of socially relevant education. He embodied the Ambedkarite principle that education must not merely reproduce existing social structures but actively participate in their transformation. Through his teaching, Dr. Kamble aimed to nurture a new generation of scholars and activists equipped with the critical tools to challenge caste hierarchies, promote social justice, and infuse public life with ethical sensitivity. His academic work stands as a testament to the possibilities of integrating rigorous intellectual inquiry with compassionate social engagement. In 2021, he was appointed by the state Government as member secretary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee.<sup>i</sup> But unfortunately due to Covid-19, he died the same year, just a couple of days after the birth anniversary of the persona whose path he followed to bring about social justice and equality.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Visionary Initiatives and Institutional Contributions**

Beyond his personal achievements, Dr. Kamble was deeply committed to structural transformation in the healthcare system, particularly in addressing the needs of terminally ill patients. He envisioned the establishment of both an old age home and a specialized care center for terminal cancer patients, an initiative rooted in his broader commitment to equitable healthcare. Although financial limitations ultimately hindered the realization of these projects, despite his purchase of eight and a half acres of land approximately 50 kilometers from Nagpur, the effort itself reflected his proactive and future-oriented approach to public health. Notably, even after his retirement, Dr. Kamble played a pivotal role in establishing a postgraduate Department of Radiotherapy at the Government Medical College (GMC), Nagpur which may be regarded as an enduring contribution that reflects his visionary commitment to institutional development and capacity building. His decision to file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) advocating for improved hospital infrastructure further illustrated his Ambedkarite orientation toward systemic reform through constitutional and legal channels. In this way, Dr. Kamble's work exemplifies a model of social engagement that seeks to bridge clinical practice with legal activism and structural transformation.

### **Philosophical Orientation and Activist Engagement**

Dr. Kamble's intellectual and activist life was profoundly shaped by the ethical teachings of Gautama Buddha, the emancipatory vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. These philosophical traditions collectively informed a worldview rooted in human dignity, rational ethics, and the moral imperative of social transformation. For Dr. Kamble, philosophy was not an abstract pursuit but a framework for concrete action aimed at the eradication of systemic oppression and the construction of a more just and compassionate society. His active participation in Ambedkarite movements such as the Samata Sainik Dal and the Dalit Solidarity Peoples organizations exemplified his commitment to the democratization of society through peaceful, educated means. Following Ambedkar's principle of *prabuddha* (enlightenment through critical consciousness), Dr. Kamble emphasized that liberation from caste and social hierarchies must be achieved not through violent confrontation, but through organized, rational, and collective efforts grounded in education, legal advocacy, and social service. His activism thus aligned with what scholars' term "transformative social praxis," wherein knowledge production and grassroots mobilization are intertwined processes aimed at substantive social change.

Dr. Kamble's philosophical orientation also reflected the deep humanism of Buddhist ethical thought, particularly the emphasis on compassion (*karuṇā*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), and the interdependence of all beings. By integrating these principles into his public health initiatives and social activism, he demonstrated that personal ethical cultivation and societal reform are mutually reinforcing.

Throughout his life, Dr. Kamble's activist engagement remained steadfastly focused on the upliftment of Dalits, women, children, and other vulnerable populations. His work illustrated Ambedkar's vision that true emancipation requires both political restructuring and cultural reformation. By working within movements that sought to awaken self-respect, foster social solidarity, and promote educational empowerment, Dr. Kamble contributed to building what Ambedkar called an "ethical society", one based not on inherited hierarchies but on the conscious cultivation of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Thus, Dr. Kamble's life offers a paradigmatic example of how philosophical ideals can be operationalized into sustained activist practice, creating a model of socially engaged professionalism that remains urgently relevant in contemporary struggles for justice.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Kamble's life stands as a testament to the transformative possibilities that emerge at the intersection of medical science, social activism, and philosophical inquiry. His career, deeply rooted in Ambedkarite pragmatism and Buddhist humanism, reflects a lifelong commitment to advancing both public health and social justice. By integrating scientific rationalism with ethical compassion, Dr. Kamble challenged the conventional boundaries of professional life, demonstrating that medical practice must be responsive not only to biological suffering but also to the broader structures of social inequality.

His work in revitalizing radiotherapy services, promoting cancer awareness, and advocating for the marginalized exemplifies a model of socially engaged medicine that remains urgently relevant in contemporary India. As an educator, activist, and public intellectual, Dr. Kamble operationalized Ambedkar's vision of education as a tool for empowerment and Buddha's teachings of

compassion and service as central to ethical life. His numerous accolades, including the Jeevan Sadhna Award, Bhim Ratna Award, and Abhiman Award, underscore the wide-reaching impact of his contributions.

In a society grappling with persistent health disparities and social divisions, Dr. Kamble's integrated approach offers a powerful paradigm for future generations: one that refuses to separate professional excellence from moral responsibility and envisions healing as both a medical and a social act. At the felicitation ceremony of the cancer specialist and social worker Dr K.M. Kamble, organized on his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 to recognize his contribution to society, Puranchandra Meshram rightly said, "It is a coincidence that Dr Kamble was born on the day Constitution was adopted. He is certainly a crusader of war against cancer and against cancer as a disease and the cancer of social inequality".<sup>iii</sup>

#### **Endnotes:**

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<sup>i</sup>Cancer specialist Dr Krishna Kamble dies of Covid-19 by Chaitnya Deshpande published in The Times of India, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021 [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/82106604.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/82106604.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst) last accessed on 3/5/2021

<sup>ii</sup>Defeating the Virus-The Crusader Dr KM Kamble by Sanghmitra S Acharya on 22/4/2021 <https://countercurrents.org/2021/04/defeating-the-virus-the-crusader-dr-km-kamble/> last accessed on 24/4/2021

<sup>iii</sup>Dr Kamble's work to end social inequality praised published in The Times of India, Nov 27, 2019 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/dr-kambles-work-to-end-social-inequality-praised/articleshow/72248087.cms> last accessed on 22/11/2022