

Impact of Buddhism on Hindu Religion after Demise of BR Ambedkar

¹Satya Prakash Dikshit

¹Glocal University, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract

Thich That Hang, Daisaku Ikeda, and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are just a few of the many Buddhist thinkers and activists who have championed the idea of engaged Buddhism and its activists for world peace. Two Buddhists in as many years have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and the widespread emphasis on the idea of "inner peace and world peace" suggests that this is a defining characteristic of modern, politically active forms of Buddhism. Buddhist activism does not always take on the tone and style of the gentle and humble Monk stereotype. In order to build a model society based on equality, fraternity, and social justice, free of inequity, disrespect, pollution, and embarrassment, Dr. Ambedkar abandoned Hinduism and converted to Buddhism, encouraging his millions of followers to do the same. He envisioned using Buddhist principles as a counterweight to Hinduism. Dr. Ambedkar and his followers revitalized the Buddhist movement in 1956 by adopting Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Keywords:- Buddhism, Hindu, Religion, Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Life, rather than length, should be valued for its quality. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, commonly known as Babasaheb, was an Indian lawyer, economist, politician, and social reformer who was instrumental in launching the Modern Buddhist Movement and fighting injustice against India's Dalits and other oppressed groups including women and workers. As the first law minister of an independent India, he played a crucial role in developing India's foundational document, the Constitution of India. Ambedkar was a dedicated student, gaining doctorates in law, economics, and politics from prestigious institutions including Columbia University and the London School of Economics. He started out as a professor, then a lawyer, and finally an economist. After retiring from the military, he became politically active, producing periodicals that promoted political rights and social freedom for Dalits and playing a vital role in the foundation of the Indian state. He became a Buddhist in 1956 and was responsible for a large-scale movement of Dalits to that faith. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990. Numerous monuments and cultural representations of Ambedkar have been built in his honour.

Dr. Ambedkar's reconstruction of Buddhism offers an explanation for behaviour based on democratic politics of conflict and resistance. Its foundation is an understanding of the self as an entity with many facets, which differs from traditional notions of individual freedom. If Buddhist communities do not interfere with or restrict its members' freedom to make decisions about their own life, they do not violate democratic principles. To maintain their social relevance in modern India, however, they must keep making concrete contributions to the social realm, which is inextricably intertwined with the political. Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhist beliefs offer a democratic politics grounded on struggle and resistance. The foundation of this theory is a view of the self that transcends traditional notions of individualism. If Buddhist communities do not interfere with or restrict its members' freedom to make decisions about their own life, they do not violate democratic principles. However, in modern India, the social realm is inexorably tied to the political, therefore they must continue to have practical implications on the social realm if they are to remain socially relevant. A social movement may be able to mobilise around crucial themes and make a difference, however, if it addresses both local and global difficulties, as well as environmental and social justice concerns. In conclusion, neo-Buddhist ideas are not

likely to provide a moral foundation for political practises and institutions that globally replace liberal democracy, regardless of how the issue of the dichotomy is resolved. However, as engaged citizens of the modern world, they will bring up concerns

II. AMBEDKAR'S VIEW ON BUDDHISM

Dr. Ambedkar's brand of Buddhism is distinctive from previous manifestations of the religion. The earlier texts lack the concentration on monastic life, meditation, and enlightenment; the concepts of karma and reincarnation; and the mystical trappings of magic, ritual, and the cosmos. Not only do the philosophical and psychological speculations of the 'Abhidammikas,' 'Madhyamikas,' and 'Yogacharins' not belong in Ambedkar's Buddhism, but so do the Four Noble Truths, which Dr. Ambedkar considered as the incorrect interpellation of monastic editors of the Buddha's discourses. Dr. Ambedkar argues that social exploitation and material poverty, both of which are created by the cruelty of others, are primary causes of human misery (the First Noble Truth in traditional narratives). In the end, Dr. Ambedkar concluded that Buddhism is the superior religion for liberating humanity. In a pamphlet put out by the Mahabodhi Society in 1950, he laid forth four requirements for a fulfilling religious experience. We can't let it sanctify or elevate poverty, therefore it's imperative that we turn it off as soon as possible. The only religion that meets these criteria, he said, is Buddhism. Though Dr. Ambedkar is most known for his political contributions, he also wrote extensively on other topics, including religion. Recently published fourteen-volume compilations of his work. He came to believe in his latter years that religion could either liberate people or keep them in servitude. As time went on, he became more and more convinced that Hinduism is a religion that frees some people from servitude while giving hope and dignity to others. He writes that the treatment of India's untouchables was far worse than that of African slaves in the United States. He claimed that the Hindu religion was the driving force behind the systemic oppression of India's lowest castes and untouchables. By fostering worship of gods who, according to holy Hindu texts, were scoundrels with uncontrollable sexual appetites and vices like rage, envy, pride, and pettiness of tremendous proportions, he claimed that Hinduism undermined people's moral senses. Monsters motivated by a thirst for power are presented as gods and human heroes, and both are seen to participate in bloody war campaigns. Dr. Ambedkar claims that not a single deity in Hinduism is an example of moral behaviour. To add insult to injury, the Hindu faith is based on a wealth of mythological narratives that highlight the reality that social injustice is inherent in the universal fundamental structure. Although Dr. Ambedkar knew that Hinduism offered little to India's poor, he was less familiar with the alternatives. He felt most connected to Buddhism more than any other faith.

On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism was a highly interpreted version of components carefully selected from the 'Pali' canon. His posthumously published Buddhist tome, "The Buddha and His Dhamma," is considered a Bible by many young Buddhists in India. The author of "The Buddha and His Dhamma" set out to write a book that would tell the story of the Buddha's life and teachings in a way that was both rational and orderly. Dr. Ambedkar begins by selecting passages from both canonical and non-canonical Buddhist texts and providing analysis on them. The arrangement of the book makes it difficult to tell where the official text ends and the commentary begins. Over the course of his life, he devoted himself to the study of the world's various faiths. He felt most connected to Buddhism more than any other faith. The book is formatted in such a way that it is often hard to tell where the original text ends and the commentary begins. Because he does not specify which texts were selected from the vast body of Buddhist literature, comparing his interpretation to a canonical source is a monumental task that few people are likely to undertake. Dr. Ambedkar informs the reader right from the bat that he would be addressing four important issues during the course of this essay. He argues that the historical record has been rewritten by Buddhist tradition in all of these instances, distorting the Buddha's original teachings in the process. He begins by vowing to read between the lines and find the actual narrative that has become buried by fanatical fabrication, because the traditional version of the Buddha's life and teaching "is not plausible and does not appeal to reason". Comparing his interpretation to a canonical source is a big undertaking, and only a select few have done so because the precise locations of the texts chosen for debate within the vast corpus of Buddhist literature are not divulged. In the introduction, Dr. Ambedkar explains that the book will focus on four main issues.

III. IMPACT OF DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S CONVERSION TO BUDDHISM

Doctor Babasaheb Ambedkar sought to right the wrongs of the Hindu social system. His goal was to free Hindu society's "untouchables" from their oppression. He made an effort to improve Hindu society from within, appealing to the morality of so-called Hindu authorities. In the end, though, his efforts were for naught. The orthodox Hindus, on the other hand, were quite hostile toward him.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar felt he had no choice but to abandon his Hindu faith and find a religion more faithful to the democratic ideals of freedom, equality, fraternity, and social justice. He was convinced that the teachings of the Buddha, known as the Dhamma, made Buddhism the only viable option for his religious conversion. So on October 14th, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his supporters converted to Buddhism. He made the conscious decision to do so in India, the spiritual home of Buddhism. He believed that the strengthening of democracy in India and the reorganization of Hindu society along democratic principles required the growth of Buddhism in the country.

Variation in Society

The foundation of Hindu society was a system of stratified inequality. Respect and dread were reserved for those above one's Varna and Caste, while disdain was reserved for those below one's Varna or Caste. The four Varna and thousands of castes and sub-castes were ranked one above another. One of the ugliest manifestations of this disdain was the inaccessibility. The upper castes were defiled by contact with the Untouchables and even by their mere presence. The Untouchables' contamination was so severe that it defiled the Gods themselves when they touched them or entered the temples. Dr. Ambedkar devoted his life to changing the status quo of Hindu society. Based on the democratic ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice, he sought to reorganise the established social order. When he realised that he couldn't bring about the necessary change from inside Hindu culture, he embraced Buddhism instead. He abandoned Hinduism for Buddhism and urged his millions of followers to do the same so that they could live in a utopia free from discrimination, abuse, pollution, and shame. He intended to counter Hinduism with Buddhism.

Nearly half a million of his followers responded to his call to Buddhism on that day in October, 1956. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar only lived another 52 days after this momentous occurrence. The conversion movement, however, was unaffected.

The untouchables' widespread conversion to Buddhism ended their centuries-long servitude to the Hindu caste system. Those once considered untouchable might now live as equals. The dehumanization and loss of morale had ended. For the first time in centuries, they felt safe again. They were well-versed in and committed to the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice. They were committed to the idea that a democratic society was the best way forward. As a result, they began to adopt the associated lifestyle. For the most part, they stopped identifying as members of different castes or sub-castes and instead saw themselves as a single social group. To emphasise their solidarity, they self-identified as Buddhists, Dalits, scheduled castes, etc. What happened here was a major shift in society. To keep the scheduled castes and the Shudra castes from leaving the Hindu social order, the once rigid social structure of the religion has begun to loosen. The orthodox and casteist mindset of caste Hindus was greatly affected by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism. While caste is still present, centuries of oppression, inequality, and shame are finally beginning to fade. Scheduled castes can now freely enter temples. They are free to use parks, roads, and other public spaces. All Scheduled Cates have the same access to all public institutions, including schools, hospitals, and hotels. It would appear that list does not observe inviolability.

Building the separate identity of untouchable as Buddhist

The Untouchables were considered unworthy of society. Those people didn't belong to the Varnacaste system; instead, they identified as Avarnas. 10 They didn't belong in any of the four Varnas (Chaturvarnya), let alone the Caste system. Despite not being a member of the caste system, they were nevertheless regarded to be a valuable

asset to the Hindu community. No one would take them seriously since they lacked any kind of distinguishable social standing, human being, or dignity of any kind. They were hiding behind the mask of a slave's identity. They were far terrible than the African and European slaves. Worse than animals, in fact. For aeons, they had forgotten who they were as human beings. Dr. Ambedkar thought that in order for the untouchables to be accepted as whole human beings, as well as respectable members of society and privileged citizens of polity, they must rid themselves of the stigma of being labelled as such. And so it was inevitable that they would convert to a religion that might give them a fresh start and a more acceptable reputation. And Dr. Ambedkar determined that the Buddha's Dhamma would be the ideal religion for the untouchable in order to achieve this goal after he studied practically all of the world's main faiths in great detail.

Dr. Babasaheb did more than restore the untouchables' sense of self; he also re-established their ties to their people's rich and illustrious past. He also charged them with reviving Buddhism in India and include the country's Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, or Shudras in the religion and culture that had long defined them as a distinct people. According to Dr. Ambedkar's teachings, the untouchables, notably the Mahar Community of Maharashtra, converted to Buddhism and reclaimed their Buddhist heritage. With the goal of maintaining and bolstering democratic ideals like freedom, equality, fraternity, and social justice in India, they also set out to spread Buddhism there.

Dr. Ambedkar formed the Buddhist Society of India with the single-minded goal of spreading Buddhism and Buddhist culture among the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, and they are doing so with great zeal and dedication. Many other groups are also fighting for the same goal of restoring the scheduled castes' traditional identities.

Change in the psychology of the Scheduled Castes

For centuries, those in the Scheduled castes (also known as "untouchables") were seen as less than human. They were denied the right to live as human beings. They had been degraded to the status of animals, or perhaps worse. Their fate was one of ignorance, illiteracy, low self-esteem, poverty, powerlessness, slavery, etc. Indeed, they had come to accept their fate of living in a state of dehumanisation. They couldn't possibly rise up in opposition right now. They had the mindset of a slave. They slept for what seemed like an eternity. But then people like Mahatma Phoolley and other social reformers began enlightening and teaching the masses. In 1848, he opened the first untouchable school at India, in Poona.

Gopal Baba Walangkar, one of his devotees, made the initial effort to reawaken their fellow untouchables. In 1883, Prince Shri Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda founded the first untouchables' schools. Dr. Ambedkar's efforts to free and empower the caste of "untouchables" culminated in his conversion to Buddhism. Dr. Babasaheb's millions of followers joined him in converting to Buddhism, and this had a profound and long-lasting effect on the psyche of the previously untouchable and contemporary Scheduled Castes.

Revival of Buddhism in Modern India after Dr. Ambedkar

To say that Dr. Babasaheb and his supporters' conversion to Buddhism on October 14, 1956, at Nagpur, was a watershed moment in the religious history of India and Buddhism is an understatement. The outcome of Buddhism's development has been altered because of it. The 14th of October, 1956 was a watershed moment in the resurgence of Buddhism in India, marking the beginning of a period of intensive activity that has come to be known as the "Ambedkar-Era" of Indian Buddhism. In May 1891, a young Sinhala Buddhist named Anagarika Dhammapal founded the Maha Bodhi Society to spearhead a rebirth of Buddhism in India. When compared to later Buddhist missionaries, he was the first outstanding one of the contemporary era. By 1956, despite the best efforts of The Maha Bodhi Society and other pioneers dedicated to the Buddhist mission in India, the religion still had a hard time winning over new converts. By 1956, this revival movement had made hardly any noticeable headway.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his supporters helped revitalise Buddhism in 1956 by converting to the faith. Such a massive number of people converting to a single religion at once, and at the examples of our one guy, has never happened before in the history of any religion. The drive to convert remained uninterrupted even after Dr. Ambedkar's tragic death.

Rise in population of Buddhists in India

Even though the Mahabodhi Society was founded in Calcutta in May 1891, the actual push for the Buddhist renaissance in India came from Dr. Ambedkar and his disciples in 1956. Despite the efforts of the pioneers of the Mahabodhi Society, they were unable to win over many people to Buddhism. In 1891, there were 50,000 Buddhists in India, and sixty years later, in 1951, there were just 1,80,823. Over 90% of these people were devout Buddhists hailing from Assam, Bengal, and the Himalayan Valley. Nonetheless, the Buddhist community grew at an unparalleled rate after Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, bringing with him half a million followers. There was a remarkable surge of over 3 million Buddhists in India, according to the 1961 census. The population more than tripled from 1951's 1,80,823 to 1961's 32,50,227. The growth occurred in just the five years between 1956 and 1961, yet the percentage rise was 1,670.717. The rate of growth was highest in the Indian state of Maharashtra. The number of Buddhists in Maharashtra exploded from 2,487 in 1951 to 27,89,501 in 1961. The Jain community in Maharashtra and throughout India was taken aback by this growth.

Development of International relations with Buddhist Countries

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his followers' adoption of Buddhism has far-reaching consequences for India's diplomatic ties to the world's Buddhist nations. A cordial rapport has begun to form between the two parties. Practically every significant Buddhist nation in the world acknowledged this historic and spectacular change. Dr. Babasaheb, both before and after his conversion, travelled to Buddhist conferences in Ceylon (1950), Myanmar (1954), and Nepal (1956), each time pleading with the international Buddhist community to focus their missionary efforts on the country of India in order to revitalise Buddhism there. Dr. Ambedkar's neo-Buddhist adherents also have their own Buddha Viharas spread around the country. They've set up groups and schools to spread Buddhism and the Buddhist way of life and teach others about it. Through a number of initiatives, they've been able to establish communication with Buddhist countries and their governing bodies.

As a result, the Buddhist countries saw a significant boost in their international ties thanks to Dr. Babasaheb's conversion. With a challenging goal in mind, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar adopted Buddhism. His goal was to free Hindu society's untouchables from their oppression under the caste system. Through the democratic principles of freedom, equality, fraternity, and social justice, he sought to remake Indian society. In an effort to help the untouchables feel more like they belonged in society, he encouraged them to adopt the religion of Buddhism. People who had previously been considered "untouchable" began to value themselves more as a result. Thus, it is claimed that Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism and the impact of his conversion resulted in the freedom of the untouchables from the Hindu social order.

IV. CHANGING FACE OF BUDDHISM AFTER UNTIMELY DEMISE OF DR. AMBEDKAR

When Ambedkar did away with the Four Noble Truths, Buddhism lost its characteristic Buddhist flavour. But the movement's strength was diminished by Ambedkar's untimely death. Both Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra saw a dramatic increase in the number of Christians among their populations. The Dalit Buddhist movement was a political response to the discrimination that Dalits experienced on account of their caste. Dr. Ambedkar has presented his understanding of Navayana Buddhism in the book *Siddhartha and His Dhamma*, which is consistent with the perspective of early Buddhist thinkers. In addition, he intended to employ faith in the service of class struggle and social equality, while doing away with the belief in predetermined outcomes, reincarnation, and associated rituals. He practises Engaged Buddhism, which incorporates elements of science, activism, and social transformation. Several detractors have recognised this change as a melding of the framework of the contemporary economic expert with that of the classical Buddha.

Tchich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk, first used the term "Socially Engaged Buddhism" in 1963. This new Buddhist movement takes on global problems like poverty and environmental degradation head-on. Many people from Buddhist countries and others who aren't Buddhists are part of this movement. The majority of the world's Buddhist population lives in Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. Stephen Batchelor, together with a group of other thinkers, is developing a secular interpretation of Buddhism that breaks with the ideas of Buddhist modernism to create a wholly original paradigm. The term "Buddhism 2.0" was used by Stephen to describe this idea. In a society where people share a common cosmopolitan philosophy and ethics, this new "operating system" of Buddhism may be of tremendous assistance in facilitating the conversations, discussions, and group practises necessary to foster human flourishing.

V. CONCLUSION

Numerous political organizations, newspapers, and labour unions based on Ambedkar's political philosophy are still going strong today in Maharashtra and the rest of India. His advocacy for Buddhist thought has reawakened a dormant interest in certain circles of Indian society. Like Ambedkar's Nagpur ceremony in 1956, modern human rights activists have organised mass conversion ceremonies. Although he never stated so publicly, some Indian Buddhists consider him a Bodhisattva. A group of Romani Hungarians in the late 1990s found common ground with the poor of India. As a result of Ambedkar's influence, they started to practise Buddhism.

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