

## The essence of Buddha's teachings

*Firmament is the garment of the Divine,  
Stars are His eye,  
The melody of His laughter  
Fills the Universe.*

There are many non-believers in God who were ruined in life, but there are none who believed and failed in life.

*Embodiments of Love!* In ancient times, many spiritual aspirants went out in search of knowledge of the Self and studied scriptures and visited holy places to acquire experience of the Divine. But they could not get the wisdom they sought. Even though they recognized the distinction between the animate and the inanimate, they could not get spiritual illumination.

True enlightenment is attained by the awareness of the identity of the One and many (*Vyakthi* and *Samashthi*). In spite

of the passage of time, man has not been able to recognize his reality. Knowledge of the Self cannot be got by the study of scriptures or from preceptors or by the grace of great men. *Brahman* cannot be seen in the external world. It should be experienced only in one's heart. It is a mark of ignorance to seek the Self in the outside world.

### **Seek the Self within**

For 26 years Buddha sought the realization of the Self by studying scriptures, meeting sages and saints and listening to their teachings. He found that by these means he could not experience reality. He realized that the knowledge of the Self has to be gained through an inward search. He stopped the outward quest and gradually experienced knowledge of the Self from within. He then declared:

*Buddham Saranam Gachchami,  
Sangham Saranam Gachchami,  
Dharmam Saranam Gachchami.*

Through his enlightenment, he discovered the importance of *Dharma* and wanted to make it the basis of society. Buddha realized that self-realization cannot be attained through penance or prayers or austerities. At the outset, Buddha emphasized the importance of developing good vision (*samyag drishti*). Good vision leads to good thoughts, good speech and good action.

Next he laid stress on association with good people. The company of the good leads to good deeds. The four rules to be observed are: cultivate good company, avoid association with evil persons, do meritorious deeds always, and remember what is transient and what is eternal.

Good company does not mean merely association with good people. *Sath* refers to the Divine. What is required is to seek the company of God, who is the source of all bliss. When

one's thoughts are centered on God, one's feelings, speech, and actions get sanctified — *samyag bhavam*, *samyag sravanam* and *samyag kriya*. This leads to the purity of the inner sense organs. Purity in thought, word, and deed is the requisite for experiencing the Divine. This triple purity is considered the essence of humanness.

Buddha recognised this Truth and experienced bliss. His mother Mayadevi had passed away nine days after his birth. After the death of his mother, Buddha was looked after by his stepmother Gautami. She fostered Buddha with boundless love. To perpetuate the name of his foster mother for the love she bestowed on him, he was called Gautama.

Buddha relied entirely on his own inner quest to experience his reality because he found that scriptural texts and preceptors were of no use.

### **Make your conscience your preceptor**

There are many in the world who preach spirituality but none of them has any experience. What is the use of studying books without personal experience or practice. Each one should make his conscience his preceptor.

When the time of *Nirvana* was approaching, Buddha noticed that his step-brother Ananda was shedding tears. He beckoned Ananda and told him “Even till today, the world is not recognising the reality. There are thousands who experience sorrow at the sight of dying persons. But they make no effort to find out what experience is in store for the dead. I know the Truth about it. I am merging in that Truth. To shed tears at this prospect is not justified.

“It seems to me that you are grieving over the exalted state that is impending for me. No human being should shed tears over the moment of death of any person. Tears are associated with the Divine and should be shed only for the sake of the Divine and not for trivial matters. You should shed tears of joy.

Grief is not a proper state for man. Hence no tears of sorrow should be shed.”

Here is an illustration from our daily experience. While going in a bazaar, if a person sees someone crying he asks him, "Why are you crying?" Other passersby also question him. If in the same bazaar another person is going about in a jolly mood, no one goes to him to inquire the cause of his happiness.

Happiness is considered to be natural condition of man. He seeks it all the time. Sorrow is repugnant to man. It is a weakness of man to give room to grief. By falling prey to grief in many lives, man is perpetually plunged in sorrow.

For a person who has firm faith in God there will be no cause for sorrow. Those who give way to sorrow are persons who have not understood the Divine Principle. God is one. He appears to people in different names and forms. Failing to recognise that God is one, people suffer from many difficulties. They worship God as Allah, Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Jesus, etc. These names have been given after their advent in the world and these are not inherent in them. The names are of passing significance.

### **Happiness is union with God**

All that is connected with body is temporary and transient. What men should seek is enduring bliss. Happiness is union with God.

Buddha prescribed five duties: good vision, good thoughts, listening to good things, good speech, and good actions. These five-fold duties constitute true *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

Man is misusing the talents given to him by the Divine. He is giving free vent to the six cardinal vices like lust, anger, and greed. They are not the gifts of the Divine. They have been fostered by the food people eat. They are animal qualities which have to be got rid of.

People should speak the truth and avoid speaking what is unpleasant even if it is truth. The entire gamut of human life should be based on truth.

Bharatiya (Indian) culture has placed the foremost emphasis on “Speak the truth; act righteously.” Speaking truth is a supreme virtue for all people, anywhere. In any circumstance one should adhere to truth. Truth is God incarnate. Righteousness should accompany one like a shadow. When you have truth and righteousness as your guiding stars you can achieve anything in life. All powers are inherent in these two virtues.

Man can realize bliss only when he turns his vision inward. Only proximity to God can confer happiness. It cannot be had elsewhere, from anyone else.

It is a mark of ignorance to expect that some other person will give you happiness. Buddha felt sad that people should be subject to such ignorance. He practiced many spiritual exercises and came to a certain decision. He decided to go to Gaya and experience bliss by his own way. He found the source of bliss within himself. He realised it could not be got from outside.

Every man's heart is the dwelling place of God. Hence everyone should take good care of it and cultivate it as the source of divine bliss.

### **Cultivate sacred feelings**

Because Buddha's teachings were not properly propagated, Buddhism steadily declined in this country. All religions suffer a decline because those who profess them do not practice them in their daily lives. People should practice what they profess. People should live up to the truths in which they believe. People do not act upon the truths they have learnt.

Unfortunately, people today have only outward vision. The external vision is characteristic of animals. You must sanctify your vision by turning it inward. Then you can get rid of ani-

mal qualities and divinise your life. Hence, develop godly feelings within you.

The divine dwells in the heart of everyone. You must enthrall those who entertain godly feelings. Such people should not be discouraged. Divine feelings arise in one only as a consequence of good deeds done in many lives. Only a sacred heart can experience the Divine. The pursuit of any object other than the Divine is a futile exercise — worldly possessions come and go, but divinity comes and grows.

### **The way to God**

*Embodiments of Love!* You have all come from many distant parts of the world. You have come to experience the joy of participating in the *Buddha Purnima* celebrations. You need not have come all the way from your distant places. *Buddhi* represents the intellect. That intellect must be used properly. Then you will realize what is implied in Buddhism.

People talk about spiritual exercises and waste their lives. All these pursuits are waste of time. It is enough if you develop sacred feelings. The chief *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) consists of getting rid of bad thoughts and cultivating good qualities. Whatever pilgrim center you may visit, try to shed your bad tendencies. Develop good qualities instead.

People speak about *nirvana*. It is equated with *moksha* or liberation. You must aim at achieving this liberation. *Nirvana* means experiencing bliss in the last moments of your life. Man does not realize what it is that he should seek and what he should reject.

There are three things required to be done in life. You should try to do good to those that have done harm to you. You must forget the harm done by others and also the good you have done to others. So you should forget what needs to be forgotten and remember those things that require to be remembered. What are the things you have to remember? The good

that others have done to you. You must remember the good that has been done to you as something sacred. You must express your gratitude to them.

Make all your actions conform to righteousness (*dharma*). Whatever actions you do remembering God will get sanctified thereby.

*See no evil; See what is good.*

*Hear no evil; Hear what is good.*

*Speak no evil; Speak what is good.*

*Think no evil; Think what is good.*

*Do no evil; Do what is good.*

*This is the way to God.*

This is the essence of Buddha's teachings. When you are indulging in evil pursuits through your senses, how can you get peace? Peace should come from *hridaya* (the spiritual heart) filled with compassion.

*Embodiments of Love!* The Divine dwells in each of us in the form of Love.

11 May 1998

Brindavan