UNIT: 12 B.R. AMBEDKAR: NEO-BUDDHISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

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12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this you will be able to-

- explain neo-Buddhism as a dynamic force
- describe neo-Buddhism as a religious movement
- analyse neo-Buddhism as catalyst for the well being of the down trodden
- find a link between Gandhi Vis-à-vis Ambedkar in Neo-Buddhism
- discuss the ethico-ritualistic dimension of neo-Buddhism
- explain a distinction between Neo-Buddhism and Emile Durkheim
- describe Ambedkar's vows on Neo-Buddhism

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Neo-Buddhism is a revolutionary social revival Buddhist movement of B.R. Ambedkar. As a revolutionary Buddhist movement, Neo-Buddhism began on October 14, 1956 when Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with nearly 4000,000 of his followers.

It mainly deals withthe social upliftment especially of the Mahar community of the down trodden class in society. Over and above,it is also a movementfor self respect, social equality and justice irrespective of class, caste, religion and creed. Apart from this Neo-Buddhismas a social philosophy is also a dynamic force for religious movement which isbased on socio-economic and ethical principles. Therefore, in a nutshell, it can be said that neo-Buddhism primarilydeals with a movement which is considered a catalyst for the well-being of the down-trodden class in society.

12.3 NEO-BUDDHISM:A DYNAMIC FORCE

It is not wrong to say that Dr. Ambedkar and Neo-Buddhism are synonymous. Dr. Ambedkar was always busy in a mission to uplift the untouchable's communities as a whole. Gandhi's effort to obliterate untouchable or outcasteswas successful after yola declaration. This declaration puts the view that outcastes were rechristened as Harijans. Gandhi put the name Harijans to the underprivileged class for the first time. As for instance, Babu Jagjiban Ram, one of the out-castes, found the status within the Hindu fold. But Ambedkar, who belongs to the Maharas community, finally embraced Buddhism and freed the people of this community from the fold of Hindu-casteism.

Ambedkar opined that Buddhism had given him immense satisfaction and pleasure.He appealed to his fellow Mahars to renounce Hinduism for sociological utility and spiritual demand. That is why he mentioned "I do not want any blind followers. I do not like sheep mentality." (Ambedkars Patriotic Call, The Buddhist Society Of India, Hyderabad, 1978, P.5) Under the able leadership of B.R. Ambedkar the Mahar community embraced Buddhism. He said "Buddhism is the best religion in the World and there can be absolutely no doubt about it." (Ambedkar's Patriotic Call, The Buddhist Society Of India, Hyderabad, 1978, P.14) He asserted thatBuddhism is the only religion which does not recognize caste and affords full scope for progress.(Ibid p-10) To

Ambedkar, “If we have any hope it is by renouncing Hinduism and following the path of the Buddha” and “those who wish to come under the refuse of Buddha should do so after counting the cost, for it is a religion very difficult to practice.” (Ibid P 5) When people embraced Buddhism on 15th October 1956, then Ambedkar’s reaction was that “All I wish today is that you should have faith in me and follow me.”(Ibid P-9) The converse was under the main tenets of Buddhism and Ambedkar together with the Mahar community fought for self respect, social equality and justice. The culmination of this struggle was to embrace Buddhism and to renounce Hinduism. And finally all embraced Buddhism by renouncing Hinduism. Ambedkar and his followers embraced Buddhism on the socio-political ground that if they remain untouchables in Hinduism, they cannot prosper in general and self develop in particular. On the other hand, if they take Buddhism, the concepts of casteism and untouchability will be dissolved and as a result there will be no hindrance or obstacle in the path of their prosperity and progress. So, Ambedkar thought that Buddhism was the best religion for the sake of their Mahar Community.One convert commented that “if Buddha was the marga data of the world, Babasaheb was the marga data of the Mahars.” That is why Ambedkar is still worshipped by the outcastes. So, Buddhism for the followers of the Mahar community in particular and for others in general took a new form that is Neo-Buddhism under the leadership of Ambedkar. And Neo-Buddhism showed a new path of prosperity and progress for the downtrodden people which was considered as untouchable or outcaste in Hinduism.So, it is considered as a dynamic force for the newly converted people into Buddhism. Therefore, it can be said that the tradition or new religious movement in India gained momentum after the post-Ambedkar period due to its liberal setup that there will be no casteism or untouchability in Buddhism (by renouncing Hinduism) That is why, there is no doubt that it is a potential dynamic force inherent in Buddhism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who has put the name Harijans?

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Q 2: Towhich community does Ambedkar belong?

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Q 3: “Buddhism is the best religion in the world and there can be absolutely no doubt about it.” Who said this?

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Q 4: What is the main purpose of religion?

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Q 5: Why was Buddhism considered the best religion, according to Neo-Buddhism? (Answer in about 70 words)

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Q 6: State whether the following statements are true or false

a) Ambedkar’s view is that Buddhism is the best religion for the outcastes. (True/False)

b) Neo-Buddhism renounces casteism or untouchability. (True/False)

c) Neo-Buddhism shows a new path of prosperity and progress for the downtrodden class. (True/False)

d) Neo-Buddhism is a dynamic force of renouncing casteism and untouchability in society. (True/False)

e) Ambedkar was the margdata of Mahar community in case of conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism.

f) Ambedkar has a deep respect for religion. (True/False)

g) Neo-Buddhism is a revolt against casteism, untouchability, and inequality. (True/False)

h) Neo-Buddhism is a socio-economic and ethico-religious movement.(True/False)



ACTIVITY

- Neo-Buddhism revolts against casteism, untouchability and inequality. Do you accept it? Discuss

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12.4 NEO-BUDDHISM: A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

Ambedkar had a deep respect to religion. According to him, religion indicates a meaningful life. Being a non-religious man he acknowledged the importance of religion in life. And he wanted to lead a meaningful life within a framework of religion. Religion asserts the values of liberty, equality and justice. Regarding the backdrop of casteism Ambedkar was fully dissatisfied and he leads to rebellion for the concept of casteism particularly in Hinduism and finally Ambedkar converted into Buddhism. He not only converted into Buddhism but also taught the people the bad effects of casteism that continued in Hindu religion. In this way Ambedkar showed people a new path to the outcastes especially the Mahar community to free themselves from the prevalent system of casteism.

Before being converted into Buddhism, Ambedkar had studied the tenets of Buddhism intensively and participated in the International Conference of Buddhism and afterwards he decided to leave Hinduism. Being a follower of Buddhism, he did not accept the Hinayana School which accepted the four noble truths. Similarly, he was also against the Mahayana school who defied the Buddha himself and which was also contrary to his conviction. By involving the new concept like neo-Buddhism, Ambedkar upgraded the Mahars from the iron grip of casteism and gave Buddhism a new outlook in a modified form with twenty two vows. To Ambedkar, the main purpose of religion is spiritual satisfaction and he added that the new form of religion is not out of this purpose. After the death of Ambedkar on 6th December, 1956 the

movement of Neo-Buddhism, did not stop.Rather it took a new shape and momentum by the co-operation and enthusiasm of the followers because the conversion agenda from Hinduism to Buddhism continued. Some instances can be pointed out:

1) The conversion ceremony was held in Bombay on 20th October 1969
2) Gorakhpur ceremony on 14th April 1970
3) The Gazipur ceremony on 18th April 1970
4) The Patna Ceremony on 13th Ceremony 1971
5) The Basti Ceremony on 30th January 1972

It can be opined that Neo-Buddhism is a strong religious movement with a missionary zeal. It is also a socio-economic and ethico-religious movement. It also deals with spiritual bliss and mundane prosperity.

12.5 NEO-BUDDHISM: A CATALYSTFORTHEWELL-BEINGOF THE DOWNTRODDEN

Neo-Buddhism functions as a catalyst for the well being of the outcastes. As it is said, it is a religious movement, so question arises- how is it a religion without accepting God or a supernatural reality? Neo-Buddhism is a religion in the accepted sense of the word. Without believing in or worshippinga supernatural or divine being, neo-Buddhism indicates that one's spiritual satisfaction and bliss are as important as change of social status, economic prosperity, academic progress and political awareness. It is an all round development of a human being. Again can Neo-Buddhism be conducive to the spiritual welfare and material welfare? Dr. Ambedkar views that there is an element of flexibility in Buddhism which is not seen in other religions of the world. What we see in Neo-Buddhism is that spiritual satisfaction is equally important for the change of social status, economic prosperity, academic progress and political awareness. It is an all round development of each individual. Ambedkar put equal importance on men and women. He views that the

main purpose of conversion was to liberate people from injustice and inequality.

Change in social status: Neo-Buddhism is unique and unparalleled in the history of religions. Amberkar fought for human honour not only for himself but for his fellow outcastes. His struggle was a struggle for temple entry, struggle for equality in education, and struggle for getting equal status in all other aspects. And whatever he achieved was because of his continuous struggle for the right of outcastes. The Mahar community, by becoming Buddhists, assured equality for all and also became free from the grips of Hindu casteism. And as a result they got the dignity, honour and were considered as worthy as other human beings. It was really a struggle or a movement of social equality. Ambedkar attacked Manu for coding the social strata in general and also for placing the outcastes on a low or sub standard. He also criticized Manu for placing women to the status of a non-entity scale. He in his book *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*mentions that even a Brahmin woman had no status of her own even though women of ancient times in India enjoyed high positions as teachers and performers of sacrifices. They commanded respect even from a king. He vehemently opposed the Manu's lawsas one of the prime causes of Women's moral-degradation. He again in his book *Rise and fall of Hindu Women* shows how Buddha was liberal for women and how he gave equal honour to women. He points out that Buddha permitted women to become Bhikkunis irrespective of their origin whether ofBrahmin origin or Sudra origin. He in this context asserts that virginity is not the prime criterion for a woman to become Bhikkuni. There was no restriction in case of joining the sangha; therefore, he made provisions for married, unmarried or even transformed prostitutes to become a member of the sangha. It can be said that Neo-Buddhist talked of giving equal status to the male and female alike. So, this new movement aimed at giving equal importance not only caste wise but also sexwise.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Is Neo-Buddhism a religion without God?

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Q 8: What was the main purpose of conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism? Explain briefly (Answer in about 40 words)

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Q 9: Write the name of a book written by Ambedkar.

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Q 10: Why did Ambedkar criticize Manu? (Answer in about 100 words)

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Q 11: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) Neo-Buddhist talked of equal importance to the male and female. (True/False)

b) Neo-Buddhism was a movement or a struggle of social equality. (True/False)

c) Spiritual satisfaction deals with the all round development of a human being. (True/False)

d) There was restriction in case of joining the Sangha. (True/False)



ACTIVITY : 12.2

- Do you think that Neo-Buddhism has been successful in eradicating the social evils like untouchability, inequality and casteism? Discuss

Ans: .....

- Do you find any distinction between Buddhism and Neo-Buddhism? Discuss

Ans: .....

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12.6 NEO-BUDDHISM: GANDHIVIS-A-VIS AMBEDKAR

There are some cases in which both Gandhi and Ambedkar have affinities and also some cases in which both Gandhi and Ambedkar differ. Gandhi and Ambedkar assert that men and women are equal. They put importance on the eradication of untouchability. But their positions differ in achieving the common target that is the complete eradication of untouchability.Dr. Ambedkar was a champion to the cause of eradication of untouchability. To Gandhi, “Nothing will satisfy Gandhi, till the last vistage of untouchability is eradicated.” (Cf, Kadam, K.N.(Ed.)op cit.p100)Ambedkar imagined a society where there will be no caste and all are would be considered as equal. Eradication of untouchability was the top most priority of Ambedkar. To Gandhi, eradication of untouchability was one of the programmes of removing untouchability, Gandhi considered menial work as noble and therefore, introduced the outcastes as ‘Harijans’.But Ambedkar did not like this comparative and sympathetic ground of the castes. That is why, it can be said that Ambedkar was a true realist and also a pragmatistin a sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes through struggle. On the other hand Gandhi was a true idealist in the sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes or downtrodden class through the change of heart or attitude, not by struggle. That is why he embraced Buddhism and Neo-Buddhism, which was the result of his moderate thinking, functions as a catalyst for the social upliftment of Mahars and the outcastes as well. It is needless to mention that after independence untouchability was considered an offence, according to Constitution of India, Art.17. Ambedkar called upon the people to convert into Buddhism in order to secure theirstatus.And as a result the

Maharcommunity converted into Buddhism and got the social status by leaving Hinduism.

On the other hand Gandhi thought of the removal of untouchability from the framework of Hinduism. Therefore, it can be asserted that Neo-Buddhism as a movement has tried a lot to provide a social status to the downtrodden class especially of the Mahar community.

Economic progress is one of the most important aspects of the struggle of Neo-Buddhism for the Maharcommunity. So, Ambedkar points out "we should progress economically too and endeavor to become independent. I have been struggling myself through out my life to that end. Not only this, I very much desire mankind to become economically strong."Ambedkar felt that poverty was also one of the prime barriers in case of the upliftment of the downtrodden class. According to Ambedkar, this class is deprived of their status, dignity and rights. Therefore,he put emphasis on education for the upliftment of Mahar community. With dedication to this mission, he founded the people's education society of Bombay in July 1945. Besides, he also started the Siddarth College, Bombay.

Political Awareness: Dr. Ambedkar also paid equal attention to political consciousness of the Mahar community and as a result the Mahar community of Maharashtra became aware of politics. Ambedkar viewed that the Mahar should enter politics and gain power for safeguarding their rights irrespective of their caste, religion, race etc. Therefore, it can be opined that Neo-Buddhism is a movement which can help people in all the fields of life. So, in a short form, it is a way of life. Besides it is also a movement of social welfare. And Ambedkar lays emphasis on embracing Buddhism for reviving their rights especially in case of dignity, status in society.

12.7 THE ETHICO - RITUALISTIC DIMENSION OF NEO-BUDDHISM

Ethics and Dhamma are considered synonymous in Neo-Buddhism. Ambedkar points out that "Morality is Dhamma and Dhamma

is morality." Morality takes the place of God in Dhamma, although there is no God in Dhamma. It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own God that man has to love man." (Ambedkar, Dr. B.R. *Buddha and his Dhamma* pp.322-23, 2,3,7) From this viewpoint it can be said that ethics has a vital role in Neo-Buddhism. The *Buddha and his Dhamma*has been considered as the spiritual text as well as code of conduct (needed for the doctrines and ethics) for the Neo-Buddhists. It also helps the people in case of conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism. So, Ambedkar's book *Buddha and His Dhamma*has been considered as the Bible. It emphasizes on social equality and castless society. The greatest contribution by Ambedkar to Buddhism was to provide concise cannons instead of manifold cannon or restrictions provided by other religions. So, Neo-Buddhism gave a new outlook to society by providing or issuing only some cannons which are considered as conducive to taking Buddhism as a religion for conversion.

It can be viewed that *Buddha and His Dhamma* is the Veda of the Neo-Buddhists and Dr. Ambedkar can be reckoned in this case as the Navyas. So, to be brief, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar adopted the teachings of the Buddha and developed them into Neo-Buddhism like Adisamkara who adopted the philosophy of Gaudapada and developed it into non-dualism.

Neo-Buddhism as a movement has given an identity to the converted Mahars. Ambedkar simplified Buddhism which is known in a new-form as neo-Buddhism. There are no voluminous treatises associated with it. *Buddha and his Dhamma* is the only book which we find in Neo-Buddhism.Over and above we do not find any rituals involved in it.The only ceremony which is found in neo-Buddhism is the initiation ceremony. It occurs at the time of conversion of an individual into Buddhism.

The Neo-Buddhist movement is considered a spirit for the downtrodden class in society which is followed up by the Dalit movement. For Ambedkar, morality is the ultimate reality of the Dhamma.

The object of moral activity is to form a good society. Morality is the sum and substance of Neo-Buddhism. The ex-untouchable Mahars have a new society on the basis of the tenets of Buddhism and hence they have attained a new identity for themselves. We can, therefore, say that this religion has given an identity to the converted Mahars.

12.8 NEO-BUDDHISM AND EMILE DURKHEIM

Just as we can make similarities between Gandhi and Ambedkar so also we can find out some affinities between Neo-Buddhism and Emile Durkheim. Anthony Giddens' view is that "Durkheim began his intellectual career with the attempt to find a "Science of Morality". This endeavour led him to sociology, which was to provide a method for such a science. But the formulation of that method in turn led him back to morality, since the moral character of social facts is their distinguishing feature." (Giddens, Anthony, Durkheim, William, Collins & Sons & Co. Ltd. Glassow, 1978, p.63)

Ambedkar also put so much emphasis on morality in religion which is found in the section III ofpart V in *Buddha and His Dhama*. As noted in Buddhism, there is no God and morality takes the place of religion. In *Buddha and His Dhama*, morality is God and God is morality."

Durkheim'sview on society is significant when he says that "one dimension in which society has a liberating effect is in freeing man from subjection to the world of nature, in delivering him from blind unthinking physical forces; His submission to society is the condition of this liberation. In the simplest forms of society, this submission is more or less total. The levels of individuality and autonomy of action are low. In these societies, the simplicity of moral behaviour makes it easy to transform such behaviour into habits, mechanically carried out……custom and tradition have such power and prestige as to leave no place for reasoning and questioning". (Giddens, Anthony, Durkheim, William Collins Sons & Co.Ltd. Glassow, 1978, p. 5)This important saying by Durkheim reminds us that society has a free nature which is

considered as common to all human beings and which has a liberating effect in order to free humans from the status of inequality especially the downtrodden class in society. Therefore, the Mahar community who lives in society will get the same status as enjoyed by others living in society. Durkheim is very clear that the very nature of society will be fulfilled only when people living in society equally enjoy the free nature of society; otherwise the very term of society acquired by its nature will be questionable. If it is followed in society then the Mahar community will be freed from untouchability and ultimately they will get the status as enjoyed by others.

The important question is: can acts be purely egoistic, (i.e., oriented wholly to the self) which have moral character? Durkheim said that they cannot, self interest is logically distinct from moral conduct. (Giddens Anthony, Durkheim, Willium Collins Sons & Co.Ltd. Glassow, 1978, p.63)We may surmise that the 'Hindu society' comprising egoistic individuals as to ensure servitude from the untouchables has been reduced to inequality, though the Hindu religion as Gandhi interpreted, was 'division of labour'. The Hindu religion deviated from the division of labour to the division of castes and it consequently turns decadent and immoral. It must be noted that 'Egoism and moral character are discrete and in chronic potential opposition." (Giddens, Anthony, Durkheim, Willim Collins Sons & Co.Ltd. Glassow, 1978, p.63) Hence a situation arose that the Mahars under the leadership of Ambedkar chose (opted) to leave the Hindu society. Thus, the common usage of Neo-Buddhists that they were liberated from the hell in the sense to get rid of egoism and immoral character prevalent in Hindu Society.

The concept of untouchability in Hindu society leads to inequality. Gandhi interpreted it as 'Division of labour'. It has been said that some egoistic individuals in Hinduism treat some people as untouchable in order to fulfill their personal interest and which in turn leads to the cause of inequality in Hinduism. This view indicates that egoism and moral character are discrete and distinct. By egoistic nature of a human being

we cannot determine the morality of a human being. Similarly, from the moral nature of a human being we cannot determine his egoistic tendency. So, they are not vice-versa.

Therefore, it can be said that both Durkheim and Ambedkar have some affinity in case of upliftment of the down trodden classespecially of the Mahar community from the status of inequality to the status of equality. Durkheim, in this context, points out the free nature of human being, while Ambedkar insisted on the process of conversion to the Mohar community from the grip of Hinduism to Buddhism to get the status of equality, which was missing in Hindu society. So, it can be viewed that the mahars community under the guidance of B.R. Ambedkar was freed from the bondage of untouchability.Coming out of the Hindu framework, theMahars opted for a new religion which is basically dealt with the highest standards of moral codes. Their main purpose was to seek 'an autonomous and satisfying human experience'. (p-173)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: What are the main differences between Ambedkar and Gandhi?(Answer in about 80 words)

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Q 13: What are the three main aspects on which Ambedkar gave emphasis on to uplift the downtrodden class?

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Q 14: Which book is considered Bible in Neo-Buddhism?

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Q 15: What is the motto of Ambedkar's book Buddha and his Dhamma?

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Q 16: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) Poverty was also one of the prime barriers for the upliftment of theMahar community. (True/False)

b) Neo-Buddhism is a movement of social welfare.(True/False)

c) Ambedkar introduced the concept of Neo-Buddhism. (True/ False)

Q 17: Fill in the blanks

a) Ambedkar in his book *Buddha and His Dhamma* says that morality is God, ———————————— is morality.

b) *Buddha and His Dhama*is the……of the Neo-Buddhists.



ACTIVITY : 12.4

- Has Neo-Buddhism been able to uproot the social inequality prevalent in Hindu society? Discuss

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- Do you admit that ethics has played a dominant role in Neo-Buddhism? Discuss

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12.9 AMBEDKARS VOWS ON NEO-BUDDHISM

Ambedkar had prescribed 22 (Twenty) vows and had retained the Noble eight-fold path. And the five precepts and the ten parimittas are also important doctrinal beliefs of a Neo-Buddhist.

- Noble Eight-fold Path:

1. Right belief
2. Right thought and right aims
3. Right speech
4. Right Conduct
5. Right means of livelihood

6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right meditation

- Five Precepts
  1. I shall abstain from harming living beings
  2. I shall abstain from taking not given
  3. I shall abstain from sexual misconduct
  4. I shall abstain from false speech
  5. I shall abstain from indulging in intoxicating drinks and drugs
- The Parimittas:
  1. Sila (moral temperament)
  2. Dana(the giving,charity)
  3. Uppekka (detachment)
  4. Nekkema (renunciation of the pleasures of the world)
  5. Virya (right endeavour)
  6. Kanthi (forbearence)
  7. Succa (truth)
  8. Adhisthana (right determination)
  9. Karuna (Loving determination)
  10. Maitri (Extending fellow feeling to all – friend or foe)
- The three Refuses:

The Trisarana or three Refuses bind Neo-Buddhists with the Buddhist with the Buddhist fraternity all over the world. They are:

1. Refuge in Buddha
2. Refuge in the Dhamma
3. Refuge in the Sangha

The third Refuge, viz., taking 'Refuge in the Sangha' is, at present, a meaningless phrase for a Neo-Buddhist. However, a Neo-Buddhist takes this 'Refuse', both to be in conformity with the tradition in the Buddhist world and in the fervent hope that the Neo-Buddhist Sangha may become a reality.

- The Twenty-two Vows

Ambedkar prescribed twenty two vows for conversion into Buddhism from Hinduism to get a separate identity in the context of Neo-Buddhists within the framework of the world federation of Buddhists. This is unique in the sense that it was prescribed in the Indian framework.

1. I shall not recognize Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as Gods, nor shall I worship them.
2. I shall not recognize Rama and Krishna as Gods, nor shall I worship them.
3. I shall not recognize Gowri and Ganapati as Gods nor shall I worship them.
4. I do not believe in the theory of incarnation of God.
5. I do not consider the Buddha as the incarnation of Vishnu.
6. I shall not perform shradh for my ancestors, nor shall I give offerings to God.
7. I shall not do anything which is detrimental to Buddhism.
8. I shall not perform any religious rite through the agency of Brahman
9. I believe in the principle that all human beings are equal.
10. I shall endeavour to establish equality.
11. I shall follow the Eight-fold path of the Buddha.
12. I shall observe the ten Parimittas enunciated by the Buddha.
13. I shall be compassionate to all living beings and I shall nurture them with care.
14. I shall not steal.
15. I shall not lie.
16. I shall not commit adultery.
17. I shall not take liquor.
18. I shall not strive to lead my life according to the three principles of Buddhism, i.e., Gyan, Sheel and Karuna.
19. I hereby reject my old religion Hinduism which is detrimental to the prosperity of human kind which discriminates between man and man and accept Buddhism.

20. I fully believe that Buddhism is Saddhamma.
21. I believe that I am reborn now.
22. I pledge to conduct myself hereafter in accordance with Buddha's Dhamma.

Besides the existing Buddhist doctrines, the prescribed twenty two vows (22) of Ambedkarare considered the important parts in the context of mass conversion for the flourishing of Neo-Buddhism.

Ambedkar evolved these vows to defend the evils of Hindu society. By going through these vowswe can understand the deep meaning of the prescribed vows.

The first five vows deny the Hindu deities. By negating the beliefs of Hinduism Ambedkar makes people realize that Neo-Buddhism in no way deals with Hindu beliefs and doctrines. The eight vows indicate that Buddhism does not approve of any kind of rituals for which priesthood has become an important and integral part of Hinduism. Therefore, it can be said that the first five and the eight vows markthe total disconnection of the Mahars from Hinduism.

The sixth vow indicates that Buddhism does not admit the transmigration of soul. According to Hindu belief, soul is immortal. After the death of a person, the soul comes to another body and it continues from one body to another. But, Buddhism believes in Parinibbana. It means the total extinguishing or blowing out. There is no soul and therefore, there is no rebirth of that soul. The twenty-first vow involves a new kind of Buddhism that is known as Neo-Buddhism.

The 9th and 10th vows indicate the principle of equality. The outcastes especially the Maharcommunity wanted the status of equality and they ultimately attained the status of equality by accepting Buddhism. Men are equally treated in Buddhism, therefore, Buddhism provides a new platform of the down trodden class to get the equal status. That is why Neo-Buddhism tries to establish equality by giving the equal status of the deprived class.

The 13th to 17th vows imply the importance of social ethics in society. That is why he included the clauses of being compassionate, not to steal, not to utter lies, and not to take liquor.

The 18th vow prescribes the three principles of Buddhism-Pranjna, Sila and Karuna.

The 19th vow indicates the rejection of Hinduismand acceptance of Buddhism.

The remaining 20th vow, 11th vow, 12th vow, 22nd vow and 7th vow are also equally important for Neo-Buddhism. These vows, at the time of conversion ofthe Mahar community give valuable and most significant tips to lead a good life. These vows also provide a separate identity of the Neo-Buddhist people.(in general and for Neo-Buddhism in particular.)Therefore, it can be said that Navayana or Bhimayana or Neo-Buddhism, is a simple and straight faith.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 18: How many vows are prescribed by Ambedkar for Neo-Buddhism?

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Q 19: What are the five precepts found in Neo-Buddhism?

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Q 20: Mention only three vows found among the twenty two vows.

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Q 21: What do you mean by parinibbna?

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Q 22: What are the three principles found in the 18th vow prescribed by Ambedkar?

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Q 23: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) Neo-Buddhism does not deal with Hindu beliefs and doctrines.(True/False)

b) The 9th and 10th vows prescribed by Ambedkar talk of the principle of equality. (True/False)



ACTIVITY : 12.5

Are the vows prescribed by Ambedkar enough for Neo-Buddhism to be a follower of Neo-Buddhism? What do you think? Discuss

Ans: ……

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12.10 LET US SUM UP

- Neo-Buddhism as propounded by Ambedkar is a revolutionary social movement. It is concerned with the upliftment of the Mahar community of the down trodden class. It is also a movement for self respect, social equality and justice irrespective of class, caste, religion and creed.
- Being converted into Buddhism one convert commented that if Buddha was the marga data of the world, Babasaheb was the marga data of the Mahars. That is why Ambedkar is still worshipped by the outcastes. So, Buddhism for the followers of the Mahar community in particular and for the others in general took a new form that is Neo-Buddhism under the leadership of Ambedkar.
- Neo-Buddhism has been considered as a dynamic force for the newly converted people into Buddhism. Therefore, it can be said that the tradition or new religious movement in India took momentum after post-Ambedkar period due to its liberal setup that there will be no casteism or untouchability in Buddhism by

renouncing Hinduism. That is why, there is no doubt that it is a dynamic force inherent in Buddhism.

- Ambedkar had a deep respect for religion. According to him, religion indicates a meaningful life. Being a non-religious man he acknowledged the importance of religion in life. And he wanted to lead a meaningful life within a framework of religion. Religion asserts the values of liberty, equality and justice.
- To Ambedkar, the main purpose of religion is spiritual satisfaction andNeo-Buddhism, a new form of religion, is not out of this purpose.
- The Mahar community by becoming Buddhists assures equality for all and also became free from the grips of Hindu casteism.
- Ambedkar attacked Manu for coding the social strata in general and also for placing the outcastes low. He also criticized Manu for placing women to the status of a non-entity.
- Ambedkar in his book *Rise and fall of Hindu Women* shows how Buddha was liberal for women and how he gave equal honour to women. He points out that Buddha permitted women to become Bhikkunis- whatever they may be, either a Brahmin origin or a Sudra origin etc.
- Ambedkar thought of a society where there will be no caste and everyone would be considered as equal.Eradication of untouchability is the topmost priority of Ambedkar.
- Ambedkar was not only a realist but also a pragmatist in a sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes through struggle. On the other hand Gandhi was a true idealist in the sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes or downtrodden class through the change of heart or attitude and and not by struggle.
- Ambedkar called upon people to convert into Buddhism to be a castless person from the framework of Hinduism. And as a result the Mahar community got the social status by leaving Hinduism. But Gandhi thought of the removal of untouchability from the framework of Hinduism.

- Ambedkar felt that poverty was also one of the prime barriers for the upliftment of the downtrodden class to deprive of their status, dignity and rights. He also put emphasis on education for the upliftment of Mahar community.
- Neo-Buddhism is a way of life or form of life. Besides, it is also a movement of social welfare. And Ambedkar lay emphasis on embracing Buddhism for reviving their rights especially in case of dignity and status of the under privileged class in society.
- Neo-Buddhism gave a new outlook to society by providing or issuing only some cannons which are considered as conducive to taking Buddhism as a religion for conversion.
- Neo-Buddhism as a movement gives an identity to the converted Mahars. Ambedkar simplified Buddhism into simple which is known in a new-form as neo-Buddhism.
- The Neo-Buddhist movement has been considered as a spirit for the downtrodden class in society which is followed up by the Dalit movement. For Ambedkar, morality is the ultimate reality of the Dhamma. (and his belief in Buddhism.) The object of moral activity is to form a good society. Morality is the sum and substance of Neo-Buddhism. And Neo-Buddhism is basically dealt with the highest standards of moral codes.



12.11 FURTHER READING

Pandyan, David. *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar And the Dynamics of Neo-Buddhism*. Gyan Publishing House. 2009

Rodrigues, Valerian.(ed.) *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*. Oxford University Press 2002

Naik, C.D. *Thoughts and Philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar*. Sarup &Sons. New Delhi- 2003

Naik. C.D. Ambedkars Perspective on Buddhism and Other Religions. Kalpaz Publications. New Delhi. 2009



12.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: Gandhi

Ans to Q No. 2: Mahars

Ans to Q No. 3: Ambedkar

Ans to Q No. 4: The main purpose of religion is spiritual satisfaction.

Ans to Q No. 5: Ambedkar and his followers converted into Buddhism on the socio-politico ground. He thought that if they remain untouchables in Hinduism then they cannot prosper in general and self develop in particular. Therefore, he insisted on the Mahar communityto leave Hinduism and to convert into Buddhism. That is why he viewed that Buddhism was the best religion for safeguarding the rights of the underprivileged class.

Ans to Q No. 6: a)True b)True c)True d)True
e)True f) True g) True h)True

Ans to Q No. 7: Yes, like Buddhism Neo-Buddhism too does not believe in supernatural reality like God etc. And it also does not prescribe any kind of worship.

Ans to Q No. 8: According to Ambedkar, the main purpose of conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism was to liberate people from the iron grip of Hinduism, so that they can get the status of equality and justice.

Ans to Q No. 9: Buddha and His Dhamma

Ans to Q No.10: He criticized Manu for placing women to a position of non-entity. He in his book *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*mentions that even a Brahmin had no status of her own even though women of ancient times in India enjoyed high positions as teachers and performers of sacrifices. They commanded respect even by a king. He holds that Manu's laws can be considered as one of the causes of women's moral degradation. Over and abovehe in his book *Rise*

*and Fall of Hindu women*comments how Buddha was liberal for women and how he gave equal honours to women.

Ans to Q No. 11: a)True b)True c)True d)True

Ans to Q No.12: Ambedkar was a true realist in the sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes through struggle. On the other hand Gandhi was a true idealist in the sense that he wanted to reform the outcastes or downtrodden class through the change of heart or attitude and not through struggle. That is why Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and Neo-Buddhism functions as a catalyst for the social upliftment of Mahars and all the outcastes as well.

Ans to Q No. 13: Social equality, justice, and social untouchability

Ans to Q No.14: Buddha and His Dhamma

Ans to Q No.15: Social equality and Castless Society

Ans to Q No. 16: a) True b)True

Ans to Q No.17: God

Ans to Q No.18: Twenty three vows

Ans to Q No.19: a) I shall abstain from harming living beings

b) I shall abstain from taking not given

c) I shall abstain from sexual misconduct

d) I shall abstain from false speech

e) I shall abstain from indulging in intoxicating drinks and drugs

Ans to Q No. 20: a) I shall not recognize Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as Gods, nor shall I worship them.

b) I shall not recognize Rama and Krishna as Gods, nor shall I worship them.

c) I shall not recognize Gowri and Ganapati as Gods nor shall I worship them.

Ans to Q No. 21: It means total extinguishing or blowing out

Ans to Q No. 22: Pranjna, Sila and Karuna

Ans to Q No. 23: a) True b)True



12.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very short Questions

Q 1: What do you mean by neo-Buddhism?

Q 2: Who is the propounder of neo-Buddhism?

Q 3: Who coins the term 'Harijan'?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What do you mean by Parinibbana?

Q 2: Why neo-Buddhism is considered as dynamic force? Explain briefly

Q 3: How did neo-buddhism give a new outlook to Mahars? Briefly explain

Q 4: Was Neo-Buddhism a struggle or a movement against inequality, untochability? Explain briefly

Q 5: Is neo-Buddhism considered a catalyst for the social upliftment especially the Mohars community? Discuss briefly

C) Long Questions

Q 1: What is Neo-Buddhism? Discuss

Q 2: Is neo-Buddhism a dynamic force for the upliftment of Mohars community in case of social inequality, untouchability and casteism? Discuss

Q 3: Is neo-Buddhism a revolt against casteism, untouchability, and inequality? Discuss

Q 4: How far Ambedkar was successful in converting the Mohars community to Hinduism? Discuss

Q 5: Does neo-Buddhism function as a catalyst for the well being of the outcastes? Explain

Q 6: What is the main purpose of religion, according to Ambedkar? Discuss with reference to Ambedkar.

Q 7: Did the mahars community get the social status after being converted into Buddhism? Discuss

Q 8: What are the vows prescribed by Ambedkar? Discuss

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