



## **BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA : Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR' PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is a well known intellectual and philosopher of world fame. His is one of the best brains in the world of modern period. Being a staunch protagonist of religion, he differed with who negotiate the necessity of religion in one hand, and in various aspects with other religions except Buddhism in other. He is the revivalist of Buddhism in India of modern period. It is not an exaggeration to say that Dr. Ambedkar is the modern Buddha. He is the greatest scholar of modern period in various disciplines in general, and of Buddhism in particular. This paper deals about Dr. Ambedkar's ideas on Buddha and his Dhamma i.e. his religion and a comparison with other religions in brief. This also deals with the basic requirements of a religion to fulfil and how Buddhism fulfils them and deals also with the measures to be taken for spreading of Buddhism.*

### **Introduction**

Dr. Ambedkar, unlike Marxists, believes in religion. For him, religion is absolutely essential for the development of mankind. He says: "Religion is necessary for the poor. Religion is necessary for the depressed people. The poor man survives on hope. The root of life lies in hope. What will happen to the life if the hope is lost? Religion makes hopeful, and gives a message to the depressed and the poor do not be afraid, life will be hopeful, it will be! Therefore, the poor and the depressed mankind cling to the religion"<sup>1</sup>

While explaining about the religion of Buddhism, he says: "Buddhism is the path of elevation and progress. The principles preached by Lord Buddha are immortal. But he did not make such claim. There is a provision for change with the change of time.

Such generosity is not found in any other religion”<sup>2</sup> He continued, the Buddhist principles are not temporal. Today, the whole world respects all the principles of Buddhism even after 2500 years. The Buddha said that if you feel, accept this religion. If this religion appeals to your reason, then accept it. Such generosity has not been allowed in any other religion.

### **Comparison of Buddha and his religion with others**

Dr. Ambedkar said that there is tremendous difference between the Buddha’s religion and other religions. It is not possible to have changes in other religions because those religions relate man with God. Other religions preach that God has created the nature. God has left nothing for us to do, so we must worship God. But there is no place for God and Soul in the Buddha’s religion. Lord Buddha said that there is sorrow all over the world, 90% people are suffering from sorrow. The principal task of the Buddha’s religion is to emancipate those depressed and poor people from sorrow. He himself said about his religion as “This religion is *Bahujan hitay bahujan sukhay, Lokanucampay, Dhamma adi Kalyanam, Madhya Kalyanam, Paryavasan Kalyanam*” Dr. Ambedkar said that Buddhism only will be the saviour of the world. Unless there is justice, there will be no peace in the world.

### ***Buddhism and Communism***

Dr. Ambedkar has compared Buddhism and Marxism or Communism and explained the similarities and differences between them. He says, Communism starts with the theory that there is exploitation in the world that results in suffering, sorrow, and poverty. This is not different in any way from that of the Buddha’s teaching that there is suffering or *Dukkha* in the world and he preached it in a broad way.

With regard to the question of poverty, Marx said that in order to prevent the exploitation, there should not be the private property. He says, everything should be under the control of the state. Here, Dr. Ambedkar says, Buddha has denied the *Bhikkus* to own the property. So, he says, there is no difference between the teachings of Buddha and Marx.

Then, Dr. Ambedkar said that there is complete similarity in between the Buddhism and Communism with regard to the aims and goals. But there exists a

major difference in between them with regard to the means to achieve their ends. The means of Communism is *Violence* and killing the opposed. For Buddhism the means is *Ahimsa* and *love*. Here, Ambedkar says: “The Communists get quick results but would not be long last. Whereas the Buddha’s is a long way, but no doubt the surest way. Therefore, the Buddhist way of life of reaching the goal is a lasting one. And the methd was the safest and the soundest”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Buddha and other religious teachers***

Dr. Ambedkar says, there are many founders of religion. Among them four are important whose religions have not only moved the world in the past, but are still having a sway over the vast masses of people. They are Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, and Krishna. Ambedkar says: “A comparison of the personalities of these four and the poses they assumed in propagating their religions reveals certain points of contrast between the Buddha on the one hand and the rest on the other, which are not without significance.”<sup>4</sup>

As per Dr. Ambedkar there are two major distinctions between the Buddha and the rest of the religious teachers. They are:

1. The first point which marks of Buddha from the rest is his self-abnegation<sup>5</sup>. Jesus insists that he is the Son of God and that those who wish to enter the kingdom of God have to recognise his as the Son of the God, otherwise they will fail. Mohammed went a step further, and claimed himself as the messenger of God on earth and particularly the last messenger. Everyone should accept him as the last messenger of God that who wanted the salvation. Krishna went a step beyond both Jesus and Mohammed and declared himself as not only a God, but the God of the Gods, the *Devadhideva*.

Here, Dr. Ambedkar explains that Buddha never arrogated to himself any such status. The Buddha made a clear distinction between a *Margadata* and *Mokshadata*. Jesus, Mohammed and Krishna claimed themselves as the *Mokshadata*. The Buddha was satisfied with playing the role of a *Margadata*.

2. The second distinction is that of the infallibility of their teachings<sup>6</sup>. Both Jesus and Mohammed claimed that what they taught was the word of God and are

infallible and beyond question. Krishna was being claimed as the God of the Gods, what he taught are uttered by God, and were original and final and are infallible.

Coming to Buddha, Ambedkar says, He never claimed such infallibility for his teachings. In *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* He told Ananda that “His religion was based on reason and experience and that his followers should not accept his teaching as correct and binding merely because they emanated from Him. Being based on reason and experience they were free to modify or even to abandon any of his teachings if it was found that at a given time and in given circumstances they do not apply.”

Here, Dr. Ambedkar observes: “Buddha wished that His religion not to be encumbered with the dead wood of the past. He wanted that it should remain evergreen and serviceable at all times. That is why he gave liberty to His followers to chip and chop as the necessities of the case required.”<sup>7</sup> Dr. Ambedkar declares that no other religious teacher has shown such courage. They were afraid of permitting repair. But Buddha had no such fear, because He was sure of His foundation. He knew that even the most violent iconoclast will not be able to destroy the core of His religion.

### ***Buddhism and Hinduism***

Dr. Ambedkar says: “Hinduism is a religion which is not founded on morality. Whatever morality Hinduism has it is not an integral part of it. It is not embedded in religion. It is a separate force which is sustained by social necessities and not by injunction of Hindu religion.”<sup>8</sup> Where the Buddha’s religion is morality. It is embedded in religion. Without morality Buddhism is nothing. In Buddhism there is no God. There is morality in the place of God. What God is to other religions, morality is to Buddhism. He continues that the meaning of *Dhamma* is the religion of morality. The Vedic meaning of *Dharma* did not connote morality in any sense. The *Dharma* enunciated by the Brahmins meant nothing but the performances of certain Karmas and keeping up of observances, i.e. *yagnas*, *yagas*, and *sacrifices* to God. It had nothing to do with morality.

Whereas the *Dhamma* as used by the Buddha had nothing to do with rituals or observances. In fact, He negotiated them as being the essence of religion. In place of *Karma* He substituted morality as the essence of *Dhamma*. Although the word *Dhamma* was used by Brahmanic teachers as well as by the Buddha, the content of both is radically and fundamentally different. In fact, the Buddha was the first teacher in the world who made morality the essence and foundation of religion.

As per Dr. Ambedkar, every religion must fulfil some requirements. They are as follows<sup>9</sup>:

1. Religion in the sense of morality must be the governing principle of society;
2. Religion must be in accord with reason or science;
3. A religion, along with its moral code, must recognise the fundamental principles of social life i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity; and
4. Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.

As per Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism is the only religion which satisfies all those requirements. In other words Buddhism is the only religion which world can have.

Dr. Ambedkar opposed the notion that the only thing Buddha taught was *Ahimsa*. He says Buddha has taught many other things besides the *Ahimsa*. He taught as part of his religion social, intellectual, economic and political freedom. He taught equality, - equality not between man and man only, but between man and woman. He says: “It would be difficult to find a religious teacher to compare with Buddha, whose teachings embrace so many aspects of the social life of the people, whose doctrines are so modern and with main concern to give salvation to man in his life on earth and not to promise it in heaven after he is dead!”<sup>10</sup>

### **Future of Buddhism**

According to Dr. Ambedkar, there were three major causes for the decline of any religion. They are as follows:

1. Lack of abiding principles in it;
2. Lack of versatile and conquering orators; and
3. Lack of easily understandable principles.

Dr. Ambedkar said that along with other causes, the above mentioned causes also reason for the decline of Buddhism in India. And then, for reestablishment, for spreading and for future of Buddhism he proposed three steps quite necessary. They are:<sup>11</sup>

1. To produce a Buddhist Bible;
2. To make changes in the organisation, aims and objects of the *Bhikku Sangha*; and
3. To set up a world Buddhist mission.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Ambedkar is basically a believer in religion. For Ambedkar religion is nothing but a social doctrine, should govern the life of the people of the society. Thus he believes that Buddhism meets the needs and necessities of society. Being the intellectual and champion of Buddhism, Dr. Ambedkar has studied and recognised its need and importance as a social doctrine and as a rational and scientific religion. Being the modern Bodhisattva, he played a historical role and bought back the religion of Lord Buddha to its birth place and the holy land. With his supreme intellectuality, he studied all the religions and compared them with Buddhism and concluded that Buddhism is the only gospel which can be the saviour of the world.

### **References**

1. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17 (3), Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1987, p. 541
2. *Ibid*, pp. 541-542.
3. *Ibid*, pp. 554-556.
4. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17 (2), Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1987, p. 97
5. *Ibid*, p. 97
6. *Ibid*, p. 98
7. *Ibid*, p. 98
8. *Ibid*, p. 98
9. *Ibid*, p. 104