

MODERN BUDDHISM

BUIKKHU. ANANDA

Buddhists should always cherish a feeling of gratitude. Our object of gratitude is not God, but it is Men. We are grateful to Men and to the lands in which they live.

Therefore in our morning and evening services, we Buddhists of all nationalities vow to repay the benefaction of the lands in which men live and of all living beings.

As a French citizen and a French Buddhist, I should of course be grateful to my country and my people. Simultaneously I am grateful to China and the Chinese, to India and the Indians, to the western regions and the various southeast Asian countries and the peoples of these countries from whom I accepted the faith of Buddhism and absorbed Buddhist cultures.

Buddhism is really a way of life that permits a scientific mind-training so that each man becomes truly a master of his own nature. A FREE AGENT controlling his own acts, a comforter and protector of those who need to be uplifted, a guide to the fallen, the weak, the down trodden. Such a man must have learned to be selfless.

Above and beyond all other teachings, the observation, the comprehension of the human personality as a process of becoming would lessen the egoism, the pride, of place, which is the blind cause of selfish cruelty of man to man and race to race. The theory of competition and the western ideal of "survival of the fittest" have resulted in the creation of an environment of strife, anger and jealousy in which individuals as well as nations particularly those in highly industrialized and so-called developed areas can have no lasting comfort or peace.

Most of the areas in south east Asia have set a pattern of human dignity and pacific ideals which nations of the world, that are generally interested in furtherance of peace and good will to mankind, can follow and further develop in a common endeavour to improve and uplift the human race.

If the materialism of the west pursues its relentless course ignoring all spiritual values and regardless of the untold suffering that follows in the wake of ruthless competition for trade markets and profit, then the truth of the formula that action and reaction are equal and opposite will be driven home in no uncertain manner to millions of peo-

ples the world over may be in a year or a decade, perhaps sooner rather than later. For what nation seeking to destroy another in the struggle for supremacy will wait till the opponent is fully armed before it attacks?

The path to peace and happiness is as clear as the noon-day sun. Whether it be prince or pauper, the answer to all life's problems is 'there in the way of Life propounded by the Buddha "2,500 years ago".

To a world groping in total darkness his message rings out clear and true. That the world is full of suffering and when one understands its origin, its extinction, and the path that leads to its extinction, there will be perfect peace. There is nothing in that way which offends the morals, practices or intelligence of human beings the world over.

It is up to the intellectuals of the west to give this Noble way of life a trial in the hope and earnest belief that mankind may yet be saved from the impending cataclysm of Atomic Power.

I take the opportunity to point out this famous sentence from Mahatma GANDHI: "You should even deal with an enemy in such a way as not to leave the door open for friendship and reconciliation".

THE ESTABLISHING OF INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP.

Cultural exchange is in itself an important means for promoting International friendship. We Buddhists should be proud of our predecessors

They have made invaluable contributions not only to the cause of Buddhism, but also to the civilization of mankind and to the establishment of friendly relations among nations.

They have not only translated several thousands volumes of Buddhist scriptures and have written a great deal of important works, which are the common heritage of CHINA, INDIA and other nations, but have also devoted themselves to the transplanting of the flowers of the labour and wisdom of their own peoples, which have greatly enriched the cultures of these nations. Though they lived well over a thousand years ago, their names never fail to inspire the sincere and warm feelings in the hearts of the peoples of these countries. Especially to-day when the friendly cooperation among the Asian countries is being strengthened and

consolidated, the merits achieved through the hard work of our predecessors have not only regained its brilliance, but will continue to impart vitality to the cause of Buddhism.

For a religion the most important external condition is of course the protection of the freedom of religious faith by the government. On the other hand, we should also acknowledge that owing to the universal spirit of serving the people and the development on a large scale of national construction, the Buddhist ideal of "benefiting all sentient beings and glorifying the country".

We are living in such an environment in which all speeches and actions which are beneficial to the people are praised and supported while all the speeches and actions which are not beneficial to the people must be criticized and stopped. We have discovered that our teaching of "committing no evil doing, all that is good and purifying the mind", is in concordance with the Whole social movement today. We can work together with the people of the whole country with a mind of easiness, not only according to our duties but also according to our religious faith, for the sublime task of peace, happiness morality and wisdom of mankind. We Buddhists have obtained the true freedom of religious belief. But it is still not enough we must put together our forces to realize the three following points which are very important for us Buddhists.

- (1) to educate Buddhist personnel
- (2) to promote Buddhist cultural tasks
- (3) to restore and develop Buddhist international intercourse

We should be grateful to our present age, the age of awakening of the Asian peoples and the age in which Peace and Righteousness are prevalent. It is only in this age that there is the possibility of the restoration and development of Buddhist international intercourse.

Such is our belief and our wish that this great Memorial day of the Buddha will make all the Buddhist brethren and sisters in the world, under the inspiration of the great teachings of the Buddha, live more harmoniously, study the Dharma more diligently and serve all living beings more energetically.

The benefit of Buddhism should be united with the benefit of all living beings. It is said in the "AVATAMSAKA-SUTRA" all

living beings are the roots of a tree, while the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the flowers and fruits of the tree. If the Buddhist can cooperate closely and serve for the benefit of all living beings, and can continuously practice SILA (morality) SAMADHI (concentration) and PRAJNA (transcendental wisdom) and destroy LOBHA (greed, is one of the 3 unwholesome roots) DOSA (hatred, anger, is one of the tree unwholesome roots) and MOHA (delusion is one of the three unwholesome roots, the best known synonym is AVIJJĀ) in the course of serving all living beings, so as to dig out and cultivate our own ability and wisdom in order that we may render a better and wider service to all living beings, then there will be no doubt about the long existence of Buddhism in the world.

The Lord Buddha message is essentially Democratic, for he proclaimed two thousands five hundred years ago. That all men are born free and equal and that deeds alone determine high birth or low birth, for he said, "Not by birth does one become a high caste, not by birth does one become a low caste, by deeds one becomes a high caste, by deeds one becomes a low caste" The only nobility he acknowledged was the nobility of a well lived life.

Actually the French Buddhists are willing to strive together and work hand in hand intimately with the Buddhist Brethren and sisters of different countries in the task of practising and propagating the Dharma and in the friendly and peaceful service of mankind. One may never forget the roles played for Buddhism in France by BURNOUF and SYLVAIN LEVY. The books entirely consecrated to Buddhism are available in France. They are very good books indeed, and their number is steadily increasing by the activities of "LES AMIS DU BOUDDHISME" who is a French Buddhist Association with their Headquarter in PARIS. Unfortunately their Books have not the publicity they ought to have. And as soon as Buddhism will have taken its rightful place, then can it be demonstrated that Buddhism is the only solution.

May Buddhism live long.

May all living beings be happy and live in Peace.

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