

Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

A notable departure from conventional Buddhist practices may be seen in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 20th-century reconstruction of Buddhism, which reflects his dedication to social justice and equality. When Ambedkar saw the institutionalised prejudice and widespread caste system in Hinduism, he looked for a theological framework that would support the contemporary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In contrast to concentrating just on individual suffering, his groundbreaking book "The Buddha and His Dhamma" presents a reinterpreted version of Buddhism that attempts to address modern social challenges. As a result of his criticism of both Marxism and Hinduism, Ambedkar modified Buddhism by highlighting its capacity for social change. Instead of supporting a religion that incorporates moral responsibility, scientific principles, and human rights, he opposed Marx's emphasis on socialism and the notion of a violent revolution. Different from conventional Buddhism, Ambedkar's Buddhism emphasises social equality, democratic principles, and rejects the sanctification of poverty. His reformulation of the Sangha and Buddhist practices was further spurred by his discontent with conventional Buddhist monks, who he believed did not adequately attend to societal problems. The goal of this updated Buddhism is to provide a solid basis for modern democratic and socialist communities by guaranteeing that religious practice advances social fairness and progress.

Keywords: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Buddhism, Social Justice, Caste System, Religious Reform

Because traditional Buddhism was a historical phenomenon that changed and evolved over time in response to the social conditions of the time, scientific advancements, technological advancements, and scientific tempore of that particular society, each Buddhist community has its own unique practices, sermons, and rituals. Prior to 1956, Indian Buddhism was considered extinct due to the small number of its adherents. Being a product of the twentieth century, Dr. Ambedkar received his education and training from some of the most esteemed institutions worldwide. A person who is a member of Maharashtra's untouchable community, endures various forms of injustice and

inequality throughout his life, and spearheaded the struggle for justice and equality for underprivileged groups in society is considered an untouchable. Ultimately, he concluded that religion is the institution that (apart from Marxism) shapes the morality of its adherents. If a religion ignores the elements of justice, equality, fraternity, and liberty, its adherents will unintentionally perpetuate the same practices of untouchability, slavery, hate crimes, and other institutionalised discrimination against the underprivileged and impoverished segments of society. After giving up Hinduism, he spent a long time searching for Buddhism. However, he saw many barriers to emancipating and strengthening the underprivileged in society, so he modified classical Buddhism to reflect contemporary social objectives. Thus, the Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism are distinct from the conventional one.

The caste structure inside the Hindu social hierarchy was the first factor that shaped Dr. Ambedkar's thought process. Caste system was a major influence on his worldview, from his first thesis or essay on it until the completion of his book *The Buddha and His Dhamma* towards the end of his life. He claims that the caste system is a system of graded inequality that, via the rule of Karma and Purity, is upheld by Hindu laws, customs, beliefs, practices, rituals, and myths, and which disadvantages the lower castes on the caste stratification ladder. The whole Hindu society was built on a system of graduated inequity, and each lower caste level on the caste ladder lost privileges and dignity in relation to its just higher caste. Throughout his life, Dr. Ambedkar opposed both Hinduism and the caste system, and mass conversion was the best answer he could find. Prior to a widespread conversion, he thoroughly examines Buddhism by studying all of its primary books. He then picks and reinterprets some of the most significant moments and events from the lives of the Buddha, his main followers, and Buddhist teachings in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.

The significance of the book is demonstrated by the fact that Dr. Ambedkar produced three quite distinct outlines for the same work. The prefaces of *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (BD) that now exist include the first, the abandoned preface of the same work (Unpublished Preface, 1956), and *Buddha and the Future of his Religion*, which was published in 1950—many years before the *Buddhist Bible*—"The Buddha and His Dhamma."

To put it succinctly, the 1957 book *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was based on the framework of the 1950 essay. "I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism," was the most significant passage in the abandoned

introduction. The other two publications are called Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India (ii) and Buddha and Karl Marx. They're written in sections. I want to release them shortly. (Preface, unpublished, 1956) It was written on April 6, 1956, and he completed his book BD on December 6, 1956, the day he passed away. The published introduction of this book only addressed the research issue he addressed in BD; the unpublished preface provided the missing information on the book's relevance and reference point.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India, compiled by Vasant Moon and released by the Government of Maharashtra in 1987, is an incomplete work. The Buddha and Karl Marx was a lecture he gave at the World Buddhist Conference in Kathmandu on November 10, 1956 (maybe it is only a synopsis of the planned material). According to the structure of these works and the information contained in these titles, Dr. Ambedkar compared the legends of Buddha and Karl Marx before deciding on Buddha. In contrast, in another text, he demonstrated the dialectics of revolution using the philosophy, history, and myth of Hindu texts or great traditions.

Who created the world is one of the fundamental issues in philosophy, regardless of religion. Who keeps nature's equilibrium intact? What existed before to birth? After death, what? soul's existence! The soul, what about it? How does the world function, etc.? These questions' responses provide room for God! They establish God's existence! However, both Buddha and Ambedkar disregarded a great deal of these issues and cast doubt on the existence of God. They believe that the earth is self-sustaining due to a number of rules. Among the fundamental ideas Dr. Ambedkar conceptualised through Buddha and purified the doctrine of the Buddha are the laws of relativity, Karma (action), socialisation of the masses (through preaching, teaching, discussion, instructions, through stories and practical knowledge, etc.) for universal laws, equality, morality, human rights, and the dignity of every individual. Buddha himself stated that he is a teacher, not God, and that the path he follows is called Dhamma, or Dhamma, not Dharma. As the Sangha's founder, he proclaimed that he was a member of the group rather than its Shashta, or ruler. Based on the Gana Parishad, he brought the democratic and socialist style of government to the Sangha. He resisted to allow women into the Sangha in order to uphold its decorum, and when he did, he made sure that the standing of men and women in the Sangha was balanced by placing limitations and regulations on women. Ambedkar and Buddha both disputed the holiness of religious writings, arguing that nothing is everlasting and that everything is subject to change. Relativity or the law of change is the only source of truth. The

Buddha spoke Pali because, to them, it is the language of the people, the language of education, preaching, and teaching. Dr. Ambedkar's book, *BD*, is not sacred; rather, it illustrates, via the teachings of Buddha, the road (the Dhamma) of equality, fraternity, brotherhood, and humanity.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, religion and religious instruction need to adapt to the needs of society. If this did not happen in a timely manner, religion ended up playing a significant role in society's decline, particularly in terms of moral and spiritual standards.

From 1916, when he read his first significant study on the caste system in India, to 1956, when he finally decided to convert to Buddhism, Dr. Ambedkar critiqued many facets of Hinduism in his lectures and well-researched writings. It took him nearly twenty years to make up his mind to convert. After considering Sikhism as a possible alternative to Hinduism, he ultimately chose to convert to Buddhism. He conducted a thorough analysis of traditional Buddhism utilising the framework of Marxism and his ideas, particularly historical materialism and dialectical materialism. He draws comparisons between Karl Marx and the Buddha, but ultimately rejects Marx on two counts: first, Marx downplayed the significance of religion; and second, Marx concluded that socialism would be the ultimate objective, which might be attained by the (bloody) revolution of labourers.

To ascertain the reason behind Ambedkar's rejection of Marxian notions of revolution. The question "Why did Buddha leave his home and his community?" is one that Ambedkar answered. And why did he not return to his people and family once the issue was resolved? According to orthodox Buddhism, Siddhartha's mind was ignited by bodily anguish and suffering; as a result, he left his family and set out to find the solution. On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar asserts that Siddhartha was compelled by political circumstances to leave his home and village in order to improve the family and community.

A few days after *Sanyasa*, Siddhartha learnt that Shakyas and Koliyas, the two ganas, had resolved their differences and that, as a result, the original war plot had been abandoned. "Now that the cause is known, why does he continue his *sanyasa*?" Siddhartha reconsidered. Furthermore, Dr. Ambedkar said that Siddhartha declined to return home. He adopted a new goal for himself: Why are people in society hurting and in pain? "There is conflict not only between kings and nations but also between nobles and Brahmins, householders, mother and son, father and son, sister and brother, and companion and companion," was his response.

Nation-state conflicts happen from time to time. However, class strife never ends and never goes away. This is the source of all grief and suffering in the universe. I can now see how my issue has grown. I have to figure out how to resolve this social conflict issue. 1957, 57–58).

In actuality, Karl Marx's answer to the issue—socialism after revolution—was the natural conclusion of his line of reasoning.

Traditional Buddhism began its teachings, problems, and questions with suffering, which they identified as the Four Noble Truths, also known as the Aryan Truths. These are the fundamental ideas or tenets of conventional Buddhism. The reality of suffering (Dukkha); the truth of suffering's emergence (Samudaya); the truth of suffering's cessation (nirodha); and the truth of the route (marg) that goes beyond suffering are these four noble truths. The first noble truth principle, which has to do with pain, suffering, disease, and injury, is an unavoidable fact about birth. What about social hardship if physical suffering was important to the noble truth? Why did Siddhartha go from his abode? A king's son who had everything lovely and pleasant with him departed from home to proclaim that physical misery is real! What is it that is obscured? Ambedkar questioned the notion of physical and personal pain, substituting societal strife and suffering for individual physiological anguish.

While Ambedkar believes that religion is necessary for every civilisation, Marx opposes the need for religion in his suggested socialist system. For him, religion serves as society's unifying factor. He states that "either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality" is what keeps society together, and that "if either of these is removed, society is sure to fall apart." But the role of law is quite minimal in all cultures; its main purpose is to contain the antisocial minority and keep it from upsetting the social order.

By using what Ambedkar refers to as "the postulates and the sanctions of morality," the majority must be allowed to continue its social life. Because of this, religion—in the moral sense—must continue to be the cornerstone of every community. Sangharakshit (year), 112.

According to Ambedkar, religion must meet three criteria:

1. It must be consistent with science;
2. It must acknowledge the core principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and
3. It cannot elevate and sanctify poverty.

First and foremost, every religion must satisfy the fundamental criteria of science. The principles of religion will eventually lose their relevance as a guiding principle of (social) life and may even dissolve and lapse if they are not accompanied by modern knowledge. As a result, the religion will be mocked and lose its respect.

As the three guiding principles of social life, liberty, equality, and fraternity must be recognised by all religions, according to Dr. Ambedkar, who also asserts that "religion will be doomed unless a religion recognises these three fundamentals of social life."

The third issue with religion is sanctification and ennobled poverty, which Dr. Ambedkar seeks to disprove using this idea. The reason is because many Indians believe that begging is their religious prerogative, and Indian religion not only mystifies and justifies poverty and beggary, but it also institutionalises these practices forcefully through the laws of Karma and the soul. The custom of begging is still in place. Karma and the concept of a soul are rejected by both Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was a fervent supporter of justice, morality, equality, liberty, and fraternity in the social, political, and religious spheres of society. This intellectual connection may be seen in the religion he rebuilt for the contemporary world.

Regarding the part played by the Buddha's Bhikku Sangha (Monk Community), Dr. Ambedkar was not pleased. He thought that the Sangha had failed to carry out the noble mission of social labour that the Buddha had advocated. According to Buddha, a monk's primary duty is to serve the general public by preaching, teaching, counselling, and advising them in accordance with their needs. To do this, a monk must be well-versed in the science, technology, social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of the community in question. A monk who has no good reason to hurt the teachings of the Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar said, "If the Bhikku is only a perfect man, he is of no use to the propagation of Buddhism because though a perfect man, he is a selfish man," in the introduction to *The Buddha and his Dhamma*. However, if he is a social worker, he could end up being Buddhism's best chance. (1956). According to him, this is the question of Buddhism's future, and if you are familiar with history, this is the response to the query, "Why did Buddhism lose ground in the Indian subcontinent?" Due to the aforementioned information, Dr. Ambedkar was deeply dissatisfied with conventional Buddhist monks and desired the reconstruction of the Sangha.

In summary, Dr. Ambedkar revived Buddhism during the 20th century, faced off Marxism, and demonstrated that religion is an integral component of society—a certain type of religion is still required under socialism. The type of religion practiced in any contemporary democratic or socialist nation differs greatly.

Ambedkar created religion for the twenty-first century, incorporating all contemporary principles such as the Law of Karma, often known as relativity,

- Tempore scientifica,

-Individualism combined with a sense of community, empathy,

Democratic principles include human rights, equality, fraternity, brotherhood, and equal chances. -

Rationality; - Morality founded on accountability and human rights;

- Criticised the role of poverty and begging in religion, etc.

Thus, Ambedkar expressed his religious worldview.

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