

8. BUDDHA'S MESSAGE*

*The more you grind sandalwood,
The greater is the fragrance;
The more you chew sugarcane,
Sweeter is the taste;
The more you heat gold,
The greater is its brilliance.
Likewise trials and tribulations will only
enhance the goodness in noble souls.*

Embodiments of Love!

The more one loves one's fellow beings, the greater would be the Bliss that one enjoys. The more you love others, the happier you would be. Therefore, if you wish to be constantly happy, you must always love all. Love is the royal path to God. The best way to God is to love all and serve all. This is the lesson that Buddha taught humanity.

Ahimsa is the greatest dharma of all

Buddhists chant the following:

*Buddham saranam gacchami.
Dharmam saranam gacchami.
Sangam saranam gacchami.*

** This discourse was delivered on Buddha Poornima, when Buddhist devotees from several countries were celebrating the festival in the divine presence.*

These three maxims imply that firstly, one must sharpen the intellect and the capacity for spiritual discrimination. Next, intelligence has to be used in the service of society. Thirdly, service must be based on *dharma* or righteousness. If these three steps are followed, they would lead to Bliss. Never harm any living creature in any way whatsoever. Help ever, hurt never – this is the essence of Buddha’s teaching.

Ahimsa paramo dharmah.

Nonviolence is the supreme *dharma*. One must never ever hurt or injure another person by thought, word, or action. You may wonder: “Is such a thing possible?” Yes it is, provided you have firm determination. With resolution and absolute determination, there is nothing in this world that cannot be achieved. Fear is a great obstacle to achievement. Once you realise that the same divinity resides in all, you will never be afraid of anything or anyone.

Prahlada saw unity in diversity. He clearly perceived Narayana to be the substratum of everything in creation and happily surrendered to Him. He realised that God is Omnipresent. His father Hiranyakasipu was just the opposite. He saw diversity in unity and became deluded by the multiplicity of forms in Creation, each with its own name. These forms are all transient whereas God represents the Eternal Truth.

God is known by various names and of these, the greatest and the most fitting is *Satchitanada*. *Sat* means that which remains unchanged in all the three periods of time – the past, the

present, and the future. Strict adherence to truth would enable one to experience *sat*. *Chit* means total awareness or complete knowledge. It is that which enables one to experience divinity in all its aspects. Once *sat* and *chit* are experienced, *ananda* or bliss would follow automatically.

Everyone wants to be happy. Such a desire is natural and it springs from the fact that man's true nature is Bliss. Bliss is God but man does not understand that. He does not understand that he originated from God, that life's undercurrent is God, and that his final destination also is God. Man is born of *ananda*, the basis of his life is *ananda*, and his goal also is *ananda*. Truly speaking, it is not difficult to know what the basis of life is, and what should be the goal of life. Bliss should be the goal, and one must seek it in all earnestness. The human body is temporary; the pleasure that it can give also is fleeting. Therefore, one must seek that which is permanent, that is to say, God, or, what is the same thing, Bliss. It is meaningless to seek this Bliss by way of instruments that are impermanent. The body can give only bodily pleasure, and the mind can at best give only mental satisfaction. But these do not represent Bliss.

Buddha left his home in quest of the secret of *ananda*. In his wanderings, he saw a dead body, an old man, and a sick person. These painful sights made him to enquire deeply. He realised that death could not be avoided. Old age also is inescapable, being the natural culmination of childhood, youth, and middle age. Such changes form part and parcel of the physical world, which itself is ephemeral. These changes are natural, and one must not be

perturbed or agitated by them. Buddha asked himself, “What is the cause of death? Why do old age and sickness come upon humans?” After much pondering, Buddha concluded that the body is just like a water bubble, while the sickness of the body has its origin in the mind. In modern parlance, the psychological attitude of a person determines his actions and behaviour.

Vishnu is all-pervasive. He is powerful. In the human being, Vishnu is represented by the mind. The mind is thus a very powerful instrument in the possession of man. The body must be used in conjunction with the mind to experience divinity and not diverted to other activities. In life, the alternation of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good and bad are all inevitable. One must not be deluded by them. But man is deluded by duality and fails to realise the Omnipresence of the Lord, despite performing innumerable *yajnas* and *yagas* and engaging in all forms of ritualistic worship.

One day in his wanderings, Buddha came to a village. The residents of the village were performing a *yajna* and, as a part of the rituals, were preparing to sacrifice an animal. Buddha saw this and advised the villagers not to do so. He said, “No harm must be done in any manner whatsoever to any living being, because God dwells in all.”

Isnah sarvavidyanam.
Isvarassarvabhutanam.

God is wisdom. God dwells in all beings. Buddha added, “This is what I have learnt. God dwells in all; therefore the individual is God and God is the individual. Hence, it is wrong to kill this animal.” The head priest replied, “Sir, we are not killing this

animal; we are offering it liberation.” Amused by the reply, Buddha said, “You are offering liberation to an animal that did not ask for it. Instead, why don’t you liberate a person who is asking for it? Your argument has no basis in the scriptures. No *Veda* advocates what you are saying. Your observation is false and untrue. Do you think Liberation can be granted by inflicting harm, pain, and injury? No! Your father, mother, wife, and son all want liberation. Why don’t you offer them in sacrifice and grant them all the liberation that they seek? You are so eager to liberate an animal that has no desire for it but unwilling to liberate fellow humans who are hungering for it. What kind of perverted logic is this? What you are trying to do is the worst of sins. Never hurt, injure, or kill living beings.” This is how Buddha conveyed the idea

Ahimsa paramo dharmah.

Ahimsa (nonviolence) is the greatest *dharma* of all.

The love principle inherent in man is equally present in all beings, birds and beasts included. Therefore, one has to place the same value on the lives of all beings. Share the love latent within you with not only fellow human beings but also with all creatures in nature. This is the true universal love principle. Such principle alone should be the basis of one’s life.

The real meaning of liberation

People have strange ideas about liberation, imagining that it involves going to heaven and having eternal existence there. That is not the meaning of liberation. It means achieving selfless love

that is constant, unabating, and total. This is the state that one must seek to attain; it is only when this state is reached that one is truly liberated. In the name of liberation, seekers are trying out all sorts of spiritual paths. All such exercises can at best confer temporary satisfaction. The path of Pure Love alone can truly get you there and confer permanent Bliss.

You are aware of the nine traditional paths of devotion: *sravanam* [listening to the sacred word], *keertanam* [singing the Glory of the Lord], *Vishnu smaranam* [chanting the Name of the Lord], *pada sevanam* [service to the Lotus Feet], *vandanam* [offering salutations to the Lord], *archanam* [offering worship], *daasyam* [service to the Lord], *sakhyam* [being the Lord's friend and companion], *Atmanivedanam* [surrender]. These paths, if followed by rote, will fetch nothing more than temporary satisfaction. If you want liberation, then a flood of love must accompany such pursuits. Pure love must be the undercurrent of whatever path you choose to adopt. Indeed, it must be so in every spiritual endeavour. Everything must be done out of love for God, and for God – this is true devotion. *Bhakti* does not mean mere chanting of the Name, ritualistic worship, studying the *Vedas*, etc. All such activities represent but one aspect of devotion. True devotion is the direct flow of love from you straight to God. Unconditional and selfless love for God is true devotion. Worship of God must be totally free from any demands, especially the fulfilment of worldly desires and the expectation of worldly rewards. However, people always worship God with a lot of self-interest – this is not true devotion. What you must offer to God is pure and selfless love. It is such love alone that would secure liberation. Indeed,

such love itself is liberation, because it frees you from worldly desires. As Swami often says: *moksha* is *mohakshaya* – liberation from attachments and desires is true liberation.

One God, but many Names

Pure love cannot be learnt from books. Nor can it be taught by others. It has to well up from deep within. Your heart is the source of Eternal Joy and Eternal Bliss. You yourself are *Ananda Nilayam* or the Abode of Bliss. This love originating from your heart must be offered to the Lord. Swami said the other day:

Deho Devalayah prokto jivo Devah sanatanah.

The body is a Temple, and the Indweller is God Himself. The same God resides in all bodies. Therefore you must love others to the same extent you love yourself. This is a body [Swami points to Himself], and that also is a body [Swami points to another person]. Bodies may be different but the God within is the same. There is a man who is addressed as father by his son. The daughter-in-law calls him father-in-law, while the grandchildren call him grandfather. The individual is the same but the manner in which different people address him varies. Similarly, the same God is given different names by the followers of different religions; they hail Him as Allah, Jesus, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and so on. Though the names vary, God is one and the same. Therefore, there is really no room for dispute between people belonging to different religions. You may address God by the name of your choice but all calls go to the same destination. Goal is one, and God also is one. Thus, in respect of God, there should be no

difference of opinion. In fact,

Sarva jiva namaskaram Kesavam pratigacchati.

No matter to whom you offer salutations and greetings, they all go to God Himself. Since the same God resides in all, where is the room for arguments based on caste, creed, race, etc.? As the deputy foreign minister of Sri Lanka (who spoke earlier) said, we all belong to the caste of humanity.

There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity.

There is only one religion, the religion of Love.

There is only one language, the language of the Heart,

And there is only one God,

He is Omnipresent.

This one God can be given any name you choose. These are names given by you to God, but in actual fact, God has no names of this kind. He is nameless and formless. He is pure consciousness and pure energy. This divine energy and consciousness are present in you, and you must use these extraordinary powers and capability in a most reverential manner for sacred activities only.

From prema to poornam – from pure love to totality

God has blessed you with pure love but due to worldly perturbations, and your food habits as well as life style, this love gets contaminated. It gets adulterated by *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride), and *matsarya* (jealousy). The aberrations and pollution of divine power that one sees these days are entirely due to food and habits. *Sattvik* food is the proper diet for man, because it alone fosters good, noble, and pious tendencies. Buddha ate only *satvic*

food, which in due course led to the blossoming of *buddhi* or the intellect in all its fullness. The Vedas declare:

Candrama Manaso jatah, caksoh Suryo Ajayata.

Moon is the presiding deity of the mind while Sun is the presiding deity of vision. The moon is not self-luminous; it shines by reflecting the light from the sun. The light is the same; it originates in the sun and gets reflected by the moon. However, while the direct light from the sun is bright and brilliant, the light reflected from the moon is soft and subdued; it is cool to the eye. Sunlight represents *jnana* or spiritual wisdom, while moonlight represents *prema* (love).

You know how a fruit comes into existence. It starts as a flower, becomes a bud, grows big, then becomes an unripe fruit, and finally transforms into a sweet fruit. The flower, the bud, and the ripe fruit merely represent different stages in the evolution of the same entity. Similarly, in the pathway to God, the *karma marga* (path of action), the *bhakti marga* (path of devotion), and the *jnana marga* (path of wisdom) represent different aspects of the same underlying principle. That underlying principle is *prema*, and the three paths mentioned are three different ways of showing one's Love for God. *Prema* is fundamental, and that is what you should focus on. You have to develop humility on the one hand and divine feelings on the other. The festival of Buddha Poonima is celebrated to remind us that *prema* is the pathway to *poornam* (totality).

Avoid sycophancy

Buddha wandered across the length and breadth of the land,

advising people to follow the path of divine love. In the process, he became physically exhausted. Thus, once when he stopped in a village, he decided to take some rest and asked one of his disciples to speak to the villagers in his stead. Happy about his good fortune and charged with great enthusiasm, the disciple said in the course of his talk, “Buddha is the One of love, wisdom, and compassion. Such an exalted one was never born before and never will be in the future.” The villagers were thrilled to hear this and responded with a loud applause. Buddha, who was resting, heard the sound. He came out of his room and went to the disciple. Motioning the disciple to stop talking, he asked, “Son, how old are you?” The disciple replied, “Lord, I am twenty-five.” Buddha then asked, “What places have you visited?” The disciple mentioned the names. Buddha then said, “You are young and inexperienced and have seen so little of the world. With such limited knowledge, how can you be sure that none like this Buddha was ever born or will not be in the future? You do not know the past, nor do you know the future. You do not even know everything about the present. What authority then do you have to make assertive statements about both the past and the future? By talking the way you did, you are merely exposing your utter ignorance.” Buddha then declared, “Many great souls have been born in the past and many more will be in the future. None can contradict this Truth.”

Buddha disliked pomp, show, and sycophancy. He was simple, ever calm, pure, humble, and always full of love as well as compassion. Only a person equally full of love can appreciate his greatness.

Practice alone leads to Bliss

Embodiments of Love! It is not enough to be happy just on this day of Buddha Poornima. You must be able to experience bliss all the time, and you can do so by following the teachings of Buddha. These days, people are great heroes in making platform speeches but zeroes when it comes to practice. It is far more important to translate Buddha's teachings into practice than to make eloquent speeches. This is the proper way to enjoy happiness. This is also the right way of showing respect and reverence for Buddha.

The teachings of Buddha are lofty, sublime, and sacred. His most important teaching is:

Ahimsa paramo dharmah.

Ahimsa or nonviolence is the greatest *dharma* of all. Buddha asserted this with great emphasis and force. Buddha also advised that one's looks must be sacred. He said, "Sacred vision is a must for leading a pure life. You should cultivate *samyak drishti* (the habit of looking only at good things) and *samyak sravanam* (the habit of listening only to good things)." For Buddha, everything had to be pure and sacred. If you throw a pebble into a well, ripples are created and these travel up to the edge of the well. In the same way, if you throw a pebble called good thought into the well called the heart, the ripples generated travel throughout the body. When the ripple reaches the eye, it stimulates pure vision. When the ripple reaches the ear, it tunes the latter to sacred sounds. When the ripple reaches the hands, it swings them into good action. In this manner, when the ripples spread across the entire body, there is a symphony of sacred activity all round. Thus, good and noble

thoughts are fundamental to sacred activity.

Such are the great teachings of Buddha. What is your response to them? No doubt you all read books containing Buddha's teachings. But the moment the book is put down, all the teachings are forgotten. Remember it is only when the sandalwood is continuously ground that the fragrance can be experienced. It is only when sugarcane is well chewed that the sweetness can be experienced in full measure. In the same way, it is only the continued and the sustained practice of sacred teachings that can lead to Bliss. Great people of the past have left behind innumerable teachings that must be followed and ideal examples that ought to be copied. It is enough if you practise just one or two of these great lessons from the past.

Sanctify Time, do not waste it

God has given you the gift of time. What for? For you to sanctify it. But are you doing that? Introspect and find out how much time you are wasting. Time is God; don't waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. These days, people are wasting their time in every conceivable way. They can find time to remain glued to TV sets but have no time for service or doing something sacred. Why do you have to waste time in useless pursuits? Instead, why can't you use that time for charitable and service activities? This is what Buddha did, always serving others. The moment came when he had to give up his body. He had a small coin with him at that time. There is a story behind that coin. To please Buddha, kings and emperors built great mansions for him to stay; but Buddha

was not happy with this. One day an old lady came to him and said, “Sir, I am poor and do not have much money. But I love you and want to give you something. I have this small coin. Please accept this as my offering”. Buddha was very happy; the amount was small but the heart of the giver was large and full of love. Large amounts gifted with pomp and ostentation do not count for much. A small gift with pure love is far more precious. As Swami often says, one teaspoon of cow’s milk is far superior to a barrel of donkey’s milk.

Buddha was once resting in a forest. He was by himself. A fearsome demon came to him and said, “I am very hungry. Are you prepared to become a meal for me?” Buddha smiled and replied, “I am ready! Death is certain to come some day or the other. Why then should I not die today, especially if I can satisfy your hunger?” Never be afraid of death, because it is a certainty; no one can escape it. Buddha was not afraid of death, and that was why he was ready to become a meal for the demon. The moment the demon heard the reply, it transformed into a dove and said, Today, you have demonstrated your enormous capacity for sacri-fice. From now on, I too shall spread your message everywhere”.

God and love are not different

Buddha’s teachings were based on the love principle. The same is true of Sai also. Love is the basis for all Incarnations. No one is making any effort to understand this fundamental truth. You have to develop selfless love. If you do, the whole world would be in your control. This love is blissful and nectarine. The sweetness of nectar may have limits but the sweetness of divine love has none.

It is beyond all measure. It is beyond description too; it can only be experienced. Buddha discovered this love, experienced it, and became one with it. God and love are not different.

*The bubble is born in water,
It grows and lives in water,
And it finally merges with water.
Man is a bubble,
And God is the water!*

Man is a bubble born of water that is God. The individual is God and God is the individual. The two are not distinct, as people imagine.

Embodiments of Love! Regard all as just different forms of God. Parents give you a name, and that is the name you print on your visiting card. The card that you present to God must not have your given name but love. When you show your card to another person, that person recognises you by the name and address on the card. God, on the other hand, recognises only love, love, love!

*Start the day with love
Spend the day in love.
End the day in love.
This is the way to God!*

[Loud applause!] Therefore, starting from today the auspicious day of Buddha Poornima, vigorously develop your love for God. Propagate and spread selfless love. There can be no greater spiritual preaching than love. The study of scriptures can make a person scholarly [in the worldly sense] but not wise. Who is a true scholar? Who is the truly wise one? He who has perfect

equanimity and is equal-minded under all circumstances alone can be described as scholarly and wise. They pore over books, claim to have mastered all the texts, and proclaim themselves to be highly learned. Such self-praise and self-acclaim are a sure sign of ego. Ego is very dangerous because it drags one with certainty to ruin. What is the use of mere study? Do these scholars practise even a bit of what they have studied? Hardly. Scholarship will not protect or redeem you; only pure love can.

Pure love is like a well-paved, one-way road with no speed-breakers. You can rush along it to God at whatever speed you want. Rivers also illustrate this principle. All rivers speed down from mountains. They flow fast and swift to somewhere. Where to? To the ocean. In the process, they go over boulders and rocks, skilfully avoiding obstacles on the way. They never stop, but keep moving all the time towards the goal. Life must be a river rushing towards the ocean called God. The flow should never stop or falter. Overcoming all obstacles, you must keep rushing toward God. That must be the characteristic of your spiritual journey. Be strong-willed, resolute, determined, and sincere. There should be no room whatsoever for weakness. If your vision, hearing, thoughts, feelings, and actions are good, you will experience nothing but Bliss.

Obey God's command and spread love

Embodiments of Love! You need not go in search of God; He will come in search of you. God does not reside in temples, mosques and churches. These are structures built by man. God resides in a temple that He has built for Himself, and that is the human

body. The human body is a living temple, a walking temple, and a talking temple. No man-made temple can match this God-built temple in power and sanctity. This temple has not been built with brick and mortar. No [human] architect has designed it, and no engineer has built it. This temple has come into existence by the will of God. You must treat your body as a precious gift of God and safeguard this sacred gift. Obey God's command and engage only in sacred actions. Spread love as much as you can, and also the fragrance of the *Atmic* Principle.

Body and Head must both be oriented toward God

Sarira madhyam khalu dharmasadhakam.

The body has been given for following the path of *dharma*. Man is not born to eat, drink, and make merry. No doubt, food is necessary to sustain life.

Bhiksannam deha raksartham, vastram sita nivaranam.

Food for maintaining life and clothes for covering the body should be the guiding principle. Food and head must lead you only to God and nowhere else. There must be perfect harmony between food, the head, and God. By itself, the head carries no value. There is a story that illustrates the point.

Emperor Ashoka was once going through a forest. Seeing a Buddhist monk, he alighted from his horse and prostrated at the feet of the monk. Ashoka's minister, who was accompanying the Emperor, was shocked. He wondered, "How can such a great

man bow before such a lowly one as a renunciate?” Nevertheless, the minister kept quiet and did not voice his misgivings. Later when they were back in the palace, the minister gently raised the topic. He said, “O Emperor, how can such a great and intelligent one like you place your head at the feet of an inconsequential monk?” Ashoka just smiled and did not reply. Some days later, he summoned the minister and quite casually said, “Obtain first the head of a sheep, a goat, and a man. Take these three and try to sell them in the market. Afterwards, come back and report to me.” The minister was taken aback by this most peculiar command, but then, orders are orders especially when they come direct from the Emperor. The minister procured three heads, as told, and tried to dispose them of in the market. He was able to find a buyer for the heads of the sheep and goat, but no one came forward to buy the human head. The minister went back and reported the matter to the Emperor. Ashoka said, “Well, if no one is prepared to buy the human head, give it away free.” The minister went back to the market place but to his dismay, no one wanted the human head even if given free. He went back to the palace and reported to the Emperor. Ashoka smiled and said, “Do you remember how you protested when I placed my head at the feet of a monk? Now you have discovered for yourself that the human head has no value! The head is not eternal; yet, you were agitated by what I did. Though the head has no value, when placed at the feet of a noble one, it brings blessings and grace. That is what I wanted you to learn.”

*Darsanam papa nasanam,
Sparsanam karmavimocanam.
Sambhasanam sankata nasanam,*

*The vision of the Lord wipes out all sin.
The touch of the Lord destroys all bondage.
Talking to the Lord removes all difficulties.*

Ashoka continued, “The moment my head brushed against the foot of the monk, all my sins were wiped out.” Wisdom slowly dawned on the minister.

Realise the usefulness of the body while you are alive. It is when you are alive and in possession of the body that you can have *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan*, [i.e., the opportunity to see the Lord, touch the Lord, and converse with the Lord]. Can you have these after the body is gone? Impossible! The world may not give you what you want but from the Lord, you can certainly get all the good things you want.

Resolve to follow Buddha’s teachings

Embodiments of Love! All of you have come here with great devotion. Your sincerity is praiseworthy. You must resolve to follow the teachings of Buddha. He was a noble soul. The best way of celebrating Buddha Poornima is to put into practice the teachings of this holy one. It is not enough to be happy just on this festival day. By constantly re-living the experience of this holy day, you must experience joy all the time. The cow first grazes; it then sits down quietly to chew thoroughly what it had eaten earlier. If an animal can do this, can not a human do the same with respect to the teachings he acquires? When you get back home, ruminate over what you have learnt today. Recall repeatedly the experiences you have had today. This is the way to digest what

you have learnt and also be happy. It is only when you do this that your journey to this place would become worthwhile. You should not forget the lessons the moment you leave from here.

Spiritual lessons must soak into your blood and spread everywhere. God has a special name: *Rasovaisaha*. It means that in the human body, God is present as the Divine Essence. This divine essence spreads all over the human body, to every limb and organ. Therefore, God is also given another name – *Angeerasa*. *Angam* means limb; *Angeerasa* therefore means One who pervades over all the limbs, soaking them with His divine power and essence. Thus, God is within you as *Angeerasa*. You think you are taking care of yourself and protecting yourself. This is not true! It is God who really does so. Who do you think protects you when you are fast asleep and do not know what is happening around you? Who takes care of you then? It is God who does so. In fact, He cares for you at all times, at all places, and under all circumstances. Since God always protects, there is no need to be afraid of pain and sorrow. Difficulties are bound to come, but they also will go away. They do not stay forever; they are like passing clouds. But God is steady and permanent. Make Him the basis of your life and think of Him always. This is the lesson you must grasp today, as a part of your pilgrimage to this place.

At the conclusion of the discourse, Bhagavan sang the *bhajan*,
“*Vahe Guru ...*”..

21 May 2000.

