

BHIKHUS SHOULD SERVE THE BUDDHA BY BECOMING PREACHERS OF HIS DHAMMA

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Dated the 30th October 1956.

My dear Valisinha,

Thank you very much for your letter of 25th October 1956. It certainly was a great event and the crowd that came forward for conversion was beyond my expectation. Thank the Buddha it all went well.

I am glad you realize that having begun the task well we have to look to its continued progress in the future. We have to consider ways and means of imparting knowledge of Buddhism to the masses who have accepted His Dhamma and will accept it on my word. We should no doubt train large number of workers to teach Dhamma to the people, but the best agents for carrying out the same are the Bhikkus. They would carry a great deal of prestige with them which no layman could do.

The Bhikkus in my judgement ought to be very happy to find out that a large task awaiting them has been done. The only difficulty with the Bhikkus is that they don't care to learn the language of the people. I am afraid the Sangh will have to modify its outlook and instead of becoming recluses they should become like the Christian missionaries the social workers and social preachers. As I told you today they are neither Arhans nor useful members of the society. This fact must be hammered into them and make them realize that they could serve the Buddha well by becoming preachers of His Dhamma.

I like your idea of opening a sort of the logical seminar where Bhikkus and non-Bhikkus could be taught the fundamentals of Buddhism and make to learn the different languages of India so that they could be sent to the different parts.

So far as my reading of the mind of the Indian youth is concerned it is very difficult to make them turn to learn the monestic ideals. The best way is that we can create like Japanese married priests like the protestant Christians have done. For that we shall have to find means for their support during their educational period and after they go out public life as priests.

The conversion ceremony in Bombay will probably take place in December, most probably during the X'mas holidays so that many people could have travel facilities which they would not otherwise get. I shall let you have the exact date after consulting my Bombay people.

I hope you are giving full publicity to the Nagpur ceremony, in the Maha Bodhi Journal. I would like you to particularly mention the following points :

1. that on the first day some three lakhs and eighty thousand people became converts to Buddhism. As many people arrived after the ceremony was over a second ceremony was held on the next day as the first item in the programme.
2. that there was another conference at Chanda on 16th October 1956 which was held in the evening. There also another conversion ceremony was held and some 3 lakhs of people were converted.
3. According to the news item in yesterday's paper there was again a conversion ceremony held at Akola after I came away and more than 2000 people were converted.
4. That a Marathi paper called 'Navyug' has published some fine photographs of the crowd that attended conversion ceremony at Nagpur.
5. That I am receiving letters from all corners for conversion.

If you are issuing a special number of Mahabodhi Society Journal and desire, to obtain photographs I can help you to obtain the same. Please let me know.

With reference to your query as to our tour programme I am told a copy of the same has already been sent to you. You will know from it when I shall be in Sarnath.

Yours Sincerely,
(Sd.) (**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar**)

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¹ : Mahabodhi ; May 1957, Number 5, P. 226.