

**WHO IS TO BELL THE CAT?
AMBEDKAR'S MISINTERPRETATIONS OF BUDDHISM
(From 1957 to 2009)**

Re: *The Buddha and His Dhamma* by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.
(Published by People's Education Society, 1957, Bombay &
The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taiwan, 1997).

By
Sona Kanti Barua
President, Indo-Canadian Buddhist Council,
Toronto. Phone 416 2691020.



Introduction:

As far as Buddhism is concerned, we know Siddhartha's (Buddha) great renunciation was the best blessings for mankind and his life is the embodiment of his teaching. Amidst comfort and prosperity, crown prince Siddhartha realized the universality of sorrow or un-satisfactoriness and happiness of great renunciation. Buddha's great renunciation was not the author's (Dr. Ambedkar) political punishment but Prince Siddhartha's birth story is embedded moral principles and practices which the Bodhisattva had observed for self-development and perfection to renounce His Kingdom to attain Supreme Enlightenment. Dr. Ambedkar did not understand that Bodhisattva is entitled to be protected from political abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm by the power of Universal Dhamma. Great Renunciation is door to the Supreme Enlightenment of the Buddha. No writers have rights to misinterpret the Prince Siddhartha's **great renunciation as the offer of exile in political punishment.**

“The Going forth” or Great renunciation of the prince Siddhartha (earlier life of the Buddha) was not a political punishment and according to the Pali and Sanskrit sources, there is no scriptural evidence to prove the example of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and he had no knowledge what the Buddhist wisdom taught relating to war “when right is in question, wealth, limbs, and even life itself, must all be sacrificed **should the occasion so demand it** (Khuddaka Nikaya, Jataka 28/382/99).” Prince Siddhartha's renunciation in his pursuit of Enlightenment is seen as the unique blessing, although some may criticize him for any reason. In his book Ambedkar made the political darkness in the Siddhartha's glorious great renunciation and the author was created the war conspiracy environment (between Sakya and Koliya) in blaming the Siddhartha's *offer of exile* (pages from 24 to 35).

Dr. Ambedkar created his political environment to insult Prince Siddhartha:

After 2500 years Crown Prince Siddhartha Gautama was not related to the war issue and ‘offer of exile’ according to the Dr. Ambedkar's essays in his book. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has dedicated his life for human beings, Dalits, Human Rights and Buddhism. But there are some mistakes in his book entitled *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (a) 14. Conflict with Sangh (pages : 24 to 26); (b) 15 *Offer of Exile* (pages 26 to 28), (c) 16. *Parivajja – the Way Out* (pages 28 to 29), (d) 17. *Parting Words* (pages 30 to 32) (e) Leaving His Home (pages 32 to 35). Dr. Ambedkar or his followers could not have checked on the facts and verify them, as there were no literary sources or even references to these “Offer of Exile” in *the life of the Buddha* and his ministry as given in the Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Thai or any Buddhist Canons. Therefore, the Ambedkar's book entitled “The Buddha and His Dharma,” pages from 24 to 35 are pure fiction and there is no any evidence in the Buddhist world. Above the circumstances, Dr. Ambedkar's bell is gone and the question arises relating to his faults or who is to bell the cat?

In the *Angata Bhaya Sutta* of the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha had made a prophecy relevant to the Ambedkar's Siddhartha and his offer of exile is the black doctrine in Buddhism. The Buddha envisaged a time when writers or monks degenerate in spiritual attainment and would give an incorrect interpretation and slant the Buddha's

Teaching (Dhamma) in favor of their pet theories and speculations. Ambedkar referred to such teachings and interpretations as black doctrines (kanhadhamma). In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta too the Buddha envisaged a time when writer monks would compose and introduce sutttas and doctrines in Buddha's name. Lord Buddha advised his followers to compare and **contrast the doctrines and the dubious propositions with the with the Buddha's Teachings** (Dhamma and Vinaya) taught by him (the Buddha). If they are discordant and inconsistent, Buddha advised and taught his followers to compare and contrast the doctrines and the dubious propositions with the Dhamma and the Vinaya taught by Him. If they are discordant and inconsistent, he (Buddha) advised us not to accept them. For they should they should be regarded as deviations or incorrect interpretations done in Buddha's name. Now, not a word was mentioned about *the offer of exile*. I have stated my reasons for not accepting of Ambedkar's *offer of exile*. Relating to the life of Buddha Ambedkar writes, "If Venerable Maha Kassapa had collected the record of Buddha's life we would have had today a full-fledged biography of the Buddha. Why did it not strike Kassapa to collect the record about the Buddha's life? It could not be indifference. The only answer one can give is that the Buddha had carved no niche for himself in his religion. (page no. 246, paragraphs # 23, 24, & 25)."

History of the Buddhas (Buddhavamsa in Pali) gives a short historical account of Gautama Buddha and of the twenty four previous Buddhas who was told (prophesised) his attainment of Buddhahood. Birth stories of the previous existences of Gautama Buddha (Jataka in Pali languages) were recorded while he was as yet a Bodhisattva. In these birth stories are embedded moral principles and practices which the Bodhisattva had observed for self-development and perfection to attain Buddhahood.

Shame on Dr. Ambedkar who made the Bodhisattva guilty person: page 27

What the crown prince Siddhartha born for? He was not in a position to be afraid of anything or anybody that would be prevented him from what was to be righteously done. According to the Buddhist Scriptural records, the author's (Ambedkar) remarks on the crown Prince Siddhartha, it is objectionable and Dr. Ambedkar's treatise is quite different from that of other authors' treatises; written as it is in the form of dialogue between two imaginary speakers holding different political views of war. Ambedkar presented a cooked-up Siddhartha's *offer of exile* as follows: "The Senapati (commander in chief of Sakya kingdom), grew angry and addressing Siddhartha, said, "Your eloquence will not help you. You must obey the majority decision of the Sangh (council). You are perhaps counting upon the fact that the Sangh has power to order an offender to be hanged or to exile him without the sanction of the king of the Kosalas and that the king of the Kosalas will not give permission if other of the two sentences was passed against you by the Sangh (council)." Ambedkar insulted his Siddhartha as he writes, "Accordingly, Siddhartha spoke to the Sangh (Council), "Please do not punish my family. Do not put them in distress by subjecting them to social boycott. Do not make them destitute by confiscating their land which is their only means of livelihood. They are innocent. ***I am the guilty person.*** Let me alone suffer for my wrong. Sentence me to death or exile, whichever you like. I will willingly accept it and I promise I shall not appeal to the king of the Kosalas." **Shame on Dr. Ambedkar and he** was historically guilty who writes, "If this is the difficulty I can easily suggest a way out." said Siddhartha Gautama. "I can become a Parivrajaka (homeless recluse or monk, page 27) and leave this country. It is a kind of an exile."

It is also most remarkable that according to the Dhammacetiya Sutta, “King Pasendi of Kosala once came to see the Buddha and entering the dwelling where the Buddha was staying, he fell on his forehead at the feet of the Buddha. When asked by the Buddha that why he was showing such extreme humbleness and respect to the body of the Buddha praising his virtues. The Buddha told his Bhikkhus that the words uttered by the king constituted a memorial in honor of the Dhamma and urged them to learn this memorial and recite it frequently.” (U. ko Lay, Guide to Tipitake, page 66, (6) Dhammacetiya Sutta, Raja Vagga, 2nd Volume of the Majjhima Nikaya).

After 2500 years in the name of the Great Renunciation of life of the Buddha, Dr. Ambedkar made the mistake in explaining to Buddha’s *renunciation as the political punishment* in his book. Great Renunciation of the Buddha is the blessing of mankind. Unfortunately, the author (Ambedkar) made the great renunciation as the punishment in his book and Dr. Ambedkar’s book entitled ‘The Buddha and His Dhamma’ is purportedly confiscates Crown Prince Siddhartha’s (earlier life of the Buddha) seeing the four signs (Old man, Diseased man, Dead body (Corpse) and a dignified hermit, Buddhavamsa, page 65), on the way to visit the royal garden. He (Ambedkar) made the glorious renunciation chapter of the early life of Crown Prince Siddhartha Gautama’s (the Buddha) life a nightmare of ‘Offer of Exile’ (and “Conflict with Sakya Sangha - Governing Council), which is derogatory and insulting to Buddhists all over the world. We are sure that Ambedkar Mission at home and abroad must be well aware of this regretful incident which caused deepest resentment to Buddhists in this country as well as abroad. Buddha taught us, “Truth of Dhamma alone is victorious.” After 2500 years Dr. Ambedkar must not be misinterpreted ‘Life of the Buddha’ in his book as ‘Offer of Exile’ and he failed to understand that spiritual ends and means differ from social ends and means.

Misinterpretation of Buddhist Discourses:

He (the author Dr. Ambedkar) did not mention or explained the Paticca Samuppada and Bodhipakkiya Dhamma or The 37 “Things pertaining to Enlightenment or requisites of Enlightenment” according to the Buddhist Text. Mahasatipattana Sutta, Vipassana Meditation and Dependent Origination (Heart of Buddhism) are not explained in his 599 pages of book (The Buddha and His Dhamma). The question arises what does the Buddha proclaim in His Dhamma? 2553 years ago Venerable Assaji replied, “Whatsoever phenomena (things) arise from causes, the Tathagata (the Buddha) has explained the causes thereof, their cessation, too, he has explained. This is the Dhamma (Teaching) of the Supreme Buddha.”

We are all equal under the Rule of Law including Ahimsa (non-violence) as the author (Dr. Ambedkar, page 345) criticized which is objectionable for Buddhists, “(8) **the monks of Ceylon fought against and asked people of Ceylon to fight** against the foreign invaders.” No comments are perhaps necessary from us for any Buddhist or even any right understanding non-Buddhists to note how Buddhist Universal love (Ahimsa) misinterpreted here, particularly as the author (Dr. Ambedkar) mentioned, “ (9) On the other hand the monks of Burma refused to fight against the foreign invaders and asked **the Burmese people not to fight. (10) The Burmese people eat eggs but not fish. (11) This** is how Ahimsa is understood and followed. (12) Recently the German Buddhist Association passed a resolution by which they accepted all the Panch Silas except the first which deals with Ahimsa.” Buddhists all over the world will have been shocked

upon reading the explanations in his book. We Buddhists look forward to the Venerable Sangha both in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world to actively spread the Dhamma in which we see the only salvation for the world.

As Chairman of the drafting committee of the Constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar did his job with both distinction and efficiency. In the last session of the assembly, he was showered with extravagant praise. In the cultural sphere, the conflict between tradition and modernity offers interesting challenges, and the need for building a new style of life drawing on traditional values, and yet meeting new exigencies is an issue facing all religions. Above the observations, we have to understand on the human nature orientations become equally relevant, specially the search for an ethic of permanence and peace.

After 2500 years Dr. Ambedkar could not change the 'Life of the Buddha.' No Buddhist texts supported Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's "Sakya -Koliya" war issue for Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) to leave his kingdom for supreme enlightenment. Many readers complained us that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar did not make any systematic attempt to set out the life of Buddha according to the Buddhist Texts. The Life Buddha is not as in the morning paper which is apt to be disappointing if there are no banner headlines. If anybody would be kind enough to preach *the Life of the Buddha* for the welfare of the impatient modern man who always yearns for quick results, he may preach the *life of historical Buddha* according to the Buddhist Texts.

Nobody could change the *Life of the Buddha*. No one has the power to misrepresent it. The first aspects of the *Life of the Buddha and Buddhism* are timeless, unchangeable and universal or cosmic truth. We discussed and mentioned the Dr. Ambedkar's book error as the Buddha explained in the Buddhist Cannon and Texts. Every organization could be of immense service in this world, where peace could be obtained only dispelling these misinterpretations of Truth and its Dhamma. Ambedkar was a politician and he discovered political and social issues in Buddhism. Fame and public popularity do not make a Buddhist scholar. Being a Buddhist scholar we have to be remembered that one does hope, not to take up his or her pen lightly as he or she is so frequently apt to do, for he is morally responsible for the subsequent mis-interpretation and its effects on the welfare of millions of human beings.

Ambedkar did not know about Vipassana:

Dr. Ambedkar did not explain the Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppada) and confessed his ignorance in his writings, "**To some it is Vipassana (a kind of Pranayam,** page 225)." From this viewpoint, we understand that Dr. Ambedkar did not know anything relating to the sublime teaching of Buddha's Vipassana. Vipassana (Insight) system of meditation was unheard of before the Supreme Enlightenment of Lord Buddha. Vipassana means insight wisdom with (1) Contemplation of body as a Foundation of Mindfulness (2) Contemplation of Feelings as a Foundation of Mindfulness (3) Contemplation of the Mind as a Foundation of Mindfulness and (4) Contemplation of Mind-objects as a Foundation of Mindfulness. In Buddhism Pranayam

means Anapana Sati Meditation and details have been explained in the Anapanasati Sutta of the Buddha.

The author (Dr. Ambedkar) explained **Karma and Rebirth without Dependent Origination** (Paticca Samuppada) in his book “Part II (page 329), How similarities in Terminology Conceal Fundamental Difference. Section 1, Rebirth. (1) Preliminary (2) Rebirth of What ? (3) Rebirth of whom?” All Buddhist scholars including the most venerable Narada Mahathero of Sri Lanka explained that “the process of rebirth has been fully explained by the Buddha in the Paticca – Samuppada. Paticca means ‘because of’ or dependent upon; samuppada means arising’ or ‘origination.”

Conclusion:

However, moral duty impels all people of faith to work for a greater justice. We build trust through the protection and preservation of Buddha’s universal love (metta) and rights for all people. This kind of trust implies responsibility, a readiness to be accountable for the well-being of all. Let us now appeal to all Ambedkar Missions for their conscience of the right thinking sections of its Mission Offices to initiate action for a revision of this book entitled “The Buddha and His Dhamma” as early as possible for the benefit of all mankind and specially for those who are in search of the Truth, where-ever it can be found. May all beings be happy!

No human being, despite his or her race or circumstances, deserves to be reduced to the level of a slave is against of humanity. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar (1891 – 1956) is the father (Babasahed) of the Dalits or human beings oppressed who have no human rights in India. He defended the 250 million Dalits who have been inspired by the message of Dr.Ambekar. Brahmin mafia and caste Hindus socio- political surroundings tend to generate doubt and hatred towards the Dalits or untouchables. Ambedkar has discovered for Dalits the way to freedom. Later he became the champion of human rights, liberator of the Dalits, Minister of Law and **principal architect of India’s constitution**. He was inspired to heal the poor Dalits’ wounds after millennium years. Mahatma Gandhi could not break the chains of tragedy of caste system in India. Dr. Ambedkar’s single most important quality was the ability to make bold decision to be converted as Buddhists with 500, 000 people in Nagpur dated October 14, 1956 for the welfare of the oppressed.(It is also remarkable that prior to the 1760s, a slave was sold for approximately \$ 900.00. Thus, owing a slave became a status symbol – a sign of prestige in Quebec, Canada.) Misunderstood towards any religions is a curse to mankind.
