

PHILOSOPHICAL ENGAGEMENT OF BUDDHISM IN INDIAN MODERNITY

Dr. Alok Kumar Verma¹

Assistant Professor

Samrat Ashok Subharti School of Buddhist Studies

Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, U.P. India

Introduction:

Abstract: Today, Buddhism is working on the path of modernism in various ways throughout the world. It works with great reliance on regional and historical contexts, in which the principles stated by the Buddha's teaching. Today, the outline and scope of Buddhism are increasing in almost all countries around the world. As a result, in the world, Buddhism and its teachings are moving very fast towards modernization. Therefore, Buddhist scholarship and the idea of new types of Buddhism are changing society with the emergence of contemporary methods. Similarly, the relationship of political states with nationalism, colonialism, and communism with modernity can be regularly discussed in the Asian context of Buddhism; and their socio-religious presence can be portrayed among others.

In present-day India, Buddhism makes the events established by their nature efficient. However, because of their reactions to modernity, Indian Buddhists have to address their exact socio-ancient and political circumstances. In this context,

B. R. Ambedkar played a very lively role in the emergence of Buddhism in the modern era. He is known as the pioneer of the re-rise of Buddhism in India. He has done pioneering work in taking Buddhism to new heights of modernity. Along these lines, the main purpose of this paper is to relate Buddhism and modernity in today's context. In this way, the major issues of modern Indian Buddhism are reconsidered in this paper for a better understanding of the development of Buddhism in modern India.

Keywords: Buddhism, Reform Movement, Ambedkar, and Indian Modernity.

Buddhism is a living lifestyle, which works on the teachings of the Buddha. The earliest interpretations of the life of the Buddha have been developed through stories, which are dated to the first century CE. In the form of a story that is quite decorated with some examples, these texts also give contradictory details of some events. However, these texts are important for the Buddhist way of life, which is why the current challenges are interested in separating myth from truth. Today, the picture society has of the ancient Buddha is based on what scholars have inferred from a combination of early Buddhist sources, archaeological evidence, and famous historical figures. It is the best way to know Buddha and Buddhism.

It has been the tradition of Indian society that, the history of the formation of the Buddhist canon is largely obscure to modern scholarship. Western scholars have traditionally considered the early parts of the 'Pali Canon' to be the maximum authoritative and reliable source for knowledge of early Buddhism. It has been given the complex history of those texts; people need to be wary of attempts to derive a better or unique form of Buddhism from canonical sources. This approach has significantly inspired the presentation of Buddhism in present-day scholarship, in which it is normal to stress the plurality of Buddhist thought and behavior (Ura, 2012: Pp. 13–16).

Buddhism brings with it modernity in various ways. The regional and historical contexts have a very important place in it. Therefore, Buddhist scholarship and Buddhism are moving to new heights in contemporary times. The relationship of political states with nationalism, colonialism, and communism with

¹Dr. Alok Kumar Verma, Assistant Professor at Samrat Ashok Subharti School of Buddhist Studies, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, U.P. India. 250005.

Email Id: Alokcug007@gmail.com, alok9630@gmail.com, Contact No: 08460887342, 08707484725

modernity has been regularly discussed in the Asian context of Buddhism; and their socio-religious presence has been special among others (Coleman, 2001: Pp. 35–36). Buddhism is a mass movement, which has undertaken institutional reform, social reform, and culturally advancing in the society. In present-day India, Buddhism analyzed many incidents, and, their response to modernity, has served Indian Buddhists to address their exact social and political circumstances (Ibid).

The earliest preacher of Buddhism has been from faith. Many propagandists came out to spread Buddhism in India, who went to Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Tibet, Korea, and Japan, etc. and propagated Buddhism. Along with this, many Buddhist monks went to the west to propagate Buddhism and spread the message of Buddhism there. Today, Buddhism is spreading very fast in almost all over Asia, due to which a new thought is arising in the society. Therefore, today intelligence has reached its zenith in the entire world (Etienne, 1988: Pp. 36–37). That is why the spread of Buddhism in the West is very special because this transmission is taking place in the context of globalization in the context of the large-scale Asian diaspora in the West. As a result, a very important event that we see in the modernity of Buddhism is moving very rapidly through the spread of the West. It is a better reflection of Western thought, due to which intelligence is moving very rapidly towards modernity.

Concept of Buddhism and Modernity:

There are many important points that are relevant to Buddhism and modernity. These are the following:

1. Economic Modernity

Economic modernism has been used primarily in Buddhism as Buddhist reform movements of the contemporary era. It is beneficial to analyze situations that may be involved in the development of this profound current understanding of the world. Today, the processes of urbanization are moving towards political centralization all over the world, due to which it is becoming very necessary to adapt to the economy. The economy started in Buddhism in the sixth century BC in northern India. This was an extreme change that came to affect society. This change was very essential to the ideological framework as a religious conversion. In this sense, Buddhism can be understood as the evaluation of a new request. For example, money can be associated with simplicity and the idea of '*Dhamma*' (McMahon, 2004: Pp. 9–10).

Therefore, money is comparable to austerity in a way, because it represents the hardening of work, and, to the extent that society cannot run without its medium. Sufficient desires can be fulfilled in society by money. In the same way, money is identified with the idea of '*Dhamma*', like '*Dhamma*', every monetary communication work, dissects reality in relation to goods. Similarly, intelligence has begun to serve as a way of all-inclusive convertibility in modern society for the improvement of the economy, which can be seen as a change in today's society (Givel, 2015: Pp. 18).

Similarly, modernization in the world can be differentiated from that of a common Asian country with a Southeast Asian country. Therefore, the validity of this part of Buddhism is playing an important role in the development of the society. In this way, society can play a leading role in the Buddhist-based framework. In this way, people can be regularly tested daily to protect their existence that is why everyone in intellect is working for their livelihood. Thus, Buddhism has been always working to lead the society towards progress. In today's era, society is moving very fast towards modernity, the principles of intelligence are playing its role very well in this. Therefore, today, Buddhism is working in the development of each area throughout the world (McMahon, 2004: Pp. 16–17).

2. Educational Modernity

In the field of education, Buddhism has advanced its philosophical principles at an institutional level very well. Today, the teachings of Buddhism are being followed all over the world, this indicates Buddhist historicity. Many attempts were made to isolate it, but intelligence continues on its path. At present, the Buddha's teachings are on the path where the path is open for all sections of the society. This is also said in the Buddha '*Sangha*'. Another notable feature of the Buddha Association is that regulatory positions could not be achieved at a fundamental level, which is why '*Monks*' was given the assurance of restraint. It contains practically every single guideline (Nelsojn, 2017: Pp. 16-20).

3. Subjectivity and Intentionality

In Buddhism, the criticism of the ritual practices, especially of the wasteful expenditure has been a central part of modernization. Buddhism has been an effort to move the religious practices from the material world and towards a realm of the spiritual world. It has frequently focused on the domain of morality in modernity. These

are all linked to the subjectivity and intentionally in Buddhism

4. Buddhism and Peace Building

Peace is the basic strand of human civilization. Without the ideals of peace, human civilization cannot exist and human civilization will become meaningless without peace. Though in different phases in human history peace has been disturbed by different forms of war and violence, but later on peace has been restored with the realization that without peace human civilization will be extinct. Peace is also an individual in nature. To be successful as an individual people need to be internally at peace with themselves.

Therefore, peace has a very essential and significant role in human life and human civilization. Peace has also tremendous ramifications in the animal world. In view of the modern world scenario, which has been marred by colonialism, two world wars, cold war, religious confusion and sometimes barbarism, crumbling down of ethics and morals, etc. peace has held the only light. Peace has been restored through agreements and engagements. In this present day scenario which is governed by capitalist pursuits, psychological breaking down of individuals, etc. a relook at the gospel of peace and the tradition of peace needs to be made (Birodkar, 1998: Pp. 7-11). As Haynes observes:

“Peace is one of the important aspects of any developed country. Without peace, no country can develop, whether economically, socially, or politically. ...Peace is essential for social harmony, economic equality, and political phenomena. The spiritual and religious leaders like Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama were lovers of peace and they considered it an essential part of any society. There are some people, who interact with those who may dislike and be jealous of them, but still, they try to maintain peace. Many philosophical, religious, and cultural traditions have mentioned the peace in its positive and negative sense” (Haynes, 2009: 52-75).

So, without peace, no country can progress in this present day world scenario. Peace can be conceptualized in terms of political stability, economic security, social

equality and justice, and the sharing of love among human beings. ‘Love your neighbor’ should be the marking principle of the countries of the world, which will help in the establishment of peace among the comity of nations (Der-Ian Yeh, 2006: Pp. 91-112).

The Modern Western Variation of Buddhism:

In the early times, there was some complexity at the beginning of the spread of Buddhism in the West, but after some time, Buddhism made a distinct identity in the society through its teachings. As Western orientalist, non-secular seekers, historians, and philosophers come from all over Asia. Although these begin after the sunrise of the 19th century, it also introduces the third distinguishing feature of the current incarnation of Buddhism. With this, Buddhism has spread to the West (Garfield, 2015: Pp. 48). Therefore today, Buddhism remains in the whole world. Intelligence deals with the concept of modernism in a near contradictory way. The representation of Buddhism in contemporary form, as recently as technology, as ecological, has been concerned with human rights as well as a continuous trope in the reform of Buddhism in the feminist West. For this reason, intelligence in present-day Asia is at its zenith (Park, 2010: Pp. 15). Therefore, the Western countries adopted Buddhist ideas at the same time, which is the deep tension that runs through Buddhism nowadays. It is heavily represented within the West (McMahon, 2012: Pp. 19–20).

It has been a reflection of Buddhism through the West in the context of modern globalization (Siderits, 2007). In these lines, educational Buddhist studies have had a wide impact on the fabric of technology in the modern-day student due to the other way of teaching. It is an attempt to see humans in many traditional Buddhist cultures. Contemporary scholars go for consciousness on a kind of philosophical and historical perfection (Chetna: 1995: Pp. 36). The Dalai Lama teaches quantum mechanics on a regular basis. When he talks about the character of ideas, he will often refer to events in focus studies or neuroscience. These ideas and examples derive directly from the contemporary lab of Buddhism using modernity, which is its main purpose (Richard, 2009: pp. 47–48).

The Difficulty of Truthfulness in Modernity:

The spread of Buddhism in Europe and the revival of Buddhism in India took place around the same time. It is a well-known reality that Europeans have played an

important role in encouraging the revival of Buddhism in India. The social lifestyle derived from the historical Buddhist tradition has developed the concept of a judicial and social order in present-day Indian society. Today, the social unrest in Indian society is a tribute to the images presented by the thought stream of Hindus. Therefore, there is a tenuous situation between 'Hinduism and Buddhism'. Therefore, within the minds of scholars there remains a magnificent environment in the political-non-secular sphere, which has an important place in society (Lusthaus, 2006: Pp. 78–79). A historical or non-secular tradition is a deeply scholarly byproduct of members, which furthers one's undertaking, as the heir to that lifestyle to retain the original and unpublished, handed over to us by our families and teachers (Laumakis, 2008: Pp (46–48)).

Today, as Buddhism is becoming more deeply associated with modernity, we can expect this modernist idea of Buddhism, updating new dimensions and self-theory. This attempt of Buddhism is a deeply innovative culture for the Buddhist tradition, which can influence its development (Huber, 2008: Pp. 13–14). Hence much can be said about the current approach, that the most valuable qualities are available within Buddhist culture, which can consistently show the way to a theoretically revolutionary and successful social regime (John, and Kitiarsa, 2013: Pp. 13-16).

Buddhism is basically a protective method of all kinds of problems (Gomez, 2002: Pp. 12). Therefore, the modernization of Buddhism requires more modern interpretations of 'Dhamma' to stand up to the challenges posed through modern society (McMahon, 2012: Pp. 5). Spiritual values and beliefs are usually based on the social philosophy of spiritual gadgets. Therefore, if a religious philosophy is interpreted according to specific social agencies or beats of society, then faith itself can be included in the method of modernization (Garfield, 2011: Pp. 18).

B. R. Ambedkar's Contribution to Modernity of Buddhism in India:

Dr. Ambedkar gave a wide variety of speeches at the Buddha and Buddhism. In a speech, he stated, "*I would say that the rising of Buddhism in India was as vast as the French Revolution. Buddhism paved the way for the establishment of democracy*". On 25th May 1950, in Colombo conference, he said, "Buddhism may have disappeared in material form but as a spiritual force it still exists in India" (Karunyakara, 2002: Pp. 59-60). In

1951, he had participated in the 'Buddha Jayanti' celebrations organized by 'Mahabodhi society of India', New Delhi. In 1954, it has become crystal clear that Dr. Ambedkar could embody Buddhism. In BBC broadcast 3rd October 1954 he said, "*My social philosophy may be stated to be enshrined in three words: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, I have derived them from the teaching of my master, the Buddha*" (Shende, 2011: Pp. 51).

In 1956, Dr. Ambedkar made acknowledged publicly his willpower to revive Buddhism in India. He made his followers aware of the Buddhist doctrines by means of his lectures and writings and established that social equality can handiest be available via the route proven through the Buddha (Thomas, 1972: Pp. 49-50). On 24th May 1956, the '25th Hundred Buddha Jayanti day', at a public meeting, Dr. Ambedkar announced that he might embody on 14th October 1956 at Nagpur, the Vijaydashami day. On the morning of 14th October 1956, Dr. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism alongside his more than five lakh fans.

The world witnessed this terrific event as a remarkable phenomenon of mass conversion. This historical event recognizes Dr. Ambedkar as best reviles of Buddhism of contemporary instances and superior the significance of his thoughts and interpretation of Buddhism. He has become the savior of the ignored humanity and opened the gates of Buddhism to them all. Buddhism has given them a new existence. They do not sense themselves humiliated and not as good as everyone. This alteration has delivered them nearer to other Buddhist groups of the arena (Shende, 2011: Pp. 16).

In the revival proposal of Buddhism, Ambedkar has demonstrated a very important position. Even, reformist intellectuals have attempted to renew Buddhism and have successfully attempted to fit into the social and cultural milieu of cutting-edge life (Sangharakshita, 1986: Pp. 14). Being the father of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar's contribution to modern Buddhism is very meaningful. Ambedkar's non-public philosophy is derived from the simple beliefs of Buddhism. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution is the first category of Ambedkar's contribution to Buddhism in modern India (DeshRaj, 2010: Pp. 8-9). The Buddha spent his entire lifestyle on the provider of humanity. Understanding love reflects the essence of Buddhism, his life is a real example in itself, which has to be lived on this cosmic in order to gain expertise and

survive in the bearer of humanity (Ahir, 1998: Pp. 56–57).

In this context, B. R. Ambedkar played a very lively role in the emergence of Buddhism in modern India. He is known as the pioneer of the re-rise of Buddhism in India. Naturally, for those who have an understanding of the modern Buddhist world for their own translation, it is natural that the engagement of Buddhism with modernity is a problem of concern. Therefore, humans have to be vigilant as they will check the engagement that modern revisions will be worked out along with the expected amendments of Buddhism. It will also be accompanied by modernity in Buddhism with the expected changes (Emmanuel, 2013: Pp. 16–17).

As such, human beings cannot forget the difference in the present lifestyle which will have difficulty in importing Buddhism. Today people need to be aware of this as a missionary technique in which the West is largely an affected person, not an agent. As such, humans take into account the ways in which Buddhism will necessarily modernize, they must beware of the rhetoric of authenticity that may cover a reactionary defensiveness among practitioners that is relevant to the relevance of the current era of the ‘*Buddha Dhamma*’ can pose a threat (Sangharakshita, 1986: Pp. 79–80). Ambedkar states that “*Buddhism is a part and parcel of the Bharatiya lifestyle. He said that I have taken care that my conversion will not damage the condition of the culture and history of this land*” (Shende, 2011: Pp. 69–70).

Approaches of Buddhism to Indian Modernity:

Today, around the world, many philosophers believe that the contemporary era, a new era, is an indicator, which can produce humanity’s freedom from poverty, ignorance, partiality, and the absence of happiness (Lyotard, 1984). Therefore, “*Modernity would bring the victorious struggle of reason against emotions or animal instincts, the science against religion and magic, truth against prejudice, correct knowledge against superstition, reflection against uncritical existence*” (Bauman, 1992: Pp. 6–7). In this way, modernization is a universal goal with the emergence of industrialization, economic development, social development, and political freedom. It is all the Buddhist approaches which are working on the modernity of the society.

Therefore, Buddhism has worked on all basic and fundamental areas, which are relevant to modern society, such as social and cultural development. Hence, all these can lead to a unified world system with shared

modern values. From a Buddhist point of view, modernity refers to the constant pursuit of improvement in human life and the pursuit of their progress. Therefore, Buddhism has always worked in harmony with the changing nature of time and place.

Conclusion:

The most important thing that has been important for the revival of Buddhism is the modernization of the faith. Modernization is a continuous process, through which the revival of Buddhism continues. Modernization is a social paradigm, representing social perspectives and programs perceived as modern. Modernization is a type of exchange and a truly high-quality alternative. It is for social exchange because it brings an alternative to the social view of humans. Therefore, these days Buddhism is dedicated to the problems arising in Indian society. Therefore, today, in Indian society at large, Buddhism is trying very fast to overcome the social and mental problems of the average Indians, it can be anticipated that it can succeed in this. Even today, the social outlook of Indian society is similar to the time of independence. Therefore, efforts will be made to succeed in Buddhist teachings, Buddhist broadcasting, and the continuation of Buddhist practices. Within Buddhist cultures, human beings have a continuum of teaching and practice that is constantly changing. People should not go through the path of truth; they should not come in contact with anything that is permanent through that change, which can harm the society. These are the basic duties of bringing modernity into Buddhism.

References:

- 1) Ahir, D. C. (1998). Dr. Ambedkar’s Vision of Dhamma: An Assessment, B. R. Publishing. Nimri Commercial Centre, Ashok Vihar, Delhi.
- 2) DeshRaj, D. (2010). Dr. Ambedkar’s Views on Humanism and Buddhism. Sahitya Sansthan, Ghaziabad.
- 3) Emmanuel, S. M. (2013). A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- 4) Etienne, L. (1988). *History of Indian Buddhism*. Trans Sara Webb-Boin. Louvain: Institute Orientalist.
- 5) Garfield, J. L. (2011). *Buddhism and Modernity*. The Smith College University of Melbourne, Central University of Tibetan Studies.
- 6) Gómez, L. O. (2002). *Buddhism in India. The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History, and Culture*. Ed. J. M. Kitagawa. London and New York: Routledge.
- 7) Huber, T. (2008). *Buddhism and Modernity*. The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London.
- 8) Huber, T. (2008). *Pilgrimage & the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*. The University of Chicago Press Chicago and London.
- 9) John, W. B., and Kitiarsa, P. (2013). *Buddhism, Modernity, and the State in Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan in the United States.
- 10) Kadam, K. N. (1997). *The meaning of the Ambedkarites Conversion to Buddhism and other Essays*. Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai.
- 11) Laumakis, S. J. (2008). *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 12) Lella, Karunyakara, (2002). *Modernization of Buddhism: Contributions of Ambedkar and Dalai Lama – XIV*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.

- 13) Lusthaus, D. (2006). *Buddhist Phenomenology*. Routledge Curzon is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.
- 14) McMahan, D. L. (2012). *Buddhism in the Modern World*. Routledge: London and New York.
- 15) Michael, C. (1983). *The Buddha: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 16) Park, J. Y. (2010). *Buddhism and Modernity in Korea*. State University of New York Press, Albany.
- 17) Richard, G. (2009). *What the Buddha Thought*. London: Equinox.
- 18) Sangharakshita. (1986). *Ambedkar and Buddhism*. Originally Published by Wind horse Publications.
- 19) Sen, T. (2014). *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual, and Cultural Exchange*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, India.
- 20) Seyfort, R. D. (1995). Some Reflections on the Place of Philosophy in the Study of Buddhism. In *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18, 145 –81.
- 21) Shende, S. S. (2011). Dr. Ambedkar's Role in the Revival of Buddhism and its Impact of Socio-Economic Development of Ignored Humanity in India.
- 22) Siderits, M. (2007). *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- 23) Thomas, M. M. (1972). *Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement*. Edited by T.S. Wilkinson and M.M. Thomas, Madras: The Christian Literature society.
- 24) Turco, B. L. (2014). *Buddhism and Modernity: In the Margin of Donald S. Lopez Jr.'s "Buddhism and Science"* Sapienza University di Roma.
- 25) Wagh, S. (2015). *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Significant Role in the Revival of Buddhism in Modern India*. Department of History, Mumbai University, Mumbai.
- 26) Whalen-Bridge, J., and Kitiarsa, P. (2013). *Buddhism, Modernity, and the State in Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA.
- 27) Ura, D. K. (2012). Gross National Happiness and Buddhism. (October-December 2007). http://www.kosei-shuppan.co.jp/english/text/mag/2007/07_101112_10.html. Birodkar, S. (1998). *Hindu Customs in Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism: Socio-Cultural Interchange Communities in India*.
- 28) Der-Ian Yeh, T. (2006). "The way to Peace: a Buddhist Perspective". *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 11 (1): 91-112.
- 29) Barlingay, W. S. (1977). "Dr. Ambedkar and Conversion to Buddhism". *Free Thought Publication*, 7 (9): 144-153.
- 30) Nelsojn, J. (2017). "An Experimental Approach to Buddhism and Religion". *International Journal of Dharma Studies*, 5 (16).
- 31) Givel, M. (2015). "Mahayana Buddhism and Gross National Happiness in Bhutan". *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 5 (2), Pp. 14-27.
- 32) McMahan, D. L. (2004). "Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72, Pp. 897-933.
- 33) Coleman, J. W. (2001). *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*. Oxford University Press.