Chapter III

AMBEDKAR’S TURN TO BUDDHISM
Ambedkar’s Turn to Buddhism

This chapter analyses Dr Ambedkar’s major work *Buddha and his Dhamma* from philosophical perspective. The chapter studies the substance and philosophy of the great work. Prior to Ambedkar’s intervention, Buddhism was seen as an offshoot of Hinduism by those such as Radhakrishnan. The two were believed to have a common mythology. Even Buddha is considered as incarnation of Lord Vishnu. But Buddhism espoused by Dr Ambedkar is the different in terms of its linkage with Hinduism. However, this chapter argues that Ambedkar viewed Buddhism as an alternative to the problematics of Hinduism. From his point of view, the absence of democracy in Hinduism can be best addressed by Buddhism which takes into consideration equality, liberty and fraternity. The chapter also talks about the life journey of Lord Buddha describing how he began as Siddharth Gautam and catapulted to become Gautam Buddha. The chapter makes some important parallels between Buddhist evolution and the movement triggered by Dr Ambedkar. Siddharth Gautam hated war and violence hence he relinquished state and embraced *parivrajaka*. Gautama’s desertion of kingdom can be linked to Dr Ambedkar’s hatred towards Hinduism that inflicted humiliation and disrespect on his kinsmen. Siddhartha’s *parivrajaka* is corollary to Dr Ambedkar’s espousal of
Buddhism—the religion that epitomises peace and non-violence Siddharth thinks from the philosophical point of view about the root cause of sorrow and suffering and the real cause of his leaving his home and the solution offered by other old established philosophies. He could not settle the political disputes in the kingdom. Similarly Dr Ambedkar also could not lead all oppressed to Buddhism. When Ambedkar talks about the Karma and re-birth theory of Buddha, it is to be noted that he has modified, raised the questions about re-birth and soul, karma and rejected it while interpreting the karma theory. Buddha has denied the existence of the soul but he has simultaneously affirmed the doctrine of karma and rebirth. Dr. Ambedkar has rejected the karma theory in Buddhism as it convinced people to accept the social caste system from Hindu religion.

The chapter asserts that Ambedkar’s has not blindly adhered to Buddhism but he has made many corrective and constructive modifications to it. The religion has been made more humane if not spiritual. The campaign for the conversion has put supreme insistence on enlightenment, seeking knowledge, overriding selfishness and observing righteousness. The chapter briefly tries to put that Buddha did not claim things pertaining to desire, rebirth, soul, life after death rather he cuddles the sorrow and suffering of the people living in misery and poverty.
Buddha never claimed to be the originator of Buddhism. Though his followers requested him to appoint a successor he always refused such type of requests and answered that, “The Dhamma must be its own successor”. Most of the prophets of all religions have promised salvation of the human soul. But, Buddha is the only one teacher who has not made any type of promise of salvation but he assures the guidance towards the same. This argument is the crux of the chapter. The chapter contains Ambedkar’s discussion about the fundamental concept of the Buddha’s Dhamma. His classification of Dhamma while putting in his ideas of the Dhamma from philosophical and universal perspective he simultaneously writes about the Buddhas teaching and philosophical explanation of what is not Dhamma. The chapter also has the difference between religion and Dhamma in terms of nature and purpose. The concepts such as birth, rebirth, law of karma are also discussed in this chapter. Ambedkar’s interpretation of the transmigration of the soul and Buddha’s sermon, twelve causes of the downfall of the man, concept of ‘Sangh’, ‘Bhikku’ ‘Upasak’ are the integral notions in this chapter. Ambedkar’s critique of Buddhism too are given in this chapter. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first section is an exposition of Ambedkar’s reconstruction of Buddhism in his text Buddha and his Dhamma. The second section explains the principle of dhamma in detail.
and the last section explains the relevance of dhamma to socio political issues. It also explains the role of a Buddhist monk as a social reformer.

I

Ambedkar’s econstruction of Buddhism: *Buddha and his Dhamma*

Ambedkar’s *Buddha and His Dhamma* reinterpreted the traditional understanding of Buddhism, and attempted to bring it to the world of social action and social change. Buddhism was not simply spirituality for Ambedkar, but a rational and psychologically oriented ‘Dhamma’ (teaching) designed to help humans live in the world and transform that world into one free from sorrow (Omvedt: 3). During the course of time when Brahmanism took its hold again on the society, the many ideas of Brahmanism were mixed up with Buddhism. So the earliest Puranas (like Agni, Vishnu, Vayu and Matsya) mentioned Buddha as one who deluded people to ruin but the later Puranas like Garuda reconciled themselves with the fading. Buddhism after the 6th century was assimilated into Hinduism and Buddha was invoked as an incarnation of Vishnu (Payutt 11). Ambedkar’s *Buddha and His Dhamma* (published in 1957) and his conversion to Buddhism can be read as two important events in Indian neo Buddhism.
The Buddha and His Dhamma gives a coherent and systematic story of the Buddha’s life and his teachings. It proceeds by selecting passages from various Buddhist texts, both canonical and post-canonical, and accompanying them with Ambedkar’s commentary. In his introduction to this work, Ambedkar explains that his book will explore four important issues. In this book Ambedkar has tried to interpret Buddhism in a rationalistic manner. Firstly, Buddha could not have been so naïve so as to have only a first encounter with the old man, sick man and dead man and then be so deeply affected that he renounces the world. He must have the knowledge of things so common to human race. Secondly, the four noble truths make Buddhism a gospel of pessimism. If life is to be understood as full of suffering then there would be little incentive for change. Thirdly, the doctrine of no soul is not compatible with the notion of rebirth and law of karma mentioned in the classical texts. Lastly, the monks purpose is not clearly stated, it is ambiguous whether the monk is supposed to be a person seeking liberation or is to be a social reformer. His conscious reconstruction of Buddhism supported Dalit activism (Buddha and his Dhamma Introduction pp. xli-xlii).

In the first book Ambedkar depicts in detail about Buddha’s Kula, his birth, his education as well as his childhood which was marked by
the presence of supreme sense of compassion. In his childhood, Ambedkar depicts his education that includes all types of subjects including the science of concentration and meditation from Bhardawaj, a disciple of Alara Kalam, who had his ashram at Kapilavastu since his childhood. Siddharth did not like any kind of exploitation. His nature was of kind, yet he was trained to be a Kshtriya. He is known to have been against the inequality of slave and master (33-34). Thus according to Ambedkar, Siddhartha Gautama, right from his childhood displayed maturity of mind, love for human beings and had strong views about exploitation. Ambedkar then discusses the conflict between Sakyas and Koliyas over the water of the river Rohini. The irresolvable nature of the conflict made Siddhartha a believer of non-violence and against the war. He is known to have openly opposed war, war only brings in more conflict and thus he urged his clan members to peacefully resolve war. As a clan leader he refuses to take part in the war, this upsets his team members. Unable to persuade his clan, he decides to take Parivrajaka and will leave the state. He believed that that would be the best way for his people and clan. He believed it to be a midway between war and pacifism(55-56). Further, Buddha believed that happiness should not come at the cost of injuring someone, thus he talks about the root cause of sorrow and suffering in the world. Ambedkar says that when the five parivrajakas brought the news of peace of the Koliyas and Sakyas, it
made Gautama very uneasy. Because it made him so uneasy that he could not go back to his home as he had taken parivrajaka. It brought him to realize that the conflict between nations is occasional. But the conflict between classes is constant and perpetual. It is this which is the root of all sorrow and suffering in the world. Thus he decides to find a larger solution for this problem of social conflict” (75). Inspired by this interpretation, Ambedkar believes that he and his fellow community members too need to take another path from appealing to majority Hindu, thus, converting into Buddhism which is based on the equal rights of all, and based on scientific truths and proofs. In part VII ‘Comparison and Contrast’, Ambedkar discusses more about those things which are rejected, modified and accepted by Lord Buddha after attaining enlightenment from other philosophies. Ambedkar says that in formulating the principles of his conduct and discipline; Buddha has rejected the following ideas:

i) He condemned indulging in metaphysical speculation.

ii) He discarded notions about the soul and refrained from identifying it with either the body, sensations, volitions and consciousness.
iii) He discarded all the nihilistic views about life. He
condemned such views as were held by heretics.

v) He discarded the theory that cosmic progress had a known
beginning.

vi) He repudiated the Vedic theories of world, such as God
created human beings or that he come out of the body of
some Bramha (106 –107).

Yet, he accepted the natural law of cause and effect with its
corollaries. Thus, he repudiated the fatalistic view of life and other view
that a God predestined as to what should happen for man and the world.
He discarded the theory that all deeds committed in some former birth
and denied fatalistic view of karma. He replaced the view of karma by a
much more scientific view of transmigration (instead of the doctrine of
re-birth). He also replaced the doctrine of moksha of salvation of the
soul by the doctrine of Nibbana (107). When Ambedkar talks about the
karma and re-birth theory of Buddha, he modifies these doctrines,
Buddha has denied the existence of the soul but he has simultaneously
affirmed the doctrine of karma and rebirth. This Ambedkar found
contradictory because if there is no soul then there be could not exist the
karma or rebirth? So, Ambedkar has rejected the karma theory in
Buddhism as it convinced people to accept the social caste system from Hindu religion.

In the second book, Ambedkar, makes a case for following the new Dhamma and conversion. Ambedkar states that Buddha understands that even if a new doctrine has been reached, it has to made accessible and help people follow the same. Thus knowing that there is much unhappiness and sorrow in the world, Ambedkar believes that Buddha realized that it was wrong for him to sit as a Sanyasi with folded arms and allow things to remain as they were, he made an attempt to change the world and make it better” (110 -111). So that, while preaching his Dhamma, Buddha has tried to bring comfort to the weary and sorrow laden. His religion has brought new beginning in the life of those who are suppressed and oppressed by the inequally of Hindu/ Brahmanic philosophy. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism is important for its doctrine of doctrine of righteousness and his aim is to establish the kingdom of righteousness on earth(8).

Ambedkar further in the same book says that, Buddha has believed in neither the middle way of life which is neither the path pleasure nor the paths of desires and rebirth. Buddha’s religion has nothing to do with God and Soul, with life after death as well as concerned with any rituals and ceremonies. The dhamma of Buddha as is
related with the men who are suffering and living in sorrow, misery and poverty. Ambedkar, then, says that, during the campaign of conversion, Buddha had managed to convert all the people from the high strata of the society as well as low. When Buddha started preaching his dhamma to remove and understand the suffering in the world, the Yashas and Kassyapas of Benares, Sariputta and Moggallana of Rajagaha, Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, Anathapindika of Shravasti, the capital of the kingdom of Kosala, king Prasenjit, all converted and accepted the dhamma of Buddha. Similarly, the Upali, the Barber, Sunita the sweeper of Rajagaha, the untouchable, Sopaka and supply of shravasti, Sumangala and other low caste people converted into Buddhism during the life of Buddha. Ambedkar, further states that he also converted the women and the fallen and criminals into his Dhamma.

The third book in *Buddha and His Dhamma*, deals with the teaching of Buddha and his place in His own Dhamma. According to Dr. Ambedkar Christ has claimed as the prophet of Christianity, Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam claimed as he was sent by God. But, Buddha has never made such condition and claimed to be the originator of Buddhism. Similarly, Ambedkar depicts that most of the religions are described as revelations but the religion (dhamma) of Lord Buddha is not revelation. Buddha’s religion is a religion of discovery in the sense
because it is the result of inquiry and investigation into the conditions of human life on earth and understanding of the working of human instincts with which people are born (191). Generally all religions promise salvation of the human soul / human beings. But, Buddha is the only one teacher who did not make any type of promise of salvation, instead he called himself the pathfinder, the *marga data* or the one who only shows the way. His salvation is not a means to save the soul from being sent to hell by the intercession of the prophet but it means: nibbana and nibbana means control of passions (194). Then, he states that lord Buddha has not claimed only kind of divinity for himself and for his religion, because it was the religion discovered by human beings for human beings and not a revelation unlike the other religions which hypocritically promised the revelation and salvation of mankind. In the same book while discussing about the religion and teaching of Buddhas Ambedkar has interpreted the different views of the Lord Buddha’s Dhamma in detail As he says that some consider that Buddhism and Buddha’s teaching is related with to Samadhi, esotericism, exotericism, a system of barren metaphysics, a steer mysticism, a selfish abstraction from the world. But such views are incorrect because Buddhism only has a social message of ahimsa and peace. It also has the social message of justice love, liberty, equality, fraternity which over time as been buried by modern authors (197). Ambedkar’s interpretation of Buddha’s
dhamma, adhamma, saddhna was meant to understand this social message. According to Ambedkar, Buddha’s dhamma is a means to maintain purity of life, to reach perfection in life. Nibbana is giving up cravings and a belief that all compound things are permanent, and belief that karma is the instrument of moral order is Dhamma. The purity of life refers to the three forms of purity such as purity of body means a certain one obtains from taking life from stealing from strong practice in sensual lusts (199). Purity of mind means one is not covetous or malevolent and has developed the right view of things (199). To understand Buddha’s philosophy of his Dhamma. Ambedkar says one must follow the path of maintaining the purity in life. There is even need to achieve perfection in the body, speech and mind. The perfection mind means realizing thoroughly himself in life. Nibbana is righteousness in life, release from passion. It is in short the middle way to lead life and path of righteousness.

The Buddha, when explains or classifies his Dhamma, says believing that karma is the instrument of moral order in the world is Dhamma. Rejecting God as the creator, destroyed and preserver of nature, Ambedkar proposes Karmma Niyam. It is not God which maintains the moral order in the universe” (213). It is the order which is based on man and not an others though it may be good or bad. To those
who consider that the moral order in maintained by divine power such as
god, Buddha proposed that it is karma, that is ones action shows result
and consequences in this birth(not next). This is the governing principle
of the world. Such interpretation of Karmma or rule is concerned with
the penance of the moral order in the universe and was part of Dhamma
of Buddha.

According to Ambedkar, those who believe in the supernatural
things cannot be serious about Dhamma. This is because it is not
concerned with rational thinking is as it kills the very spirit of inquiry of
mind. So he says worship of the supernatural is not Dharma, Similarly
belief in God, in soul , in scarified, ‘Because the religion of Brahmanic
was based on upon sacrifices which involved drinking killing animals
and merry making in the universe on speculation reading books of
Dhamma in the infallibility of books is not Dhamma for the Buddha.
The world has naturally evolved and not been created by God or divine
power. Besides interpreting, Dhamma, Adhamma, Ambedkar, further
analyses Suddhamma its purpose functions objectives in the next part of
the same book. As it should lead the Dhamma to Adhamma also follow
the path of comapassion and pradnya in human life. It becomes a
genuine religion, only when it teaches the needs of rational thought and,
it leads and promotes friendship / maitri, and at last it must be
accompanied by sila or right conduct (258). This must be accompanied by compassion and friendship which is a love for all living beings in this universe. It is important and vital interpretation. Buddha’s dhamma aimed to bring down all the social barriers which are created by the Brahmanic philosophy and Vedas for the sake of a few human beings / people. His theory rejected the theory of Chaturvarna. His theory of Dhamma completely opposite to the doctrine of the Brahmins. Ambedkar notes that for Buddha, human beings had worth due to their deeds, rather than their birth. So, Buddha’s Dhamma is a Saddhamma which promoted the equality between man and man. It should be Saddhamma which must give equal rights to all living beings in this universe to lead their life that of work and not of birth.

Lastly, he makes a distinction between religion and dhamma. According to Ambedkar, the concept of religion has never fixed. It has been varied from time to time. It is an indefinite word which does not have fixed meaning. Its meaning has been changed in different stages of its evolution. It connotes belief in God, belief in soul, worship, curing of erring soul, propitiating god by prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices. The word religion thus has different connotations, but Buddha’s Dhamma is different from the religion. Religion for Buddha is personal and we must keep it with ourselves. We cannot take it to public life on the other hand,
Buddha’s Dhamma is social, fundamental, preaches righteousness, it consists in understanding and love for others in the society and universe. In this sense, Buddhas Dhamma is different from the religion. Their purposes are also different. The religion is basically concerned with revealing the beginning of things. The main purpose of Dhamma is to reconstruct the world and that of the religion is to explain the origin of the world. In religion there is no place for morality because it is just concerned with God, soul, prayers, worship, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices (231). Thus Buddha’s dhamma is closely related to morality.

Ambedkar in the next part of the book discusses the concept of birth and rebirth. According to Ambedkar, Buddha did not believe rebirth because of his belief in the principle of non-existence of the soul. However, he first believed in the materialist notion of soul. He explains four elements of existence which go to compose the body. They are, prithvi(earth), apa(water), tej(eather) and vayu(air) (236). After death these four elements float in space and again these elements from the floating mass join together a new birth takes place. This is what the Buddha meant by rebirth says Ambedkar. After discussing the concept of rebirth from the natural philosophical perspective, Ambedkar analyses the doctrine of karma. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism privileges wisdom over faith. It is closely related to the domain of ethics or
morality(Payutt, 6). The Buddhist law of karma is quite different from the Brahminic law of karma. Though there is similarity in terminology but there is difference in meaning and its connotations. Buddha did not believe in theories of past life and karma (as it is believed by Brahmanic and Hindu philosophy), thus it has not effect on future life. Thus according to Ambedkar, it is a purely Brahmanic doctrine that is inconsistent with the Buddhist doctrine of non soul. (238). The next section explains Buddha’s dhamma and its principles in detail.

II

Principles of Dhamma: Ambedkar

Ambedkar’s a dhamma without the doctrine of karma, is a an interesting and radical principle. This is because while karma is a metaphysical assumption for which there is no scientific evidence, it is used in all societies to convince believers to accept their social lot and in India, specifically, to justify the caste system. In India it means accepting caste system and the untouchability principle (Omvedt, 6-7) According to Ambedkar the karma doctrine out to be rejected as Buddha had never advocated a more absurd and inhuman doctrine that causes so much violence(Ambedkar, “Buddha and His Dhamma, xiii). Ambedkar reinterprets the doctrine of karma, as action oriented towards change to
brought in this life. This is the only way out of caste exploitation and oppression. This doctrine of karma is very relevant because

- It establishes an understanding of actions and their results as having a cause and effect relation, rather than superstition and faith.

- It demonstrates that the success of any aspiration is dependent on action, encouraging self-reliance and diligence.

- It develops a sense of responsibility – to one self by giving up bad actions, and towards others by acting kindly towards them.

- It nurtures the understanding that all people have a natural and equal right, either to let themselves degenerate, or to improve and develop themselves.

- It shows that mental qualities, abilities and behavior are the measuring sticks of human baseness or refinement, and that discrimination according to caste or race are unnecessary and harmful.

- It explains the capacity of people to learn from past actions, by considering actions according to reason; and finding ways to change them (instead of simply finding fault with others or
external situations). It projects future as personal responsibility (Payutt 111-12)

After discussing Buddha’s doctrine of karma and his own views about Buddhism with karma, Ambedkar interprets Buddha’s teaching of Ahimsa or non-killing as closely connected with karma and mairti. According to Ambedkar, Buddha does not define ahimsa. He has rarely used it in specific terms, unlike the Jainas, thus he was not opposed to eat meat. Buddha’s use of Ahimsa because is his middle path between the will to kill in Brahminism and will never to kill.

Thus, non killing and an interpretation of law of karma formed the basis of dhamma and life of a true follower. Ambedkar’s description of the Buddhist ways of life is unique one. Ambedkar discussed in detail the notions of good, evil, sin, craving and lust, hurt and ill-will, anger and enmity, man, mind and impurities, self and self-conquest, wisdom, justice and good company, thoughtfulness and boldness, sorrow and happiness, charity, kindness and hypocrisy. The first principle of dhamma is to do good, to not be a party to evil and committing no sin” (305). Here Ambedkar states that as a human being one should only do good and not treat evil lightly. It is the cause of sorrow and converts into sin. The second way of Buddhist life is that one should not be possessed by craving and lust. The craving results in sorrow and fear and from lust
also comes grief, fear. So, according to Ambedkar, those who are free from craving and lust are free from grief and fear in life. Similarly, the Buddhist way includes not hurting others as well as cherishing ill-will of others in life. Instead of anger, war, hate and vengeance against enemies, one should win enemies by love is the next way of Buddhist life. From the Buddhist perspective: ‘here is no fire like lust, no ill-fortune like hatred’ (310). Buddha’s main way of teaching his Buddhist way of life is based on the training of the mind and body. Both should be encouraged on the path of righteousness. (313). For, Ambedkar, the Buddhist way of life aims at the moral regeneration and social emancipation of human beings; each member of society must strive for their own moral progress as well as that of other individuals(Khalkho: 39). Ambedkar analyses that to follow the right way of life is to follow the eightfold path; the path of good speech, conduct, virtues and truth. In part IV of the book he analyses the sermons of Buddha. These sermons are for the householders, maintaining the character, on righteousness, on nibbana and on socio-political questions. In his explanation of the virtuous life of a householder, he explains that the secret of the householder’s happiness is in the realization that the happiness of possession is only in wealth being justly and righteously acquired by great industry and amassed by labour. Second, in the happiness of enjoyment of justly acquired possession. Thirdly is the happiness of freedom from debt. A
householder, owes no one any debt great or small, thus he gains happiness.

Fourth is the happiness of leading a blameless life. A householder, who is endowed with blameless action of body; blameless speech and blameless thinking, gains happiness of blamelessness (324). Also, according to Ambedkar, Buddha understands the importance of respect for women and children as an important principle of the life of the householder.

Ambedkar then interprets Buddha’s sermons on the need for maintaining the character. According to Ambedkar, Buddha explains bad character as of the downfall of a man in his life. One who does not follow dhamma, who keeps the company of immoral people, finds pleasure in vicious deeds, favours injustice, intoxicated, drowsy, lazy, indolent, revengeful, angry, values riches more than relationships and morality, who has by falsehood become an ascetic and deceived peole, debauchee, drunkard, a gambler, who squanders whatever he possess, adulterator, lecher, viciously ambitions and the ones he describes as bad characters. The twelve causes of the downfall of people implies that when someone who succeeds in overcoming them will be able to lead a virtuous life. According to Buddha, doing good deeds is another name of happiness and one should not be afraid of good works. Similarly, he says
that there is a great need to make good resolutions to be made and observed for a pure and happy life (332). Further, he explains the meaning of righteousness, with reference to Buddha’s sermon at Sala, a Brahmin village. In sala, when the heads of the Brahmin of sala asked Buddha to explain the meaning of righteousness. He says that, there are three forms of unrighteousness and wickedness for the body; four for speech; and three for thoughts (333-34).

Ambedkar also elaborates on the emphasis of Nibanna in Buddhist philosophy. Buddha understands it as a middle way which leads one to peace, insight, enlightenment. It is the middle way close to the noble Eight-fold path of right outlook, right aims, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (342). Thus, nibbana meant a release from passion” (342). Ambedkar also analyses and interprets Buddha’s sermons on dhamma and relation with the eightfold path, the noblest one is the right outlook in one’s life. It is because the right thinking is the preface and the key to everything else in the higher life and ignorance (344). And the root cause of all evils in the life of human beings is one’s lack of understanding. In understanding the notion of life after the death and man’s prayers and invocations to the God are all futile, it is not anger, conceit, killing, revolt, guide, envy, bluster, pride, low company, base
living, slander, fraud, cheating, the trickster’s wiles are carrion and bad and not eating meats. He further says that one should control ones senses; rule by ones own power, pursue truth and be very kind(347). The next section explains the relation of Dhamma to socio political issues and the role of the Buddhist monk as a social reformer.

III

Socio Political Relevance of Dhamma and the Role of a Monk

Ambedkar’s interpretation of Dhamma, had a deep socio political significance and impact. It proposes a politics of righteousness and justice. Buddha would believe that unless the head of the institution is not righteous, the subjects will also not be righteous. If the King becomes unrighteous then their ministers and officers also become unrighteous. Similarly, the Brahmins, the householders being unrighteous will cause injustice in the whole society. Thus it is the head of institution followed by ministers, officers, householders, the town-folk, and villagers that need to become righteous. Political and military strength is based on the social system of the state war is not the solution to all the questions. War and conquest breeds hatred and misery. The slayer and the victor wins and believes it the right to degrade the vanquished and enslave him (355). However, he says the Buddha had a
different view on the matter as he believed that it was the victor’s duty to use his victory for the service of the people who have lost. (355). This is very important in the context of Ambedkar’s critique of Hinduism as it is the duty of the strong to use their position to bring about justice in the society. He believed that the society can be organized on the principles preached by the Buddhist congregations and monks, their primary message was that of bringing about a more just and peaceful society.

In Buddha and Dhamma, he explains the notion of organization of the Sangh, the Bhikkhus (monks), wows, and their teachings. According to Ambedkar the followers of Buddhism, were divided into two classes, one the Bhikkhus (they were organized into sanghs) and the other called as Upasakas (they were not organized into sanghs). The Buddhist Bhikkhus were primarily a Parivajaka; those persons who had abandoned family life and were a mere floating body of wanderers. Earlier, they had not formed the Sangh and had also not formulated any rules of discipline and had no ideal to strive for in future. Buddha organized his followers into a Sangh and gave them an ideal to pursue and realize. According to Ambedkar, the interesting aspect of the sangh was that entry to it was open to all. It recognized no class, caste, sex, economic and social status boundaries.
Inside the Sangh, ranks were regulated by worth and not by their status (358).

Accordingly, once the Bhikkhu enters into the Sangh, he loses his caste, class, sex and all social identity. The bhikkhu sangh(for men) was separate in its organization from the bhikkhuni sangh(for women) (358). Further, the bhikkhus in the sangh wows and resolves to not break the principles of dhamma, if he/she does that one is liable to punishment. The vows for the bhikkhus laid down by Buddha were, to remain celebrate, not to boast, not to own anything except what the principles permit. They were also other set of offences called Sanghadisesa-ecclesiastical offences (361). There were also strict rules formed for the good conduct of the bhikkhus and punishment after the trial of offences in the Sangh. These rules were democraticall decided and Buddha never restricted the freedom of sangha to choose their own leaders and successors. Buddha’s conception of the Bhikkhu as Ambedkar states is that:

1. “He who wishes to put on the yellow dress without having cleansed himself from sin, who disregards also temperance and truth, is unworthy of the yellow dress.
2. “But he who has cleansed himself from sin is well grounded in all virtues, and endowed also with temperance and truth, he is indeed worthy of the yellow dress.

3. “A man is not a mendicant (Bhikkhu) simply because he asks others for alms; he who adopts the whole law is a Bhikkhu, not he who onle legs.

4. “He who above evil, who is chaste, who with care passes through the world, he ideed is called a Bhikku (364-65).

A bhikkhu is different from Brahmyn as bhikkhu from Brahmyn as a Brahmin is primarily a priest. His main function is to perform certain ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death. These ceremonies became necessary because of the doctrines of original sin which requires ceremonies to wash it off, and because of the belief in God and in soul. For these ceremonies a priest is necessary, A bhikkhu does not believe in original sin, in God and soul, thus there are no ceremonies to preform and the bhikku is thus not a Brahmin. Also while one is born a Brahmin, one chooses the life of bhikku in the course of life. Primarily, a Brahmins is a caste, a bhikkhu has no caste (371).

After discussing the nature of life of a householder and bhikkhu, he discussed the relevance of the nature of ethics and five ways of leading a virtuous disciplined life. The panchshilas thus have an
important socio-political significance. The *Panchasila* is a great
traditional contribution to the well-being of human family. The
Panchasila of the Buddha found expression in the political field as they
were enunciated by Nehru in Micro-Asian conference at Bandung in
Indonesia in 1955-56. The first principle of panchshila explains mutual
respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty (panatipata
veramani), the second is mutual non-aggression (adinnadana veramani),
third, Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs
(Kamesumicchachara veramani), fourthly. equality and mutual benefit
(musavada veramani) and lastly peaceful co-existence (Naik: 93).
Further, there are vows for the Bhikkhus. While on the other, the
Upasaka is free from all the vows of the Bhikkhus and other rules. He
can marry, have his own family, can have property. He is also not
forbidden from taking life but the Panchasilas should be observed by
him like the Bhikkhus because it is common to both.

The duty of the Bhikkhus is to convert people into his Dhamma
(religion) not by force but by preaching. The Sanghs had an important
role of spreading the religion and spreading virtue in the world (374).
Though, the admission to the Sangh was not restricted but as an
organized body its membership was not open to all. To be a member of
the Sangh a mere Parivrajaka was not sufficient because it is only after
the Parivrajaka was obtained that he could become a member of the Sangh says Ambedkar. Further, it was seem that Buddhism is not a religion at all. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism was a true religion as preached people to become ethical and helped them free themselves from oppression and exploitation. According to Ambedkar, a true religion must teach people shun bad conduct. The destruction of life, the taking of what is not given, licentiousness and lying speech are the four vices of conduct which he must avoid. Evil deeds are done from motives of partiality, enmity, stupidity and fear. If he is not led away by these motives, he/she will spread violence, thus the role of the monk is to spread religion that can teach people to train their abilities towards rationality. A true religion must also teach a person not to dissipate wealth. Dissipation of wealth results from being addicted to intoxicating liquors, haunting fairs, being infatuated by gambling, associating with evil companions, the habit of idleness. True religion will help people to overcome such weakness. A true religion must teach a person true love and friendship (390-91).

Ambedkar’s work on Buddha and his contemporaries, highlights the support that Buddha got from his contemporaries and those who converted into Buddhism as well as worked to spread Buddhism. The book also analyses Buddha’s doctrines of open admission to the Sangh,
the rules of vows, doctrine of Ahimsa, preaching of virtue, his theory of soul and rebirth and a charge of being an annihilationist. It also explains the challenges and criticisms that Buddha faced. Buddha was charged of being a charmer and a glamorous trickster. Secondly, He was accused of being a parasite, living upon others and not earning his living by working for it. Thirdly he was charged of being guilty of breaking the institution of the householders in the state. Fourth, he was falsely charged of murder and immorality by the Jainas. These baseless charges were an attempt to malign the Buddha and to check the spread of his dhamma, as many felt threatened by it.

The Brahmins, enemies from within Buddha’s family too were responsible for creating ill will as the dhamma of Buddha became very popular. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha was also criticized for breaking class and caste barriers. Buddha’s open admission to the Sangh, rule of vows and other doctrines were severely criticised. They argued that under such strict values there were good chances that after they have been admitted into the order they give it up, and return again to the lower state, thus the religion of Buddha is actually in vain(421). There were other persons and critics who used to critics on the rules of the vows and the doctrine of ahimsa of the Buddha. While criticizing on the doctrine of ahimsa, they said that his doctrine of ahimsa involved
surrender or non-resistance to evil. Here, Ambedkar says that Buddha had made his position clear on various occasions so as to leave no room for ambiguity or misunderstanding by preaching ahimsa he understood the futility of violence as a means to achieve an end (423). The last two books entitled as ‘The Wanderer’s Last Journey’ and ‘The Man Who was Siddhartha Gautama’ contains the descriptions of Dr. Ambedkar and his views on Buddha as an inspiration for unconditional service and love for the downtrodden.

In summing up it can be said that Ambedkar has developed four main critiques of Buddhism that he attempted to answer in The Buddha and his Dhamma. These four problems were the mythology of the life of the Buddha, the four Aryan Truths (the four Noble Truths), the nature of the soul, and the role of the Bhikkhus in the propagation of Buddhism (Kirby: 86)22 While answering these four critiques of Buddhism Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has revived the declining of Buddhism not just in the land of its birth but in the world. It is the Dhamma of Lord Buddha which is the only way of living in the whole world which will save the world from exploitation and violence. It is the only religion in the world which treats all human beings equally and the no caste and class system that can support the inequality and save the world from the Dhukkha (grief) and human sufferings. The next chapter explains the relevance of
Ambedkar’s version of Buddhism that can free the society from the evils of non-morality and inequality. With values that encourage the principles of fellow-feelings and human dignity, the chapter explains Ambedkar’s Buddhism as relevant in today’s fundamentalist times.