

ORIGIN SPREAD AND CAUSES OF DECLINE OF BUDDHISM DR. TAHIRA'

The study on buddha and his teachings would not be complete without a study of the main differences between the prevailing religion at that time and Buddhism which was born as an offshoot.

Hinduism was not the name of the religion which was current at the time of Buddha. This name came later after some centuries and owes its origin, as scholars point out, to 'Sindhu' being pronounced by foreigners as 'Hindhu'. At that time it was referred to variously as Aryan, Vodie, Brahman, Trayi, Sanatan and son on. The other religions or faiths, which were distinct from this religion, were many but they were neither very influential nor had a large following. Among them were mainly the shramana, the Vratye, the Nirgranthan, the Ajivika and other groups. buddha was attracted to the Shramana way of life the essential discipline in which consisted in renunciation and austerities. After experiments and experience he veered round to what he called the Middle Path and Yoga. These led him to self-realisation and enlightenment. 1

Buddha taught the new Dhamma, and the Sangha developed in a predominantly Vedic environment in which the orthodox religious community naturally opposed the cult of buddhism. 2

The following five points show how Buddha differed from the Hinduism of those days:

(1) Buddhism, in contrast to Hinduism, discards the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas as divine revelation. From the earliest times in India, the Vedas, the basic scriptures of the Hindus, have been the source of religious authority and inspiration, and have been also looked upon as divine and infallible revelation. Buddha preached against the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, or for the matter of that, of any books, or persons, or even of the Buddha himself, as being harmful to spiritual progress.

(2) Buddhism differs from Hinduism concerning its belief in a Creator-God. Buddhism, which is based on the principles of



and was committed to help them, therefore, his own house had a priority. It was Paul who made the reformist message of Jesus as for all nations.

As far as Islam it has taken into consideration the process of internal evaluation and external initiatives. *Da'wah* strategy adopted by Islam brings solidarity within the community and a strength by an extended initiative to the external world. As Qur'an calls the Prophet of Islam a *Da'i* it makes Ummah responsible for *da'wah* work.

In the same way the Qur'an declares that the Ummah would be witness unto people and the Prophet would be witness over his people. Witnessing is a universal phenomenon of Islam which is confirmed by internal evidence and practical experience of the Ummah. No body can accuse Islam for adopting a contradictory policy. *Da'wah* is an obligation and it is a life line of the Muslim community the Qur'an has confirmed this policy by saying.

وكذلك جعلناكم امة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا (114)

Thus have we made you an Ummah justly balanced that you might be witness over the nations and the messenger a witness over yourselves.

the most influential world religion. As far Christianity it was initially a corrective attempt to judaic rigidity. However, Paul's efforts made it a religion for the whole humankind. An objective reader can see the contradicting statements in the Gospel regarding preaching to others. Some of the most often quoted verses are as follows:-

Mathew states the faith of the cononite woman: She said that her daughter was suffering from demon possession. Jesus replied. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel". "Lord help me" She said. He replied. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to thier dogs." She said, "yes Lord, but even the dogs eat crumbs that fall from the master's table".(111)

According to Mathew, Jesus sent out his disciples with following instructions." Do not go among the gentiles or enter any town of samiritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go preach this message. "The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead clean those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received freely you give".(112)

Mathew reports from Jesus a statement which one can not expect from such a noble person in normal circumstances. He is reported to have siad." Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under thier feet and then turn and tear you to pieces." (113)

This statement of Jesus seems strange in the universal context of christian mission. However, looking at the circumstances in which Jesus was conveying his message the statement seems appropriate. In fact Jesus was emphasizing the circle of importance. This statement can be understood in a situation of a person who has his own backyard full of dirt but has gone out cleaning other's back yard. The folly of that person is evident. Since Jesus was concerned with Jewish conditions

(111). Mathew, 15/21-28

(112). Mathew, 10/5-10

(113). Mathew, 7/6-7

its deeds and actions and modes of thinking. *Da'wah* is the secret of national solidarity. Once a community abandons the principals of assessment and practice of critical evaluation different kinds of heresies, corruption and malpractices creep in and cowardice overpowers the community's heart and mind. Abandoning *da'wa* work not only destroys the confidence of the community but also causes erosion to the social cohesion and solidarity of the community. *Da'wah* therefore can be termed as a fundamental element for the social fabric of the society.

Externally, *da'wah* is a strong vehicle for the export of ideas and thoughts. It not only helps in expanding the influence of the community but also keeps the community intact. Communication of an ideology signifies the strength of a community. A passive community is always a target of aggressive nations. Those communities who abandon *da'wah* are integrated or assimilated with powerful cultures. *Da'wah* therefore, is the best external policy of a community. Taking initiative saves a community from external aggressions.

To understand *da'wah* strategy of Islam one has to look at the historical context of the religious situation. At the time, when Islam was introduced on the world stage, two types of religions were leading the world: missionary and non missionary. Hinduism, judaism and Zoroastrianism were the non missionary religions. The follower of these religions maintaining their solidarity had closed their doors for outside world. Through internal mechanism these religious countries kept themselves intact and resisted all foreign influences. Since the followers of these religions do not go for preaching therefore, they do not allow any body to preach to them. Although this policy did not help these countries to stop conversion of their members to other religions yet they succeeded in preserving the social identity of the community.

Budhism, Christianity and Islam are considered to be the missionary religions. Although according to some scholars Buddhism was a reformist movement in Hinduism yet the aggressive policy of preaching adopted by its followers made it

بعقاب من قبل ان يموتوا (108)

Jarir b. 'Abdullah reported that I heard Apostle of Allah as saying: If any man is among a people in whose midst he does acts of disobedience, and, though they are able to make him change (his acts) they do not change, Allah will smite them with punishment before they die.

عن انس، قال : قيل يا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : متى نترك الامر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر فقال : اذا ظهر فيكم ما ظهر في الامم قبلكم - قلنا : يا رسول الله ! وما ظهر في الامم قبلنا؟ قال : الملك في صفاركم والفاحشة في كباركم والعلم في رذالتكم (109)

It is reported from Anas that the Messenger of Allah was asked as to when we would stop enjoining of good and forbidding of evil. He said that when it would appear amongst you what had manifested among the people before you. We said that what appeared amongst the people before us. He said that when the political power would turn into the hands of your lowly and despised people, abomination manifested amongst your elders, and the knowledge would go to your mean and despicable ones.

Inviting people to Allah is the most glorious act in this world. Prophet (p.b.u.h) has explained the significance of *da'wah* work in the following words:

فوالله لان يهدى الله بك رجلا واحدا خير لك من ان يكون لك حمر النعم (110)

By Allah, even a single man is led on the right path (of Islam) by Allah through you, then that will be better than the nice red camels.

Da'wah work is important because it is the sign of community's life and strength. *Da'wah* has two dimension: internal and external.

Internally it is a source of strength and cohesion. It is evident from the record of history that no community can survive without objective assessment and critical evaluation of

(108). Trimidhi, K. Al-Fitan, bab ma ga'a fi al-'Amr ..., 4/468 Abu Dawud, K. al-Malahim, bab al-'Amr, 4/508

(109). Ibn Maja, K. al-Fitan, bab Qawluhu Ta'ala ..., 2/1331.

(110). Bukhari, K. al-Maghazi, ghazwa Khayber, 5/77