

advantages it gives them, then the Caste System will be strengthened. On the other hand, if you give education to the lowest strata of Indian Society which is interested in blowing up the Caste System, the Caste System will be blown up. At the moment the indiscriminate help given to education by the Indian Government and American Foundation is going to strengthen the Caste System. To make rich richer and poor poorer is not the way to abolish poverty. The same is true of using education as a means to end the Caste System. To give education to those who want to keep up the Caste System is not to improve the prospect of Democracy in India but to put our Democracy in India in greater jeopardy.

26, Alipur Road,

New Delhi,

Dated : 20th May 1956.

Sd / B. R. Ambedkar

●●

THE BUDDHA DHAMMA WILL BE THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar declared his conversion to Buddhism through a statement issued from New Delhi.

The Statement is as follows—

26, Alipore Road,
Civil Lines, Delhi.
23rd September 1956.

The date and place of my conversion to Buddhism has now been finally fixed. It will take place at Nagpur on the *Dussehra** day *i.e.* 14th October 1956. The ceremony of conversion will take place between 9 and 11 a.m. and in the evening of the same day I will address the gathering.

Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR,
23rd September 1956.”

The programme was published in detail in ‘Prabuddha Bharat’ Weekly. It was informed that those who are desirous of converting, should be above 18 years of age.¹

The complete responsibility of the organizing this conversion programme was delegated to ‘Indian Buddhist Council’, Nagpur branch. Accordingly, Mr. W. M. Godbole, Secretary of the committee, published a handbill as follows :—

“Mass Conversion

Revered Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Founder and President of Buddhist Society of India shall embrace Buddhism at the ceremony to be held at Nagpur at 8 a. m. on the Vijaya Dashmi day-**Sunday, the 14th October 1956. Venerable Bhikkhu Chandramani Maha Thera of Burma**, now in India, shall perform the ceremony.

* *Ashoka Vijaya Dashmi.*

¹ : Prabuddha Bharat, 29th September 1956.

People desirous of getting themselves converted shall be able to do so at the very ceremony, and shall be required to wear clean and white garments.

Appeal For Funds

In this benevolent ceremony the people, it is hoped, shall participate in lacs; and shall render every possible aid to the **local branch of the Bharatiya Bouddha Jana Samiti** to whom the revered Baba has entrusted the task of managing this great ceremony. While rendering the financial aid to the local benevolents shall insist on having receipts of the Samiti concerned. Outsiders will kindly remit money by money order.

Those who want to volunteer themselves to assist the management of the celebrations shall see the undersigned on or before the 30th September 1956.

W. M. GODBOLE,

Secretary,

Bharatiya Bouddha Jana Samiti

Dated, (Nagpur Branch), Kothari Mansion,

The 21st September 1956. Sitabuldi, Nagpur.”¹

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar through a letter requested Reverend Bhikkhu Chandramani to perform the Conversion Ceremony. The letter is as follows :

“26, Alipur Road,

Delhi

the 24th September 1956.

Reverend Bhikku Chandramani,

Kushenara, Gorakhpur District,

Uttar Pradesh.

Reverend Bhante,

This is to inform you that I and my wife have decided to embrace Buddhism. The ceremony is to take place at Nagpur on the 14th of October, 1956. The time of the ceremony is

¹ : Wamanrao Godbole, P. 266.

fixed in the morning between 9 and 11. It is our great wish that you should officiate at the ceremony. You being the oldest Buddhist Monk in India we think it would be appropriate to have the ceremony performed by you.

We realise that your physical condition may make it difficult for you to go to Nagpur but we can manage to provide the transport from Kushenara to Nagpur either by air or by train and all other arrangements for your living in Nagpur. We can send some one to take you from Kushenara to Nagpur. Please let us know whether you can accept the invitation of ours.

With kind regards.

Your sincerely,
(Signed) B. R. AMBEDKAR.”¹

On the eve of this occasion ‘Prabuddha Bharat’ published a special supplement on 12th October 1956.

“It was informed that this programme is free to all but the committee requested them to become member by paying one rupee as subscription. The responsibility of the expenses was to be borne by the people of Nagpur. The reception committee membership fee was Rs. 25 and it was open to all.

It was informed that the registration for the conversion begins from 11th October 1956 and the office will work even at the place of conversion. Two tickets were issued to all the registered delegates which were useful for the entry at the conversion place.

The volunteers were directed to come in white half pant and white shirt. Mr. K. V. Umre, Mr. Sacchindand Manke and Mr. R. R. Patil were entrusted with the responsibility to guide the Volunteers coming from outside Nagpur.”

Looking into the demand of the people a special train was arranged by the Railways to carry the people from Bombay to Nagpur. This train was to start on 12th October 1956 at 9.15 p.m. from Bombay V. T. and accordingly a notice was published by railway authorities. In spite of this, all the trains going to Nagpur were full of people. On every station wherever these trains stopped more and more people entered the trains.

¹ : Khairmode, Vol. 12, P. 48.

Accommodations for all these people were made in the schools of Nagpur.

The programme was arranged on the open ground near Vaccine Institute, South Ambazari Road, Nagpur. The ground was covered by bamboo sheets. About 3000 electric bulbs were arranged all over the ground. The separate arrangement for women was made.”¹

“Shri Revaram Kawade and Shri W. M. Godbole took of a brochure giving the details of conversion Ceremony.

Saturday 13-10-1956

Evening 5—8 p.m.	Paritran
8—10 p.m.	Lecture of Shri D. Valisinha, General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society. Magic lantern show on Life of Buddha and well-known Buddhist places in India.

Sunday 14-10-1956

8—11 a.m.	(<i>Ashoka Vijayadashami</i>) Conversion Ceremony of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Mrs. Maisaheb Ambedkar and other people by Hon. Chandramani Mahasthavir.
11—11.25 a.m.	Presentation of Buddha idol sculpture to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar by Mahabodhi Society, Calcutta.
6—7 p.m.	Lecture by Shri D. Valisinha, General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society.
8—11 p.m.	‘Yugyyatra’ a Marathi play by Milind College, Aurangabad.

Monday 15-10-1956

8—11 a.m.	Public address by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar .
8—10 p.m.	Magic lantern show.

¹: Navyug. dated 21st October, 1956.

14th October 1956 :

On 14th October, people got up early in the morning and started towards Deeksha Bhoomi, in the processions, shouting slogans. 2 to 2.5 lakh people thronged and the half of the pandal was full by 7 a. m. The arrangement of this Ceremony was entrusted to 'Samata Sainik Dal' of Nagpur and Mumbai. There were only 10 to 11 police posted for this Ceremony. A special arrangement was made for the media. There were about 30 press reporters from India and abroad. The people intended to get converted were so enormous in numbers that all the entry cards got exhausted and eventually the organisers were forced to declare the ceremony open to all.

The Conversion Ceremony :

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar arrived at the place alongwith Mahasthavir Bhikkhu Chandramani at 9.30 a.m. By that time about 5-6 lakh people were assembled at the place. The other Bhikkhus present in the ceremony were.—

- (1) Thero Pannatis, Sanchi Vihar, Bhopal,
- (2) Ven. Bhikkhu H. Siddhatissa, Ey Ceylon,
- (3) Ven. M. Soughratna, Sarnath, Banaras,
- (4) Bhikkhu G. Pradnyanand, Buddha Vihar, Lucknow,
- (5) Ner Shramner, Dhammodaya Vihar, West Bengal and
- (6) Rev. Paramsandhi.

The ceremony began with the welcome song by Miss Indutai Warale. On this occasion, the rich tributes were paid to Ramji Maloji Subhedar, the father of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Then Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Maisaheb stood with folded hands in front of the idol of Lord Buddha. Mahasthavir Chandramani recited *Trisharan* and *Panchsheela* to them in Pali as follows :

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa
 Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa
 Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

Meaning :

(Honour to Him, the Holy One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One !)

Buddham saranam gacchami

Dhammam saranam gacchami

Sangham saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami

Meaning :

(I follow the Buddha

I follow the Dhamma

I follow the Sangha

Second Time I follow the Buddha

Second Time I follow the Dhamma

Second Time I follow the Sangha

Third Time I follow the Buddha

Third Time I follow the Dhamma

Third Time I follow the Sangha)

Pancha-sila :

1. Panatipata veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami.
2. Adinnadana veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami.
3. Kamesu micchacara veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami.
4. Musavada veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami.
5. Surameraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani-sik-khapadam samadiyami.

Meaning :

- (1. I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from killing living beings.
2. I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from taking things not given.
3. I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from false speech.
5. I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs.)

In this way Mahasthavir Chadramani initiated Dr. Babasaheb and Maisaheb Ambedkar to Buddhism.

Thereafter Dr. B. R. Ambedkar garlanded the idol of Buddha and bowed thrice before it.

The conversion ceremony for the masses started at 10 a. m. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar proclaimed that, those who are willing to renounce Hindu religion and embrace Buddhism should stand with folded hands and recite *Trisharan* and *Panchsheela* after him. In response to this proclamation, the whole gathering stood up and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar initiated them to Buddhism.

As a part of this Ceremony Dr. B. R. Ambedkar got recited the 22 Oaths from the people, which are as follows :

- “1. I shall have no faith in Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, nor shall I worship them.
2. I shall have no faith in Rama and Krishna, nor shall I worship them.
3. I shall have no faith in ‘Gouri’, ‘Ganpathi’ and other Gods and Goddesses of Hindu religion, nor shall I worship them.
4. I do not believe in the theory of incarnation of Gods.

-
5. I do not and shall not believe that the Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu. I believe this to be, mischievous and false propaganda.
 6. I shall not perform 'Shraaddha' nor, shall I give 'pind-dan'.*
 7. I shall not act in any manner contrary to the principles and teachings of the Buddha.
 8. I shall not perform any ceremony through Brahmins.
 9. I believe in the equality of mankind.
 10. I shall endeavour to establish equality.
 11. I shall follow the Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha.
 12. I shall follow the '*Ten Paramitas*' enunciated by the Buddha.
 13. I shall be compassionate to all living beings and nurture them with care.
 14. I shall not steal.
 15. I shall not lie.
 16. I shall not commit carnal sins.
 17. I shall not consume liquor.
 18. I shall strive to lead my life in conformity with the three principles of Buddhism i. e. *Pradnya* (wisdom), *Sheel* (character) and *Karuna* (compassion).
 19. I hereby embrace Buddhism by renouncing my old Hindu religion which is detrimental to the prosperity to the humankind and descriminate human beings and treat them low.
 20. I firmly believe that the Buddha Dhamma is the *Saddhamma*.
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* Rituals performed in Hindu Religion after the death of a person.

21. I believe, I am entering the new life.
22. Hereafter I pledge to conduct myself in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

“Later on Shri Vali Sinha, General Secretary All India Mahabodhi Society, presented the idol of the Buddha to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

The prominent people who embraced Buddhism were—Bar. B. D. *alias* Rajabhau Khobragade, Secretary General Scheduled Castes Federation ; B. K. *alias* Dadasaheb Gaikwad, President Bombay State, S. C. F. ; R. D. Bhandare, President SCF Bombay Region; Shantabai Dani, C. N. Mohite, G. T. Parmar, President Gujrath Branch, S. C. F. ; K. K. Parmar, D. G. Jadhav, Sarojini Jadhav, V. R. Ranpise, Pune; M. M. Sasalekar, Haridas Awale, Sadanand Fulzele, Ahote, V. S. Pagare, S. A. Upshyam, B. S. More, B. H. Varale, Dhondiram Pagare, Yashwantrao Ambedkar (Son of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar), Mukundrao Ambedkar, B. C. Kamble etc.

On this occasion the High Caste Hindus like Justice Bhavani Shankar Niyogi, Shri V. M. Kulkarni, Secretary Bouddha Samiti. Shri M. B. Chitins, Principal, Milind College, Aurangabad, Shri B. S. Kabir also got converted to Buddhism.

After the conclusion of the Conversion Ceremony various messages which came in appreciation as compliment to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar were read. The few selected messages from—U. B. Sway, Prime Minister, Burma as well as Yu-Nu former Prime Minister of Burma, H. W. Amarsuriya of Colombo, Dr. Arvind Barua from Culcutta, Mahathero Yu-Pannalok from Rangoon etc. This programme was concluded at 11 a. m.

In the evening of 14th October, a play ‘Yug Yatra’ was staged by the student’s Milind College, Aurangabad. ¹

¹ : Prabuddha Bharat—Ambedkar Buddha Deeksha Special number dated 27th October 1956.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on the occasion of the Conversion delivered his speech in Marathi on 15th October 1956.

He said,

My all Buddhist fellows and invitees present:

Perhaps it is difficult for the thinkers to understand the significance of the place of conversion (*Deeksha*) ceremony which was performed yesterday and today morning. In their and in my opinion as well the ceremony which was held yesterday should have been held today and today's yesterday. It is essential to know, why we have shouldered this responsibility, what was its necessity and what will be the result of it. By understanding this, the foundation of our mission will become strong. This process of understanding should have occurred earlier. But few things remain so uncertain that, those happen automatically. About this ceremony the things to be happen, happened. But in spite of exchange of days, nothing is harmed.

Many people asked a question, why had you chosen Nagpur the place for this ceremony? Why this ceremony was not performed at some other place? A few people say that since the large platoon of R. S. S. (*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*) is in Nagpur and just to embarrass them this ceremony is being held in this city. This is not true at all. For this reason this ceremony is not being held at Nagpur. Our mission is so stupendous that every minute of life is inadequate. I do not have time to ill-omen others by scratching my nose.

The reason for choosing this place is different. Those who have studied the Buddhist history will come to know that the people who propagated Buddhism in India were the Nag people. Nag people were the fierce enemy of the *Aryans*. Many Fierciful battles took place between the *Aryans* and the Non-Aryans. Many examples are available in the *Puranas* about where the *Aryans* burnt the Nagas. The sage Agasti could save only one Naga. We are the descendents of him. The Naga people who tolerated the oppression needed some great man to uplift them and they found that great man in Lord Gautam Buddha. The Nagas propagated the teachings of Lord Buddha throughout India. Such are we Nagas. The major habitation of the Naga people was in and around Nagpur. Therefore this city

is called 'Nag-pur' means the city of Nagas. There is a Nagarjun Hill about 27 miles from this place. The river flowing nearby is Nag river. Obviously this river got this name because of the people living here. The river which flows through the habitation of the Naga people is the Nag river. This is the main reason to select this place-Nagpur. There is no question of irritating anybody nor the intention. The reason of the R. S. S. even did not touch my mind. Nobody should interpret in that way.

Opposition, could perhaps be for other reasons. I have already explained that this place has not been chosen for antagonism. I have been criticised by many people and newspapers for the initiation of this mission. The criticisms of some is harsh. In their opinion I am misleading my poor Untouchables. They are misguiding some of our people by telling that those who are Untouchables today will remain Untouchables and the rights they have got, they will lose it. They advise illiterate people among us to follow the traditional path. This might be influencing some of the young and elder among us. If, by that the doubts have been arisen in the minds of people, it is our duty to clear those doubts and the clearing of those doubts will strength then the foundation of our movement.

In the past we had a movement for not to eat meat. The touchables thought it as if a thunderbolt of lightening for them. Isn't this a strange practice that they should drink the milk of living buffalo and we should carry its carcass on our shoulder after its death. We ask them why don't you allow us to carry your dead mother? They should give us their dead mother as they give us their dead buffalo. Some one some time wrote in the 'Kesari' through correspondence that in certain villages 50 cattle died every year, Rs. 500 could be earned from their hides, horns, hoovers, meat, bones and tails; and leaving aside the matter of meat of dead animals, these people would be deprived of that profit, such propaganda was made through 'Kesari'. Really speaking what was the necessity of replying to such propaganda. Our people felt that what our Saheb (leader) is doing if he is not replying such propaganda?

Once I had been to Sangamner for meeting. The arrangement for the dinner was made. That time a reporter from 'Kesari' sent me a chit and asked, "You are advising your people not to carry dead animals. How poor they are ! Their women do not

have sari and blouse to wear, they do not have food, they do not have fields, when their conditions are so miserable, you tell them to give up an income of Rs. 500 per year from hides, hooves, meat, is it not a loss of your people ?”

I asked, “where shall I reply you ? Shall I reply here in corridor or in meeting ? It is better to answer before the people.” I asked the person, “Is it the only thing or you want to ask anymore ?” He said, “This much to say and answer this only”. I asked that person, “How many children you have and how many people you are ?” He said, “I have five children and my brother has five to seven children”. I said, “It means your family is large. Hence, you and your relatives should carry all the dead animals of that village and earn an income of Rs. 500. You must take this benefit. In addition to this I make an arrangement to give you Rs. 500 annually. What will happen to my people, whether they will get food, clothes or not, I will see it myself. Then, why are you giving up this benefit ? Why don’t you do this ? If we do it, it is beneficial, and if you do it, isn’t beneficial to you ? Carry the dead animals.”

A Brahmin-boy came to me yesterday and said, “you have been given reserved seats in the Parliament and the Assemblies, why are you giving them up ?” I said, “You become Mahar and fill up those seats in the Parliament and the Assemblies. The vacancies in the services are filled up. So many Brahmins and others apply for the posts. Why don’t you Brahmin people fill up these reserved seats by becoming Mahar as you do in services ?”

My question to them is why do you weep for our loss ? In reality self-respect is dearer to human being and not material gain. A woman with virtues and character knows how much beneficial is immoral behaviour. In our Bombay there is a locality of prostitutes. Those women wake up at 8 O’clock and place an order for the breakfast in nearby hotel, (Dr. Ambedkar imitated this in changed voice) “O Suleman, get a plate of mince (Kheema) and bread.” Suleman brings alongwith tea, cake etc. But, my Downtrodden sisters do not get even simple Chutni-Bhakar (mixture of chilli and salt and bread), but they live with dignity and character.

We are fighting for honour and self-respect. We are getting ready to take the human being towards the perfection, for that we are ready for any sacrifice. These newspaper people (indicating them) got on my nerves for the past forty years. How severely they have maligned me till date ! I ask them to ponder over at least now, leave this childishness and be prudent.

Even after conversion to the Buddhism, I am confident, I will get the political rights. (Shouts in the name of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar with thunderous claps). I cannot tell what will happen after my death. For this movement we have to struggle more. What will happen on having embraced the Buddhism if at all there are difficulties, how could those be avoided. For that, what arguments and efforts are to be made, I have thoroughly thought over this. My bag* is with full of solutions. What are those I know fully well. These rights I have obtained for my people. One who obtained these rights, will surely regain them. It I who have obtained these rights and facilities, and I am confident that I will again obtain them. Therefore, now at least you should continue to have faith in me. That there is no truth in the adverse propaganda.

I am surprised at one thing. Everywhere there is debate on large scale. But no one has asked me a question as to why I embraced the Buddhism. Why I embraced only this religion and not any other. This is the basic and important question in the any movement of a conversion. While converting it should be put to the test :Which religion and why it should be embraced. Through a resolution at Yeole in 1935, we started the movement of renouncing the Hindu religion. Long back I had vowed, "Though I am born as a Hindu I will not die as a Hindu" and I proved it yesterday. I am overjoyed, I am exalted. I feel I have been liberated from the hell. I do not want blind followers. Those who wish to embrace Buddhism, they should accept it with comprehension. Their conscious should accept that religion.

* Eye witnesses to the conversion ceremony say that Dr. Ambedkar did not use the word 'bag' instead he used the words 'in the pocket of my coat.'

Evenafter the conversion for some years people used to quote this expression.—Editors.

Religion is absolutely essential for the development of mankind. I know that one sect came into existence after reading Karl Marx. According to them religion is futile. They do not have importance of religion. In the morning they get breakfast containing bread, cream, butter, chicken leg etc. full meal, sound sleep, to see movies; and that is all. That is their philosophy. I am not of that opinion. My father was poor; I could not get such kind of luxuries. Nobody has ever lived a life as hard as mine. Therefore, I have a realisation that how hard a man's life can be in the absence of luxuries. I know that economic elevation movement is necessary. I am not against that movement. Man must progress financially.

But I make an important distinction in this matter. There is a difference between buffalo, bull and man. Buffalo and bull need fodder every day. Man also needs food. But the difference in between the two is that buffalo and bull have no mind; man has body and mind too. Therefore, both should be pondered over. The mind should be developed. The mind should be cultured. It should be made cultured. I do not want to have any sort of relationship with such country or people who say that there is no relation between man and cultured mind except the food. As to keep relationship with people man should have sound body in the same way while making the body healthy, the mind should also be cultured. Otherwise, it cannot be said that mankind has been progressed.

Why man's body or mind is ill ? The reasons are, either his body is diseased or his mind has no enthusiasm. If there is no enthusiasm in mind there is no progress. Why is not this enthusiasm there ? The first reason is that man has been kept in such a way that he does not get any opportunity or he has no hope to rise. That time, how will he remain enthusiastic ? He remains diseased. The man who gets the fruit of his deeds can get enthusiasm. Otherwise a teacher in a school started saying, " Hey, who is this ? He is a Mahar. And will this wretched Mahar get through in first class ? For what he wants first class ? Be in third class only—to get in first class is Brahmin's claim. Under these circumstances, what enthusiasm the boy will get ? How can he progress ? The root of creating enthusiasm is in mind, whose body and mind also are healthy, who is courageous, who has confidence in surmounting all adversities,

in him only enthusiasm is generated and he only excels. Such a strange philosophy has been incorporated in the Hindu religion which can never promote enthusiasm. Circumstances making man unenthusiastic have been maintained for thousands of years, then at the most such people will be produced who would fill their stomach by clerical jobs. What else will happen ? To protect these clerks, a big clerk is needed.

The reason behind man's enthusiasm is mind. You know the owners of mills. They appoint managers for their mills and get the works done in the mills through their managers. Mill owners are involved in some or the other bad habits, their minds have not been developed culturally. We started a movement to infuse enthusiasm in our minds, then the education would be started. I began my education by wearing a loin-cloth. I could not get even water to drink in the school. I spent many days without water in the school. The same situation was maintained even in the Elphinston College in Bombay. If such is the situation, what else conditions will be created. Only clerks will be produced.

Lord Linlithgow was the Viceroy when I was in the Executive Council of Delhi. I said to him, "In addition to the normal expenditure, you spend Rs. Three lac on the Aligarh University for the education of the Muslims. In the same way you give Rs. Three lac to the Banaras Hindu University. But we are neither Hindus nor Muslims. If you think of doing something for us, then thousand times more than them should be done. Do at least as much for us as Muslims." Then Lord Linlithgow said, "Whatever you have to say give me in writing." Accordingly I prepared a memorandum. That manuscript is still with me. Europeans were very sympathetic. They accepted my proposal. The problem was on which item the money had to spend. They thought that, our girls are not educated, they should be provided with education. Boarding be started for them, and the money should be spent on that. If our girls are provided education and made educated, where, at home, is the material to cook various types of dishes? What is the end result of their education ? The Government spent the money on other heads and withheld the amount for education. Therefore, one day I went to Lord Linlithgow and regarding the expenditure on education I said, "If you do not get angry, I would like to ask you a question. I am alone equal to fifty graduates,

Aren't I? He had to accept it. Again I asked him, "What is the reason of it?" He said, "We do not know the reason." I said, "My learning is so great that I could sit on the pinnacle of the palace. I want such men. Because, from there, one can make overall surveillance. If our people are to be protected, then such sharp eyed men should be created. What can a mere clerk do? At the very moment Lord Linlithgow was convinced by my words and sixteen men were sent to England for higher education. Just as some earthen pots are half-baked and some are baked, of those sixteen some are half-baked and some are baked-this is different matter ! Later on C. Rajgopalachari cancelled this scheme of higher education.

In this country, such situation prevails that will make us unenthusiastic for thousands of years to come. Till this situation exists, there cannot be enthusiasm for our progress. In this regard we cannot do anything by remaining in this religion. There is *Chaturvrana* in *Manusmruti*. *Chaturvrana* system is very harmful for the progress of mankind. It has been mentioned in the *Manusmruti* that *Shudras* should do only menial service. Why do they need education? The *Brahmin* should take education, *Kshatriya* should take up arms, *Vaishya* should do business and *Shudra* should serve. Who will unfold this system? *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* have some gain, but what about *Shudras*? Will there be any enthusiasm in other castes except these three *varnas*? This *Chaturvarna* System is not haphazardly ; this is not a custom; this is the religion.

There is no equality in the Hindu religion. Once I had been to Mr. Gandhi, he said, "I believe in *Chaturvarna*"? I said, "Mahatmas like you believe in *Chaturvarna* ! But what is this *Chaturvarna* and how is this ? (Dr. Ambedkar expressed this by showing his hand fingers one upon another as well as keeping palm in flat position.) This *Chaturvarna* is whether up or flat? from where the *Chaturvarna* begins and where does it end? Gandhiji did not answer this question and what answer can he give? Those who ruined us, also be perished by this religion. I do not accuse this Hindu religion unnecessarily. Nobody will prosper by the Hindu religion. That religion itself is a ruinous religion.

Why did our country go under the rule of foreigners? Till 1945 Europe witnessed the wars. In whatever number soldiers were killed that number was filled by new recruitment. That time nobody could say that we had won the war. Everything is altogether different of our country. If *Kshatriyas* are killed, we are doomed. Had we right to possess the arms, this country would not have gone in servitude. No one could have been able to conquer this country.

By remaining in the Hindu religion nobody can prosper in any way. Because of the stratification in Hindu religion, it is fact that higher *varnas* and castes are benefitted. But, what about the others? The moment Brahmin woman delivers a child, her eyes are focussed towards a post of High Court Judge where it is lying vacant. On the contrary, when our sweeper woman delivers a child, her eyes are focussed on a post of sweeper where it is lying vacant. The *Varna-System* of Hindu religion is responsible for such a strange social structure. What improvement can take place from this? Prosperity can be achieved only in the Buddhist religion.

In the Buddhist religion 75% *Bhikkhus* were Brahmins. 25% were the *Shudras* and others. But the Lord Buddha said, “O, *Bhikkhus*, you have come from different countries and castes. Rivers flow separately when they flow in their provinces, but they lose their identity when they meet the sea. They become one and the same. The Buddhist *Sangh* is like an ocean. In this *Sangh* all are equal. “After they merge into the ocean, it is not possible to identify the water of Ganga or Mahanadi. Similarly when we join Buddha *Sangh*, we lose our caste and become equal. There is only one Great Man who preached such equality, and that Great Man is Lord Buddha. (Thunderous applause).

Some people say, “Why did you take so much time to get converted? What were you doing all these days? This is the question of importance. Convincing a religion is not an easy task. That is not the mission of a single person. Any person thinking of religion will come to know this. No man in the world shoulder as much responsibility as do I. If I get a long life, I will fulfill my planned work. (Shouts of ‘long live Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar)’”.

Some people will say what will happen if Mahar becomes Buddhist. I tell them they should not say so. It will be dangerous for them. Higher and wealthy class will not feel the necessity of religion. The officers among them have bungalows to live in, servants to serve them, they have money, wealth and respect, the men of such sort need not think of religion or to be worried about it.

Religion is necessary for the poor. Religion is necessary for the Depressed people. The poor man survives on hope. The root of life lies in hope. What will happen to the life if the hope is lost? Religion makes hopeful, and gives a message to the depressed and the poor—do not be afraid, life will be hopeful, it will be! Therefore, the poor and the depressed mankind clings to the religion.

When the Christian religion entered Europe, the condition of Rome and neighbouring countries was very distressful. People could not get enough food. That time hotch potch (Khichadi) was distributed among the poor people. Who became the followers of the Christ? Poor and Depressed people. The poor and lower class people of Europe became Christian. Gibbon had said that Christianity is the religion of beggars. Gibbon is not alive to give the answer to how Christian religion became the religion of all in Europe, otherwise he would have had to answer this.

Some people will say that this Buddhism is the religion of Maharas and Mangas. The Brahmin people used to call Lord Gautam as 'Bho Gautam' means 'Are Gautam'. In this way the Brahmins used to tease the Lord Buddha. They have to see how many idols of Rama, Krishna and Shankara will be sold out in the foreign countries, if they are put to sale. On the contrary, if the idols of Lord Buddha are kept for sale, not a single idol will be left out (Loud clapping). That is too much in India, go and show something outside, the name known to the world is of the Lord Buddha. Then how the propagation of this religion will be prevented !

We will follow our path, you follow yours. We have found a new path. This is the day of hope. This is the path of elevation and progress. This is not the new path. This path has not been borrowed from any where. This path is from here, it is purely

Indian. The Buddhist religion survived here for 2000 years in India. Truly speaking, we feel regretted why we did not embrace the Buddhism earlier. The principles preached by the Lord Buddha are immortal. But the Lord Buddha did not make such claim. There is a provision for change with the change of time. Such generosity is not found in any religion.

The main reason of destruction of the Buddhist religion is the invasions of Muslims. Muslims destroyed the idols of the Lord Buddha in their invasions. This was the first attack on the Buddhist religion. Because of the fear of their invasions, the Buddhist *Bhikkhus* fled. Some went to Tibet, some went to China and some went elsewhere. To defend the religion laity is essential. There was a Greek King in the North-West Frontier. His name was Milinda. This King always used to debate. He delighted in debates. He used to tell the Hindus, one who is a debator should come forward and debate. He had made many unanswerable.

Once, he thought to debate with the Buddhist people and he asked to fetch any Buddhist debator. So the Buddhist people requested Nagsena that he should represent the Buddhists in that debate. Nagsena was learned. Earlier he was Brahmin. What debate took place between Nagsena and Milinda is known to the world through a book. The name of that book is 'Milinda Panha'. Milinda asked a question, 'Why does the religion decline?' Nagsena answered and gave three reasons for it.

The first reason is that a particular religion itself is immature. The basic principles of that religion have no depth. It becomes a temporal religion and such religion survives only for short period.

The second reason is that, if there are no learned preachers in that religion, then the religion declines. Learned persons should preach the philosophy of the religion. If the preachers of the religion are not prepared to hold debate with the opponents, then the religion declines.

And the third reason is that, the religion and the religious principles are only for learned persons. For common people there are temples and shrines. They go there and worship supernatural power.

While embracing Buddhism we should keep in mind these reasons. No one can say that the principles of Buddhism are temporal. Today, the whole world respects all the Principles of Buddhism even after 2500 years. There are 2000 Buddhist Institutions in America. At the expense of 3 Lac rupees, a Buddhist temple has been built in England. In Germany also, there are 3 to 4 thousand Buddhist Institutions. Buddha's principles are immortal. Nevertheless the Buddha has not claimed that this is the religion of God. The Buddha said that his father was a common man ; his mother was a common woman. If you feel, accept this religion. If this religion appeals to your reason, then accept it. Such generosity has not been allowed in any other religion.

What is the original foundation of Buddhism ? There is tremendous difference between the Buddha's religion and other religions. It is not possible to have changes in other religions because those religions relate man with God. Other religions preach that God has created the Nature. God has created all-sky, air, moon, sun etc. God has left nothing for us to do, so we must worship God. According to the Christian religion, after death, there is a Day of Judgement, and all depends on that Judgement. There is no place for God and Soul in the Buddha religion. Lord Buddha said there is sorrow all over the world, 90% people are suffering from sorrow. To emancipate those depressed and poor people from sorrow is the principal task of the Buddha's religion. What else did Karl Marx tell different from Lord Buddha's saying? Lord Buddha did not tell anything in a zigzag way.

Brothers, I have told you whatever, I wanted to say. In all respects this religion is perfect. It has no stigma at all. The principles of Hinduism are such from which enthusiasm can not be created. From thousands of years till the other day not a single graduate or a learned man was produced from our society. I do not hesitate to say, there was a woman who used to sweep my school ; she was Maratha. She did not touch me. My mother used to tell me to call elder person as *Mama* (uncle). I used to call the postman as *Mama* (Loud laughter). In my childhood I felt thirsty in the school. I told so to my teacher. The teacher called the

peon for my protection and told him to take me to the tap. We went to the tap. The peon opened the tap and I drank the water. Usually at school I did not get water to drink. Later I was offered some service as District Judge. But I did not get stick with that sort of job. I had a problem-who would carry out the mission of my brothers, so I did not get stick in that bondage.

As an individual, nothing in this country is impossible for me (clapping). How the arranged declivity of *Vaishya*, *Kshatriya* and *Brahmin* on your head will be tumbled down and destroyed, is the real question. Hence, it is my duty to give you in all respects the knowledge of this religion. By writing books, I will remove all your doubts and suspicions and will try to lead you to a stage of full knowledge. At least at present, you should have faith in me.

However, your responsibility is great too. Your behaviour should be such that other people will honour and respect you. Do not think that this religion means we have got stuck with a corpse around our neck. As far as the Buddhism is concerned, the land of India is of no account. We must resolve to follow Buddhist religion in the finest way. It should not happen that the Mahar people brought the Buddhism to disgrace, so we must have firm determination. If we accomplish this, then we will thrive ourselves, our nation, and not only that but the whole world also. Because the Buddhist religion only will be the saviour of the world. Unless there is justice, there will be no peace in the world.

This new path is full of responsibilities. The young should keep in mind that we had made some resolutions and expressed some desires. They should not become selfish idlers. We should decide that, at least, we should give 20th part of our income for this purpose. I want to take all of you with me. Initially Tathagat gave *Deeksha* to few individuals and directed them : "Spread this religion". After that Yasha and his forty friends embraced the Buddhism. Yasha belonged to rich family. Lord Buddha said to them, what is this religion like ? The religion is "*Bahujan hitay bahujan sukhay, Lokanucampay, Dhamma adi Kalyanam, Madhya Kalyanama,*

Paryavasan Kalayanam.” Tathagata decided the path of preaching His religion according to the conditions of that time. Now we must have to make the mechanism. After this ceremony each one should give *deeksha* to each one. I proclaim that every Buddhist person has the right to give *Deeksha*.¹

Thus, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar concluded his speech under thunderous applause from the Buddhists and invitees.

.....tears of joy ran down

“Reverend D. Valisinha, General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, was specially invited to grace the occasion. His eye-witness account of the conversion ceremony bears ample testimony to the enthusiasm shown by Babasaheb’s followers in embracing Buddhism. About this historical event Rev. D. Valisinha says ;

“14th October, 1956 was a memorable day in the history of Modern India. For it was on that day that Dr. Ambedkar with 500,000 of his followers recited *Trisarana* and *Panchasila* and publicly embraced Buddhism. The site of the great event was a fourteen acre vacant land in the city of Nagpur, Maharashtra Pradesh, where an enormous pandal had been erected for the ceremony. I had the privilege of being invited to it and even today the unprecedented scene of such a mass of humanity repeating word for word the *Trisarana* and *Panchasila* remains vivid in my memory. Never did I see such an enthusiastic gathering in my life. Throughout the previous night and the whole of the morning of the 14th, the sky was rent with cries of “*Bagawan Buddha-ki Jai*” (Victory of Lord Buddha). Large and small batches of men, women and children, and some with babies in their arms, some with Buddhist flags in the hands, came in never ending streams from all parts of the country and poured into the enclosure. Thousands were seen squatting on the roadside

¹: Marathi Speech published in the Prabuddha Bharat Special number, Ambedkar Deeksha : 27th October 1956. Translated into English by the Editors.