



Dr. Ambedkar's Concept Of Neo-Buddhism And Ideal Society

DR. SUBRATA DUARY

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DEPT. OF PHILOSOPHY

KASHIPUR M. M. MAHAVIDYALAYA

KASHIPUR, W.B., INDIA

Abstract: Dr. Ambedkar's concept has been used as a source of understanding the *Dharma* in humanistic perspective and a religious framework has been formed on the basis of his unique thoughts. We try to discuss his experience related to *Dharma* and then gradually reach his theory of *Dharma*; ultimately we prove that Dr. Ambedkar's theory is a unique idea of *Dharma*. He has presented a new interpretation of the current theory of *Dharma* and has actually struggled till the last day of his life for its application.

He has organized movement in a variety of ways to correct this unequal social system. He wanted to adopt a *Dharma* that *Dharma* speaks of equal rights of people of all class irrespective of *Dharma*. In the view of Dr. Ambedkar the only *Bouddha Dhamma* is the path, which can lead to genuine democracy with equal dignity of every class in the society. The teaching of the Gautama Buddha is full of rationalism. *Bouddha Dhamma* speaks of the evaluation of knowledge. Gautama Buddha was the first to destroy the unequal caste system in India. *Bouddha Dhamma* speaks of a society. So the only of wellbeing or liberation way for all human beings is there in doctrine of Gautama Buddha, the leader of humanist democracy. After all Dr. Ambedkar implemented his decision to convert to *Bouddha Dhamma*. As a result, he was initiated into *Bouddha Dhamma* in Nagpur on 14th October 1956, the day of Dassara. In this paper 'Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's concept of Neo-Buddhism and ideal society' highlight that Dr. Ambedkar's unique doctrine of *Dhamma*. Our research work have strived to carry Dr. Ambedkar concept of *Dhamma* as a torch focused in a manner consistent with his aims and teachings and relevance in modern times.

Index Term - *Dharma, Dhamma, Karuna, Nirvana, Neo-Buddhism, Hunanism, Equality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born in the British-founded town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh) on 14th April 1891 in Mahar family. He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai Murbadkar. His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambavade in the Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. They belonged to the Hindu Mahar caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to intense socio-economic discrimination. He (1891-1956) had been engaged in evaluating different perspectives with regard to their suitability as means of

offering an escape from the stranglehold of the caste system. Because he realizes that caste system is a very vital ill in our society and his wisdom and vision have made a lasting contribution to the social consciousness of humanity. Towards the end of his life, for a very short period his works were deeply marked by his historical researches on cast, Hinduism and Buddhism, and also with other religions.

The founder of Buddhism is Buddha. He was born around 600 B.C. as Prince Siddhartha Gautama, in what is now Nepal. At the age of 29, Siddhartha left his palace as heir to his father's throne, and renounced all worldly pleasures. He travelled far and wide in order to understand the true meaning of the suffering all around him. With concentration and perseverance, Siddhartha conquered the demons that tempted and distracted him, and finally succeeded in his search for liberation. After six years of arduous training and strict self-discipline, he found the answer to the question of suffering, its causes, and the way to stop it. In doing so, Siddhartha attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha under the Bodhi tree. For the next 45 years, the Buddha journeyed throughout northeast India, teaching and aiding all those who listened to His Philosophy life.

The Buddha was never a god who had supernatural powers over people's lives and futures. The Buddha was a human being, albeit an extraordinary one, who taught humankind that we have Buddha nature inside each of us and that we need to find it. All of us have the potential to achieve what he achieved, for Buddhahood is not reserved for supernatural beings or select individuals. We can all become Buddhas and free ourselves from the sufferings of life and the cycle of birth and death. The word *Dharma* means "teaching and protecting". By practicing the Buddha's teachings, we can shield ourselves from life's conflicts and sufferings. After Buddha's death Buddhism are generally recognized by two major extant branches: Theravada or *Hinayana* (Pali: "The School of the Elders") and *Mahayana* (Sanskrit: "The Great Vehicle").

Mahayana Buddhism and *Hinayana Buddhism* both started off with one goal, *Nirvana*. But both schools took different ways to get there. But Dr. Ambedkar only accepts the basic concepts of *Buddhism* or *Buddha dharma*. According to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar "I will accept and follow the teachings of Buddha. I will keep my people away from the different opinions of *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*, two religious orders. Our Buddhism is a new Buddhism, *Navayana*."² This is the concept of religion is *neo-buddhism*. Now explain that, what is the meaning of *dharma* and what is the basic concept of *Buddha dharma* in the form of *neo-buddhism*.

II. Different between religion and Dharma

Dharma (Sanskrit: "way of righteousness." From *dhri*, "to sustain; carry, hold") refers to the underlying order in nature and human life and behavior considered to be in accord with that order. The word *Dharma* is used to mean *nyaya* (Justice), what is right in a given circumstance, moral values of life, pious obligations of individuals, righteous conduct in every sphere of activity, being helpful to other living beings, giving charity to individuals in need of it or to a public cause or alms to the needy, natural qualities or characteristics or properties of living beings and things, duty and law as also constitutional law. *Dharma* is the law that maintains the cosmic order as well as the individual and social order. *Dharma* sustains human life in harmony with nature. When we follow *dharma*, we are in conformity with the law that sustains the universe. But *Dharma* is not the same as religion. What is the basic difference between religion and *Dharma*? According to Dr. Ambedkar:

- Religion, it is said, is personal and one must keep it to oneself. One must not let it play its part in public life. Contrary to this, *Dhamma* is social. It is fundamentally and essentially so. *Dhamma* is righteousness, which means right relations between man and man in all spheres of life.
- The purpose of religion is to explain the origin of the world and the purpose of *Dhamma* is to reconstruct the world. The content of religion consists of God, soul, prayers, worship, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices. Morality comes in only wherein man comes in relation to man. Morality comes into religion

¹ In Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language in which many Buddhist teachings were recorded, *Buddha* means "Awakened One". When awakened, a person sees things as they really are, and is free from all of life's sufferings. Everyone has the potential to become a Buddha through self-awareness, wisdom, and compassion.

² Press interview on 13 October 1956 at Sham Hotel, Nagpur.

as a side wind, to mention peace and order. Religion is a triangular piece. Be good to your neighbor, because you are the children of God. That is the argument of religion.

- Religion preaches morality, but morality is not the root of religion. It is a wagon attached to it. It attached and detached as the occasion requires. The action of morality in the functioning of religion is therefore casual and occasional. Morality in religion is therefore not effective. On the other hand, morality is *Dhamma* and *Dhamma* is morality. In *Dhamma* there is no place for prayers, worship, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices. Morality is the essence of *Dhamma*. Morality is *Dhamma* arises from the direct necessity for man to love man. Without it there is no *Dhamma*. It does not require the sanction of God. It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own good that man has to love man.
- Religion claimed to be the prophet of God. For example, Jesus Christ claimed to be the prophet of Christianity. He further claimed that he was the Son of God. Jesus Christ also laid down the condition that there was no salvation for a person unless he accepted that Christ was the Son of God. Thus Christ secured a place for Himself by making the salvation of the Christian dependent upon his acceptance of Christ as the prophet and Son of God. Similarly Mohammad claimed to be the prophet of Islam and he was a Prophet sent by God. He further claimed that no one could get salvation unless he accepted two other conditions. a) A seeker of salvation in Islam must accept that Mohammad is the prophet of God. b) A seeker after salvation in Islam must further accept that he is the last prophet. Thus Mohammad secured a place for Himself by making the salvation of the Muslim dependent upon his acknowledgement of Mohammed as the prophet of God. On the other hand according to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha claimed no place for Himself in His own *Dhamma*. Buddha did not propose any condition for man. He claimed that he was no more than the natural son of Suddhodana and Mahamaya. He carved for himself no place in his *Dhamma* by laying down any such conditions regarding him for salvation as Jesus Christ and Mohammad did. In the view of Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha said that, "The *Dhamma* must be its own successor and principle must live by itself, not by the authority of man".
- Religion described as revelations. A revealed religion is so called because it is a message of God to his creatures to worship their maker i.e., God and to save their souls. The message is sent through a chosen individual who is called a prophet, to whom the message is revealed and who reveals it to the people. All prophets have promised salvation. That means the saving of their souls from being sent to hell, provided they obey God's commands and recognize the prophet as his messenger. It is then called religion. On the other hand Buddha did not promise to give salvation. He never claimed that he was a prophet or a messenger of God. He only claimed that he was *marg data* (way finder) and not *moksha data* (giver of salvation).
- Mohammad and Jesus salvation means saving the soul from being sent to hell, by the intercession of the prophet. But Buddha's salvation means *nibbana*, and *nibbana* means control of passions.

III. Three types of Dharma

In his posthumously published "*The Buddha and His Dhamma*" (1957), Dr. Ambedkar wanted to revive what he took to be the main principles of original Buddhism. In the point of view of Dr. Ambedkar Buddha's own classification of *Dhamma* is his basic concept of *Dharma*. These classifications of *Dharma* are divided three categories. The first category is *Dhamma*, second category is *Adhamma*, and third category is *Saddhamma*. If we understand his *Dhamma* then must understand all the three – *Dhamma*, *Adhamma* and *Saddhamma*.

❖ *Dhamma:*

- **To maintain purity of life is *Dhamma*.** What is purity? There are three types of purity: purity of body, purity of speech and purity of mind. Herein certain abstain from taking life, from stealing, from wrong practice in sensual lusts. This is called purity of body. Herein certain abstain from falsehood. This

is called purity of speech. Herein a certain one is not covetous or malevolent of heart and has a right view. This is called purity of mind. . These are three forms of purity.

- **To reach perfection in life is *Dhamma*.** What is perfection? There are three types of perfection: perfection in body, perfection in speech and perfection in mind.
- **To live in *nibbana* is *Dhamma*.** *Nibbana* as thought by Buddha has a totally different meaning and content than what has been given to it by his predecessors. In general *nibbana* meant the salvation of the soul. Thus there were four ways in which *nibbana* was conceived of: Loukik, Yogic, Brahmanic and Upanishadic. The loukik conception of *nibbana* was too materialistic. That means nothing but the satisfaction of man's animal appetites. The Yogic conception of *nibbana* was a purely temporary state. The happiness it brought was negative. It involved dissociation from the world. It avoided pain but gave no happiness. Braahmanic and Upanishadic conceptions involved the recognition of a soul as an independent entity. These four theories which Buddha had denied according to Dr. Ambedkar. Because *loukik* conception of *nibbana* was nothing spiritual in it. Yogic conception of *nibbana* was not permanent, it was temporary. Braahmanic and Upanishadic conception of *nibbana* recognition of a soul as an independent entity. Buddha's conception of *nibbana* is quite different. *Nibbana* is visible in this life and not merely in the future – inviting, attractive, and accessible to the wise disciple. *Nibbana* and *parinibbana* are not equal meanings. *Parinibbana* occurs when the body becomes disintegrated, all perceptions become stopped, all sensations die away, the activities cease and consciousness goes away. Therefore *parinibbana* means complete extinction. *Nibbana* can never have this meaning. *Nibbana* means enough control over passion so as to enable one to walk on the path of righteousness.
- **To believe that all compound things are impermanent is *Dhamma*.** According to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar the doctrine of impermanence has three aspects. There are 1) the impermanence of composite things, 2) the impermanence of the individual being, 3) the impermanence of the self-nature of conditioned things.
- To give up craving is *dhamma*. To believe that karma is the instrument of moral order is *Dhamma*.
 - ❖ ***Adhamma*:**
 - Belief in the supernatural is *not dhamma*. In repudiating supernaturalism, the Buddha's basic object was to lead man to the path of rationalism.
 - Belief I *Ishwara* is not essentially part of *dhamma*. Nobody can prove that *God* has created the world. So belief in *God* as the creator of the universe is *not dhamma*.
 - Belief I soul is *not dhamma*. Nobody has seen the soul or has conversed with the soul. The soul is unknown and unseen. The thing that exists is not the soul. But the mind? Mind is different from the soul. Belief in the existence of soul is as common as the belief in the existence of *God*. A religion based on soul is therefore not worth having.
 - ❖ ***Saddhamma*:**

In the view of Dr. Ambedkar according to the Buddha, *Saddhamma* consists of *Prajna*, *Karuna* and *Samata*. What is *Prajna*? *Prajna* is understanding. The Buddha made *Prajna* one of the two cornerstones of His *Dhamma* because he did not wish to live any room for superstition. What is *Karuna*? *Karuna* is love. Because without it, Society can neither live nor grow. What is *Samata*? *Samata* is all are equal. No cast; no inequality; no inferiority; all are equal.

IV. Conclusion

This is the basic concept of *Buddhism*, according to Dr. Ambedkar. If we this concept of *buddhism* or in the form of *neo-buddhism* pre-establish in our society, then this interpretation of *dhamma* made a casteless ideal society. The mission of Dr. Ambedkar's life was the establishment of human dignity, development of self respect among the all classes, and attainment of self-salvation. This is the concept of man-making. He

was a great thinker who think that the common man to have belief in his potential power, to develop his power and to stand on his own feet. He not only helps to clear the conception of a man but also assist us to show the way how to be a man i.e. how to achieve livelihood.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, *Bouddha Dhamma* not only speaks of the emancipation of the individual, but also of the social and political emancipation of the individual. Gautama Buddha's message embodies the principles of justice, peace, friendship, non-violence, compassion, love, equality, brotherhood and freedom. This social message of Gautama Buddha is *Dhamma* in Dr. Ambedkar's view. Dr. Ambedkar realized that the principle-based society and state theory made in Buddhist sociology, by giving it a clear form and applying it to the state system, could destroy caste-based attitudes and achieve the overall welfare of people of all walks of life. So he presented a new interpretation of Buddhist sociology called *Navayana* and struggled to put it into practice until the last day of his life. It is one of the modern religious movements. This movement works on the basis of socio-economic and moral principles for the well-being of the oppressed. This is a short account of the book "The Buddha and His Dhamma" will be sufficient to indicate. "The Buddha and His Dhamma" of Dr. Ambedkar can be treated as the religious text to the revised version of *Bouddha Dhamma*. This combination contains a mixture of Buddhist literature without any supernatural or tantric or yogic experience. Such a text should be hailed as a universal authority on the revised version of *Bouddha Dhamma*. He wants to eradicate all injustice and inequalities. He also wants to establish social democracy and social equality in India. He is the modern exponent of *Neo-Buddhism*. Dr. Ambedkar as a revolutionary, rational humanist and an intellectual human right activist has made this a very big, contribution to *Bouddha Dhamma* as well as Indian society.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rathore A. S. and Verma A. 2013, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Ahir D. C. 1990, *Buddhism and Ambedkar*, Delhi: B. R. Publication Corporation.
- [3] Pandyan K. D. 2009, *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and The Dynamics of Neo-Buddhism*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- [4] Keer D. 1991, *Dr. ambedkar Life and Mission*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd.
- [5] Keer D. 2016, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd.
- [6] Rodrigues V. 2006, *The Essential Writings of B. R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [7] Shah G. 2001, *Dalit Identity and Politics*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- [8] Robb P. 1999, *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [9] Ranttu N. C. 1997, *Last few years of Dr. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Amrit Publishing House.
- [10] Ranttu N. C. 1995, *Reminiscences and Rememberances of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Falcon Books.
- [11] Kuber W. N. 2001, *B. R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi, Patiala House