CHAPTER VII

Revival of Buddhism in Maharashtra in the Twentieth Century

The study in hand will not be complete until and unless we consider the revival of Buddhism in Maharashtra in modern times. The conversion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar with his half a million devoted and staunch followers to Buddhism is a notable event in the history of Buddhism. A single person, without showing his people any kind of temptation for money or without taking the help of any arm or making use of any undue method, but only with his clarion call, has converted them to the Dhamma. This is a unique thing in the history of Buddhism and also in the history of the religions of the world. This is really a mass-conversion the world has ever seen. Hence, in this Chapter we are going to study the revival of Buddhism in Maharashtra in modern days.

Revival of Buddhist studies in the modern world:

Although Buddhism originated in India, unfortunately it had completely disappeared and forgotten by the people of India and it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that there was an awareness of her existence and prosperity in the past. This awareness
can be regarded as the beginning of modern period in the annals of Buddhism in India and the modern world.

"According to Buddhist tradition the Dhammacakra Pravartana - the turning of the wheel of law - is said to have taken place three times. Historically, the reference is first to the one which took place at Sāranāth, the second to the resurgence of Māhayāna and the third to the rise of the Yogācāra School of Vijñānavāda. To this can be added a fourth awakening which may be reckoned as co-existent with the period of intensive research on Buddhism in the East and West in the past hundred years. The awakening was sudden and inspired, and it brought about a renaissance in Buddhist studies. This new wave spread through the three continents of Europe, Asia and America, touching almost all branches of the arts and humanities thereby leading to a revival of cultural life in Asian countries and making a world, Buddha-Samajni or Buddha conscious."

To these again can be added the fifth and the sixth. But we will name them Dhammacakka Anu-pavattana, the re-turning of the wheel of law. Of these two, the fifth can be attributed to the conversion of the Great king Asoka to Dhamma and his propagation of the same throughout and outside India and transforming it into a world religion. This can be evidenced in the words of

1. Bapat P.V. - 2500 Year of Buddhism, p. 333.
R.C. Majumdar thus, "As a result of Asoka's wonderful zeal and activities Buddhism, which was till then confined to an insignificant sect, was transformed into a world religion. He forswore the aggressive imperial policy of his fore-fathers and pursued instead - the ideal of conquering the world by means of Dhamma (Law of Piety). In this object he succeeded to an extent beyond his wildest dreams. For it must be set largely to his credit that even to-day, more than two thousand years after his death, one third of the people of the world follow the teachings of Buddha."²

In connection with the revival of Buddhist studies in the modern world some names occupy a very important place in the list. "The names E. Burnouf, Fausboll, Prince Kern, Csoma de Coros, Oldenberg, Poussin, Levi, Steherbatsky and the illustrious couple Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids stand out in glory in the west and one remember with reverence such veterans in the east as S.C. Das, S.C. Vidya Bhusan, Bunyru Nanzio J. Takakusu, D. Kosambi and B.M. Barua. There are also innumerable other scholars in our times who have kept the torch burning and deserve our grateful homage."³

"Until a century ago the word Pali or even such

² Majumdar R.C. - Ancient India, p. 112.
³ Ibid., p. 334.
words as Hinayāna and Mahāyāna were little known outside Ceylon, Burma and Japan. The discovery of Pāli literature, with which Asoka is closely associated, is an interesting story. In the first quarter of the last century, archaeologists like James Prinsep and others were engaged in deciphering Asokan edicts. Pāli chronicle of Ceylon helped them to identify king Piyadassi of the edicts with king Asoka. No wonder that a Pāli book from Ceylon should have brought to light the name of the king who was so greatly instrumental in carrying the Buddha's message of Enlightenment to the island. The credit for this discovery goes to George Turnour who realized the value of the hidden treasures in Pāli literature and published a critical edition and translation of the Mahāvamsa in 1837.⁴

These developments were received with great interest by Western Indologists and an eminent scholar Prof. Vincent Fausboll of Kopenhagen came forward with an edition and a Latin translation of the Dhammapada in 1855. Scholars like E. Burnouf, B. Clough and S. Levis had already published works on the Pāli language based on the few texts that were available. New branches in Buddhist studies were opened.⁵

⁴. Ibid., p. 334.
⁵. Ibid., p. 334.
Apart from the individual works of the scholars in the west, the Pāli Text Society, founded by Prof. Rhys Davids in London, translated nearabout all the volumes of Tripitaka into English and also brought to prominence many scholars.

The Buddhist studies of the western scholars brought about an awakening among the scholars of India and thus inspired by their works they also started to bring to light the message of the Buddha. Ahir while speaking on the point says, "The renaissance of Buddhism can be said to have commenced in India towards the middle of the 18th century when the British Civil Servants started bringing to light its treasures hidden under dust and debris." He further adds, "The systematic revival of Buddhism in India began in 1891 with arrival of Anāgarika Dhammapāla, a young Sinhala Buddhist, who turned out to be the first great missionary of modern Gaya, Dhammapala visited Sāranāth and Bodha-Gaya in January 1891 to see for himself the condition of the Buddhist shrines."

"Coincidently another great event of the year 1891, which Indian Buddhism witnessed, was the birth of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on 14th April 1891, a great personality who was to change the course of the history of Buddhism after about 65 years."  

6. Ahir D.C. - Buddhism in Modern India, pp. 23,27.
"The Buddhist Text Society was founded in Calcutta in the year 1892. Rajendra Lal Mitra and Hara Prasad Shastri worked for the society. Sarat Chandra Das who served the Buddhist Text Society for many years published many unknown Texts such as Bodhicaryāvatāra and the first few Chapters of the Visuddhimagga. The society arranged for the teaching of Buddhists from abroad in the Sanskrit College of Calcutta and thus opened a new Department of Buddhist Studies in India. Another eminent Indian in this field was Satish Chandra Vidyabbushan, a pupil and colleague of S.C.Das. He was the first Indian to obtain an M.A. Degree in Pāli at Calcutta University (1901). In 1910 he went to Ceylon and studied for six months, with the Ven. High Priest Sumangala, the Principal of the Vidyadaya College, Colombo."  

\[Pāli Studies in Maharashtra\]

We get very interesting information about the introduction of Pāli studies in Maharashtra. In this field, credit goes to venerable Dhammānand Kosambi, a great missionary of Pāli and Buddhism in Maharashtra. Dr. Bapat says, "Since the Pāli Text Society had been publishing the Pāli Texts, it was not considered

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necessary to publish them in India too. However, readers in India did not feel quite at home with the Roman characters in which these editions were published. There was a need of a scholar with insight and inspiration who could make the Pāli treasures accessible to the masses. This prime need was largely fulfilled by the late Dhammānand Kosambi, who, true to the Indian tradition, left his hearth and home in search of Truth and a Teacher and built up a tradition of Buddhist studies in his motherland.  

His passionate zeal for knowledge and the teachings of the Buddha took him several times to Ceylon, Burma and distant parts of India. For a while he became a Sāmanera (novice) in Ceylon (1902), and learnt Pāli with the Ven. Sumangala of Vidyodaya College. He spent many years in Burma meditating like a true Yogin. He was first discovered by Calcutta University where he served for a while in 1906, but his desire to teach Buddhism among his own people brought him to Maharashtra. For some years (1912-1919) he was Professor of Pāli at Fergusson College in Poona, where certain eminent scholars of our day had the privilege of studying with him. It is through these scholars that the Pāli language found a place in the schools and colleges of the Deccan.

8. Ibid., p. 344.
and many Pāli Texts were published in Devanāgari editions."

Another scholar, the late Prof. C.V. Rajvade, who died very young at the age of 30, may also be mentioned. He was a worthy pupil of Dhammanand Kosambi. He edited, for the first time, in Devanāgiri characters the first fifty suttas of the Majjhima Nikāya, and the Hatthavanan-gattavīhāravamsa, a small Pāli Text of the 13th Century A.D. His Marathi translation of Digha-Nikāya, particularly of the first volume, shows his scholarship and critical acumen."

Dr. Bapat further adds, "The brilliant contributions of these eminent scholars bear testimony to the growing popularity of the Buddhist literature and thought. They also point to the vitality of a culture which could command the whole-hearted service of so many scholars of the East and the West."

As we have observed earlier the Calcutta University was the first in India to establish a separate Pāli Department and the first to award M.A. Degree in Pāli in the year 1901. The Bombay University was the next to provide facilities for the study of Pāli. In the year 1909, Bombay University started the Pāli Department. "Its

9. Ibid., p. 344.
10. Ibid., p. 345.
11. Ibid., pp. 345-346.
proponent, the renowned scholar Sir R.G. Bhandarkar, had included Buddhism among his Indological interests from 1878, and his associate K.B. Pathak began a lengthy period of work in 1894. Even before this, Bhagavan Lal Indraji had worked with the European scholar James Burges and Jahann George Buhler on western cave temples and Nepalese inscriptions, but full-fledged studies based on Pāli had to wait for a second generation of scholars trained not at Bombay but at Poona by one of the most remarkable figures of the modern rediscovery Dhammanand Kosambi."12

"The Fergusson College Poona where Dhammanand Kosambi was a Professor of Pāli from 1912-1933 was the Principal College Teaching Pali in Maharashtra. Now there are distinct Pāli Department in Delhi, Varanasi, Aligarh, Allahabad, Jabalpur, further in the University of Andhra, Baroda, Banaras, Lucknow, Magadha, Patna etc. adequate arrangements exist for teaching of Pāli. As far as the teaching of Pali in schools is concerned, Pali has been recognised as one of the classical languages for the S.S.C. and Junior College Level throughout the whole of Maharashtra. Also it is taught in schools in Assam, Uttara-Pradesh, and West Bengal. The establishment of the Nalanda Pali Institute (Nava-Nalanda-Mahā-vihāra) in 1951, is also an evidence of an important

place modern India has given to Pali and Buddhist studies.

**Progress of Pali and Buddhist Studies**

"There was some popular writing on Buddhism in western India (Maharashtra) before the turn of the century, and it was this rather than scholarship, led to participation in Buddhism. A school teacher at Wilson High School in Bombay, Krishnarao Arjuna Keluskar, published *A Life of Gotama Buddha* in Marathi in 1898 (and it was this book presented by the author to the school boy Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar which introduced Ambedkar to Buddhism). Vinayak Kondave Oka, also published a serialized life of the Buddha in the Marathi Children's Magazine 'Balabodha' in 1890. This publication came to the attention of Dhammanand Kosambi, the first Indian scholar - Buddhist in the modern period."\(^{13}\)

"Bombay, Poona and Baroda are the active centres of Buddhist studies in western India. The University of Bombay has undertaken to publish Pali books in Devanāgari scripts for the use of the University students under the general editorship of Prof. N.K. Bhagwat of St. Xavier's College. Among the books brought out, there is the *Milinda Panha*, edited by Prof. R.D. Vadekar of Poona."

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 391.
Other works, the Nidānakathā (of the Jātakas), the Mahāvamsa, the Dīgha-Nikāya (Vol. I and II), the Majjhima-Nikāya, the Theragāthā, the Therigāthā and the Mahāvagga in two volumes have all been edited by Prof. Bhagwat himself. He has also brought out editions of the Khuddakapāṭha, the Dhammapada, the Paritta, a few selections from the Jātakas and the Buddhaghosupatti, also a Devanāgari edition of Pātimokkha and the Mihinda Pāṇha."  

"Prof. Dr. P.V. Bapat, successor of the late Prof. Dhammānand Kosambi at Fergusson College, brought out in 1924 a critical edition of the Sutta-Nipāta in Devanāgari characters. He also published Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga a comparative study. In collaboration with Prof. R.D. Vadekar, his colleague at Fergusson College, Prof. Dr. Bapat brought out critical editions in Devanāgari of the Dhammasangani (1940) and the Atthasālīni (1942) in the Bhandarkar Oriental Series. He also translated into English the Chinese version of the 'Arthapada-Sutra'. Another work is an English translation made in collaboration with the late Prof. J.H. Woods of Harvard University, of the famous Encyclopaedic work of the Visuddhimagga by the Pāli Scholiast, Buddhaghosa."  

15. Ibid., pp. 368-369.
Another student of Prof. Kosambi, C.V. Joshi, brought out a manual of Pali in 1916 and served as a Professor of Pali at Baroda University. There are another noteworthy Buddhist scholars from the Maharashtra - G.R. Nandgirkar translated the Buddha-Charitam of Asvaghosa for the Arya Bhushan Press in Poona in 1911. V.V. Gokhale secured a doctorate from Bonn University. R.D. Shrikhande, edited Dhammapada which was published in Poona in 1923 and wrote a book on, 'The Rise and Spread of Buddhism' in Marathi, which was published by Willingdon College in 1929. 16

Dr. A.L. Nair, a medical doctor in Bombay, published a Journal called 'Buddha Prabhā' from 1933. K.A. Padhye continued the publication of 'Buddha-Prabhā' after Dr. Nair's death in 1934. Another Maharashtrian, who held this view was A.R. Kulkarni, an advocate in Nagpur. Kulkarni became interested in Buddhism in 1930 largely because he found the behaviour of some Hindus involved in a temple court-case more intolerant than he felt was right. He began to observe Buddha Jayanti in 1944 and in 1946, gave up his profession to be an advocate for Buddha for a number of years. 17

17. Ibid., p. 397.
"Dr. V. V. Gokhale, also of Fergussen College, has specialised in Mahāyana Studies in Tibetan and Chinese. He published his thesis on the Paticcasamuppada of Ullangha (Bonn, 1930) and many other Sanskrit works.

Prof. P. L. Vaidya has tried to restore the Sanskrit Text of Caturhasataka, Chapters VIII-XIV, from its Tibetan translation. He has written a book in Marathi on the Origin and Spread of Buddhism (Buddha Dhammācā Abhyudaya āni Prasāra, Poona, 1927). He has published representative passages on Buddhism from Pāli and Sanskrit under the title, "Buddhāgamārtha-Sangraha, Lalitavistara and Avadānasataka edited by him in Nāgari Character are also published 1958."

Nagpur University is also providing the facilities of Pāli and Buddhist studies from the year 1930. Number of students had their higher education from Nagpur University. Many of the students worked on various topics in Pāli and Buddhism and have been awarded Ph.D. Degrees.

Marathwada University, Aurangabad, which was established in the vicinity of the world famous Buddhist caves of Ajanta and Ellora, and which can see the Buddhist culture through Aurangabad caves from her

18. Jadat P.V., 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 369.
windows, is far ahead of all the Universities of India and particularly of Maharashtra in imparting Pali education to a large number of students. The Department of Post-Graduate Studies in Pali and Buddhism has been started in the year 1972. Milinda College of Arts, founded by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1950, has started Pali Department in the year 1963. The Professors of Pali Department work with great zeal and teach the subject, to the students as a 'way of life' which can be useful to them in their household life. Hence it helps to increase the number of students of Pali, year by year. In the year 1976, the number of students studying Pali and Buddhism was 1,800. This was the highest number recorded in the whole of Maharashtra. This is a very encouraging event in the progress of Pali studies in Maharashtra.

In Marathwada region another college providing facilities for the study of Pali is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts and Commerce, Aurangabad. Here also the number of Pali students is very encouraging.

Thus we can sum up the revival movement of Buddhism in Maharashtra in the words of D.C.Aahir. He says, "In western India (Maharashtra) the revival movement was pioneered by the two grand personalities namely
Dr. Anandrao L. Nair and Ven. Dhammānand Kosambi. Dr. Anandrao L. Nair founded the Buddha Society, Bombay in 1922. He also built the first Vihāra, 'Anand Vihara' in Bombay in 1931. The Buddha Society popularised Buddhism in western India through its spokesman in print, first 'Buddha Purnima' and then 'Dhamma Chakra', 'Wheel of Moral Law'. Ven Dhammānand Kosambi was the first Indian scholar of Pāli. He wrote several books on Buddhism in Marathi and Gujarati. All his works reflected his zeal to popularise Pāli literature and Buddha Dhamma. In 1937 he built a small Vihara at Parel, Bombay and called it 'Bahujana Vihāra' as it was intended to satisfy the spiritual needs of the workers and labourers living in the area."19

Revival of Buddhism after independence:

After independence, the revival movement took a new turn as Buddhism came to be associated with nationalism and Ancient Indian Culture. "When the Constituent Assembly was busy drafting a Constitution for free India, the question of National Flag and National Emblem baffled the constitution makers. Their eyes ultimately turned towards the Buddhist heritage which represented the glorious days of India under the ages of the Buddhist

19. Ahir D.C. — Buddhism in Modern India, p. 31.
kings. Thanks to the wisdom of the Constituent Assembly of which President was Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Buddhist Wheel of Law and the Lion-capital of Asoka were adopted as National Symbols of free India. The inspiring personality behind the adoption of the symbols of Buddhist culture as 'National Symbols' was none else but Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was the Chairman of the Committee which drafted the Constitution. 20

When the world Buddhist Conference invited Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to deliver his speech at Rangoon in the year 1954, at the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations, he very proudly said that he was representing the country which is not to-day a Buddhist country, but in the past had shown the path of humanity to the world. He further said, "I have told the teaching of Buddha to my six lakh followers. In India the Brahmins have established their monopoly for many years. I challenge any learned Brahmin to discuss on Buddhist Philosophy. I hope, I will definitely defeat him. It is my extreme desire to spread Buddhism in Bharata. I have established Siddhartha College at Bombay and Milind College at Aurangabad in the vicinity of Ellora and Ajanta. Bharata is the only country in the world where Buddhism can be spread early. The Buddhist countries should support this cause. They may help or not but my mission will continue." 21

20. Ibid., p. 33.
Dr. Ambedkar pointed out at the same Conference that "Buddhism from Bharata could not disappear completely. One can see the Pali script "Dhamma-Cakka-Pavattanāya" behind the seat of the President of India. The Buddhist Wheel of Law (Asoka Cakka) was incorporated in the Indian National Flag and that the Lions from an Asokan Pillar at Sāranāth were adopted as National Emblems by the Constituent Assembly. Further he said, that he feels to establish the Buddhist Vihāras at Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. We have to reorganise at this time to gain success in the spread of Buddhism."\(^{22}\)

Thus he cast a spell on the conference with his thought provoking views on the mission and propagation of Buddhism.

The year 1956 marked a milestone in the chequered history of Buddhism. In that year, the Buddhist Era, which commenced on the day of Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha, completed 2,500 years. This historic event was celebrated with great enthusiasm throughout the Buddhist world. The Buddha Jayanti Celebrations of 1956 undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new era, an era of hope, peace and prosperity for Buddhism. This is particularly true about India. "To celebrate the historic Buddha Purnimā in a befitting manner the Government of India, appointed the Buddha

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 166.
Jayanti Celebrations Committee headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of India. Other members of the Committee were Dr. Sampurnanand, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh; Dr. Sri-Krishna Sinha, Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri S.D. Sharma, Chief Minister of Assam, Ven. Kushak Bakula, Head Lama of Ladakha, and the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, was an associate Member. Under the auspicious of the Celebration Committee, the Government of India and various State Governments drew up ambitious programmes. The Buddha Jayanti Celebrations lasted for full one year i.e. up to May 1957. 23

Another very important and notable event of this year, which is to be recorded in the annals of Indian Buddhism, is the publication of the whole of 'Pali Tipitaka' in Nagari script. Upto this year the 'Pali Tipitaka' was not fully available in any script of India. This prime need was fulfilled by joint venture of the Government of India and the State Government of Bihar.

Ven. Bhikkhu Jagadish Kasyapa General Editor of Pali Publication Board, while tracing the need of Publication of 'Pali Tipitaka' in Nagari scripts says, "In Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, the principal religion of the people is Theravāda Buddhism, that

23. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
adheres to 'Pāli Tipitaka' as its scriptures. They have been having editions of it in their own scripts. The Pali Text Society, London, has been able to complete the publication of a major portion of it in Roman characters. But as yet, it is not fully available in any script in India. It is with a view to removing this want that the Government of India and the State Government of Bihar have jointly sanctioned a scheme of editing and publishing the entire 'Pali Tipitaka' in Devanāgiri script, which will be complete in 40 volumes of about 400 pages each. This task has been entrusted to the Devanāgari Tipitaka Publication Department, Nalanda. 24

The monks and monasteries play an important role in any religious movement. It is more so in the case of Buddhism as Samgha is one of the three pillars (Triple Gem) on which this great religion stands.

"The first Hindu to become a Buddhist monk in modern times was Mahāvīra. He became a Bhikkhu in Ceylon in 1890, returned to India via Burma and started living at Kusinagara. Bhikkhu Mahāvīra was followed by the great Dhammānand Kosambi. He became a Bhikkhu in Ceylon in 1902. The first Bhikkhu to be ordained in India was (Bhikkhu) Bodhānand in the year 1914. Ven. Bodhanand was followed by Ven. Bhadant Ananda Kausalyayana in 1928. Ven. Maha


In 1902, the first Buddhist Vihara of Modern India was constructed at Kusinagara by Ven. Bhikkhu Mahavira. This is the most notable thing to be recorded here. Burmese monk the venerable Chandramani 26 Mahāthera joined Ven. Bhikkhu Mahāvira in Kusinagara and after his death took over the Vihara work.

Progress of Buddhist Studies :

"Thus among the factors which were largely responsible for directing the attention of the Indian intelligentsia towards the study of India's past and particularly the study of the Buddha's life and that of the Buddhist religion, were the works of early indologists like Sir William Jones (1746-96) and H.T. Colebrook, who arrived in Calcutta in 1772 and later in 1847." 27

26. Dr. B.R Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in the year 1956 by the same Ven. Chandramani Mahāthero.
27. Bapat P.V. - 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 360.
"It happened that in 1750 a broken piece of an Asokan Pillar Inscription was discovered by British Official in Delhi. Then followed many other discoveries, the study of Asokan Inscriptions and the interest in Buddhist traditions which increased through the years. In 1819 the Ajanta Cave was accidently discovered by two British soldiers. The great stupa of Sanchi was discovered and in 1851 was opened by Sir Alexander Cunningham. There were large numbers of subsequent discoveries. The active work of excavation and restoration of Buddhist Archaeological sites was carried out. The glorious history of Buddhism was reawakened its greatness discovered and brought back to the interest both of India and of the world." 28

In this way numerous Indologist, Archaeologist and Buddhist scholars aroused considerable interest in the Buddhist studies and its propagation in India and Maharashtra.

**Buddhist Revival Movement of Dr. Ambedkar**

Decision to renounce Hinduism - After a life-long struggle to achieve human rights and equal treatment from the Hindu fold to his followers, it is unfortunate to mention very painfully that he had to take a decision

to renounce Hinduism. "For this purpose the conference met at Yeola on October 13, 1935 and was attended by about 10,000 'untouchables' of all shades of opinion. In the tremendously feeling speech lasting for an hour and a half Dr. Ambedkar recounted the plight of the Depressed classes in all spheres - economic, social, educational and political and pointed out the immense sacrifices made by them to secure the barest human rights as members of the same community under the aegis of Hinduism." 29

"He, then, with a rise in voice, exhorted them to sever their connections with Hinduism, and seek solace and self-respect in another religion. Referring to his own personal decision in the matter Dr. Ambedkar said that unfortunately for him he was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond his power to prevent that but he declared that it was within his power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions .......... "I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu." 30

Thus taking the decision to renounce Hinduism, the conference ended and a new chapter began in the life of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. This was the beginning of the movement of revival of Buddhism.

30. Ibid., p. 252.
After this very important conference the letters of appeal poured to his residence at Bombay. One appealing offer came from the Secretary of the Mahābodhi Society of India, Banaras, saying that Ambedkar with his followers was most cordially well-come to embrace Buddhism, which was professed by the greater part of Asia. "Among Buddhists, there are no religious or social disabilities. We guar-antee equal status to all converts. There is no caste distinction amongst us."\(^{31}\)

Christian, Muslim and Sikh leaders sent appealing messages to Dr. Ambedkar to embrace their religions.

Hence again on May 30 and 31, 1936 the conference met at Dadar, Bombay to take a decision as to which religion Dr. Ambedkar and his laks of followers should adopt. The proceedings of the Conference, started in a specially erected Pandal. Dr. Ambedkar then rose to address the Conference. He then in an out spoken way declared that he did not believe in the honesty of Hindu social reformer, who lived in their own caste, married in their own caste and died in it.

In a thought provoking speech he told the Conference, "I will tell you, religion is for man and not man

\(^{31}\) The Times of India - 18 October 1935 quoted in

Keer Dhananjaya - Ambedkar His Life and Mission.
for religion. If you want to organise, consolidate and be successful in the world, change this (Hindu) religion. The religion that does not recognise you as a human being, or give you water to drink, or allow you to enter the temples is not worthy to be called a religion. The religion that forbids you to receive education and comes in the way of your material advancement is not worthy of the appellation 'religion'. The religion that does not teach its followers to show humanity in dealing with its co-religionists is nothing but a display of force. The religion that asks its adherents to suffer the touch of animals but not the touch of human beings is not religion but a mockery. That religion which precludes some classes from education, forbids them to accumulate wealth, and to bear arms, is not religion but a mockery. The religion that compels the ignorants to be ignorant and the poor to be poor, is not religion but a visitation."

of Hindu festivals and to stop visiting Hindu places of worship. Thus this Conference was the confirmation of Dr. Ambedkar and his followers to conversion.

After this Conference again, the Buddhists too tried in their own way to capture his mind towards Buddhism. One of their missionaries, an Italian monk, venerable Lokanatha, who was the founder of the Lokanatha Buddhist Mission, came to Dr. Ambedkar's residence at Dadar, on June 10, 1936, clad in the robes of a monk, carrying a bowl and umbrella, and interviewed Dr. Ambedkar and tried to persuade him to get converted to Buddhism.

But from the very beginning Dr. Ambedkar was inclined towards Buddhism. This is evidenced from his writings and from speeches he delivered from time to time.

"Buddhism, says Dr. Ambedkar, swept the land as no physical conqueror had ever done in India’s history. Within a few generations almost the entire country, especially the masses and the trading classes went over to Buddhism. There were three cardinal teachings of Buddha that appealed to the masses. His gospel of social equality, his demand for the abolition of the 'Chaturvarna' system, his doctrine of nonviolence and his condemnation of elaborate religious ceremonials and
sacrifices which impoverished the masses and created among them a repugnance for religious ceremonies.\textsuperscript{33}

At a meeting at Kamagar Maidan, Bombay on 29th April 1942 Dr. Ambedkar gave the reasons for separating himself from Hindu religion. He said, "When I started on my public career and long thereafter I considered that for good or for evil we were part of Hindu society." I thought for long that we could rid the Hindu Society," of its evils and get the Depressed Classes incorporated into it on terms of equality. That motive inspired the Mahad Chaudar Tank Satyagraha and the Nasik Temple entry Satyagraha. With that object we burnt the Manu Smriti and performed mass thread ceremonies. Experience has taught me better. I stand today absolutely convinced that for the Depressed Classes there can be no equality among the Hindus, because on inequality rest the foundations of Hinduism. We no longer want to be part of the Hindu Society."\textsuperscript{34}

On 10th of March 1948, Dr. Ambedkar wrote the preface to the third edition of the book named 'The essence of Buddhism' written by the noted writer Prof. P.L. Narasu. He thought that it was the best book on

\textsuperscript{33} Kunte B.G. - Source Material on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Movement of Untouchables, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 251.
Buddhism and praised Narasu as a social reformer and stated further, "I am myself working on the life of Buddha and I think I would deal with this matter better in my own book."\textsuperscript{35}

In the Vesaka issue of Maha-Bodhi Journal for 1950, Dr. Ambedkar wrote an article on the topic, 'Buddha and the Future of His Religion'. Concluding his article he said, "Buddhism is the only religion which the world can have because of its emphasis on reason, morality, liberty, equality and fraternity."\textsuperscript{36}

It is very important to note one fact that in 1950, the revival movement undertaken by Dr. Ambedkar took another favourite turn. Hitherto, Dr. Ambedkar was only known as an acknowledged leader of the scheduled castes, the down-trodden masses, as he had confined his attention to their economic, social and political problems only. But in the year 1950 he declared publicly his determination to revive Buddhism in India. In that year he asked his followers to celebrate the Buddha Jayanti in future every year.

In the year 1950, the members of the 'Ambedkar

\textsuperscript{35} Narasu PL. - Essence of Buddhism - Preface.

School of Thought' arranged a programme on a large scale and celebrated the first Buddha Jayanti on the grounds of the Scheduled Caste Welfare Association in Delhi. H.E. Sir Maung Gyee, the Ambassador of Burma to India, presided over the function and Dr. Ambedkar spoke, in his 30 minute speech in flawless Hindi, emphatically asserting that Buddhist renaissance had again commenced in India. "Buddhism came forward to furnish to the Republic her emblem of the three lions and Asoka Chakra over free India's National Flag, and when the first President of the Republic was being sworn in, at that history making occasion, idol not of any of the countless Hindu Gods or Goddesses but that of the Buddha was installed to record the event."37 added Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar made it clear that he did not believe as Socialists and Communists did, that religion was unnecessary. He stated categorically, "I believe that religion is necessary for mankind. When the religion ends society would perish too. After all no government can safeguard and discipline mankind as Niti or Dharma can," Dr. Ambedkar added. Further he said that "the Buddha's religion was based on morality and

ethics and Buddha acted as a guide. An official of the Mahabodhi Society declared the Society's rejoicing over the fact Dr. Ambedkar has joined our ranks."\(^{38}\)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar attended the meeting on May 27, 1953, at Nare Park, Bombay at Vesakha, full-moon-day when the Buddha Jayanti was to be celebrated on behalf of Boudha Dharma Prachara Samiti, Bombay. Before the meeting of thousands Dr. Ambedkar said, "Hindus are afraid to take the name of Buddha but firmly I say that the religion of the Buddha will spread in the world. By which way this true religion will arrive in India, I cannot say today. I will spend my life for the spread of Buddhism. I will move the Wheel of Law."\(^{39}\)

In the same function Dr. Ambedkar spoke on the propagation of Buddhism. "My spread of Buddhism will not be limited upto the untouchables but it will be for those who suffer due to Hinduism. I cannot say how far it will be a success. For the protection of humanity, not to India alone but for the whole world it is essential. I have written a Buddhist Bible to understand this true Dharma. Let us take oath to make efforts for the arrival of Buddhism."\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 367.

\(^{39}\) Lalaya Singh - Dharma Parivartana (Hindi), pp.59-61.

\(^{40}\) Keer Dhananjaya - Ambedkar: His Life and Mission, p. 407.
On January 14th 1955, Dr. Ambedkar at the meeting at Varali, Bombay, explained to the people how he was attracted towards Buddhism in his early childhood. "While congratulating me in the meeting Mr. Keluskar presented me a copy of the life of Buddha. Though I read Ramayana and Mahabharata, I could understand the importance of Buddhist teachings, which was more superior than other books. A new vision developed about Buddhism and could know the difference in Hinduism and Buddhism. He further said, "There are two streams of the Indian culture. The dirty water of Brahmanism entered in the clear water of Buddhism and the Hinduism came up. Let us dig a canal and take out the clear water."  

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had in his mind clear ideas and plans to propagate Buddhism throughout India. He wanted to start a Buddhist Seminary in Bangalore. In an interview with P.T.I. Dr. Ambedkar said in Bombay that a Buddhist Seminary would be started in Bangalore as a preliminary step to spread Buddhism in India. He further added, that the Rajpramukh of Mysore had donated a five acre plot which was situated in between the two well known centres of learning, the Raman Institute.  

and the Indian Institute of Science. He said as a result of his two visits to Burma recently all help - financial and technical from the World Buddhist Mission and the Buddha Sasana Council had been promised. Dr. Ambedkar further added, "The main object of this institution would be to train preachers for propagating Buddhism among the common folk." Dr. Ambedkar said that students would be admitted to the Seminary without consideration of caste, creed or nationality and would undergo courses in comparative study of religions and other allied subjects. He believed that no one could uphold Buddhism truly without studying the other religions also scientifically. Putting forth his plans and ideas he said, "The Seminary would also have a press where Buddhist Literature would be printed. A group of eminent scholars from all over the world could be engaged in translating Buddhist Texts in Pali and other languages into English and they would be published by the Seminary. A large library with books on religion and philosophy would be another feature of the Seminary. There would be also temples and class-rooms and dormitories for students, teachers and research scholars." 42

The new year 1955 opened with the news that Dr. Ambedkar was going to embrace Buddhism. Mr. D. Valisinha,

General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, Calcutta, extended hearty congratulations to Dr. Ambedkar for his decision to embrace Buddhism, in May 1, 1956. He observed that Ambedkar's name would go down in the history as one of the greatest benefactors of humanity. If six crores of people in India, he concluded, accepted Buddhism it would bring new life to the country and enable her to progress very rapidly. ④³

The year 1956, opened a golden Chapter in the life and mission of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and also in the history of Buddhism in India and the whole world. Dr. Ambedkar delivered a speech at the meeting held at Buddha Vihāra under the auspices of the Mahabodhi Society of India, New Delhi, on 5th February, 1956. He said "Any religion that could not provide an answer to communism will not survive. The only religion in my view, that can serve as an antidote to communism is Buddhism."④⁴

A talk by Dr. Ambedkar was broadcast in May 1956 from the British Broadcasting Corporation, London, on the title, "Why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present circumstances." "I prefer Buddhism" he observed "Because it gives three principles

④⁴. Ibid., p. 410.
in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches Panna (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), karuna (love) and Samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither God nor soul can save the society. Marxism and Communism have shaken the religious systems of all the countries. He claimed that Buddhism was a complete answer to Marx and his Communism.\(^\text{45}\)

Before conversion to Buddhism Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar followed the path shown by Tathagata Buddha and proved to be a staunch Buddhist. He named his residence at Dadar Hindu Colony, Bombay as 'Rajagruha', the College he started at Bombay as 'Siddhartha' and the College at Aurangabad as 'Milinda' and the large campus of this college as 'Nagasena Vana'. The building of the College at Bombay as 'Ananda Bhavana'. These are the clear evidences of his faith in the Buddha and his Dhamma.

**Historic Conversion of Dr. Ambedkar to Buddhism**

14th of October, 1956, the day fixed for conversion was fast approaching. He therefore called Mr. W.M. Godbole to Delhi to discuss with him regarding the

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 487.
Arrangements to be made at Nagpur, because he wanted to make the ceremony a grand success. Mr. Godbole was secretary of the Bharatiya Bouddha Jana Samiti founded by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself for this purpose. The B.B.J. Samiti issued a general appeal to the depressed class people directing them to come to Nagpur in large numbers, dressed in white clothes for the initiation ceremony.

Venerable Chandramani Mahāthero of Kushinagar, district Gorakhpur was invited to Nagpur to initiate him into Buddhism. Ven. Chandramani Mahāthero was the oldest monk in India, therefore it was appropriate to have the ceremony performed by him.

He wrote to Mr. D. Valisinha expressing his desire that Maha Bodhi Society of India should participate in the function. He informed him that he had no idea of exactly what rituals there were.

For a week prior to the day fixed for the ceremony, thousands of followers of Dr. Ambedkar poured into Nagpur from distant places.

An expansive open ground of 14 acres at Shraddhanand Peth, Nagpur was selected for the function. A huge dias lined with white cloth and surrounded by a replica of the Sanchi stupa was erected at the north. In front
of the dias were erected two bij pendals on either side—
one for men and other for women. Buddhist flags consisting of blue, yellow, red, white and orange strips fluttered all over the pendal.

Since early morning a sea of humanity had been flowing towards the Deeksha Bhoomi. Everybody put on white dress and was waiting eagerly for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and to see him.

Dressed in silk white Dhoti and white coat, Dr. Ambedkar left hotel Shyam at 8.30 a.m. in a car with Rattu and his wife Mrs. Dr. Savita Ambedkar. She also had put on a white saree. The huge crowds enthusiastically cheered their saviour as he reached the pendal and was taken up on the dias. He stood on the dias with a staff in one hand and the other hand on the shoulders of Rattu. It was now 9.15 a.m. cameramen were busy taking photographs and newsmen with writing reports. On the dias were Mr. D. Valisinha, Ve. M. Sangharatana Thero, Ven. H. Saddha Tissa Thero and Ven. Pannanand Thero.

The vast sea of humanity about five lakhs of men and women from all parts of the state watched the ceremony eagerly, when the eighty three year old Maha Thero Chandramani and his four saffron robed Bhikkhus administered in Pali to Dr. Ambedkar and his wife, who were both
bowing before the image of Buddha, 'The Tisaranani' refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Samgha and Pancasila - five precepts. They repeated in Pali. Then they bowed down thrice with clasped hands before the Buddha statuette and made offerings of white lotuses before it. With this, Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the Buddhist fold was announced. It was now 9.45 a.m. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar now declared "By discarding my ancient religion which stood for inequality and oppression today, I am reborn. I will strictly follow the Eight-fold Patha (Atthangiko Maggo) of Buddha. Buddhism is true religion and will lead a life guided by three principles of Knowledge (Panna right patha (Sila) and compassion (Karuna).

Now Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar became Buddhist by Ven. Chandramani Mahā Thero in this ceremony which was witnessed by the lakhs of people. Now Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar called upon those who wanted to take to Buddhism to stand up. The entire gathering rose up, he then administered three Refuges (Ti-saranani) and five Precepts (Pancasila) and different pledges to the vast gathering. The followers repeated in loud and joyous tones the three Refuges five Precepts and Pledges. Thus nearabout five lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism on the same day and became Buddhist. This event opened a
golden chapter in the annals of Buddhism. This was the great revival of Buddhism in modern times, the world has ever seen.

Congratulating Dr. Ambedkar on this great achievement the Hitavāda a daily News-paper of Nagpur, said "Paradoxically enough, Dr. Ambedkar, a highly rationalistic and scientific thinker stands in line with Emperor Aśoka and others of historic memory as a high prophet of Buddhist faith." 46

Thus Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar set the Dhamma-Cakka in motion. This is the Sixth Dhamma-Cakka-Anupavattana as we have already mentioned earlier, Dr. Ambedkar in true sense fulfilled the prediction of Sir William Hunter who had said as early as in 1881 that, "The revival of Buddhism, is, I repeat, one of the possibilities in India." 47

The day selected by Dr. Ambedkar for his conversion was 'Asoka Vijaya Dasami Day' which marked the great Emperor Asoka's conversion to Buddhism in ancient times.

On the 15th October, 1956 the next day of 'Dhamma Deeksha' Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar addressed the huge gathering of Buddhist Upāsakas and Upāsikas. In his lucid and spontaneous style he said, "I want to express my thoughts on this important question as to why I have taken the stupendous responsibility of the great task of reviving and propagating the Gospel of Lord Buddha. The initiation (Deeksha) ceremony as you all know, took place yesterday. It has been a difficult task for the thoughtful to evaluate the significance of Initiation ceremony carried on a gigantic scale yesterday at this place. Those who have studied the Buddhist history of India know that the people who worked in the beginning for the propagation of the religion of the Buddha were the Nāgās. It was the Nāgās who spread the religion of Buddha throughout the world. These people were predominantly the inhabitants of Nagpur. Through the soil of this city there flowed a river named 'Nāga'. It appears that the Nāgās lived on the banks of this river. This is mainly the reason for selecting Nagpur for this great occasion." Thus he explained the reasons why he selected Nagpur for the function.

He further said, "For the progress of mankind religion - or to be more precise - 'Dhamma' is
absolutely necessary. If we have any hope it is by renouncing Hinduism and following the path of the Buddha. Replying the question, "Why I have taken so long time to take a decision in regard to change of religion," He explained, "The only reply I can give in this that the question of religion is the most difficult and a very serious question. It is a matter of enormous responsibility, really, to educate the people in regard to the habit of behaving according to the principles of the 'Dhamma'. There is no other person who had to shoulder so grave a responsibility, nor do I think will anybody be called upon to shoulder such a heavy responsibility in future. If I am allowed some more years to live, I shall bring the task that have undertaken today to a successful end."48

He further added, "In fact this is not something new nor have we imported it from outside. Buddhism is the religion of this country. It is more than two thousand years old. I feel sorry for the fact that I did not embrace this religion earlier. The teaching of the Buddha are eternal but even then Buddha did not proclaim them to be infalliable. The religion of Buddha has the capacity to change according to times a quality

48. Bhagwan Das - Thus spoke Ambedkar, p. 156.
which no other religion can claim to have."

Speaking about how peace could be maintained throughout the world by Buddhism Dr. Ambedkar explained, "This religion can serve not only this country but the whole world. At this juncture in the world affairs, Buddhism is indispensable for world peace. You must pledge today that you, the followers of Buddha, will not only work to tolerate yourself but will try to elevate your country and the world in general". He advised his followers and said, "You must resolve to contribute at least 1/20th of your income for the propagation of the Dhamma."\(^{49}\)

We can conclude the conversion of Dr. Ambedkar and his revival of Buddhism in the words of Dr. P.V. Bapat who says, "The revival of Buddhism which has been going on in India for the last sixty years, but particularly during the past decade, is one of the strongest and most striking events in the history of religions. Nowhere else in the world does one find a parallel case of a religion being revived centuries after its disappearance, not by the command of a deist, not as a result of foreign conquest, but simply because it is the will of the people."\(^{50}\)

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 164.

\(^{50}\) Bapat P.V. - 2500 Years of Buddhism, pp. 401-402.
Future of Buddhism:

In the context of Maharashtra, India and the modern world we find Buddhism has got the bright future. Universal principles of Buddhism can only save mankind from their sufferings and bring happiness all over the world.

"Buddhism as a rational system of thought" says L.M. Joshi, "sought to liberate mankind from the fear of Gods; as a moral system it stressed the necessity of personal piety and good deeds, as a way of life it trained men and women in the art of self-control and suppressing passions. The thinking minds will always remember the Buddha as a great religious teacher who freed us not only from the bondage of our false-selves but from dependence on the invisible being or beings called God or Gods." 51

Buddhism as a Universal Truth or Law:

"Buddhism does not advocate rejection of the world. It strives to ensure the peace and happiness not only of human beings, but also of animals and plants - that is of all forms of life. Consequently, anything that

presents to be unrelated to the world and daily life cannot be called true Buddhism. True Buddhism cannot reject or claim isolation from the Law of the world"52 says Kogen Mizuno.

**Buddha as a source of Unity**

Buddha should now be discussed as a source of Unity for the simple reason describes Chai-Shin-Yu, "The Unity of the Buddhist community appears to have been based fundamentally on his personal authority. Having been the founder of the community he was its leader and disciples were dependent upon him as the basis of the Dhamma-Vinaya."53

**Buddhism and Culture**

Culture, which is derived from a Latin word meaning 'tilling' can be looked at from three principal points of view. First of all it is the act of developing the moral, intellectual and aesthetic nature of man through education and discipline. Secondly, it is that familiarity with the taste in the fine-arts, humanities and broad aspects of science, that enlightened and

52. Kogen Mizuno - The Beginning of Buddhism, p. 156.
53. Chai-Shin-Yu - Early Buddhism and Christianity, p. 82.
refined state or temper of mind, which such education and discipline tend to induce. Thirdly it is those activities and objects which are the effect in the artist, and the cause in the rasika, or savourer of a work of art, of the enlightenment and refinement referred to. Thus culture comprises the act of cultivation, or education, the thing cultivated, in this case a mental state and the fruits of such cultivation; in short, works of science and of art. Buddhism is obviously connected with culture, in all three senses. Buddhism as we have seen, is the means to enlightenment, and as such three-fold; consisting of Sila, Samādhi and Panna. Culture is part of Buddhism, where Buddhism is there is culture. Whither in the world Buddhism goes, thither goes culture too. This is, indeed, one of the most obvious lessons of the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia, and it is repeated here only because its significance for the modern world in general, and for modern Indian in particular, is not always sufficiently appreciated. Ceylon, Burma, Siam (Thailand), Cambodia, Laos, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ladakha, received with Buddhism not only their religion, but practically the whole of their civilization and culture. 54

54. Bapat P.V. - 2500 Years of Buddhism, pp. 390, 396, 397.
"Propheysing is a proverbially hazardous game; but it may be confidently asserted that if we had the power of dipping into the future "as far as human eye can see", we should uphold there Buddhism softly pacing through the centuries hand in hand with culture and peace. So far as the immediate future is concerned, there is little doubt that the tempo of Buddhist resurgence and revival throughout Asia, as well as that of its propagation all over the non-Buddhist world, will be accelerated with the passing of every remaining decade of the present century. The cultural manifestations of Buddhism will bloom more and more profusely while the grey-green olive of peace, lovingly tended by the ever-stronger-growing hands of the Dharma, will put forth their black, shriving fruits for the healing of the nations in ever greater abundance. If the cultural and political implications of Buddhism in the modern world succeed in working themselves out along the present lines of their development, our two leaves and a bud will soon grow into a whole forest of flowers."

In the above paragraphs we have seen some views of the scholars on the future of Buddhism. Now we will see the views of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on the future of Buddhism.

55. Bapat P.V. - 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 408.
Future of Buddhism - Dr. Ambedkar's views:

Expressing his views on the future of Buddha and his Dhamma Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar says, "The religion of the Buddha is morality. It is imbeded in religion. Buddhist religion is nothing if not morality. It is true that in Buddhism there is no God. In place of God there is morality, what God is too other religions morality is in Buddhism." 56

Elaborating his views on the point Dr. Ambedkar further says, "He (Buddha) taught as part of his religion social freedom, intellectual freedom, economic freedom and political freedom. He taught equality, equality not between man and man only but between man and woman. It would be difficult to find a religious teacher to compare with Buddha, whose teachings embrace so many aspects of the social life of a people and whose doctrines are so modern and whose main concern was to give salvation to man in his life on earth and not to promise it to him in heaven after he is dead." 57

He put a question to the people engaged in propagation of Buddhism and answered the same in the following


57. Ibid., p. 13.
words, "How could this ideal of spreading Buddhism be realised?" He says, "Three steps appear to be quite necessary. First to produce a Buddhist Bible. Second to make changes in the organisation, aims and objects of the Bhikkhu Samgha. Third to set up a World Buddhist Mission. The production of a Bible of Buddhism is the first and foremost need. The Buddhist literature is a vast literature. It is impossible to expect a person who wants to know the essence of Buddhism to wade through the sea of literature." Hence Dr. Ambedkar says, "We should have a handy Gospel which everyone can carry with him and read whenever he goes. The proposed Gospel of Buddhism should contain (i) a short life of Buddha, (ii) Chinese Dhammapada, (iii) some of the important Dialogues of Buddha and (iv) Buddhist ceremonies, birth, initiation, marriage and death." he concludes his point.

While explaining the second point Dr. Ambedkar says, "A Bhikkhu has every thing to do with the world, he again raised two questions in this regard as to what was the purpose for which Buddha thought of establishing the Bhikkhu Samgha? What was the necessity for creating a separate Society of Bhikkhu? He answered these questions in the following words, "One purpose was to set up a Society which would live up to the Buddhist ideal embodied in the principles of Buddhism and serve as a model
to laymen. Buddha knew that it was not possible for a common man to realize the Buddhist ideal, he wanted these ideals should be placed before common man a society of men who were bound to practise his ideals. But there were other purposes, which he had in his mind when he thought of founding the Samgha. One such purpose was to create a body of intellectuals to give the laymen true and impartial guidance. That is the reason why he prohibited the Bhikkhu from owning property.

Ownership to property is one of greatest obstacles to free thinking and application of free thought. The other purpose of Buddha in founding the Bhikkhu Samgha was to create a society, the members of which would be free to do service to the people. That is why he did not want Bhikkhu to marry."

He further adds, "Is the Bhikkhu Samgha of today living upto these ideals? The answer is emphatically in the negative. It neither guides the people nor does it serve them. We want fewer Bhikkhus and we want Bhikkhus highly educated. As is well-known the Universities of Nalanda and Taxila, were run and manned by Bhikkhus. Evidently they must have been very learned men and knew that social service was essential for the propagation of their faith."
Elaborating his ideas regarding world Buddhist Mission Dr. Ambedkar says, "Without a Mission Buddhism can hardly spread. As education requires to be given, religion required to be propagated. Propagation cannot be undertaken without men and money. Who can supply these? Obviously countries where Buddhism is a living religion. It is these countries which must find the men and money at least in its initial stages."

He continues, "On the other hand time seems quite propitious for the spread of Buddhism. There was a time when religion was part of one's own inheritance. At one time a boy or a girl inherited the religion of his or her parents along with the property of the parents. Time seems to have changed. Many persons throughout the world have exhibited an unprecedented piece of courage with regard to inheritance of their religion. Many have, as a result of the influence of scientific enquiry, come to conclusion that religion is an error, which ought to be given up. Thus the people have developed an enquiring mind in respect of religion. And the question whether religion is at all worth having and if so, which religion is worth having are questions which are uppermost in the minds of those who dare to think about this subject."
"Time has come" he added, "What is wanted is will. If the countries which are Buddhist can develop the will to spread Buddhism, the task of spreading Buddhism will not be difficult. They must realize that the duty of a Buddhist is not merely to be good Buddhist. His duty is to spread Buddhism. They must believe that to spread of Buddhism is to serve mankind."

Thus, when we take into consideration the above facts, we feel ourselves very proud that these days are very favourable for the propagation of Buddhism. Hence every follower of the Buddha should undertake this missionary work as his sacred duty. Because the message of Buddha and the principles on which it rests have assumed new significance in the world of today, and the peace the U.N.O. speaks is an indication that the whole world is gradually changing to the beliefs embodied in the religion of the Buddha. Buddhism in this way has been in the past, is at present and will continue to be in future a factor contributing to the establishment of universal peace.

The Buddha's rational approach, ethical doctrines, and his democratic principles, which guide the countries where there is living democracy as a way of life, have secured a permanent place in human thought and the gospel
of peace and mutual understanding are bound to have
greater hold progressively on all thinking minds and
consequently influence the future of humanity.

Thus we can say the Buddha, his Dhamma and the
Samgha have bright future in the modern world, in India
and in Maharashtra, where the population of the follow-
ers, increasing day by day due to the historic conver-
sion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to the Dhamma.

To sum up the above references we can say very
proudly that a century ago the Dhamma of Buddha was
unheard of in the land of its birth, as nearly every
trace to the religion had been effected from the Indian
soil. But today the dried roots of the Bodhi-Tree, but
deply planted under the soil, being given the pure
water and fertilizer by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar through
his historic conversion, has sprouted and has signs of
glorious growth in Maharashtra and all over India. He
has also sown the seeds of Bodhi-Tree all over the
country and the trees are growing with green leaves at
every corner of the country.

From the conversion movement the number of Bhikk-
hus, Viharas, Buddhist Societies and Organizations have
considerably been increased in Maharashtra to propagate
the Dhamma and as a result, it is worth noting that
within a period of five years (1956-61) the population of Buddhist registered a spectacular increase from 1,80,823 it raised to 32,50,227. This figure has further gone up in the year 1971; it was 32,64,223 and in the year 1981, it raised to 39,46,149* according to Census Report of 1981, as the movement of mass conversion initiated by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has been continuing unabated.