

Revival of Buddhism in modern India

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Swami Vivekananda once said: "Do not mistake, Buddhism and Brahmanism.. . Buddhism is one of our sects." S. Radhakrishnan has a similar observation, Buddhism was a derivative of the ancient Hindu faith, possibly a schism or a heresy, and, was not a new establishment or an independent religion. P.V. Kane, the Brahmanical tradition's most eminent modern Indian scholar, says that the Buddha merely reformed the Hindu religion from how it was practiced in his time.¹ Gandhi said: "I have no hesitation in declaring that I owe a great deal to the inspiration that I have derived from the life of the Enlightened one. The intellectual conception does not satisfy me..."² However, I am not reassured by these statements as they are a result of the general opinion of the upper caste circles in modern India. Dr. Lal Mani Joshi, an internationally prominent figure on religions, views Buddhism through the lens of the fact that since Hinduism had not emerged in its present form at the time of Buddha's birth, the Buddha was not 'born a Hindu'.³ Buddha was born at Lumbini, in the territory of the Sakya republic, and at the age of twenty-nine, he 'went forth from home into the homeless life'. At the age of thirty-five, he attained Supreme Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, and, passed away at Kusinagara at the age of eighty. The kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala, as well as the borderline areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, saw a spread of his teachings during his lifetime. Including both men and women, from kings to merchants, from princes to orthodox Brahmins, from outcastes to robbers and naked ascetics, members from all classes of society were recruited as his disciples. He faced opposition, hostility, and, sometimes even personal danger, with a calm and compassionate smile.⁴

Patronage of Contemporary Buddhist Kings and Clans

Bimbisara, belonging to the Haryanka dynasty, was the real founder of the imperial power of Magadha which comprised the districts of Patna and Gaya of southern Bihar.⁵ He was a great patron of the Buddha and his religion. The Buddha accepted King Bimbisara's offering of his Veluvana pleasure garden. For thirty-seven years, from that moment up till the time of his death, Bimbisara exercised his full power to further and aid the growth of this new religion. A storeyed house for the disciples of the Buddha in the Veluvana was constructed. Greatly devoted to the Buddha, the king, along with his children, wives, subjects, and royal officers offered their lives to the service of the Master. He appealed to his kin to attentively take note of the Buddha's teachings in order to pursue them in their daily lives. He also took a keen interest in the welfare of monks and the Sangha and prohibited anyone from harming them. He appointed his famous personal physician, Jivaka Komarabhacca, to look after the Buddha and the Sangha.⁶

ASOKA (c. 273-232 B.C.)

Asoka is renowned not only for his great devotion to Buddhism but also for his reverence for other religions. His edicts show that although he accepted Buddhism as his religion and surrendered everything for its progress, he acknowledged other religions too.⁷ The meeting between Asoka and Nigrodha set out to be an important event in the history of Buddhism. Addressing Nigrodha, Asoka said: This very day he has been accepted as the refuge of Buddha, the Doctrine, and the Order, together with his wives, children, his kith, and kin.⁸ In the emperor's legends, he has been depicted as a zealous builder of stupas and viharas all over his empire. Asoka learned from the Moggaliputta Tissa that Dharma has 84,000 sections, and so he constructed an equal number of stupas and viharas in his kingdom and built the Asokarama in Pataliputra.⁹

Decline of Buddhism

Brahmin-Kshatriya Conflict. Despite its accomplishments and popularity, Buddhism lost ground in India. Jainism, on the contrary, survived by compromising on the acceptance of the ideology of the soul and the principle of graded inequality which in turn helped to maintain the sovereignty of the Brahmins. The decline of Buddhism had both external and internal reasons. Ever since its existence, the followers of Vedic doctrines and practices have shown a bitter opposition to Buddha's teachings. Kasi Bharadvaja disapproved of the Buddha, Aggika Bharadvaja called the Buddha an out-caste, who did not even get a grain of food in Brahmin villages, and Sondanda hesitated to acknowledge the Buddha.¹⁰ The Ramayana denounced the Buddha as an atheist, The Puranas exhibited a similar attitude of hostility and disdain for Buddhism. Yajnavalka claimed that the mere sight of a Buddhist monk, even in dreams, was inauspicious and was to be avoided.¹¹ Much like other Brahmins, Kumarila was a spiteful and avowed enemy of Buddhistic ideals. He even instigated the King Sudhanvan of Ujjaini to exterminate the Buddhist monks.¹² In addition to this, the Hindus not only amalgamated Buddhism by incorporating the Buddhist practices into their religious system but also appropriated many Buddhist shrines by replacing the Buddha's images with that of the Hindu gods and goddesses. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal have Hindu temples that have been transformed from major Buddhist shrines.¹³ The Brahmins adopted all kinds of strategies to annihilate Buddhism from its land, it was made vulnerable by the assimilative policies of Hinduism.¹⁴

External causes for the decline of Buddhism

Already vulnerable Buddhism was served a final blow from numerous external factors in addition to the internal factors, that of the kings and the Brahmins. Hunas rulers were major perpetrators amongst them. The greatest persecution of Buddhist monasteries and monks is attributed to Mihirkula, a worshipper of Siva who supported Brahmins, and who erected a temple in Srinagar called Mihiresvara. In Kashmir, he demolished the stupas, and the Samgharamas and violated around sixteen hundred foundations.¹⁵ Much like the Huna invaders, the Muslim invaders reportedly sacked the Buddhist Universities of Nalanda, Vikramasila, Jagaddala, and Odantapuri. Ambedkar unfolded two responses to Buddhism's decline. The invasions of Musalmans were credited as one of them by Ambedkar who said, "Islam came out as the enemy of the 'But' (idol worship). Ambedkar conformed that Islam attacked both Brahmanism and Buddhism but the former survived and the latter declined.¹⁶ Islam heavily oppressed the Buddhist priestly class which either perished or fled India. Nobody remained to keep the flame of Buddhism burning.¹⁷ According to Trevor Ling, various accounts have been offered to explain the decline of Buddhism in India. The persistently offered reasons, both from within and outside India, are broadly four: (1) Buddhism died of old age, (2) it relied too exclusively on royal support and withered away in its absence, (3) its vitality began to reflect into the popular culture which smothered it resulting in its perishment, (4) the advent of Tantra led to corruption and it succumbed to self-poisoning.¹⁸

Rediscovery of Buddhism in modern India

With the decline of Buddhism in medieval times, almost all Buddhist shrines in India were rendered useless and hence perished due to them either being plundered and destroyed or just ignored, neglected, and abandoned. The nineteenth-century saw the rediscovery of Buddhist sites owing to the efforts of the British Civil Servants who sought to shed light on the Buddhist heritage. Some fragments of an Asokan inscription were discovered in 1750 in the Delhi-Meerut Pillar, now situated in Delhi. In the same year, the Allahabad— (Kausambi) Pillar at Allahabad was discovered. Later on, in 1784 and 1785, the Lauriya— (Radhia) Pillar and the Barabara Hill Cave inscription were respectively discovered. Captain Polier discovered the Delhi-Topra Pillar at Ferozshah Kotla in 1785.¹⁹ As many as thirty-six places in India have recovered the Asokan Pillars and Rock Edicts. The Great Sanchi Stupa was the first Buddhist shrine to be discovered in modern India. Alexander

Cunnigham made an important discovery at Sanchi in 1851 when he unsealed the Sanchi Stupas for the first time.²⁰

The contribution of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott

Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, who became the chief adviser and director of the Buddha Gaya Maha Bodhi Society founded in Colombo Sri Lanka on May 31, 1891, led the revival of Buddhism. Ven. H. Sumangala was its first President and H. Dharmapala was its General Secretary. The Society's name was later changed to Maha Bodhi Society of India. Dharmapala was motivated by Henry Olcott to go to the World Parliament of Religions to represent the Theravada School. He familiarized himself with Madam H. P. Blavatsky via his interest in spiritualism and they together founded the Theosophical Society in America in 1875. He declared himself a Buddhist while still in America. Ensuing his correspondence with some monks in Sri Lanka, he learned of their plight and reached Galle on May 17, 1880. Colonel Olcott, accompanied by Madam Blavatsky, first visited Ceylon in 1880 where he addressed the Sinhalese people multiple times concerning their religion which ultimately moved their hearts and awakened their enthusiasm. Both of them took to Pancasila on May 25, 1880 at the Vijayananda Vihar, Weliwatta, Galle.²¹

Anagarika Dharmapala and the revival of Buddhism

The efforts of the British archeologists and explorers in the nineteenth century commenced the rediscovery of Buddhism by bringing to light the rich Buddhist heritage which had almost been forgotten. But nobody as yet had thought of reviving Buddhism in India till the arrival of Anagarika Dharmapala, a young Sri Lankan Buddhist. The Bengali Buddhist revival movement had begun in the old Buddhist community of Chittagong even before the arrival of Dharmapala.²² Dharmapala, 1864—1933, was born on 17 September 1864 in a Buddhist family in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). His father, Don Carolis Mudaliar Hewavitarne, had a furniture manufacturing business in Colombo. By the time of his birth, the national religion and culture of Ceylon had fallen to the lowest pitch of degeneration as successive waves of Portuguese, Dutch and British invasions had swept away much of the traditional culture of the country, and the Sinhalese were taught to be ashamed of their religion, culture, language, race, and color. Additionally, the Buddhists were even compelled to declare themselves as Christians.²³

David Hewavitarne, or Dharmapala as he was later known, was admitted to an Anglican (C.M.S.) School at Kotte near Colombo at first where he was forced to attend Church service daily. He was also obligated to recite some verses from Genesis or Mathew. Nevertheless, he noticed the Christian missionaries' repulsive attitude toward Buddhist scriptures. One Sunday, when Dharmapala was quietly reading a pamphlet on the Four Noble Truths, he was approached by the boarding master who snatched it from him and threw it out of the room. Soon after this incident, Dharmapala left this school and in September 1878 joined St. Thomas Collegiate School in North Colombo, where the elite children received their schooling. On the eve of the Wesak (Buddha Jayanti), he approached the head of the institution, and after explaining how this day was the 'Thrice Sacred Day' for the Buddhists, sought permission to spend the day at home in worship and religious observances. Saying that 'he did not feel justified in granting a holiday merely for the observance of a Buddhist festival', the headmaster refused him permission. Hearing this, Dharmapala picked up his books and walked out of the school for the day. The next day, he was punished for his insubordination with cane strokes on the seat of his trousers. This pattern continued for the next two years. This bitter experience deeply impacted his mind and he resolved to work for Buddhism's revival.²⁴

Young Dharmapala was accompanied by Colonel Olcott and Madam Blavatsky, the founders of the Theosophical Society, on his first visit to India in 1885 at the age of sixteen. He joined their effort to revive Buddhism and later took the name of Anagarika Dharmapala.²⁵ He was massively influenced, in 1885, by a few articles in 'The Telegraph', a London-based periodical written by Sir Edwin Arnold, the well-known author of "The Light of Asia". These articles addressed the attention of the Buddhists to the deplorable condition of the Buddha Gaya Temple and its surroundings.²⁶ A copy of the first issue of 'The Theosophist', edited by Col. Olcott, was given to Dharmapala by Ven. Gunananda

which he liked.²⁷

Five years later, Anagarika Dharmapala again visited India this time accompanied by Kozen Gunaratana, a Japanese monk. On 18 January 1891, he reached Banaras from where he left for Sarnath with Upendranath Basu. The horrible condition of the sacred spot where Lord Buddha had preached His First Sermon and Turned the Wheel of Dhamma shocked Dharmapala to the core. The holy site was completely ruined and deserted and plagued by pigs. Upon reaching Bodh Gaya on 22 January 1891, Anagarika Dharmapala found the Maha Bodhi Temple under the custody of a Hindu Mahant who had continually and shamefully neglected the Temple.²⁸ Given these circumstances, Dharmapala determined to regain control of the Maha Bodhi Temple from the Saivite Mahant, whose ancestors had occupied it at the end of the sixteenth century. After spending some time there, Anagarika Dharmapala returned to Colombo in the April of 1891. And on 31 May 1891, he founded the Maha Bodhi Society with the objective of 'establishing a Buddhist monastery and maintaining some Bhikkhus at Buddha Gaya' to take care of the sacred shrine.²⁹ The Maha Bodhi journal, meant to be the Society's spokesman in print, was founded by Dharmapala in May 1892.³⁰

In September 1893, on Theravada Buddhists' behalf, Anagarika Dharmapala participated in the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, America. On his way back from America, he ran into Mrs. Mary Foster on 18 October 1893 in Honolulu³¹ who became a life-long supporter of Anagarika Dharmapala and Buddhism after meeting him. The Maha Bodhi Society of India received more than ten Lakh Rupees from her by the time of her death in 1930 aged eighty-six years. A beautiful image of the Buddha was gifted to Dharmapala by Japanese Buddhists when he visited Japan after leaving Honolulu. On April 11, 1894, after his return to India, Dharmapala went to Buddha Gaya intending to install the gift he received from the Japanese, in the upper chamber of the Maha Bodhi Temple. However, he was restricted to do so by the Mahant and his supporters. Only in 1900, after immense pressure, the District Board of Gaya allowed the construction of a Rest House for the pilgrims visiting Buddha Gaya.³²

In the cities of Lucknow and Kanpur, the revival of Buddhism was undertaken by Bodhanand Mahasthviri, Ishwardatt Medharthi, and Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu in Dalit areas. Ambedkar in his twenty years of pursuance of a 'liberative religion', was not only aware of these developments but was also actively in touch with many of them.³³ Bodhanand Mahasthviri (1874-1952), a Buddhist who did important foundational work to revive Buddhism in the region, was born in a brahman family and was raised by his aunt. Bodhanand was completely cut off from any inter-caste connections. But he later consciously associated himself with the Dalit-Bahujan, living and working among them till the very end. He was initiated into Buddhism in 1914, founded the Bharatiya Buddha Samiti in Lucknow in 1916, and started preaching Buddhism among the Dalit-Bahujan masses.³⁴ Ambedkar extensively studied religion for over twenty years, he also took a keen interest to discuss religious matters with Bodhanand, who he met on three occasions. They first met at the Indian Non-Brahmin Conference in 1926, convened by the Maharaja Sahu of Kolhapur. They met for a second time at the Simon Commission meeting in 1928 at Lucknow and the final and third time that they met was in 1948 again at Lucknow, after Bodhanand's second marriage.³⁵ Acharya Ishwardatt Medharthi (1900-71), another pioneering Buddhist figure, had considerable influence on the Dalit-Bahujan in Kanpur. Medharthi, who began his career as an Arya Samaji, also participated in the freedom struggle, opened a school, and campaigned against the caste system, before finally becoming a Buddhist. He also served as Ambedkar's Pali teacher in the 1940s.³⁶

Buddhism in Tamil Nadu

Only after the late Sangam period, after the third century A.D., Buddhism is claimed to have entered Tamilagam. The absence of any reference to Buddhism in the late Sangam literary texts supports to uphold this claim.³⁷ Similarly, Peter Schalk argued that before the fourth century AD, no evidence could be found for 'institutionalized' or monastic Buddhism in southernmost India. The earliest such evidence consists largely of the archaeological remains of monastic buildings at Kaviripattinam (Pukar or Poompuhar) on the east coast of the modern state of Tamil Nadu.³⁸

The imperial Indian government's objective, during the colonial period, was to create a unified state which was traditionally fragmented on the one hand and was a deeply divided and extensively polarized traditional society and consciousness on the other. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Britishers designed various policies and practices in such a way that made minimum or no interference in socio-religious matters. The land settlements, an English education, commerce, industry, codification of knowledge, and law — generally empowered the already powerful and privileged Brahmins and 'upper' castes and dispossessed the non-privileged and laboring Shudras, Ati-Shudras, tribals, and many others.³⁹ Furthermore, there were communities that were outcasted, oppressed, and even deprived of human rights but benefited from the employment and educational opportunities introduced by the colonial government, rejecting the caste-based hierarchical social order and seeking new meaning and symbols within the ancient indigenous traditions. Karl Marx had observed: "Man makes religion, religion does not make a man."⁴⁰ Since religion is a man-made construct, those people who were coming up from the marginal section into the public realm, as part of their emancipatory process, constructed new worlds of meanings, symbols, world views, ideologies, and even religions.⁴¹

With the Theosophical Society's members' support in the twentieth century, the newly urbanized subaltern groups of Tamils attempted to develop a Buddhist worldview along with a symbol system as an expression not only of their emancipatory present but also of their progressive historical past. Tamil Buddhism, in association with the South Indian Buddhist Association, emerged as an expression of an emancipatory identity. Under the supervision of the subaltern leaders, Pandit Iyothee Thassar, G. Appaduraiyar, and others they developed their writings and the ideology of emancipation which sought to be infused with the age-old literary, religious, and cultural traditions of the Tamils.⁴² The foundation of the Sakya Buddhist Society launched Modern Tamil Buddhism with aid from the patronage of Colonel H.S. Olcott on the behest of a charismatic leader, Pandit Iyothee Thassar at Royapettah, Madras. Thassar was born on May 20, 1845, to one Kandasamy from the Coimbatore district, his real name was Kathavarayan but he later adopted his teacher's name. He grew up in the Nilgiri Hills and later settled in Madras. He was a reputed native physician in Siddha medicine. N. Jeenaraju (Madras) stated that the Pandit was polio-handicapped, but A. Ponnovium states that the Pandit was only bow-legged.⁴³ Iyothee Thassar was shocked by his petition's rejection by the Indian national congress in 1891 that demanded the removal of caste-based discrimination in secular spheres, particularly in education, jobs, and access to public resources.⁴⁴ Iyothee Thassar established the Sakya Buddhist Society with its office in Royapettah, Madras, after returning from his historical journey to Ceylon, as per modern times with himself as the General Secretary and Dr. Paul Cams and C. Aranganathan as President and Vice President respectively. Colonel Olcott regularly contributed to the building's rent, rupees ten. After thoroughly studying Tamil literature, Iyothee Thassar believed that the Valluva-Sakya, a sub-caste of the Paraiyar-Tamil community, was indeed the direct descendant of the Sakya clan of Siddhartha himself.⁴⁵

Ambedkar was in contact with two Tamil leaders, R. Srinivasan and N. Sivaraj during and after the Round Table Conference. At the second round table conference, Ambedkar also received strong support, in his negotiations with Gandhi, from G. Appaduraiyar in the Kolar Gold Fields.⁴⁶ Finally, when the demand for a separate electorate for untouchables gained momentum in the conference, Ambedkar firmly stood in favor of the depressed classes. Dalit Buddhists, mostly in south India, came out in full support of him and accepted his leadership against Gandhi. And all those who opposed him were condemned as traitors to the cause.⁴⁷

The reconstruction of Tamil Buddhism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be summarized in four points:

1. Saint-Simon enunciated long ago that religion cannot disappear; it can only be transformed. Likewise, Foucault observed that as soon as there would be a power relation, there would also be a possibility of resistance. The Indian history and culture, which has had glorious egalitarian traditions since ancient times, can be inferred in this context.⁴⁸

The reconstruction of Iyothee Thassar's utopian past, in my view, should be seen in the same light.

2. Iyothee Thassar's formation of the recreated past began with the assumption that the hierarchy-based caste system was brought to the Tamil region by the Arya-Mlechhas for their own selfish purposes. They considered themselves to be supreme and the Brahmins were the most privileged of them.⁴⁹
3. The repeated use of the word Kadavul to denote God and goddesses in ancient Tamil moral literature convinced and compelled the Tamil ideologues for reappropriation in Buddhist traditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵⁰
4. The Buddha, among other Buddhist gods, has been given a high niche. In the modern Tamil Buddhism cosmology, he was the 'Adiyang Kadavul—the first God and the one without a predecessor.'⁵¹

The contribution of Lakshmi Narasu

Born in 1861, Lakshmi Pokkala Narasu, Pokkala Chellam Nayanamgaru's son, was a prominent advocate of the Madras courts, who came from the Guntur district (now in Andhra Pradesh) and settled in the Presidential town. He studied Science and graduated from Madras University, and married Rukmini Ammal, who was also an active member in public life through a Women's Welfare Association. Narasu did his graduation from Madras Christian College in 1882. Sometime after his graduation from Madras Christian College in 1882, he became a lecturer in the Trichinopoly Christian College/SPG College, now known as Bishop Heber College. In 1894, he joined the Madras Christian College as Assistant Professor. In 1909, Narasu left his previous college to become a full-time professor at Pachaiyappa's College and retired from teaching in 1925.⁵² Narasu mostly led a life isolated from his brothers and other family members. Narasu died on 14 July 1934, owing to heart problems. His body was cremated in the Mylapore burning yard following a simple Buddhist ceremony.^{53,54}

Not without reason, Professor Lakshmi Narasu was called a "prodigy of the last century" by Ambedkar.⁵⁵ It does not come as a surprise then that Baba Saheb considered Professor Narasu as his forerunner.⁵⁶ Narasu published three books on the reconstruction of Buddhism: 'The essence of Buddhism (1907)', 'What is Buddhism (1916)', and 'A study of Caste (1922).' A reference to another book, Buddhism in a Nutshell, is also found but it is yet to be located. Ambedkar was so highly influenced by Narasu's book, 'The Essence of Buddhism', that he described it as "the best book on Buddhism that has appeared so far". He openheartedly recommended it to all those that desired to learn about Saddharma; he even brought out another reprint of the book with a foreword of his own in 1948.⁵⁷ 'Religion of the Modern Buddhist' must have been completed in the early 1930s, but Narasu passed away in July 1934, before it was published.⁵⁸ Narasu can be seen as a modern Buddhist whose writings inspired Ambedkar in planning his book 'The Buddha and his Dhamma'.⁵⁹

Modern Buddhism is said to have been laid down by Dharmapala, in the nineteenth century, who said: He had brought the Buddha's message that was free from theology, priestcraft, rituals, ceremonies, dogmas, heavens, hells, and other theological slogans.⁶⁰ Narasu similarly attempted to modernize Buddhism in the light of rationalism, enlightenment, morality, and modernity in south India prior to Ambedkar in the twentieth century.

Lakshmi Narasu says, "The aim of the philosopher is not to know but to be something." His philosophy's goal is to furnish a better and more manifold life for the human being.⁶¹ Lakshmi Narasu saw religion's evolutionary nature and found that it was born of the overpowering and disquieting feelings of man's dependence on the unknown supernatural powers that sought to fulfill his ends and desires and, especially, in his struggle of life towards self-preservation.⁶² He, therefore, felt the need for the reconstruction of religion in modern times and wrote, "No one can any longer admit mysteries in any creed, believing it to be a superhuman law founded upon the decree of an omniscient and infallible master."⁶³

Caste in Hinduism and Buddhism

Narasu wrote, "Caste is a crippling disease. The physician must guard against disease or destroy it.... Without rebelling against social institutions and destroying custom there can never be the free

exercise of liberty and justice.”⁶⁴ Narasu believed that Caste is an elaborate social organization of Hinduism, regulating interlining, intermarriage, and untouchability, and these regulations have been designed with the special view of maintaining the supremacy of the Brahmans.⁶⁵ Conversely, in Buddhism, all men and women are looked upon with compassion and sympathy and treated as brothers with absolute equality of consideration.⁶⁶

The reconstruction of modern Buddhism before Ambedkar can be summarized in four points:

1. Narasu was dissatisfied with the traditional form of Buddhist priestly class, whom he called Yellow-robed Buddhism, and wished the modernization of its formation.⁶⁷
2. Having known of the non-intellectuality of concentration (Dhyana) in Buddhism, Narasu emphasized its utility whereas Ambedkar did not give it any heed.⁶⁸
3. Narasu developed the idea of Saddharma, including charity, humanity, self-discipline, temperance, moderation, love, truthfulness, and goodwill, which may aid in mankind's upward struggle.⁶⁹ In his reconstruction of modern Buddhism, Ambedkar later explained the idea of true religion (Saddharma) in detail.
4. Narasu underlined the four Great Truths to be the major components of Buddhist teachings.⁷⁰ Whereas Ambedkar saw them as a stumbling block in the progress of Buddhism.

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³ D.S. Anand, p 13

⁴ *A Survey of Buddhism: its Doctrines and Methods Through the Ages*, Sangharakshita, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2001, (Hereafter Sangharakshita), p 9

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⁶ Hazra, pp 3-4

⁷ Hazra, pp 66-67

⁸ Hazra, pp 71-72

⁹ Hazra, pp 79-80

¹⁰ Ramteke, pp 26-27

¹¹ Ramteke, p 27

¹² Ramteke, pp 27-28

¹³ *Buddhism declined in India: how and why*, DC Ahir, Buddhist World Press, Delhi 2004 (Hereafter Ahir DC), p 86

¹⁴ *Hardships and downfall of Buddhism in India*, Giovanni Verardi, Manohar publishers and distributors, New Delhi, 2011, (Hereafter Giovanni Verardi), pp 22-23

¹⁵ Ramteke, p 26

¹⁶ *Writings and speeches*, Dr. BR Ambedkar, Vol 3, Ambedkar foundation, New Delhi, 2014, (Hereafter Vol 3), pp 229-230

¹⁷ Vol 3, p 233

¹⁸ *Buddhist Revival in India: Aspects of the sociology of Buddhism*, Trevor Ling, MACMILLAN PRESS, London and Basingstoke 1980, (Hereafter Trevor Ling), pp 24-25.

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²⁰ *Buddhism in India: Rediscovery, Revival And Development*, DC Ahir, Buddhist World Press, Delhi, 2010, (Hereafter BRRD), pp 9-10

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²² Ramteke, pp 55-56

²³ PBR, p 7

²⁴ The influential lectures on Buddhism by the Venerable Bhikkhu Migetuvatte Gunananda, Sri Lanka's greatest orator and debator at that time, further strengthened Dharmapala's resolve. PBR, pp 7-8

²⁵ Dharmapala and Henry Olcott, pp 1-2

²⁶ Dharmapala and Henry Olcott, p 2

²⁷ In the presence of thousands of Buddhists from the surrounding villages, Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky publicly embraced Buddhism at Galle, South Ceylon, by taking the Three Refuges and Five Precepts in Pali on 21 May 1880. Dharmapala, along with his father and uncle, was also present. He was immensely impressed by them. Later, Col. Olcott delivered his first lecture on Buddhism in Colombo in June, Dharmapala met him and Madame Blavatsky there after the meeting. PBR, pp 8-9

²⁸ BRRD, pp 107-108

²⁹ As soon as Dharmapala settled at the Burmese Rest House in Bodh Gaya, he started writing letters to the people in Sri Lanka, Burma, and India describing the pitiable condition of the Buddhist shrine, the Maha Bodhi Temple, and pleaded for their co-operation, help, and assistance in the re-establishment of the Bhikkhu Sangha at Bodh Gaya. Wherefore four Sri Lankan Bhikkhus: Chandajoti, Sumangala, Pemadada and Sudassana agreed to join him at Buddha Gaya. Accompanied by them, he returned to Buddha Gaya in July 1891 and started the mission of resurrection on the morning of Asadha Purnima, the day credited to Lord Buddha's preaching of His First Sermon at Sarnath. BRRD, pp 108-109

³⁰ BRRD, pp 109-110.

³¹ Mrs. Foster was born in the far-off Hawaii islands located in the Pacific Ocean. She was married to a wealthy merchant from North America. It is said that she was of an indomitable uncontrollable temper. As its remedy, Dharmapala advised her to cultivate willpower, and to repeat the formula 'I will be good, I will control the rising anger'. These simple words of a practicing Buddhist worked wonders. Mrs. Foster gained serenity post getting over her temperamental issues. She was deeply impressed by this change and decided to divert her enormous wealth to the spread of the gospel of the Buddha, a cause for which Dharmapala worked hard. PBR, p 17.

³² BRRD, pp 110-111.

³³ *Resurgent Buddhism: Ambedkar's predecessors in modern India*, Braj Ranjan Mani, Critical Quest, New Delhi 2007, (Hereafter Braj Ranjan Mani), p 5.

³⁴ Bodhanand built the Buddha Vihar in 1925, a small monastery, which became a center for interested and educated low caste people. Other Buddhist activists associated with him are Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, Ram Charan, Shiv Dayal Singh Chaurasia, Gauri Shankar Pal, and Chedi Rai Sathi. The Dalit movement in Uttar Pradesh saw these figures' active participation. Braj Ranjan Mani, pp 20-21.

³⁵ On Ambedkar's part there was mutual respect for each other's learning and a high appreciation for Bodhanand's undiluted fight for the Dalit cause. But Bodhanand did not restrain from criticism. He objected to Dr. Ambedkar's second marriage on the grounds that his wife was a Brahmin, fearing it would split the movement. "'Roots of Ambedkar Buddhism in Kanpur'", Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp, Edited, *Reconstructing the world: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*, Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2004, (Hereafter Maren Bellwinkel Schempp), p 230.

³⁶ After visiting different parts of the country, Medharthi took charge of a school established by his father and started teaching in his hometown in 1933. In his school, the students, mainly from the Dalit-Bahujan community, were taught to lead a casteless communitarian life on the model of the Buddhist Sangha, and were strictly forbidden to adopt or use their caste-based surnames. Medharthi wrote the book *Varna Vyavastha ka Bhandaphor Varna Vyavastha Vidhvans* (The Caste System Exposed: Annihilation of the Caste System) in 1933 and dedicated it to Ambedkar whom he regarded as the fearless leader of the youth. Braj Ranjan Mani, p 23.

³⁷ Additionally, the two edicts of Emperor Ashoka Edicts (II and III) mention that Buddhist monks were sent to Tamilagam. Along with this, other facts reveal that some Viharas and Pillars found in Tamilagam were built by Emperor Ashoka and Mahindar, who were sent by him. *Buddhism & Tamil: Mayilai Seeni Venkataswamy*, Kovi Kanaga Vinayagam, Critical Quest, New Delhi 2015, (Hereafter Venkataswamy), pp 6-9.

³⁸ Buddhaghosa, Buddhadatta, and Dhammapala, the three celebrated Pali commentators belonging to the late fourth or early fifth centuries, have some candid connections with monastic institutions in the Tamil-speaking region. *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*, Anne E. Monius, Navayana, New Delhi 2009, (Hereafter IPB), p 5.

³⁹ Both within society and the State, the upper caste communities, in the colonial period, sought to re-legitimize their traditional ideologies of ascriptive hierarchicalism, albeit in modern terms, such as historical legacy, culture, and religion. The lower sections of the society, on the other hand, tended to rediscover their tradition of resistance and even revolt due to prevailing deprivation. Both these contradictory forms of social consciousness were demanding within a State an 'equality of all before the law'. The religious movements initiated by the dominant communities like, the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, and Theosophy, were intended to revitalize the traditional ideology/religion, but these reformist movements were unjust to the Brahminical lowered caste-religious movements in general. *Iyothee Thassar & Tamil Buddhist Movement: religion as Emancipatory Identity*, G. Aloysius, Critical Quest, New Delhi 1998, (Hereafter Iyothee Thassar), pp 22-23.

⁴⁰ *On religion*, Karl Marx Friedrich Engels, Dover Publications, Mineola, New York, 2008, (Hereafter Karl Marx), p 41.

⁴¹ Iyothee Thassar, p 14.

⁴² Iyothee Thassar, pp 31-32.

⁴³ Colonel Olcott, in 1902, said that a committee of the Panchamas/the Paraiyahs people headed by one of their recognized leaders Mr. Iyothee Thassar, a native doctor of Madras, came to meet him three years prior. It was stated by them that their race was the aboriginal from this part of India and they were the followers of Buddhism at the time of the emperor Asoka, they further claimed that there were ancient books that can prove this. They additionally requested him to help in reviving Buddhism among them and to build them a temple, where they could worship following their ancestral rules. Iyothee Thassar, pp 64-65.

⁴⁴ Iyothee Thassar's suspicions came to fruition when he attended the Madras Maha Jana Sabha meeting the next year and raised the issue of the subaltern communities' entry into the temple saying that God and temples are common for all castes of the world. If that is the case then why the people following Vaishnava or Saivite traditions were prohibited from entering Vishnu or Shiv temples? Won't they prosper through mutual love if they were allowed and the religions would also be strengthened? Immediately all of them then unanimously

stood up and started shouting against them from entering. Instantly, Mr. Siva Rama Sastri, the delegate from Tanjore, stood up and objected that in his community they preached gods like Madurai Veeran, Katteri, and Karuppannan; and gods like Shiva or Vishnu were not worshipped by them. To a sensitive man, like Pandit Iyothee Thassar, who had been brought up in and followed the Vaishnava tradition, this must have been a painful experience, and it left a mark on him almost till the end of his life. Yet, it must also have been a revealing experience, for it immediately led him to ponder on the intensity and the near-primeval nature of the hatred of the Brahminic castes against those defined as 'outcastes', more particularly the Pariahs. Iyothee Thassar, pp 179-180.

⁴⁵ The main thrust of the Theosophical movement was on the Vedic-Brahminic traditions and revivalism, despite Colonel Olcott's interest and involvement in Buddhism. Iyothee Thassar, pp 69-71.

⁴⁶ In the early 1940s, Ambedkar read the *Essence of Buddhism* by Lakshmi Narasu which made a deep impression on him and he recommended it to his followers who were searching for a new religion. The book had also inspired Ambedkar to enquire about the life and activities of Lakshmi Narasu. He received information on this great pioneer from his friend, Dr. Pattabi Sitaramayya. Iyothee Thassar, pp 220-221.

⁴⁷ The Dalits massively opposed M.C. Rajah, a veteran of subaltern politics not only in Tamil Nadu but also elsewhere. The participants of Tamizhan showed no hesitation or compunction in throwing him overboard. Both the local and Ceylon-based journals that opposed Ambedkar were criticized ruthlessly. A strict stance was taken against Gandhi for creating divisions amongst South Indian Dalits and upholding the Varna system. For the entirety of the Round Table Conferences and the Pune Pact, articles published in the journal creatively criticized and condemned Gandhi's stubbornness, debunking, and camouflage. On the other hand, Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan enjoyed full support. Meetings were conducted everywhere and telegrams expressing faith in their leadership, confirming their position in the negotiations, and explicitly denying the representative capacity of Gandhi were dispatched. *Dalit-Subaltern Self-Identifications*, Iyothee Thassar & Tamizhan, G Aloysius, Critical quest, New Delhi 2010, (Hereafter Tamizhan), pp 53-54.

⁴⁸ *Dalit-Subaltern Emergence in Religio-Cultural Subjectivity: Iyothee Thassar & Emancipatory Buddhism*, G. Aloysius, Critical Quest, New Delhi 2004, (Hereafter Emancipatory Buddhism), pp 36-37.

⁴⁹ The social division based on the occupational distinctions of kings, religious teachers, merchants, and agriculturists was converted into the permanent social hierarchy of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Shudras after the arrival of Aryan Mlechhes argued Thassar. But this socio-cultural enslavement of the original inhabitants imposed by the Aryan invaders was ferociously resisted all over the country and rejected by many; however, those who had rejected this classification were marginalized and came to be known as the lower/outcastes — Chandalas in the North, Tiyas in the West, Tiyas, and Pariahs in the South. In other words, it was the defeat of the saththarmam by varnashrama dharma which resulted in a deviation from belief in the worth of moral conduct. Iyothee Thassar, pp 165-166.

⁵⁰ The Pandit explained the meaning of kadavul—Tamil for God, since the beginning of his journal *Tamilan* (1907), as used in ancient moral literature and grammar texts. The repeated use of the word in different contexts convinced him that the word genuinely was of Tamil origin; and if it was insistently and consistently used, it must have been meaningful for them. Eventually, he found out that the word referred to all those great men and women who lived the lives in righteousness and wisdom, and total selflessness, and thus through their own character, conduct, and life contribution they became indispensable to and immortal in the lives of successive generations. Only one in ten million achieved this status. Again, one reached this status not through the intervention of some superior God or by prayer, magic, and miracle but by the narrow path of lifelong Right Conduct. "Transcendence in modern Tamil Buddhism: A note on the liberative in popular religious perceptions", G. Aloysius edited in *Reconstructing the world: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*, Jondhale Surendra and Johannes Beltz, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, New Delhi 2004, (Hereafter MTB), pp 212-213.

⁵¹ Within the Tamil subaltern traditions, all these gods from non-Buddhist as well as Tamil traditions were not gods in competition with those of other religions; they did not do miracles, promise heaven or salvation, or intervene in the lives of people to rescue them from the consequences of their own actions. They were remembered and revered mainly through festivals, so that others may strengthen their resolve to walk in virtue's path, towards Maitri, or nirvana. MTB, pp 215-216.

⁵² *Religion of the Modern Buddhist*, P. Lakshmi Narasu, Edited and Introduced by G. Aloysius, Wordsmiths, Delhi, 2002, (Hereafter RMB), p x.

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⁵⁴ One such pioneer in Madras (now Chennai) of the twentieth century is Pokkala Lakshmi Narasu, the author of modern Buddhism, who sought to reconstruct an existentially modern and emancipatory religion in south India. In constant interaction with other Buddhist-rationalist stalwarts of the day: Iyothee Thassar and M. Singaravelu, Narasu's reconstruction of Buddhism took place among the subaltern communities of the region, with the

objective to elaborate a modern, rational, and hence, a liberative perspective and provide and nurture feelings of security and brotherliness to men faced both with the day-to-day as well as the ultimate challenges of life and not to set up another religion in the established sense of the term. *Religion of the Modern Buddhist*, P. Lakshmi Narasu, Edited, G. Aloysius, Wordsmiths, Delhi, 2002, (Hereafter RMB), pp viii-ix.

⁵⁵ RMB, p xii.

⁵⁶ Bhikshu Devapriya Valisinha while introducing Narasu's book on caste mentioned that Narasu publicly embraced Buddhism on a visit to Ceylon. We do not have any other reference to support this claim. But we know that Professor Narasu's interest and commitment to Buddhism started much before the establishment of the Madras branch of the Maha Bodhi Society in 1890. RMB, p xiii.

⁵⁷ Lakshmi Narasu's book, 'The Essence of Buddhism', grabbed the attention of the Japanese people so much that they translated it into the Japanese language and it underwent several editions in that country. 'What is Buddhism', another book of his, impressed Jean Masaryk, the President of Czechoslovakia who translated it into his language and sent a copy to its author. Later, a journal devoted to natural philosophy published a German translation of the book. RMB, p xviii

⁵⁸ The same Tamilian who reported Narasu's death in 1930, also reported that a manuscript had been left behind by the Professor. The above-mentioned report, submitted on behalf of the South Indian Buddhist Association by R.P. Thangavelanar and V.P.S. Monier in 1954, stated that: 'The Religion of Modern Buddhist' was written and completed before his parinirvana in 1934 and awaits publication. In 1954, when Baba Saheb Ambedkar was visiting Madras, the manuscript was handed over to him for publication, but Ambedkar too died in 1956 before it could be published. In 2000, during the fieldwork for his Religion as Emancipatory Identity, G. Aloysius received the manuscript from Mrs. Vasant Moon, the wife of Vasant Moon who was the editor of Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches. RMB, p xxi.

⁵⁹ RMB, p xix.

⁶⁰ 'Message of the Buddha', Anagarika Dharmapala, *A Panorama of Indian Buddhism: Selections from the Maha Bodhi journal (1892-1992)*, edited, DC Ahir, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995, (Hereafter Panorama), pp 10-11.

⁶¹ RMB, p 44.

⁶² RMB, pp 157-158.

⁶³ RMB, pp 1-2.

⁶⁴ Politicians fought for wealth, power, and success, disregarding the psychological revolution necessary for the progress of India. *A Study of caste*, P. Lakshmi Narasu, First Published 1922, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 2003, (Hereafter Lakshmi), pp i-ii.

⁶⁵ Achara is the chief characteristic of caste which deliberately denies freedom of thought and action. Caste is the backbone of Hinduism. According to Narasu, the sole aim of the Gita was to save the caste system and the traditional Brahminical religion from disintegration. According to him, the caste system is the steel frame binding together the many beliefs massed together in Hinduism. A Hindu without a caste finds himself in almost contradiction. RMB, p 35.

⁶⁶ Buddha gave his message of freedom from sorrow and suffering (dukkha) to all classes of men, without preaching a crusade against the Brahmin caste system. His teaching was beyond caste and welcomed men from all walks of life. RMB, pp 9-10.

⁶⁷ RMB, p 22.

⁶⁸ RMB, pp 172-173.

⁶⁹ RMB, pp 257.

⁷⁰ WHB, pp 45-46.