CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: CULTURAL CHANGE AS
PRELUDE TO SOCIAL CHANGE:

The sociological study of religious behaviour rests upon the assumption that religious behaviour is social behaviour. What is studied is human beings as they behave in regard to religion and in turn its effect on society or social interaction and social relations. So religious behaviour has concrete effects in this world, even though some of it may be directed to what is believed to be another world. Sociologically, religion is viewed as a part of man's culture and is frequently referred to as one of the major social institutions. The social scientist is concerned with empirical phenomena, not metaphysical phenomena. The study is made on these lines while evaluating the contributions of Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama XIV to the modernisation of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Every society has already developed the blueprint it expects its members to follow in their religious behaviour. Indeed, every society exerts great effort to see that the blueprint is followed rather closely. While it is true that new religions and religious innovations do
develop, it is also true that most of a man's religious behaviour was outlined and planned for him long before he was born. It is a part of the culture of his group.

Religion is man made. That is human beings are involved in the formation of religious concepts and practices. The meaning of these religious concepts are social products and part of one's own culture. 'Meaning', indeed, emerges in the process of social interaction. This can be a result of consensus or manipulative religious mechanism of the dominant group. Even though social meanings mostly emerge out of manipulations of the dominant group, in course of time they gain, wider acceptability since the lack of awareness about the functioning of social system with given social meanings among the socially exploited groups in the society.

It should be recognised that social meanings do much more than merely provide labels or titles or names for different social groups as well as individuals. Social meanings also provide plans of actions. These plans of action can be both secular and religious but actions are social. Once the social actions are given religious sanction, the influence of social action becomes religious. In other words the religious social actions are more effective in influencing the social interaction.
When an individual is labelled as a criminal or an untouchable, low, mean, or impure etc., he doesn't carry just a label but social identity. Apart from that, it also provides, whole society the instructions as to how one should treat this person, or how one should interact with him.

Suppose, in a secular society, criminal or untouchable sort of definitions carry the class discrimination on the basis of rich and poor. Where there is no religious sanction to these identities. But in a religious society i.e., giving religious sanction to social identities like untouchable' on the basis of birth, the religion has to take whole responsibility for the compartamentalised social divisions within its society.

In fact human behaviour is mostly a procedure of reacting to things and people to which the individual has already applied a label. The reactions are patterned by the plans of actions, incorporated in one's own definitions. So it is the definitions people carry around in their heads which primarily determine human behaviour.

Thus, it is important to recognise in this connection, that these definitions are real to the
individual who accepts them. Infact, it can properly be maintained that they are the only 'reality' the individual knows. They are the reality in the individual's life, whether or not these definitions really correspond to the reality. It is so because of social acceptability and religious sanction.

New words and new definitions are constantly being injected into the culture. Most people simply adopt the labels, concepts and definitions which are a part of their religion as well as culture. However history had produced great men like the Buddha in 6th C.B.C., the Ashoka (3rd C.B.C.) and in modern history men like Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama XIV to question some of the meanings, definitions and concepts provided by the traditional religions and societies. They modernised human thought with humanity and rationality as their basis.

Values or moral definitions matter much in the social relations. Goodness or badness is not an innate quality of anything but is rather strictly a matter of human definition. Since values are definitional in nature it is easy to understand why one does not usually obtain easy agreement on value questions. Because something may be good today and bad tomorrow. A practice may be good
for one group and bad for another. For example according to Manu, a true Hindu should practice untouchability and should follow caste hierarchy. Even though such treatment is unacceptable to the untouchables.

So religious behaviour can be meaningfully studied only at the social level. A fruitful approach to the study of religion is through an analysis of society. This is the approach which has been adopted by Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama XIV in their evaluation of the role of religion in general and Buddhism in particular.

Religion doesn't play the same role in all societies. This is because we have different religions with different philosophies and social purposes. The social utility of these religions differ from each other particularly in the context of philosophical dichotomy of Hindu and non-Hindu religions.

Specific religions have come and gone, have changed very slowly or very rapidly, but so far as we know, religion has always been present in human society. It has to accept the fact that religion exists and effects human behaviour. Once we accept this fact, we also accept the fact that the religious belief is not simply the
acceptance of an idea, it is an attitude in human behaviour in relation to each other.

These beliefs influence the decision of an individual in identifying common motives, like what is moral and what is immoral, what is good and what is bad to himself and his social group. The group of believers who share common religious beliefs and practices, also share common values; they accept common definitions as to what is good and what is bad.

Social values are a necessary element of religion, because religion consists of definitions as to how man should relate himself to man. Religion in fact influence the decisions, which decides the direction of society or evolution of society. In other words, religion involves in what type of society should be evolving.

Religious behaviour of man is intricately related to his other behaviour i.e., economic, familial and political. Religion doesn’t exist in isolation, nor does man’s religious behaviour occur in social isolation. In any form of social organisation, religion is one of the important variables to be considered.

In a stable society, the major religion provides
interpretations favourable to the dominant groups and to the maintenance of the status quo, particularly in Hindu society. The essence of any stratification pattern is inequality. Thus, in India individuals at different social levels have unequal chances, among other things, of getting an education, of becoming Prime Minister of India, of ending up in prison, of living to a ripe old age.

The patterns of differential rewards and punishments developed by the group are similarly reflected in its religious definitions. Thus, when a group develops a particular stratification pattern which becomes well established in the culture, it will in the process usually also develop moral definitions describing the system as good and just and asserting that the criteria utilised in differently distributing the rewards of the society are moral ones.

However, if such definitions turn out to be inconsistent due to the rise of contradictory definitions of other religion or religions in the same society, they become disruptive factors which contribute to the disorganisation of the society. The Hindu society in India faced the same problem at different historical periods due to the revival and modernisation of Buddhism.
When Hindu society came in contact with Islam and Christianity, it had faced the same problem of disintegration of its society. With Ambedkar's effort to revive and modernise Buddhism, the Hindu society is once again finding it difficult to face the challenge posed by modern Buddhism, which does not endorse any stratification system or unequal reward system. It is interesting to study the problems faced by Hindu society whenever it faced a new religious beliefs from different religions. This is because Hinduism stands entirely different from other religions on the question of stratification and reward system, since it has a unique stratification pattern based on caste, which is not existing in any other religion.

However, religious endorsement of the general principle of stratification is possibly most clearly exhibited in the definitions by religious groups as to the 'life after death'.

The stratifications of the after life are typically defined as being determined by divine wisdom, and as therefore unquestionably moral and just. A common belief concerning this afterlife is that those with certain qualifications will be assigned to particular strata for
all eternity; they will, in other words, be consigned to
different castes, such as heaven and hell, in a system
without vertical mobility and will remain in these castes
forever..

The whole matter of caste is obviously an
important one to any society which stratifies along caste
lines. Such societies have decided that individuals born
within a particular group in that society merit particular
treatment and must be required to retain their group
identification and the treatment which goes with it
throughout their entire life. The society structures its
various interaction patterns so that the caste
identification is generally recognised and taken into
account by these special patterns of treatment in all
forms of social interaction.

Individuals born into the caste are expected to
find friends within their group, marry within that group,
worship within that group, and die still carrying that
group, identification. Society sets up the necessary
social machinery to enforce such expectations, usually in
the conviction that the preservation of the caste identity
is essential for the welfare of the larger group. If a
society makes it difficult for an individual ever to lose
a particular label or identification, it does so no
grounds which it considers extremely important. Society reinforce caste distinctions with religious sanctification and make them morally justifiable.

Thus, in India, where upper - lower caste lines have been institutionalised, we find that religious definitions provide moral approval for maintaining these caste lines. The situation in India is, an intricately complex one, evidencing great variability. Patterns vary from region to region and even from town to town within regions, with religion endorsing differing and contradictory patterns to provide moral justification for the local position. In many cases justification is secured for both sides from the same religion (read as Hinduism) and from the same set of scriptures.

So, in any pattern of differential rewards and punishments utilised by a society, religion is an integral part. It is involved in the moral definitions by which the system is evaluated, and religious factors may also be taken into account in the differential system itself. Social stratification comes about when norms and values are developed by the group and are arranged into some hierarchial pattern. Religious endorsement to top level norms and values, re-inforce justification on
Stratification patterns. Stratification patterns including the religious dimensions therefore tend to be woven into the large social system in such a way that relative overall harmony is obtained.

Hence, it can be seen that religion provides the oxygen for stratification. Any action of an individual or social group is influenced by a belief system. And the belief systems can be used positively or negatively depending on one's social interest.

The need of the modern society is an ideal religious philosophy with practical solutions to the problems faced by man. What is needed is a philosophy that aims at abolishing stratification. Religion's role should be evaluated and all religious definitions which support discriminatory practices should be abolished.

Indeed, it would seem to be humanly impossible to abolish discriminatory or differential practices. Social stratification patterns are a universal phenomenon and that although great differences exist therein from one group to another and from one time to another, religion in its various forms has characteristically provided moral definitions for all such patterns so as to give them moral meaning for the human beings affected by them.
However, it can be found that differential response patterns. These response patterns are to be justified with religious philosophy. This is what exactly termed as modernisation of religion in this study.

The term modernisation represent social attitudes or programmes dedicated to supporting what is perceived as modern. It is inappropriate to refer to the modernisation of a religion unless we mean as part of a self-conscious, perhaps largely social programme. The concepts of modernity and religion identify the broad range of religious responses to intense and self-conscious social change in the contemporary world. Modernisation is a kind of social change, which suppose to be positive social change. This sort of change is possible, if change occurs in the social attitude of people. Since social attitudes are largely influenced by religion (i.e., religious philosophy), there is a need to modernise religion altogether. Religion must be equipped with modern and innovative techniques so as to confront contemporary problems.

Social and economic change involved in modernisation process. To gain socio-economic change there is a need of change in religious values and beliefs.
This is the main aim of both Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama, to modernise Buddhism. They felt mental attitude could be changed with the change in the religious-beliefs. And inturn the change could be brought in social and economic attitudes of an individual.

However, "it should be noted at the outset that the sociological concept of modernisation does not refer simply to becoming current or up to date but rather specifies particular contents and process of societal changes in the course of national development ... modernity in phislophilical and epistemological discussions refers to the perspective that there is one true descriptive and explanatory model that reflects the actual world".1 Hence both Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama interpreted the Buddhist philosophy in such a way that they not only modernised the Buddhism to make it current or upto date but evolved Buddhist model that reflects the actual world. The Buddhist belief system, which they have succeeded to build up is to call it in weberian terms a "rational-law", which could be used to initiate the process of societal changes for national development.

Much of the world is now engaged in an unprecedented process of social change that seeks to govern itself by rational policy planning. Modernisation operates rather through a transformation of institutions that can only be accomplished by the transformation of individuals - the painfully complex process which epitomised as 'a change of Heart'. Contemporary thinkers recognised that economic development is a high priority objective of every modernising society. Indeed it is not the only motivation for modernisation.

Because, satisfaction of life is the real priority objective of both rich and poor. It is not that rich man or economically, industrially highly developed societies like the west, have no problems at all. The major problem, today, the modern society has facing is that 'rising violent human attitude'. This disturbs the peace and stability of the human life. May be some extent, man sees his life with material development. But he obviously feels unsatisfied with his work and life, since, economic motivation without touch of humanity doesn't provide the ultimate satisfaction.

So modernisation of a society depends not necessarily on economic or industrial development but also
on positive social attitudes of people. This change could be achieved only with change in their religious belief system. Religious philosophy of a society should suffice the 'Humanity' as ultimate goal to be achieved by any individual in all spheres of life. It could be possibly only with change in religious goals.

If the religious goals, again, contradicting reality or the worldly problems and finding ambiguous answers from supernatural powers, and satisfying both exploiters and exploited to maintain status-quo of the system, they are not going to solve the problems faced by the modern society.

The transformation of a society is a question with moral and religious implications. Development depends not only on men's notions of what is possible, but also on their notions of what is good, and on the dynamics of their pursuit of what they deem good, the force of their motivations and the quality of their acting.

The question posed by the modern society is that what course will men choose. This depends on the what kind of social value system the society has. Obviously, social system derives its necessity from economic considerations. However it gets wider acceptability only
with the support of religious ideology. Ultimately it is the ideology of religion which determines the kind of society.

Hence, modernisation of a religion means, the modernisation of a society. Because modernisation is a kind of social change related to the religious ideology.

The current and future development of any society, depends and will continue to depend on what men in that particular society think and feel and choose, and with what quality they act. Infact these are questions which are determined by the kind of religious ideology.

What any country, not on paper but at heart, chooses to be, and how devotedly it pursues that choice, will finally determine its future. The questions of human behaviour at this level are religious questions. So the modernisation of a society involves the modernisation of its religious life.

So, the study has proved that human society has been evolving in the cradle of religious environment. And it has been seen that religious philosophy plays significant and effective role in moulding the social institutions.
And the other element of the study is that to discuss the relation between the modernisation of religion and its effects on society at large.

Hence, it can be concluded with the two assumptions that, social system is influenced by the religious ideology and to bring a needed change in the social values there is a need of a change in the religious beliefs. To bring this change, one needs to modernise the religious philosophy. Generally, it is the responsibility of the intellectuals of a society to provide the framework of ideas within the limits of which that society acts. Most of the populace in each case act within the ideational framework of a traditional culture.

The intellectuals of any society are by definition those who formulate and nourish that society's ideology, they are the custodians and extrapolators of its dominant ideas and values. During sixth century B.C., it was Gautama Buddha who undertook this intellectual task. And he modernised the notion of religion and formulated new meaning of religion by emphasising 'Humanism'.

The birth of Buddhism, itself a product of the process of modernisation of religion. So, Buddhism, one
can put it as 'religious modernity'. The philosophy of Buddhism is symbolised with modernism. The traditional criteria to identify religion is 'God'. This is the basic feature of religion in general terms. The modern world carries number of religions either with one god or goddess or many. But Buddhism is a 'Godless religion'. This is the innovation which had born in the history of religions, six hundred years before the birth of Christ. And even to present modern society, this looks new, modern and innovation.

This has brought revolution in the thought of religion. It changed the criteria to decide the identity of religion. It promulgated new values, ethics for human society. It proved religion could be also secular. These are the features, which have brought special place to Buddhism among all the divine oriented religions.

Gautama Buddha, can be called as the first one, who modernised the very thought of religion. Apart from its metaphysical difference, Buddhism has become important, due to its 'Ethics' and social order. The ancient canonical teachings set the Buddhist notion of the good society in definite contrast to pre-existing Brahmanic views on caste and sacrifice. For example, in the Pali Agganna Sutta the Buddha described the devolution
of the present world system and human society in such a way that the Brahmanic grounding of the social hierarchy in ontological and hereditary distinctions was definitively undercut.

To give another example it is proper to mention that, in the famous sigalovada Sutta the Buddha commended the suspension of traditional Brahmanic rituals for the maintenance of proper order in the world, and urged their replacement by the cultivation of proper relationships between parents and children, teachers and students, husbands and their dependents, friends and companions, masters and workers, and religious teachers and ordinary practitioners.

The ancient Buddhist canons also established the basis for Buddhist ideals of morally regulated sacral kingship that came to play a crucial role in the Buddhist tradition. For example, in the Agganna Sutta the primordial devolution of human society was checked by the decision of the people to appoint a king i.e., maha sammata, the great elect, who was given responsibility for establishing justice and adjudicating quarrels. Other suttas presented similar religio-ethical figures, such as the 'cakravartin, the mythical monarch, who set in motion
the wheel of the dharma and went on to establish his royal
dominion over all the earth; and the Dharmaraja, the
dharma - king, who established prosperity, justice, and
peace in his realm.

The next important phase in the history of
countering point in the development of the Buddhist social
ethic, during the reign of an important Indian monarch
named Asoka, who was a Buddhist and a sponsor and
interpreter of the dhamma (dharma). Asoka’s Dhamma can
be called in other way as the new form of Buddhism. His
inscriptions display his conception of the ‘true dharma’,
consisting of basic social morality supported by ritual
celebrations and simple forms of meditational practice.
Asoka held that his people could not really be happy
unless they led a highly moral life. Morality was an
essential condition for true happiness.

Some historians, of the opinion that Asoka picked
up some of the great principles of ethics from various
religions and these principles collectively were styled as
Dhamma. Asoka’s Dhamma for them, therefore, does not mean
any religious system. Nor does it mean Buddhism.
However, they could not succeed to prove, their agrument,
since they neither come up with the list of ethical
principles not the religions, which were said to be adopted by Asoka to frame his Dhamma. It is interesting to note that, almost all of them are from Hindu background and their interest seemed to be, to down play the importance of Buddhism in the life of Asoka.

Asoka’s Dhamma is modernised Buddhism at that particular historical point of period. His Dhamma is undoubtedly the Dhamma of the Buddha. He contributed to the modernisation of Buddhism, to make Buddha-Dhamma, more adaptable ethical-religious system to the society of his age. It was an effort to keep Buddhist tradition in the contemporary value system.

Asoka-Dhamma consists of well-known principles of morality, like Daya (mercy), danam (charity), satyam (truthfulness), saucham (inner and outer purity), madave (Gentleness). It does not have any dogmas, rituals and ceremonies. The Dhamma of Asoka has two aspects - the doctrinal and practical. The practical aspect was emphasised more. He exhorted the people to acquire virtues like charity, mercy, truthfulness, etc. The doctrinal aspect consists of ahimsa (non-violence), belief in swarga (heaven) etc.
One can conclude that, next to the Buddha, Asoka was the earliest teacher of religious humanity and universal morality. Asoka did not in fact enunciate any new principles in his Dhamma. What he did was that he defined, preached and published universal morality of Buddhism. Probably, his was the first attempt at greater level to modernise Buddhism in the history of early Buddhist India.

As Buddhism developed and spread, its ideal of a society regulated in accordance with dharma was realised in a variety of forms. In Theravada societies, dharmic social order took the form of an emphasis on maintenance of the purity and hence spiritual authority of the sangha; on the king as a unique Bodhisattva figure responsible for protecting the sangha and for maintaining dharmic order and justice within his realm; and on the responsibility of the laity to follow the five basic precepts and to cultivate the virtue of giving.

In mahayana and vajrayana societies, the relations between Buddhist ideals and actual social structures were more problematic. Generally, however, dharmic order in these situations took form around a single figure, usually a monarch but occasionally (as in Tibet) a monk. This
figure, because of his status as a pre-eminent Bodhisattva or living Buddha, tended to be the primary locus of concentrated religious authority.

Buddhist social ideals were articulated in one way by those who were integrated into the established regimes, in quite another way by those who sought to overthrow established authorities. Conservative social visions that legitimated and guided the exercise of authority by those already in power have been the norm in Buddhist history. But revolutionary versions of the Buddhist social ethic were also developed in countries all across Asia.

Many of these anti-establishment expressions of Buddhist social ideals were connected with expectations of the imminent coming of the future Buddha Maitreya. This Bodhisattva, often identified with the leaders of revolutionary groups espousing socio-political change for example Ambedkar and Dalai Lama XIV; who are expected to establish on earth a new social dispensation in which prosperity, justice, and steriological opportunity would abound for all classes of people.

Ambedkar’s tirade against Hindu socio-political system, and his adaption of Buddhist ethical system as a means to bring change in the Indian society, represented
anti-establishment expressions of Buddhist social ideals. His efforts to modernise Buddhism had resulted into formation of radical versions of the Buddhist social ethics. That's why he became modern Bodhisattva.

Ambedkar's interpretation can be seen mainly in the concepts of God, atman, karma, re-birth and dukkha (suffering). Ambedkar denied the existence of God. Whereas the Buddha on these questions apparently maintained silence. So Ambedkar's Buddha is certain and explicit. Ambedkar rejected the existence of atman. He rejected the belief in smasara, i.e., transmigration of the soul, belief in moksha or salvation of the soul. He also rejected belief of karma and refused to acknowledge it as the determination of man's position in present life. He replaced the fatalistic view of karma with the scientific view of karma.

According to this scientific view, re-birth as a concept applies only to the natural components of a being. When the body dies, the four elements disperse and live on. While any psychological or spiritual dimension to the concept of rebirth is denied, karma as moral law is acknowledged. It is operative only within one's present life and the general moral order. He interpreted the
Buddha's gospel as essentially social. So the traditional Buddhist vision of dukkha is omitted and suffering is interpreted as a social phenomenon. Man's misery is not just because of desire but is the result of man's inequity to man. Man's suffering is because of social and economic injustice.

Ambedkar stressed a rational, humanitarian egalitarian Buddhism, drawn chiefly from Pali texts. Hindu beliefs and practices and any supernatural Buddhist ideas were eliminated from the Buddhism propounded by Ambedkar.

The more recent efforts to modernise Buddhism have coming from Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama XIV. Historians have held the view that the institution of Dalai Lama represented the ideology of established authority and the conservative social visions. However, the process of making the Buddhist institution as an anti-establishment expression has been initiated by the present Dalai Lama.

He gives utmost importance to democracy and made his intention public to establish modern democratic system on the basis of Buddhist social ideals in the free Tibet. His politico-religious leadership, has immensely
contributed to the evolution of modern thought at both the political and religious levels.

The Dalai Lama's main contribution lies in the principles, like universal brotherhood, compassion and world peace. For him, all human beings are members of human family. Love and compassion is the essence of religion. And peaceful co-existence is the only way for the modern nations to survive without violence. Non-violence is the core of his philosophy. He urged, his audiences to forget their sectarian differences and tolerate each other for the good of the survival of human society. He asked Buddhists to adopt western science and technology while preserving their own moral and religious values. He is, however, principally a religious revolutionary.

Both Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama differ in their approaches in modernising the Buddhism, due to their different cultural backgrounds. Ambedkar is born in Hindu society and being an untouchable he has experienced the negative side of the Hindu social system. So his approach towards Buddhism is very much a reflection of his experience as an untouchable Hindu.

The relevance of religion, as he felt that, for the welfare of humanity but not to satisfy any
supernatural power or not to aim at supernatural world. His main emphasis is on the ethical values of the social system of a religion. Infact, the origin of Buddhism can be traced in the same context.

Hence Ambedkar, concentrated on the two tasks, to modernise Buddhism. One is to understand Buddhism in Hindu social context and the other one is to make Buddhism a relevant for modern society. In both the tasks, he followed the ideals laid by the Buddha. In other words whatever new angles, he provided to study the Buddhist philosophy are not different from the basic philosophy of the Buddha. However, he modernised the Buddhism and made it more relevant to modern society.

He differentiated Hinduism with rest of the religions on the question of socio-ethical system. He kept Buddhism under the category of non-theistic religion, making it a different one from rest of the major religions. This is the basis of his approach for the study of Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama XIV, born in a humble peasant family, in Tibet and the first Dalai Lama who has spent a major part of his life in India. Chinese occupation of
Tibet, made him, to be more realistic in his approach towards society and religion. Hence, the main emphasis in his philosophy is the concept of non-violence, and peaceful co-existence.

In this background, the Dalai Lama, incorporated in his philosophy, the principles like universal brotherhood, compassion, and world peace. He modernised the Buddhism with these principles and made it capable of giving solutions to the problems faced by post-industrial societies. His efforts to propagate Buddhism in western countries, as an answer to the modern problems, and at the same time his emphasis on the relevance of co-existence of all religions, have brought a new meaning to the ideals of the Buddha.

Ambedkar felt the idea of all the religions are equally good, is a wrong belief. He is of the opinion that religion is an institution or an influence like all social influences and institutions it may help or it may harm a society which is in its grip.

However, the Dalai Lama is of the view that all the religions have closer understanding and he holds that the essence of the messages of all religions is love,
mercy, tolerance and forgiveness. He also believed that, religious unity is sure to bring about world peace because the basic aim of all religions is to make man good and mentally tension free.

This contradiction between their interpretations are certainly because of their different cultural backgrounds. The Dalai Lama trying to harmonise between varied religious philosophies, where as Ambedkar finds it difficult since his social goal is to establish rationalised belief system. The Dalai Lama making his views in the general religious environment, whereas Ambedkar moulded his ideas in the context of Hindu social system. The other area, where the Dalai Lama differ from Ambedkar is over the question of existence of God. For Ambedkar god is not an essential element of a religion. In his view the religion of the savage society had no idea of god and felt that the idea of god is not integral to religion. Whereas the Dalai Lama believes in the existence of several gods. He feels, that Buddhism consist of many gods and the Buddha could be visualised in many forms.

However, there are many views, which are in agreement with the both of them. Both Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama underlined the congruity between Buddhism and
modernity and emphasised the role of exercise of individual judgement, inorder to free Buddhism from rigid interpretations and render it adoptable to the demands of modern society without compromising its fundamental principles. They believed that the change in religious beliefs could bring, change in social relations. for which, they first made an attempt to re-define the meaning of religion and then modernised the Buddhism according to it.

For them, religious modernisation refers to those process of democratisation of religious structure, secularisation and rationalisation of religious culture and humanisation of religious philosophy, which enhance the capability, effectiveness and efficiency of performance of a society’s religious system. They maintained that religion as morality is of its very substance. In other words, the religious problem is not a speculative one in which the religious object is validated primarily at the metaphysical level, it is a practical problem, pertaining wholly to men’s ethical nature.

The rationalism which this implies therefore necessitates a critique of traditional beliefs and institutions in anticipation of a more positive statement of what a genuinely rational religion must involve. Such
insistence on the need for distinguishing between the essential and non-essential -- reason and conscience, social utility providing the criteria -- is to become the guiding principle of all forms of liberal religion or modernised religion. Hence both of them represent modern social visions and the social justice forces, who sought to overthrow the established non-democratic socio-political traditions.

There is a great deal of continuity between the historical development of Buddhism and the current responses and innovations. Thus, the civilisational, and cultural patterns continue to exert a predominant influence in the evolution of Buddhist tradition. Buddhist modernism is better understood when placed within its present historical context. Modernism evolved in an attempt to establish the ability of Buddhism to face the new challenge.

The goal of Buddhist modernism is to make Buddhism relevant and responsive in the context of modern society. Its message is that Buddhists can live, engage, and contribute actively to the modern world while remaining faithful to their religion. Its ultimate objective is to provide Buddhist societies with an indigenous ideology of
development, and could become the basis of a rational, modern society. At minimum, modernist thinkers wanted to provide Buddhists with criteria by which the process of change resulting from the impact of an alien culture should be controlled and filtered.

The basic tenets of Buddhist modernism can be summarized as follows:

1. There is first of all a dire need to purify Buddhism from accretions and superstitions introduced by Brahmanical Buddhists, as well as from the rigid interpretations inherited from earlier times. The fulfilment of this task requires going back to the original sources of Buddhism, the *Tripithakas* (Sutta Pithaka on sermons of Gautama Buddha; Vinaya Pithaka on monastic rules and discipline; Abhidhamma Pithaka on metaphysics) and ancient works on different schools of Buddhism and reinterpreting them. This position the modernists had adopted with the motivation to strengthen the process of revivalism of Buddhism both in Asian and Western countries. In doing so, their use of the sources is different from traditionalists. Though, the revivalism is basic aim of both traditional and modern religious leaders of Buddhism, the latter have taken a literal and rigid approach to the text, while the modernists' objective is to discover its
spirit and to distinguish between the universal rules of Buddhism and the specific ones that are valid only for a particular period.

2. The modernist questioned the authority of the early medieval interpretations of Buddhism and advocated the exercise of individual judgement, which Ambedkar once described as the principle movement in Buddhism. Every Buddhist, the modernists argued, has the right and duty to seek to understand the Buddhist scriptures and later interpretations. This emphasis on the exercise of individual judgement led the modernists to stress the rational aspects of the religion: the role of reason, free thinking, and individual will. In the Process, modernist thinkers underlined the importance of argument by analogy, the principle of desirability, and general interests of the community.

Ambedkar, for instance, emphasized the role of reason in Buddhism. In his work 'Buddha and His Dhamma', he referred to it as the power that enables people to distinguish truth from falsehood. Thus, Buddhist law must be interpreted by reason. As an authority on Buddhism, he put his ideas into practice and gave a number of important legal opinions.
3. The modernist school focused attention on the social and moral aspects of Buddhism (and the Buddhists) rather than on its metaphysical and philosophical ones. Since Buddhism must be relevant to the needs and problems of ordinary Buddhists, it must help them in the conduct of their daily lives, the modernists argued. Believing that the teachings of Buddhism are the best that humanity knows, they concluded that no worthwhile idea can be in conflict with Buddhism. Further, they viewed their emphasis on the "this-worldly" aspect of Buddhism as truly Buddhist.

The outcome of the modernization of Buddhism is an essentially rational and liberal interpretation of Buddhism covering broad range of issues, including political organization and sources of legitimacy, legislation, economic life, the status of women and education.

In the realm of politics, these two Buddhist modernist thinkers advocated constitutional government, elections, and democratic institutions. They opposed despotic rulers and emphasized the importance of people's participation in decision making. Ambedkar's main opposition to communism is the authoritarian or dictatorial oriented governance. Both Ambedkar and the
Dalai Lama took the spirit to support democratic polity from the ancient Buddhist sangha, which was based on the principle of participation and representation of the members. They agreed that tyranny runs counter to Buddhism and had the effect of corrupting the moral fabric of the society.

The Dalai Lama, for example, stressed the civil function of the Buddhist Gurus in the community life. He himself is a fine example for a religious monk's involvement in secular and civil functions of community in the modern society. He is political as well as religious head of a Tibetan community. Although Buddhist modernism tended to be more of an intellectual trend than a political movement, there are examples of activism. the modernist thinkers reconciled Buddhist principles with the new forces of social liberation and in certain cases, as in Tibet, modernist Buddhism furnished the ideology of national resistance.

On relations between Buddhists, the modernists asked Buddhists to unite and put aside differences among sects and schools. On the issues of social justice and economic equity, the modernists position was not ambivalent. In other words, they opposed any social
system which based on discrimination and felt need of distributive justice, equal distribution of resources and equal opportunities.

In his writings, Ambedkar argued that a parliamentary system that did not serve the poor was an empty and meaningless show. In his view the uneven distribution of wealth and authority was the chief enemy of progress.

Another issue that attracted a great deal of attention among the modernists was the status of women. They argued that Buddhism liberated woman and virtually assured them equal rights. In particular the modernists advocated the right of women to education and work. On the emancipation of women, Ambedkar suggested that they should have elementary schooling if they were to play a role in society. In his later writings, he restated the case by invoking the great concepts of the nineteenth century: freedom, progress, and civilization.

From the modernist perspective the primary vehicle for social change was educational reform. They pointed out that the progress of west lay in the quality of its educational system. Criticising the traditional educational system based on religious schools and
functionaries, they advocated the introduction of rational and empirical sciences into the curriculum, the popularisation of scientific knowledge, and the teaching of foreign languages, for example, English. Thus, Ambedkar, who closely observed European educational institutions, worked to improve the curriculum and administration at Siddhardha college, Bombay (Mumbai), which he established.

The Dalai Lama also, worked to introduce modern and secular education in all Tibetan schools and even allowed Tibetan works' translation into foreign language particularly into English. He discarded the old principle of secrecy, and opened Tibetan religious secrets to the world. Both the modernists, felt teaching modern sciences in the educational institutions, would help to build society on rational lines.

The modernist approach seems to be the most capable of providing synthesis between Buddhism and the modern world. In other words both Ambedkar and the Dalai Lama made an attempt to re-interpret Buddhism to suit purposes and conditions in the modern world, although their targets differ. For example Ambedkar concerns with Dalit community and social transformation of Indian
society, whereas the Dalai Lama seems to be concerning with post-industrial societies and general conditions in modern society.

In fact, both rationalistic and humanistic elements find corner stone of respective philosophies. This marks great transformation in Buddhist ideology in the history of Buddhism in India.

Both the modernists had taken Buddhist ways in practice. They are the most significant Buddhist leaders in modern India. Ambedkar's attempt to modernise Buddhism had revived Buddhism in modern India. And the Dalai Lama's efforts to modernise Buddhism, have resulted in the propagation of Buddhism in the west.

They can be rightly called as the modern Acharyas of twentieth century, who interpreted Budhism for the epoch.