



**Dr. A. Kumar**

## **BUDDHISM & DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR**

The legendary scientist of all times Albert Einstein has said, “The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion for the future; it transcends a personal God, avoids dogmas and theology, it covers both natural and spiritual, and it is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion which will cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism.”

Buddhism is a religion and philosophy focusing on the teachings of the Buddha whose birth name was Siddhārtha Gautama and was born in 5th century BC.. Buddhism spread throughout the ancient Indian sub-continent following the Buddha's death, and propagated into Central, Southeast, and East Asia and today it has over 350 million followers and is considered a major world religion. According to Buddha, any person can follow his example and become enlightened through the study of his words and putting them into practice, by leading a virtuous, moral life, and purifying his mind.

According to Dr. Ramendra, Reader, Department of Philosophy, Patna University “It is obvious that Ambedkar regarded Buddhism as a much more rational religion compared to other religions. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s final religious act was to embrace Buddhism. His work *The Buddha and his Dhamma* contains his own understanding and interpretation of Buddhism. We may say that Buddhism as expounded in this book is what Ambedkar embraced and recommended. In this book Ambedkar has tried to interpret Buddhism in a rationalistic manner. Ambedkar did not believe in the existence of god and soul. This is obvious from the reasons he has given for embracing Buddhism as well as from his interpretation of Buddhism in *Buddha and His Dhamma*. In Buddhism, as interpreted by Ambedkar, there is no place for god and soul besides , Buddha rejected the ages old varna vyavastha.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar carried on a relentless battle against untouchability in India throughout his life. In the last part of his life, he renounced Hinduism and became a Buddhist as he was totally against the varna or class system, prevailing in India for

thousands of years. Evidently, after a comparative study of different religions, Dr. Ambedkar concluded that Buddhism was the best religion from his point of view. Dr. Ambedkar's literature like *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, *Annihilation of Caste*, *Philosophy of Hinduism* etc. are the proofs of his clean and logical thinking, his humane philosophy and his firm faith in equality of all human beings. In his article "Buddha and the Future of his Religion" published in 1950 in the *Mahabodhi Society Journal*, Ambedkar has summarized his views on religion and on Buddhism in the following manner:

- 1. The society must have either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either, the society is sure to go to pieces.**
- 2. Religion, if it is to survive, it must be in consonance with reason, which is another name for science.**
- 3. It is not enough for religion to consist of moral code, but its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity.**
- 4. Religion must not sanctify or make a virtue out of poverty.**

In Dr. Ambedkar's opinion, Buddhism was the only suitable religion among the existing religions in the world which was in line with Ambedkar's thinking. He felt that the propagation of Buddhism needed a Bible. Apparently, Ambedkar wrote *The Buddha and his Dhamma* to fulfill this need. According to him, he preferred Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination, which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love), and *samata* (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither god nor soul can save society.

In his last speech delivered in Bombay in May 24 1956, in which he declared his resolve to embrace Buddhism, Ambedkar observed: "Hinduism believes in God. Buddhism has no God. Hinduism believes in soul but according to Buddhism, there is no soul. Hinduism believes in Chaturvarnya and the caste system. Buddhism has no place for the caste system and Chaturvarnya."

On 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1956 at Nagpur, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was ordained as a Buddhist by Buddhist monk Bhadant U. Chandramani. Then Dr. B. R. Ambedkar himself gave Dhamma Diksha to his followers. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, his philosophy of religion contained :

No worshipping of idols or Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Rama, Krishna, Gauri and Ganapati, no faith in reincarnation of God, he did not even believe that Lord Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu, no faith in the rituals like 'Shraddha' or 'pind-dan', must adhere to the teachings & Dhamma of the Buddha, believed only in the equality of man and always strived to establish equality, to have compassion and loving kindness for all

living beings and protect them, keep away from the vices like stealing, telling lies, and committing carnal sins.

Dr. N. Haneda said, "The most important thing in Buddhism is the realization of a humble attitude, a broad and empty mind, or an all-encompassing mind. This all-embracing mind is called "Amida Buddha."

Budhism is a religion which is very relevant today. In its history, it has proved to be a very peaceful religion, away from all the world's wars, fanaticism, terrorism and other anti-human activities. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has further contributed to the tenets of Budhism.

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