

# Why I follow the path of Buddhism

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Every man must have a religion, especially one which appeals to the intellectual mind. A man who fails to observe religious principles becomes a danger to the very society in which he lives. There is no doubt that scientists and psychologists have widened our intellectual horizons, but they have not been able to tell us our purpose in life which is something a proper religion can do.

Man must choose a rational and meaningful religion according to his conviction without depending on mere beliefs, traditions, customs and theories. Nobody has the right to force him to accept any religion. Also, nobody should exploit poverty, illiteracy or arouse emotion to induce him to accept a religion. Hence, religion should be a free choice of Man. Man should be free to choose his own religion according to his personal liking and intellectual capacity.

To follow a religion blindly without any understanding would deprive the religion of its spiritual value and the follower his human dignity. Gauthama Buddha's noble teachings are regarded as Buddhism. It is a practical educational system for mental culture which was revealed to the world some 2,600 years ago by a Fully Awakened and Compassionate Teacher.

This religion is also known as the "Middle Way", a righteous way of life, an ethico-philosophical system and a religion of freedom and reason. It teaches us to do three main things; namely, "Keep away from bad deeds, do good and purify the mind."

## Moral conduct

This message is very simple, meaningful and practical, yet people experience difficulties when they put them into practice due to inherent human weaknesses. The moral



conduct of man plays a most important part in this religion. Its great Teacher said, "My Teaching is not to come and believe, but to come, see and practise."

The Buddha taught not only the need of an inner revolution of the individual for human happiness but also the need for an outer revolution in the life of society. Thus, for instance, he preached the fundamental oneness and unity of mankind, irrespective of colour or race or other physiological characteristics - as in the case of animals - and created a revolution for abolition of the caste system which was prevalent in India in his day.

To demonstrate his concept of oneness of mankind, he moved not only with kings, capitalists and aristocratic ladies but also with the poorest of the poor, with beggars and scavengers, robbers, murderers and courtesans. For the first time in history, the Buddha founded the religious order of nuns for women, irrespective of class or caste.

He thus gave equality to womanhood for spiritual development. He,

for the first time in the world, made attempts to abolish slavery by introducing the concept of brotherhood and dignity of mankind. The Buddha preached against the sacrifices of unfortunate animals as offerings and brought them within the ambit of loving-kindness towards every living being, making no distinction whatsoever.

Buddha is not a saviour in the same sense that others believe in a saviour, yet Buddhists regard him a saviour since he has shown the path for humanity to save them. Therefore, the Buddha is for everybody.

That means,

To great philosophers and unbiased thinkers, he is a teacher who understood worldly conditions in their proper perspective.

To moralists, he has the highest code of discipline and he symbolises perfection.

To rationalists, he is the most liberal minded religious teacher who un-

derstood vexing human problems.

To free thinkers, he is a religious teacher who encouraged people to think freely without depending on religious dogmas.

To agnostics, he is a very intelligent, kind, understanding and peace-loving man.

To Hindus, he is an incarnation of their god.

To socialists, he is a social reformer.

To religious devotees, he is a holy man.

The Buddha said, "Wisdom is purified by virtue, and virtue is purified by wisdom. The virtuous person has wisdom and the wise person has virtue. The combination of virtue and wisdom is called the highest thing in this world."

## Teaching for the wise

However, the Buddha said that

his Teachings are appreciated by everybody. It is because, "My teaching is for one who wants little, not for one who wants much. My teaching is for the contented, not for the discontented. My teaching is for the secluded, not for one who wastes time in the society. My teaching is for the energetic, not for the lazy. My teaching is for the mindful, and not for the unmindful. My teaching is for the composed, not for the flustered. My teaching is for the wise, not for the unwise."

According to the Buddha, there are three kinds of people in the world. The first category is those who are like letters carved in rock; they easily give way to anger and retain their angry thoughts for a long time.

The second group is that they are like letters written on sand; they give way to anger also, but their angry thoughts quickly fade away.

The third group is like letters written in running water; they do not retain their passing thoughts; they let abuse and uncomfortable gossip pass by unnoticed; their minds are always pure and undisturbed. Not knowing the real nature of life, we try to live without experiencing any disappointments and changes. But life is changeable. It is a bundle of elements and energies, which are always changing and will not always, are to our satisfaction.

**The Buddha has also preached about duties of a ruler too. These duties are:**

*Be liberal and avoid selfishness*

*Maintain a high moral character.*

*Be prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well-being of the subjects.*

*Be honest and maintain absolute integrity.*

*Be kind and gentle.*

*Lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate.*

*Be free from hatred and of any kind.*

*Exercise nonviolence.*

*Respect public opinion to promote peace and harmony.*

The world as such is neither good nor bad. It produces criminals as well as saints, fools and enlightened ones. Out of the same clay, beautiful and ugly, useful and useless things can be created. The quality depends on the potter, not on the clay. It is not that something is wrong with the world, but something is wrong with us. These valuable viewpoints of the Buddha's teachings enlighten our hearts with wisdom for a meaningful life-span on this earth.

## Great people

The Buddha said that so-called conquerors never succeed in the end. Those so-called leaders in the battlefield do not realise that great conquerors of the world vanished in the course of time. There is none to shed a tear at their death. But the great people who have conquered hearts through kindness and compassion continue to live in the minds of people and they are forever honoured as great conquerors. Some cruel leaders, who tried to achieve the aim of their lives by destroying millions of people and creating disasters, never succeed in the end.

Buddha said, "Though one should conquer a million men in the battlefield, yet he, indeed, is the noblest victor who has conquered himself". The Buddha also pointed out the nature of man's craving as follows, "Man is never satisfied with his life as his mind is filled with unlimited selfish desires. He is on an endless journey seeking ways and means of satisfying his insatiable desires which are like flames. The purpose of his life will elude him even after gaining the whole world."

By pondering over these valuable words of the Fully Awakened One, the Gauthama Buddha, let's determine on this Noble Vesak Full Moon Day -2022 to rectify our own weaknesses for a fruitful human life.

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