

Buddha's gospel of good life

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Man today is acquiring various types of knowledge. Among these he is learning how to live and act like lions and other animals.

What is the meaning of knowledge (*jnana*)? It is not mere acquaintance with numerous books. Even the acquisition of information about all the objects in the animate and inanimate is not knowledge. True knowledge is awareness of the relationship between the individual and collective (*samashti*) and their oneness.

Men today do not recognize the nature their humanness. How can they recognize their inherent divinity?

It is only when man is aware of his humanness that he will be competent to recognize his divinity. How then, is man to reach humanness? What is the means? Buddha undertook various inquiries to discover the Divine and came to the conclusion

that it is only through mastery over his senses he can achieve this. Man has to make the right use of his senses for sacred purposes to realize his divinity.

Samyag darsanam

Hence, Buddha declared that the first requisite is *samyag-darsanam* (Having the right vision). The implication of this statement is that, having been bestowed with the great gift of eyes, man should use them for seeing sacred objects and holy beings. But, on the contrary, by using his eyes to look at unsacred objects and evil persons, man fills himself with bad thoughts and becomes a prey to evil tendencies. What one sees influences the feelings in the heart. The state of the heart determines the nature of one's thoughts. The thoughts influence one's life.

Hence to lead a good life the first requisite is a pure vision. Man has to cultivate sacred outlook. As a result of looking at cruel, ugly, and wicked scenes man leads an animal existence. The very first inquiry one should make is to ascertain what is pure, edifying, and godly that he should see. Whatever he sees leaves its imprint on man. Few realize the effects of this.

Human life today is racked by anxiety, misery, unrest and troubles of various kinds. The root cause of all this is that man is witnessing what is repulsive, wicked and demeaning. For transforming one's life, the first requisite is a proper vision. The eye (*netra*) is comparable to a spiritual text (*sastra*) and one's vision (*drishti*) determines one's views of the cosmos (*srishti*). Hence to acquire the highest knowledge one has to purify the vision. This means one should avoid seeing what is obnoxious. One should strive to see only that which is sacred and pure. What man sees is like seeds sown in the heart. Evil scenes give rise to evil thoughts. Good scenes evoke good thoughts. When sacred scenes are implanted in the heart there

will be no room for bad feelings or thoughts to grow in the heart.

This was the first lesson Buddha taught. Buddha wandered all over the country in search of spiritual peace and liberation. After many years of inquiry he came to the conclusion that the secret of spiritual wisdom was not to be got from scholars or by study. He realized that spiritual understanding could only come from mastery of the senses.

Samyag vachanam

From developing sacred vision, man should proceed to *samyag vachanam* (sacred speech). Buddha declared that only sacred thoughts could lead to sacred speech. Buddha declared that the tongue should not be used recklessly to utter whatever one thinks. The tongue has been given to speak the truth, to expatiate on what is sacred and pure. The tongue has not been given to man to pamper the palate with delicious sweets. It is not given for talking as one likes. It is not to be used for causing displeasure to others. Nor is it to be used for indulging in falsehood. The tongue has been given to man to speak the truth, to be sweet to others, to praise the Divine and enjoy the bliss derived from such sacred speech.

There are people who devote their entire time to reading all kinds of books, without trying to put into practice what they learn from such reading. What is the use of such reading? Buddha spoke out against scholarship unrelated to the good life. He carried out a great deal of study and met many great men. He listened to many discourses. He realized that true knowledge could not be got by these means. He realized that a pure, unsullied consciousness confers the highest knowledge. True knowledge is derived from a pure inner consciousness (*antahkarana*).

This year (1998) is dedicated to Peace. How is this Peace to be achieved? The first requisite is purification of one's vision. The second requisite is the cultivation of sacred feelings within, which will be conducive to purity in speech. Harmony will promote a climate of peace. The well being of society is bound up with the transformation of the individuals composing it. Righteous individuals alone can build a righteous community. A pure mind is essential for pure thoughts, pure vision and pure speech.

The country today has plenty of persons who talk a great deal and display book knowledge, but do not practice even a fraction of what they have read or speak about. It is such people who are responsible for the lamentable plight of the nation.

Samyag karma and samyag sadhana

Buddha emphasized goodness in action (*samyag-karma*). The mark of good action is harmony in thought, word, and deed. When there is no such harmony, the action belies what is said or thought.

Buddha went on to declare that good action is conducive to good spiritual progress (*samyag-sadhana*). Good deeds constitute genuine spirituality. Mere formal worship or ritualistic practices do not constitute spiritual striving. These religious practices are good in a way. But they do not constitute spiritual *sadhana*. True spirituality consists in the unity of thought, word and deed in all their purity and sacredness.

Buddha declared that when spiritual striving of this nature has been completed, there is *samyag-jivanam* (leading a pure life).

This is how the five organs of perception (*panchendriyas*) should be used to achieve the supreme goal of life. Good vision, good thoughts, good speech, good deeds and good spiri-

tual endeavor are the prerequisites for a good life (*samyagjivanam*).

In this context, the meaning of spiritual striving should be properly understood. Essentially spiritual striving calls for the shedding of all bad qualities and the cultivation of good thoughts. Spiritual *sadhana* means cultivating good thoughts and undertaking good deeds.

The true meaning of dharma

To achieve happiness, man embarks on acquiring various kinds of knowledge and pursues various occupations. He seeks happiness through marriage and having children and building a mansion for his residence. But is he happy thereby? No.

In his last moments, Buddha summoned his stepbrother Ananda to impart to him his final message. Ananda was the son of Gautami (Buddha's stepmother). Placing his palm on the head of his younger brother, Buddha said: "My dear child! I came to the world to teach (the Truth). If anyone asks, 'Where is God?' the answer is: 'He is everywhere'. Truth is God. Speak the Truth. Do not harm anyone. Recognize that the highest *dharma* is nonviolence *ahimsa*."

What is *dharma*? Is it celibacy or the duties of a householder or a renunciant (*sanyasi*)? These are transient obligations, which have to be observed as incidental duties in the journey of life. The Supreme duty is refraining from causing harm to anyone. This truth is proclaimed in the scriptures in the exhortation: "Speak the truth. Speak what is pleasing (*Sathyam bruyaaath; priyam bruyaaath.*)" Thus, pleasing speech is declared as a supreme duty.

Buddha told Ananda that this truth was learnt by him from his own experience. He said, "When I left the palace, my father (the King) was told that I was doing a great wrong in renouncing the family. My parents, kinsmen and others tried to

put pressure on me to return to the ties of family life. These wrong efforts on their side made me more determined to pursue the spiritual path. In the quest for spiritual peace several ordeals have to be overcome. Today I have found the Truth about life. What is it? The sanctification of the five senses is the way to Truth. If the senses are polluted, of what avail are spiritual exercises? When the water in a tank is polluted, all taps will only give polluted water. Your heart is the tank. Your vision and thoughts are impure. Your speech is foul. When the heart is polluted in this manner, the senses are bound to be sullied.”

Speak sweetly and never use harsh words

When the heart is filled with good thoughts and feelings, all that comes out of the senses - your speech, your vision, your actions - will all be pure. That was why Jayadeva exhorted the God-given tongue to use its sweetness to proclaim the glory of God by chanting the Lord's sweet names: Govinda, Damodara and Madhava. One should always speak sweetly and never use harsh words.

People today are immersed in worldly pursuits to secure transient pleasures but few are interested in spiritual pursuits, which will give them everlasting bliss. When people experience spiritual bliss (*Atma-ananda*) all other forms of happiness will automatically come. People immersed in mundane pursuits have no time for spiritual matters. The *Gita* exhorts mankind to turn away from the ephemeral attractions of the misery-laden world and to seek the Divine.

You must realize the greatness and preciousness of human life. You witnessed the lion-dance earlier. The external trappings were those of lions but the persons who performed the dance were young men. It is not the external form that matters but the human element behind it. Flaunting the human form

without displaying human qualities is meaningless. You must cultivate human values such as good vision, sweet speech, good thoughts and good actions, which constitute the good life. Only then you will be a total human being.

Good life leads to nirvana

After getting enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Gaya, Buddha embarked upon his mission of preaching. Once two of his disciples were accompanying him. Buddha noticed that they were looking at some women who were bringing water from a river. Buddha chided them for their misconduct and expelled them from the *Sangha*. He said that while walking on the road the eyes should be concentrated on the road in front and should not go astray. I condemned the habit of young men to look at cinema posters on roadside walls while going on bicycles. Such actions are often the cause of serious accidents.

Buddha declared that the good life leads to liberation (*nirvana*). This is the sacred consummation for a good life. In this state, a man is free from desires and actions prompted by them.

Having taken human birth, all human beings should foster human values. In the Sathya Sai Organization, we have given the highest place to human values. It is only when human values are fostered that divine values can emerge.

Before his passing, Buddha taught his stepbrother, Ananda, the transience of worldly pleasures and the meaninglessness of a purely mundane existence.

When Ananda started weeping, noticing the imminent passing of Buddha, the Enlightened One asked him: "Why are you weeping?" Ananda said, "I am weeping because your passing is imminent." Buddha told him that he should not worry about what happens to the body that is perishable and full of infirmities. He exhorted Ananda not to bother about the

body or the mind, but lead a life based on the dictates of the conscience. Giving this advice, Buddha breathed his last.

Bharat has been the birthplace of sacred beings

Many high-souled spiritual leaders like Buddha have shown mankind the path they should follow for reaching the highest goal of life. Bharat has been the unique birthplace of many such saints and sages. Bharat has been the land of men and women known for their purity and holiness. It is the birthplace of sacred beings like Harishchandra and others who adhered to the path of truth at any cost. These truths are valid even now.

Today, you celebrate the New Lunar Year. The year is described as *Samvatsara* in Sanskrit. This term is also one of the names of God. Hence the advent of the New Year should be hailed as the advent of the Divine.

Without recognizing this divine significance of the New Year, there is no purpose in celebrating it with lavish decorations and sumptuous feasts. It is not the feast that is important. It is the ideal that is to be pursued which is important. Today what is important is the quest for peace within, which can be got only by internal purity.

Human actions have been divided into five categories of which those prompted by the heart are the highest and others done with egoistic motives are inferior. Whatever is done should be done wholeheartedly so that it gets sanctified.

Maintain silence and speak as little as possible. Since January 1, I have been restricting My speech to a minimum, confining My words to what was necessary. Swami went on to say: I am restricting my talking with others even in the interview room. What is the reason? I want to set an example to others by practicing what I preach. My life is my message. I must show the way. Many do not understand my actions. But,

when they do not understand, they should remain silent. But, instead they misinterpret my actions. That is a great sin.

From today, you must resolve to use your eyes properly, to see only the good. Why use binoculars to see distant objects? If your vision is impaired, do not lament over it. Consider even blindness as a blessing. If your hearing gets worse, do not moan over it. How much of the noise of the world is worth hearing at all? What use is there in listening to the cacophony of mutual abuse? Welcome the fact that you are saved from listening to such gossip.

Whatever your disabilities, look upon them as gifts from God. All things will turn out to be for your own good.

Peace is to be found only in Prasanthi Nilayam

Devotees have gathered here from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan and Japan. You may have come with many problems and worries. Leave them here and return to your places with your hearts filled with bliss. Leave all your bad thoughts and feelings and fill yourselves with the peace and joy of Prasanthi Nilayam. Coming here with restless minds, do not go back in the same state. *Prasanthi* (Supreme Peace) is very valuable for man. Today peace is not to be found anywhere in the world. You find only pieces (divisions) everywhere. Peace is to be found only here. Carry it with you. This is a place hallowed by the vibrations of numerous good devotees. Many noble souls have spent their lives here. Fill your hearts with their noble thoughts. Do not bother about what others may say. Develop self-confidence and proceed toward self-realization through self-sacrifice. Ignore incidental troubles, which are passing clouds. Think only about God. There is nothing more vital than that. Try to acquire Divine Love. Love is God. Live in Love. The best way to love God is to love all, serve all. All are embodiments of God.

Foster love. Adhere to Truth. Follow Righteousness. Achieve Peace. This is the special benediction of Swami on this day on all. Wherever you may go, speak softly and sweetly. Thereby you will earn the esteem of society. This is the most valuable reward you have to secure this New Year.

The Gift Swami Wants

You have presented many things as 'gifts' to Bhagavan. This 'Tiger Map' is one of them. That is not the gift I want. Hand over to me your 'tigerly' qualities. That is the gift I would like. The tiger is a cruel animal. Rid yourself of all cruel feelings and offer them to me. Lead the life of a useful, harmless, sacred cow. It gives nourishing milk in return for cheap grass.

Embodiments of Love! You have come here from long distances, undergoing many discomforts. Return with joy in your hearts and share your joy with the people in your places in an unselfish spirit. A life of selfless love will lead you to liberation.

Listening to your *bhajans* today gave immense joy to one and all. Community singing sets up vibrations that will cleanse the atmosphere.

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Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam