

# The Ideal of Engaged Buddhism for Practical Application in Indian Society

Pham Thi Ngoc Phuong, Le Phu Y

**Abstract:** "Engaged Buddhism" has become a symbolic historical event in modern Buddhism. From the twentieth century, Buddhism was transformed into a "Buddhist application" by advanced intellectuals, and various types of Engaged Buddhism advocated later were challenged in response to modernity at different levels and perspectives. The most common way is to interpret the Buddhist tradition as a strategy for modernization. Master Thich Nhat Hanh defined Engaged Buddhism as "Right Mindfulness in everyday life" in the 1990s. The Engaged Buddhism in economic and political activities positively does not hinder itself; it even needs to be freed from the world's right action. This concept of "political, economic, etc., is the Buddha Dharma", the world's work ethics as "The practices of the Bodhisattva".

**Keywords:** Engaged Buddhism, society, economy, religion, modern

## 1. The Scholar's Point of View

The concept of "Engaged Buddhism" has been heated under discussion recently among Buddhist scholars. From the scholar's point of view, it is a good thing to have a debate rather than a statement; If this is a more essential for societal upliftment than an academic issue and domain, and historically formed academic discussion to replace the sectarian agreement and disagreement, in the ordinary course of scholarly debate into a rhetoric of symbolism and symbolism of a certain kind, then this one the discussion will have important implications. In any case, "Engaged Buddhism" has become a symbolic historical event in modern Buddhism. It may be too early to make a clear conclusion because it is still in the constant convergence, adjustment, and development of the domain.

Salle B. King has defined in her book *Socially Engaged Buddhism*: "Engaged Buddhism is defined as non-violent, also defined as the traits of Buddhism - including the act of loving-kindness or be kind to the goodwill of all human beings". Also based on this nationalist or ethnic chauvinistic Buddhism is not recognized as Engaged Buddhism ; Therefore, the relevant activities or movements (referring to nationalism or ethnic chauvinism) are instead regarded as the opposite".

Master Thich Nhat Hanh defined Engaged Buddhism as "Right Mindfulness in everyday life" in the 1990s, and participatory social practice and social movements are not necessarily overlapping.

Dr. Ambedkar, who's famous Engaged Buddhism Movement in India, he has led the 500,000 people converted to Refuge Buddhism on October 15, 1956. He responded: "Our Buddhism will be a "Dalit Buddhist".

From the "Engaged Buddhism" as an outside scholar, I mainly want to comment on the context of modernity and focus on issues of "Engaged Buddhism" movement in the context of modern Buddhist history and comparative religion. The study that the author is going to undertake here is attempt an academic narrative and discussion and does not represent the position of a certain position.

From Weber's point of view, the major issue of modernization faced by Eastern religions, consists of Buddhism why it is possible to liberate the intentions and devout moral principles from a high degree of individuality, develop a systematic, and controlled secular life and guide secular achievements.<sup>1</sup>Han Si Kung (漢思昆) also refers to The Western religion's reformation to Change of Modern Enlightenment, the most striking thing is the Secularization that leads to the whole, the Religion from confidence to the criteria that must gradually recognize rationality to a certain extent. He takes Catholicism as an example, he thinks that although there has been an "anti-modernist movement" inside, it has finally turned into a "modernization" dialogue, seriously treat of modern enlightenment with Science, Atheism and the entire modern secular society.<sup>2</sup>Although Weber's knowledge of Eastern religions still has quite a few problems, the problems of modernity and religion that he has hinted at have touched the depths of the situation intentionally and unintentionally. This is a serious religious movement that cannot be avoided by the problem. Just as modern scholars try to construct meaning in the modern system by re-relieving tradition and thinking about the so-called modern East Asian model.

From the twentieth century, Buddhism was transformed into a "Buddhist application" by advanced intellectuals, and various types of Engaged Buddhism advocated later were challenged in response to modernity at different levels and perspectives. The most common way is to interpret the Buddhist tradition as a strategy for modernization.

Dr. Ambedkar's "Engaged Buddhism" is explained by the principles of "popularization" and "equalization" respectively. Here he particularly emphasizes the need for Buddha Dharma to "Adapt of Modernization". Of course, in overview Engaged Buddhism in response to the

<sup>1</sup>Marx Weber (1997).Economy, Society and Religion. Shanghai: Shanghai and Academy of Social Sciences Press. Paper 33-36, 44-47, 72-73.

<sup>2</sup>Liuxiaofeng(1996). Western Religious Philosophy in the 20th Century. Volumes 3, Shanghai Press. Paper 1620-1623.

secularization of modernity, they are also worried that it will inevitably lead to the loss of the soul's pursuit of intensify. Therefore, from the scholar's point of views, it still adheres to the ideal of Buddhism, which means that the human beings of the Buddhist beings are not stopped at the Worldly dharma (law) but just the Otherworldly dharma (law). To purify the sentient beings, Dr. Ambedkar opines that "Today advocates Buddhism in human life, aiming at the basic practice from real human life, equality, improvement, and purification."

It should be acknowledged that the purpose of the Engaged Buddhism movement has not yet been fully achieved. It is also subject to criticism and challenges from various angles, and this just shows that "Engaged Buddhism" as a kind of movement has considerable resources in the dimension of thought and practice, and there is also a great discussion.

## 2. The concept of Engaged Buddhism and Politics

Although political and social power relations, the significance of modernity that is formed between the pattern of "religion and political separation", and the public society is handed over to the secular politics to deal with religion, gradually fade out from the omnipotent ideology and focus on ethical reflection. But Religion and Politics has not been absolutely absolved. Although religion no longer directly participates in public affairs in the form of power, it still forms a very effective moral and critique of social-political power in the sense of value.

The Modern Buddhist movement in Indian is a very interesting illustration, on the issue of Indian Buddhism facing modernity, its relationship with politics has become a topic of struggle. The Engaged Buddhism movement should advocate involvement and concern for politics. In fact, the "Revolutionary Buddhism" theory which was reformed by intellectuals earlier, it is integrated with the political liberation of the ethical and secular world. These intellectuals, who combine the salvation of mind and the world, find that faith has a more revolutionary spiritual value than knowledge.

There are many people with religious thoughts, or few people with philosophical thoughts, for example: Washington, Lincoln, and others in the United States, show that knowledge can bring thoughts, while thoughts may not have courage. Religion not only unifies thoughts but also impede the taboos of the villains.<sup>3</sup> This kind of courage is an indispensable spiritual resource for Indian political change. This kind of understanding forces those who are Class equality, Buddhist of thought "Equality of Buddha nature", Dr. Ambedkar make use of extends the Engaged Buddhism movement that is the concept of freedom, democracy, equality, etc., for social modernity is attached to the interpretation of Buddhism.

It should be said that Indian modern society represented by Dr. Ambedkar, not only has considerable differences in the understanding and interpretation of Buddhism, but also clearly shows different types of thoughts on the topics we are talking about his political extension of the Buddhist concept was influenced by the early revolutionary Buddhism, But it did not go as far as the early revolutionist, and the original position of knowledge Buddhist.

Dr. Ambedkar argues that the entry into the world of Buddhism should include care for politics, although the connotation is not primarily revolution and construct, but his ideals is quite extensive, such as from the internal and world political patterns, the real dilemmas to the meaning and type of revolution, the metaphysical foundation of political systems, etc., all entered his ideals. In terms of methods, he mainly hopes to rely on Buddhist ethical principles to find a deeper foundation for the actual political order, his concerns about socio-political linked to the historical context of evolution, which was spreading at the time and co-evolved in socio-political and Buddhism, Buddhist resources for modern sociopolitical, it is also want to use this to support the legitimacy of Buddhism in the duties towards society.

Dr. Ambedkar applied Buddhism to interpret and comment on socio-political at the time, various political, social and moral movements popular in Indian society. He tried to incorporate the socio-political and what Buddhism is going to do. His hard work is actually referring to the social feelings of Bodhisattva. Enthusiasm for power work is the intention of protecting and maintains the Buddha.

India's modernization movement is of great significance, not only a value in "Existence Today", but also a "Social Needs". We can already feel strongly that Dr. Ambedkar is working hard on Buddhism especially "The Engaged Buddhism". His knowledge accumulation and depth of socio-political have not yet achieved the accomplishment of a desire.

There is another perspective of Weber's insight relationship between religion and politics. He knew that the religious ethics and modern rational politics would have intense. Rational politics is fulfilled, its responsibilities according to the rational rules of the state order, that is to say: "politics is ultimately based on power relations, not ethical "righteousness", but as a redemptive religion". Although history has had various types of combination between religion and politics, experience seems to indicate that this combination is often catastrophic. How religion affects politics without losing its principles is a very difficult issue.

Although "Engaged Buddhism" represented by Dr. Ambedkar tends to engage in ethical criticism of Buddhism, there are differences in actual political participation. They prove that he realizes the complication and subtleness relationship between political and religious interactions, and practices the necessary tensions between politics and Buddhism. This is a relatively clear-cut strong. He is representative of the Engaged Buddhism movement, we are hopeful that to maintain and develop thought value of

<sup>3</sup>Liang Qichao (1984).,Religion and Philosophy. Beijing University Press. Paper 180-182.

Buddhism.

### 3. The ethics between of Engaged Buddhism and Economics

Weber believes that there is no way for religion to lead economic ethics.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between business spirit and religion in history is a testimony to Weber's point of view.

Through the relationship between business spirit and Buddhism in Indian history, the turn of Indian modern religious ethics began with Buddhism, especially Engaged Buddhism, which ended with a breakthrough in economic ethics. This not only affirmed the value of world activities but also understood the meaning of combining religion. Dr. Ambedkar suggested that Buddhism does not conflict with various professional ethics in the world, but can provide positive spiritual support for professional ethics. The practice of Buddha Dharma into all some things needs to have a thorough grasp of Engaged Buddhism, so it is to practice Buddha Dharma in the social profession. There is a tacit understanding between businesses and learning Buddha. It can provide a kind of comfort and moral support for business, that says an ethical spirit similar to standardizing business activities. Although Dr. Ambedkar did not take a historical and descriptive detailed argument for the relationship between business and Buddhist ethics, the problems he touched were an important issue of modernity.

However, the meaning of the history of Buddhism gives a more knowledgeable explanation has been made to analyze the relationship between Buddhism and the world. Therefore, the Engaged Buddhism in economic and political activities positively does not hinder itself; it even needs to be freed from the world's right action. This concept of "political, economic, etc., is the Buddha Dharma", the world's work ethics as "The practices of the Bodhisattva".

### 4. Conclusion

"Buddha dharma from the law in this world", to understand the meaning of Engaged Buddhism, we must take care of the true devout people in the confrontation of modernity and secular life. Therefore, the rescue plan of "Engaged Buddhism" at the practical level is likely to be weak. Why "Engaged Buddhism" is often subject to criticism from religious practice, that is to say: "Engaged Buddhism" is confronted with various secularization problems brought about by modernity.

In the process of considering "Engaged Buddhism." , it is necessary to take care of the possible tension between religion and world law and to clarify the intersection and boundary between yourself and secular life.

Great ideals and not noble from innate are essential like

Dhamma, that is freedom, Mind of kindness, equality, etc., is a tool of the Government, which is essential for society. Therefore, the ideal society as perceived by Dr. Ambedkar is not only a humane democratic society based on freedom and equality, but also based on humanism, morality, and happiness of all people.

The origins of this concept go deeper into the ideal life.

### References

- [1] Max Weber, *The Religion of India the Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, Gyan Publishing House, 2017.
- [2] Entai Tomonatsu, *Economic Thought in Buddhism*, Tokyo: Kanda-Dera, 1959.
- [3] T.D. Singh, ed., *Synthesis of science and religion: critical essays and dialogues*, Foreword, San Francisco: The Bhakti Vedanta Institute, 1987.
- [4] G. Barbour, *when science meets religion, introduction*, Harper San Francisco: A Division of Harper Collins Publish. 2000.
- [5] Ralph McInerny, ed., *Introduction, Modernity and Religion*, University of Notre dame Press, 1994.
- [6] Roland Robertson, *Modernity and Religion: Towards the Comparative Genealogy of Religion in Global Perspective*, Zen Buddhism Today, No 6. 1988.
- [7] N. Jayapalan, *Social and Cultural History of India Since 1556*, Atlantic, New delhi, 2000.
- [8] Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhism Liberation movement in asia*, State University of New York, Albany, 1996.

<sup>4</sup>Marx Weber (1997). *Economy, Society and Religion*. Shanghai: Shanghai and Academy of Social Sciences Press, Paper 33