

# The Buddhism of Dr Ambedkar & the Buddhism of Tagore: A Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** *The present research paper summarizes Tagore & Ambedkar's Buddha & compares their differences. Tagore approves of Buddha's basic tenets like infinite love, morality, equality, Maitri (universal friendship) & compassion. But Ambedkar's Buddha is altogether different than Tagore. According to Ambedkar, Buddha not only preaches above mentioned tenets but also liberty, equality, fraternity & justice i.e. a social message. Buddha gives emphasis on human suffering & emancipation from the suffering. He does not discuss the imaginary things like God, heaven, hell & soul. He also did not answer or discuss the questions like who is a creator of the world? Who & What am I? From where did the humans come from? Whether the universe finite or infinite? He was strictly pragmatic. He discussed & believed those things which are beneficial for human beings. He believed the test of experience & logic. His non-violence is based upon 'need to kill' not 'will to kill' or 'never to kill'. Means, he was realistic and pragmatic. For him human mind is the centre of human being. Therefore, culture of mind is the most important thing. It means there is a need of training to the human mind to think and to do good always. Consequently it brings psychological peace. For Ambedkar, Buddha's Panch Sila, Paramitas & Noble Eight-Fold Path are the essence of Buddhism while Tagore emphasized on Buddha's love for everybody & Non-violence. Tagore himself believed in God & soul while Ambedkar's Buddha is a scientific, rational, social, moral, psychological, egalitarian, and democratic in nature.*

**Keywords:** Suffering, Nirvana, Peace, Nonviolence & Caste

## 1. Introduction

The reader may feel something interesting and eccentric to have comparison between Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Tagore. Dr Ambedkar was a social reformer, a philosopher, jurist, religious and political leader, academician, a world famous scholar and a prolific writer. On the other hand Tagore was a Nobel Prize winner creative writer and the champion of humanity (through his genius witting). But there is no eccentricity in this comparison as every social reformer or any genius creative writer has his/her own belief system. Means, he/she believes in 'something' by which s/he measures his/her life and mission. This belief system plays the central role to motivate for doing constructive and creative works. Both, Dr Ambedkar and Tagore were greatly influenced by the greatness of the Buddha. In fact both of them could do the noble deeds due to influential ideals of the Buddha. This research will be helpful for the readers who are interested in Buddha in general and Dr Ambedkar and Tagore in particular.

## 2. Literature Survey

Much has been written, yet not satisfactory, on the topic Ambedkar and Buddhism. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's master piece The Buddha and His Dhamma is the greatest testimony of his perception on Buddhism. His other books Revolution and Counterrevolution in Ancient India, Buddha or Karl Marx also help us to understand his perception on Buddha. With this, his articles and speeches also give us important information about it. On the other hand Tagore did not write a separate book or booklet on Buddha. One has to interpret his perception from his plays: Malini, Chandalika, and Natir Puja; which have the theme of Buddhism. His Buddhist characters are full of universal love, nonviolence, friendship, morality and rationality. For Ambedkar, Buddha not only taught the above mentioned

values but liberty, equality, and fraternity with the emphasis on the training to the mind for the *Kushal Kammass* (good deeds).

## 3. Objectives

- 1) To find out the similarities and the differences.
- 2) To analyze the differences with a scientific, pragmatic and a humanitarian approach.

## 4. Methods

Comparative, analytical and critical methods are used

## 5. Discussion

"A part of misery & unhappiness of man was the result of his own misconduct. To remove this cause he preached the practice of Panch-Sila. A part of the misery & unhappiness in the world was according to the Buddha the man's inequity towards man. How was this inequity to be removed? For the removal of man's inequity towards man the Buddha preached the Noble Eight-Fold Path."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the world, Buddhism is astonishingly interpreted differently. Thus, to find out an original Buddha is a Herculean task. Tagore generally viewed as a great lover & was much impressed by Buddhism. Buddhist publication society Kandy, Sri Lanka holds the same view.<sup>2</sup> But Tagore believed wholeheartedly to an individual soul & the universal soul (Brahman).<sup>3</sup> Buddhism revived by Dr. Ambedkar is totally different than Tagore's. Before comparing the similarities & differences, let's summarize perception+ of Buddhism by both.

### 5.1 Tagore's perception of Buddhism

It can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Buddha preached non-violence.<sup>4</sup>
- 2) He preached love for everybody even to the enemies.<sup>5</sup>
- 3) He preached morality & purity.
- 4) He rejected caste-system & advocated the equality.<sup>6</sup>
- 5) Infinite love for all is Nirvana.<sup>7</sup>
- 6) He believed in rationality.<sup>8</sup>
- 7) Believer of Compassion & service to others.<sup>9</sup>
- 8) Self-sacrifice i.e. Selflessness is a real joy.<sup>10</sup>
- 9) Tolerance is one of the most important tenets of Buddhism.
- 10) Peace cannot be found in the temple but in one's own heart.

### 5.2 Dr. Ambedkar's perception of Buddha

It can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Buddha's *Dhamma* (natural laws) is related to the facts of human life not theories & speculations about God, soul, heaven or hell.
- 2) Real religion lives in the heart of man not in Shastras. (religious books)
- 3) Human welfare through wisdom, morality, rationality, compassion, and universal friendship is the centre of the *Dhamma*.
- 4) Buddhism rejects soul, God & any predetermined fate.
- 5) The function of *Dhamma* is to reconstruct the world & to make it happy; not to explain its origin & end.
- 6) For misery & unhappiness of a human, she/he herself/himself is responsible; therefore Panch- Sila is remedy.
- 7) That the unhappiness in the world is due to conflict of interest & the only way to solve it to practise the Ashtang Marga i.e. The Noble-Eight-Fold path.
- 8) With Panch- Sila one must practise ten Paramitas & realize Nibbana by avoiding ten vices, *asavas* i.e. fetters.
- 9) All humans are equal. Worth is a measure of man; not the birth.
- 10) Woman is equal to man, even better than him.
- 11) *Pradnya* (wisdom), *Sila* (character), *Karuna* (Compassion), *Maitri* (Universal Friendship) & *Samadhi* (Meditation) are the inseparable parts of Buddhism.
- 12) Learning must be open to all.
- 13) Private ownership of property brings power to one class & sorrow to another.
- 14) Therefore, it is necessary for the good of society to eradicate this sorrow by removing its cause.
- 15) Nothing is infallible; everything is subject to inquiry & examination.
- 16) Everything is subject to law & causation.
- 17) Nothing is permanent or *Sanatan* everything is subject to change i.e. *Anitya*-Being is always becoming.
- 18) The world is *Ananta*- Infinite.
- 19) War is wrong unless it is for truth & justice.
- 20) The victor has duties towards the vanquished.
- 21) Mind precedes the things, contrives & dominates them.<sup>11</sup>
- 22) Therefore, culture of mind, training of mind to think and to do good is compulsory.

Whenever the name of Buddha comes, the picture of non-violence naturally envisions before us. But his non-violence is viewed differently by the different scholars. These differences can be applicable equally to his other aspects like flesh-eating, *Vipassana* & his theory of rebirth. To *Ahimsa* (Non-violence about flesh-eating) the Marathi author, A.H. Salunkhe recognizes it as an absolute,<sup>12</sup> the Vipassana Guru Acharya S.N. Goyankaji<sup>13</sup> K.T.S. Sarao<sup>14</sup> & Mrs. Rhys Davis also have the same view like Mr. Salunkhe. Acharya Goenkaji's view seems relative but he prefers vegetarian food, according to him it creates craving. But Mr. P.L. Narsu, in his seminal book 'Essence of Buddhism', is quite opposite to the above mentioned scholars. He viewed Buddha the practical, the pragmatic & the realistic man<sup>15</sup>. The same is with Mr. Rahul Sankrityan in his book, *The Supreme Buddha*<sup>16</sup> & Dr B.R. Ambedkar in his master piece, *The Buddha & His Dhamma*.<sup>17</sup>

### 5.3 Comparison about Non-violence

Tagore was no doubt, deeply influenced by Buddha's *Dhamma* especially his universal love i.e. *Karuna* (love to all human beings even to enemies) & *Maitri* i.e. love for all living beings like plants, animals & birds. Tagore's view on Buddha's non-violence can be easily grasped by his dance drama work *Natir - Puja*. Although Tagore was deeply influenced by Buddha's non-violence, it seems that he has two minds about it. In his books: 'The Centre of Indian Culture', 'The Religion of Man' & in 'My Life in My Words', there is no reference on Buddha's non-violence too. Therefore, I am trying to interpret his views from his plays. In his play *Natir - Puja*, the character Lokeshwari says to Malika about Buddha's non-violence:

"That the worst of it Malika. This religion of the weak makes folk weak that is its purpose. It bows the heads that were held once high. It teaches the Brahmins to serve & the Kshatriyas to beg. I myself have nourished its position in my blood of my own free will for many days. That is why I fear it now more than you all..."<sup>18</sup>

Further speaking with another character Vasavi, she says:

"But your teacher has come to destroy the trees. And that not axe in hand, with the strength of Parshurama. These soft teachings of his are like maggots. He sets them to eat out the very marrow of the manhood. He will wipe the Kshatriyas from the face of the earth without a battle. And when his work is done, you the Kings daughters will share your heads & tramp the roads with your begging bowls."<sup>19</sup>

The above two quotes are well enough to prove that Lokeshwari is against Buddhism although once she was a Buddhist. According to her, Buddha's teaching is destroying the family life, the basis of social life. The play is based upon the struggle between Buddhism (Non-violence) & Brahmanism (violence).

In this play, the King Ajatshatru bans Buddhism and orders to kill Bhikkus & laities who worship Buddha. But due to the fear of public revolt he withdraws his order.

Why did Tagore create these characters in his play? Because, like the character Lokeshwari, it seems that Tagore

has two minds about Buddhism. It means that according to Tagore Buddha preached absolute non-violence which destroys the *Kshatriyatva*- the fighting spirit.

Is it a right interpretation of Buddhism? It is true that in the human life, force i.e. violence is necessary for social peace & self-defense. Let's examine Dr Ambedkar's understanding of the Buddha. According to him, "There is no subject which is a matter of greater confusion than this subject of Ahimsa."<sup>20</sup> Further he says that Burmese people eat eggs but not fish. The monks of Burma refused to fight against foreign invaders & asked people not to fight while Shrilakan monks fought & asked people to fight against the foreign invaders. The German Buddhist association passed the resolution against the Ahimsa. For Dr. Ambedkar, in his own words,

"Brahmanism has in it the will to kill, Jainism has in it the will never to kill, the Buddha's Ahimsa is quite in keeping with his middle path."<sup>21</sup>

Means, he preaches need to kill by using Pradnya.

It means, Buddha's Nonviolence is pragmatic and realistic. According to him *Kshatriyatva* (military profession) must be based on worth of man not the birth.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fortified his view giving the examples of Buddhist monks' flesh eating during alms & incidents with Devdatta in which Buddha denies Devdatta's suggestions of absolute non-violence i.e. prohibition of flesh eating & severe austerities like living in jungle only & eating fruits and roots. In their personal lives, Dr. Ambedkar would take non vegetarian food while Tagore remained vegetarian throughout his life.

As Buddha's philosophy has always been called as the 'Middle Path' i.e. '*Madhyama Pratipada*', how could he preach such extremism? Buddha was highly pragmatic & practical man. He was well aware about the Nature & its rule- struggle for existence. He knows very well that the plants which we eat also are living beings. We use different pesticides to save the crop from locust, insects & from different plant diseases. Therefore, absolute Ahimsa is impossible. He advised Magadha commander-in-chief to use military force for good. However, Magadhi language was the language of Buddha and Pali language originated from its western dialects. Pali was the contemporary local language of the masses. And the Pali literature has full evidences of Buddha's non-violence based upon 'need to kill'. How could one deny the authenticity of Pali literature than Sanskrit or other languages? Pali language was directly connected to Buddha himself.

We have another example of Tagore's poetic play *Malini*. The protagonist Malini is a follower of Buddhism. The character is shown as the believer of an absolute non-violence. The story of the Play, likewise Natir-Puja based upon struggle between Brahmanism & Buddhism. The character Kemankar is an upholder of the Brahmin religion. His friend Supriya has inclination towards Buddhism. After the murder of Supriya by Kemankar, (Supriya helps the King to catch Kemankar who was going to rebel against the

king by the help of a foreign aid) Here are the last dialogues of the play:

Supriya: Friend, let it be as you wish.

Kemankar: Then come to my heart. You have wandered far from your comrade, in the infinite distance, now dear friend come eternally close to me, & accept from one, who loves you, the gift of death. [Strikes Supriya with his chains & Supriya falls.]

Kemankar: (Embracing the dead body of Supriya) Now call your executioner.

King: (Rising up): Where is my sword?

Malini: Father, Forgive Kemankar!<sup>22</sup>

This is an example of Malini's 'never to kill' attitude which was preached by Jainism not Buddhism. For Dr. Ambedkar, violence must be a positive force to be used for social good. Therefore he never preached such an impractical doctrine. If Buddha were in place of Malini he would have never forgiven Kemankar like her but would have treated like Angulimala incident. Although Angulimala case is very different from Kemankar, Buddha's style of converting people is the same i.e. based upon change of disposition-mind. Buddha would have given him imprisonment after checking his mental attitude & whether there is a possibility of his mental change. If there is no chance, he would have given him harsh punishment. Buddha never opposed the state punishments; it can be easily proved through his conversation with the Commander In Chief- Sinha of Magadha. But he opposed injustice, inequality, poverty & Ignorance of society.

All the Buddhist characters created by Tagore are follower of the absolute non-violence. They are foolish in nature because they do not use *Pradnya* (Wisdom) i.e. practical knowledge, *Vichar Dharma* preached by the Buddha. These Characters are very weak & coward. But the character Kemankar is full of zest, courage & violent. It does not create negative impressions on the readers especially which are unaware about Buddhism. In the introduction of the same book, Mr. Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharya says,

"Although Rabindranath does not believe himself in the ritualistic religion & his authorial sympathy by dies with Supriyas he has not depicted Kemankar as mean or small in any way. On the contrary, he has invested Kemankar, character with heroic & grandeur."<sup>23</sup>

Why did Tagore depict such character? Because he wanted to depict Buddhist humanism & the struggle between Buddhism & Brahmanism. Unfortunately, his depiction is based on poor understanding of Buddhism. But for Ambedkar Buddha was a man of pragmatism.

Take the example of another Buddhist scholar Rahul Sankrityan. In his book, *The Supreme Buddha*, he says, "Violence & non violence have a limit. One can observe non-violence up to extent. For, all life depends on violence."<sup>24</sup>

Earlier of the same book he says,

“The Buddha’s last meal which he ate on the eve of his beatification was also non-vegetarian... Cunda had made elaborate preparations for meal on that particular day. And had cooked the flesh of ‘neither too young not too old, a one year pig the sukars mandava.’”<sup>25</sup>

The Buddha’s dialogues with Sinha- the Commander -in - Chief of Magadha, denial to Devdatta for absolute asceticism-extremism, allowing his monks to eat flesh which was given in the alms & his complete prohibition of certain flesh like of human being, elephant, tiger, lion, horse, snake, bear etc are the clear evidences which prove that Buddha’s non-violence was purely pragmatic-‘need to kill’, as mentioned by Dr. Ambedkar. According to him,

“It is not what you eat that makes you holy,”& “Not food but evil actions that matter.”<sup>26</sup>

It means, selfish cravings, evil actions which are the products of the evil (impure) mind are the matters of concern not flesh eating. Tagore seems to be far away from this fact of life. The modern science says that human body has been evolved for the mixed diet (omnivorous) & diet changes according to need, age & environment.

Matt Fitzgerald, the author of the book, *Diet Cults*, opines that there is no fixed diet. There is no single diet which is the best diet. He further says that people who want to believe that certain way of eating is the best way because it gives them a sense of identity & a feeling of belonging. This author has the interview which is available on the You Tube.

#### 5.4 On Caste & Untouchability

In his essay, ‘An Indian folk Religion’, Tagore starts with this line:

“In this Historical time the Buddha comes first of those who declared salvation to all men, without destination as by right man’s own.”<sup>27</sup>

Tagore praised Buddha who preached to come outside of ‘misereries of the thralldom of self’. Later he compares Upnishadas & Buddhism for abnegation of self through discipline & devotion to the infinite truth of love & refers Mahayana sect as an original. The Baul sect of Bengal & its teaching is the central theme of the essay. Tagore sees similarity between this sect & Buddhism for their emphasis on Bodhihridaya, infinite love for all, by renouncing the self.

Interestingly he refers Vaishnava sect as great & the very Vaishnava sect is exposed by Buddhist publication society of Kandy, Shrilanka and this society praises Tagore as he impressed by Buddhism<sup>28</sup>. The very first line of the essay suggests that Tagore liked Buddha’s equality. In fact, Tagore himself was against caste system.

In his poetic play *Natir-Puja*, the Bhikku Upali is an ex-barber, Sunanda, a son of milkman, Sunita- an untouchable & the nun Uppalavanna- a childhood widow. All these characters are depicted in the play. It is clear that Tagore

was impressed by Buddha’s equality. He did not have regards for Hindu orthodox scriptures. In the play *Malini*, the character Queen says:

Are all truths confined only in their musty old books? Let them fling away their worm eaten creeds, & come & take their lessons from this child?”<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that, Tagore was well aware of the futility of the orthodox scriptures. But it does not mean that he understood Buddha completely. On the other side, what was Ambedkar’s view on caste-system? According to Ambedkar, the mother of caste system is Varnashram Dharma which has origin in Vedas & other Hindu scriptures like Manu Smirti & Gita which uphold this evil system. This view is well expressed with remedy in his undelivered speech, ‘Annihilation of caste’ (later published as a book). In it, he says:

“It is no use seeking use in quibbles. It is no use telling people that the Shastras do not say what they are believed to say, grammatically read or logically interpreted. What matters is how the Shastras have been understood by the people. You must take the stand that the Buddha took. You must take the stand that the Guru Nanak took. You must not only discard the Shastras, but you must deny their authority, as did Buddha & Nanak. You must have courage to tell Hindus that what is wrong with them is their religion the religion which has produced in them this notion of the sacredness of the caste. Will you show that courage?”<sup>30</sup>

Buddha was well aware about the origin of the caste-system. Therefore he opposed the scripture & the authority of Vedas with tooth & nail. This is well expressed in Ambatta Sutta & Sondanda Sutta.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Ambedkar, too has given many references regarding this view in his most seminal book- *Buddha & His Dhamma*. In this book, the subtitle named, ‘Dhamma to be Sadhamma must pull down all Social Barriers’,<sup>32</sup> envisages Buddha’s vision of equal society. This explanation will surely dispel the ignorance of Hindus who believe the Shastras blindly.

Here lies the difference between Tagore & Ambedkar. The former recognized it as a bad system but did not recognize its root cause. Therefore, could not give the proper remedy. But the latter not only found the right cause but also right remedy i.e. Buddhism. That is why he renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism on October 14, 1956. The right understanding of Buddha caused Ambedkar to carry through his works like Mahad Satyagraha, Kalaram Mandir Entry Movement, his works of the labourers, depressed classes, women through Hindu code Bill & drafting the Indian Constitution. His most important work is the revival of Buddhism which brought awareness among the masses especially the depressed classes about self-respect & their slavery of Brahmanism. Tagore established ‘Vishva Bharati University & a Buddhist centre in the university but unfortunately his understanding of Buddha lack the depth unlike Dr Ambedkar.

If Vedas preach origin of the four Varnas unscientifically & Gita the Kshatriyatva (Caste system) to Arjuna,<sup>33</sup> then whose view is superior for egalitarian society? Ambedkar or Tagore?



In *Chandalika*, Tagore's play, the character Prakriti an untouchable becomes conscious of being a human when she meets the Buddhist monk- Ananda. She falls in love with Ananda. As Ananda rejects her, with the help of her mother she uses black magic on Ananda. After a slight primary success she loses him forever because of Buddha's power.

The story is of the suffering of Chandalika being an out caste-the untouchable. Tagore presented it with a Brahmanical point of view of believing sorcery & its end is also not rational as it is found in Ambedkar's story. According to Ambedkar, Buddha induced Prakriti by enlightening her to the reality of the life with using his compassion & wisdom. Consequently she becomes his disciple a Bhikkuni.<sup>34</sup>

Buddha never took the shelter of any miracle because his very method was purely scientific, logical, psychological & social. His '*Samma Ditti* i.e. Right Understanding is depended upon the great grand law of Cause & Effect i.e. *Patit Samutpada*. Dr Ambedkar's story is according to logic & rationality; therefore of Buddhism.

### 5.5 Buddhism: A Branch of the Hindu Culture or a New Revolutionary System?

Tagore was asked by Mr. Mahadev Desai (P.A. of M.K. Gandhi) to express his opinion about schedule caste (untouchables) conversion to Sikhism & told that Gandhi was not happy with Tagore's assent to conversion. Here are few lines from Mr. Mahadev Desai's letter to Tagore.

"Dear Gurudeo,

A number of people have been quoting your opinion on the question of Harijan to Sikhism in support of their own contention that to embrace Sikhism is the only way to retain Hindu culture & yet renounce Hinduism. Bapu could not believe that you could have given your assent to a proposition like this. If Sikhism is a part of Hinduism there is no question of renouncing the latter. One may though he may be Hindu, hold Sikh beliefs or Buddhist beliefs, as he does Shaiva or Vaishnava beliefs... If he renounces Hinduism, he renounces Hindu culture for you cannot separate culture from religion."<sup>35</sup>

Then Tagore replies,

"At the outset let me tell you that I have not advised them to change their religious faith, but pleaded the case of Sikhism if, for reasons well known to all of us, they contemplated such a radical step. I hold the same view with regard to Buddhism as well."<sup>36</sup>

Tagore's reply clearly connotes that he holds the view that Buddhism belongs to the Hindu culture. He supports the untouchables' conversion in fear of their 'radical step'. Therefore it is clear that he did not see Buddhism as a remedy to the problem of caste & untouchability. But he was well aware of futility of defending the Hindu Shastras & evil law scriptures like Manu.

On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar not only believes Buddhism as a panacea over the brutal problem but sees the panacea for all endangered humanity; to a peaceful, democratic psycho- socio-economic & cultured human society. It targets to change the suffered world into happy &

peaceful world. This perspective of Buddha is completely different than the Hindu culture which either focuses on soul, God or rituals. This view of Dr. Ambedkar is revolutionary while Tagore saw Buddhism with a typical Brahmanical point of view.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha rejected supernatural things, rituals & fatalism. He modified great grand law of Cause & Effect, the *Kamma* theory on scientific basis, replaced transmigration by the doctrine of rebirth & *Moksha* by the doctrine of *Nibbana*. Then he accepted mind is the centre of everything: evil or good. Therefore culture of mind & avoidance of all sinful acts are inevitable to have a happy life. Thus Buddha's Dhamma is his own new and revolutionary creation.

Dr. Ambedkar knew that Buddhism is a peaceful, democratic revolution which aims to change the human mind & the society by the non-violent way. Therefore he sees it an alternative to every violent & blood shedding teachings including marxism.<sup>37</sup> It is an alternative to every religion & philosophy which is based upon soul, God, heaven & hell.

Buddha taught *Anatta*, *Anitya* and the *Ariya Satya* -Four Noble Truths, *Panch Shila*, *Paramitas*, *Ashtang Marga* i.e. *Noble-Eight fold Path*, *The Karma Theory* (as you sow so shall you reap) you are the maker of your destiny, poverty brings unhappiness but the riches does not guarantee of happiness and culture of mind brings happiness; therefore, training of mind is important & compulsory. He shows this path of liberation from the suffering. One has to walk on this path to liberate him or her. That is why he called himself a *Margdata* (the path shower not the *Mokshadata* (deliverance giver)

Tagore himself admitted that his life philosophy was influenced by Upnishadas & Buddha. The philosophy of Upanishads rejects Vedas, sacrifices & Brahmanical priesthood. Their emphasis is on soul & the Universal Soul i.e. Brahman. Tagore was deeply connected to this philosophy. But according to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha rejected Upnishadas on the basis of lack of proofs i.e. on the basis of experience & logic.<sup>38</sup>

Tagore in his poem, composed at the inauguration of *Mulgandhkuti Vihara*, says: (addressing Buddha)

"Bring to this country once again the Blessed name.  
Which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant land?"

Let thy great awakening under the Bodhi tree be fulfilled. Sweeping away the veil of lame reason & let, at the end of oblivious nights, Freshly blossom out in India by remembrance.<sup>39</sup>

Tagore in this poem wants to sweep away unreason which India has been facing since thousands of years. Therefore majority of people are suspicious & superstitious. They cannot solve their simple & basic problems related to life. As a result, there is no way for new creations, inventions, & discoveries (very less compare to the big population). Due to lack of rationality majority of the Indian people are plunged into the darkness of ignorance.

But the rationality of Tagore, who loves the rationality of Buddha, is quite interesting. In his book religion of Man', he says:

"We have age long tradition in our country, as I have already started that through the process of Yoga man can transcend the at most bounds of his humanity and find himself in a pure state of consciousness of his undivided unity of Parabrahman there is none who has the right to contradict this belief; for it is a matter of direct experience not of logic."<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand according to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha rejected such theories which have no proofs. For Buddha everything is under the inquiry & the things which are against logic, experience & human welfare are not the things of the Buddha.

How it is possible to defend the rationality of Buddha & to practise the irrationality of Parabrahman?

Thus for Tagore, Buddha was a creation of Hindu culture & for Dr. Ambedkar Buddha was a new revolutionary who gives a right system to replace the evil & irrational system.

### 5.6 About Nibbana

The doctrine of Nibbana i.e. Nirvana means deliverance. It has the central place in Buddhism. Buddha describes it the highest joy & the aim of life. Tagore nowhere explained it in detail. But he mentioned it in his book, 'Sadhana-the Realization of Life'. For him Nirvana means infinite love for all.<sup>41</sup> But for Ambedkar, it is much more than this, rather it only a small part of the whole.

In his book, 'Buddha or Karl Marx' (originally it was a speech), Dr. Ambedkar says,

"The doctrine of Nibbana is an integral part of the doctrine of the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Without Nibbana the realization of the Eight Fold Path cannot be accomplished."<sup>42</sup>

Earlier in the same book, he says,

"The aim of the Noble Eight-Fold Path is to establish on the earth the kingdom of righteousness & thereby to banish sorrow & unhappiness from the face of the world."<sup>43</sup>

The doctrine of Nibbana tells that there are ten difficulties in the way of realization of the Noble Eight fold path. These difficulties, *Asvas*, Fetters are: 1) Delusion of self 2) Doubt & Indecision 3) Dependence on the efficacies of the rites & ceremonies 4) Bodily Passions 5) Ill Will 6) Suppression of the desire for a future life with a material body 7) Desire for the future life in an immaterial world 8) Pride 9) Self-righteousness & 10) Ignorance.

In his book, 'Buddha & His Dhamma' he says that Buddha's conception of Nibbana lies in happiness of sentient being in this world by controlling the flames of passions which are always on fire. One has to control the evil passions - Attachment-lust, infatuation & greed, Antipathy-anger, hatred, repugnance, & Ignorance-delusion, dullness, & stupidity (*Moha* or *Avidya*)

The first two are related to emotions & the last idea to truth. As the passions are inevitable & inseparable part of life, they must be controlled properly. Buddha in his many sermons attacks vices like sloth, torpor, indolence, enmity, jealousy, slandering, frivolous talks, gluttony & stupidity. It is very similar to Biblical deadly sins. But the story of Nibbana does not end here. To control the mind from the bad passions is the first step & the second is to practise virtues i.e. ten Paramitas. They are: 1) *Dana*-donation of everything without expecting anything 2) *Sila*-fear of doing wrong 3) *Pradnya*-wisdom 4) *Karuna*-love for all human beings 5) *Maitri*-love for all living beings-animals, plants & birds.6)*Adhithana*-is a resolute determination to reach the goal 7) *Satya*-truth, a person must never tell lie 8)*Khanti* - forbearance 9)*Nekhamma*-renunciation of the pleasures of the world 10) *Upekha*-detachment, a state of mind where there is neither like or dislike.

Training to the mind by these virtues, one has to practise *Panch-Sila*, not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, (sexual misconduct) not to tell lie & not to consume the intoxicants. Then & then he/she is ready to practise the *Noble Eight-Fold Path*, i.e.

- 1) *Samma Ditti* (Right Understanding)-applying test of experience, by Cause & Effect and seeing the things as it is.
- 2) *Samma Sankalpo* (Right Goal)-the high & worthy goal.
- 3) *Samma Vani* (Right Speech)-free from lying, slandering, frivolous & abusive talk.
- 4) *Samma Kammanto* (Right Conduct)-the right behavior, respecting feelings & rights of others.
- 5) *Samma Ajjo* (Right Livelihood)- honest and sincere earning.
- 6) *Samma Vyayamo* (Right Efforts)-preventing & suppressing the negative thoughts & developing the right thoughts, beneficial for an individual & the society.
- 7) *Samma Sati* (Mindfulness & Thoughtfulness)- Constant wakefulness of the mind over the evil passions.
- 8) *Samma Samadhi* (Right Concentration)-Training of the mind to focus on Kushal Karmas-good thoughts & good deeds, gives habit to the mind to think & to do good always.<sup>44</sup>

Means for Ambedkar practising the whole philosophy of Buddha is Nibbana. Buddha himself told it so many times such as his conversation with Radha & Maluknyaputa.<sup>45</sup>

Such is an explanation of Dr. Ambedkar about Buddha's Nibbana. But Tagore's Nibbana is a very little thing. Buddha's Nibbana is highly pragmatic & psycho-socio aspect. It is deeply rooted in *Pradnya*, *Shil*, *Karuna*, *Maitri* & *Samadhi* (Meditation).Without *Pradnya* this kind of notion is self destructive. Therefore, it is against the Buddhist philosophy itself. For example if somebody is forgiving a deadly criminal because he is regretting verbally & without giving him the training of mind to do good, it will be a sheer foolishnesses & an anti-social action.

Therefore, training to the mind of *Kushal Karmas* (Good Deeds) is very important to the social life and Buddhism is nothing but the training of mind by the Kushal Karmas. Therefore one can easily understand that how important, inevitable & incontrovertible Ambedkar's view is! Thus, one

cannot ask, by understanding this, why did he embrace Buddhism?

## 6. Finding

Buddhism of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar is in accordance with modern Science, psychology, and pragmatism.

## 7. Conclusion

To sum up, Tagore & Ambedkar are very different to the understanding of Buddhism. Tagore's understanding of Buddha is tinged with his own life philosophy of Upanishadas. No doubt, Tagore was against the orthodoxy of Brahmanism: scriptures, rituals & caste system. But he failed to recognize Buddhism as a remedy & a counter-system to Brahmanism as did recognize by Dr. Ambedkar. Tagore had definitely two minds about Buddhism therefore, he could produce characters like Ratnavali & other princesses of *Natir-Puja*, Kemankar of *Malini*, & the character Malini- the practitioner of 'never to kill' attitude, the character Prakriti fails to understand how to come outside from the suffering & the untouchability.

According to Mr. K.R.K. Tagore used to say,

"Hinduism could not wholly repudiate Buddhism, nor could be replaced by it."<sup>46</sup>

There is no surprise that Tagore did not include Buddha as the center of his book 'the Centre of Indian Culture'<sup>47</sup>. And he views caste problem as a race problem in his book 'Nationalism.'<sup>48</sup> He goes even farther & views that Buddha's efforts as failure.<sup>49</sup> If Buddha failed then why non-Brahmins & women are enjoying liberty & equality (at least to the some extend) especially the untouchables?

For Ambedkar, Buddhism is the only remedy to the fatal disease-caste. His very life is an embodiment of Buddhist ideals. Due to these ideals he could uphold the depressed classes & women from the dire mud of Brahmanism of thousands of years. His drafting of the Indian constitution is based upon the Buddhist principles-liberty, equality, fraternity & justice. The aims & objectives of the Indian constitution which are reflected in the preamble: sovereignty socialism, secularism and democratic republic are nothing but the aims & objectives of Buddhism. Hence Buddhism is a democracy- a way of life based upon rationality, morality, liberty & fraternity, compassion and universal friendship. That is only why Dr. Ambedkar dreamed India as a 'Prabuddha Bharat' & from the *Prabuddha Bharat* to the *Prabuddha World* i.e. the Kingdom of Righteousness.

## 8. Future Scope

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Tagore's individual belief system and their practical application will have the great scope to study. It would be the great feast for the interested intellectuals. This kind of study also will help the common people to understand the different perceptions on the Buddha to develop the tolerance to lead the successful and harmonious life in the pluralistic society. Hence they can

easily understand Buddha's pragmatic approach to solve their day today problems with spiritual satisfaction.

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