



**INDIAN PRIME MINISTER  
NARENDRA MODI 'S SPEECH  
ON  
BUDDHA JAYANTI CELEBRATIONS**

New Delhi | 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

*“Bring to this country once again the blessed name  
Which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant lands!  
Let thy great awakening under the Bodhi-tree be fulfilled.  
Sweeping away the veil of unreason and let, at the end of an oblivious night,  
Freshly blossom out in India thy remembrance!”*

*— Rabindranath Tagore*

My greetings to all the honorary dignitaries and cabinet members present on the dais, including Dr Mahesh Sharma, Mr Kiren Rijiju, secretary general of the International Buddhist foundation, Dr Dhampai, and all the pilgrims and men and women who have arrived from all over the country.

Our society and culture has a belief that thousands of people reciting a mantra together possesses the ability to stir a power in congregation, which all of us present here have personally experienced. With our eyes wide open we bear witness to each other, but within our minds, all including me, can hear the name of the Buddha resonate through the chants occurring every second.

Words might not suffice to express the sort of emotion and devotion that all of us carry towards Lord Buddha. The Buddha enchants us in a similar manner like mantras enchant us. It is an honour and privilege for me to be present amidst all you people on this auspicious occasion of Buddh Purnima and take the blessings of all the holy men present.

Dr Mahesh Sharma and Mr Kiren Rijiju were recently mentioning that it is the second time that I have been a part of such festivities. I would have come last year had I not been attending similar such festivities in Sri Lanka. I was lucky to have celebrated Buddh Purnima with the people and the government of Sri Lanka and all the holy men who had arrived there from all over the world.

All of us are consumed by daily responsibilities. But even during this hectic and busy schedule, a mere mention of the holy name of Lord Buddha makes us feel blessed. The monks and all the holy men I can see present here have dedicated their entire lives to spread the message of compassion of the Buddha. They themselves have followed the path envisioned by the Buddha. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to offer my greetings and salutations to all those great holy men who have played a major role in spreading the message of Buddha around the globe.

I would like to welcome all of you who have arrived from various parts of the country. I also have the opportunity today to felicitate individuals and institutions who have done remarkable work in this field. I acknowledge and salute their efforts and contribution, and wish them tremendous success in the future. I would like to specially mention and congratulate Sarnath's 'Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies' and Gaya's 'All India Monks Association' for receiving the Baisakh honour.

This country of ours, a jewel on the crown of this world is an heir to an incredible heritage. The other parts of the world rarely have such a magnificent heritage associated with them.

A lot has been said, written and read about Gautam Buddha's birth, education, his conversion, and it is a privilege for today's generation to be able to come across those thoughts which have survived inspite a lot of troubles and obstructions.

We are proud that India, since ages, has been at the forefront of ideas where the main focus has been the well-being and development of humans and nature. We are also proud of the fact the constant flow of new ideas has never been at the cost of hurting or undermining someone else's feelings or rights. There have been no conflicts regarding two people's relationships or ideologies or different set of Gods.

We are proud that the thought processes that evolved and emerged from our country kept the interest of entire humanity as their first priority. India never asked someone to follow our ideals to gain benefits. Apart from creating a new ground and consciousness with its varied paths, Buddha's ideas, thoughts and traditions are today defining the character of a number of countries in the Asian subcontinent.

We, our friends, have never allowed our culture and traditions to witness us as invaders and it is a wonder of our land and a fact that every Indian can talk about with a sense of pride. We have never

encroached on the territory of any other nation. It has been thousands of years and our culture's values have adopted this path.

The journey of Buddha from prince Siddhartha to Gautama Buddha is a tale not just of attaining Nirvana. This is a lesson in disguise for a us that every person who uses his knowledge, wealth and property to heal the pain of others is either already on the path of Buddha or can follow Buddha's path to attain Nirvana.

Buddha Purnima is a festival that constantly reminds us of the values of compassion, pity and friendship. In dark times when terrorism, violence and racism overshadow the ideals set by Buddha like a set of dark clouds, the concepts of friendship and compassion gain even more importance and relevance. Life is not about destruction, violence and hatred. True life belongs to those who overcome these obstructions of hatred and violence through friendship and pity. This allows them to capture hearts and succeed in life.

It is an agreed fact that individuals who overcame their mind's evils like anger and hatred and spent time on contemplating over Buddha achieved success and immortality. This combination and amalgamation of truth and compassion leads one to become Buddha and lights the lamp of the noble way within one's soul.

Transforming the heart from a state of resentment to a state of pure joy is what defines Buddha. Discrimination on the basis of caste, colour and language can never be associated with Buddhism or India. Acceptance of every individual irrespective of his caste, colour or faith is the basic essence of Buddhism. The Jews and the Parsi's are a prime example that our culture allows everyone to mingle in it and become an integral part of it. Treating them in a different way is a thought that never entered our minds. Living the ideals of Buddha is living with equality and oneness. Those are the qualities that make Buddha one of the greatest holy men to have stepped foot on this earth. The same values were cherished by Baba Sahib Ambedkar, and hence he decided to follow the path of Buddha.

Along with development in various fields, being the land of Buddha is also something that the entire world recognizes about the greatness of India.' Dharmam Sharnam Gachhami, Buddham Sharnam Gachhami Sangham Sharnam Gachhami' has become the mantra which is used all around the world to teach people the values of humanity. The biggest message that Buddha imparts is that one should first change himself or herself before thinking of trying to change the world. One should win the war within oneself rather than looking outside. A person who can light the lamp within one self can attain the true path of Buddha.

Lord Buddha always encouraged people to nurture a calm mind and a compassionate heart. Equality, justice, freedom and human rights are an integral part of a democratic society thriving in today's time. A clear message was given by Buddha on these ideals thousands of years ago. This was always an accepted notion in India and never became a separate matter or issue.

Equality, in the vision of Buddha is the importance and dignity that every individual on this earth commands. Resources and rights and opportunities should be available to everyone without any discrimination.

Whichever country of the world we talk about, every poison, be it racism or terrorism has been injected by man himself. These disparities are the main source of injustice, exploitation, victimization, violence and social unrest. Whereas on the other hand, the concepts of justice, freedom and human rights are merely an extension of the concept of oneness and equality. This recognizes that oneness is the river from which all these tributaries flow.

Strengthening the idea of oneness in our society will help ease and open the path of social justice, freedom, human rights, social transformation, individual rights, peace and prosperity.

Buddha, in his sermons has often mentioned 'Ashtanga'. I believe that it is not possible to live and envision Buddha without first learning

the path of 'Ashtanga'. Buddha has mentioned in 'Ashtanga' that right view, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right efforts, right consciousness and right contemplation are the way to live life.

The solutions to the problems of today's world lie in following the path of Buddha. These difficult times demands the whole world to follow the path of love and compassion set by Buddha. Oneness and keenly following this path together, He said, is the only path to peace and satisfaction.

Lord Buddha my friends was a visionary who saw that sensibility and love were essential needs of an individual's life. He was an avid believer of experimenting with his ideas of 'Dharma'. He always insisted his followers and pupils to test their ideas and beliefs. One of the great Buddhist followers, Nagarjuna had advised king Uday and that advice holds firm value even in today's time. He had said that food and water should be made available for the blind, sick, needy and helpless individuals, and that they should be treated with love and sympathy. People suffering through pain and sickness should be cared about, and farmers should be provided with essentials like seed and other things.

Buddha's world vision focused on eradicating the pain and suffering of every being living on earth. He said that rather than feeling pained on seeing someone's pain, one should make the sufferer strong enough, and instead ready them to face the pain.

I am happy to see that our government is treading on the same path of love and compassion shown by Buddha. Our topmost priority has always been ways to reduce sufferings and pain of every citizen the society.

Opening up of nearly 31 crore bank accounts of people below the poverty line, giving insurance to 19 crore poor people with a premium of merely 90 paise per day or 1 rupee per month, giving free gas stoves and gas connections to more than 3 crore 70 lakh backward women, getting nearly 3 crore infants and 80 lakh pregnant women vaccinated

under the Indradhanush mission, giving nearly 12 crore rupees of loan without any bank guarantee under the Mudra yojna and many other steps have been taken by the current government to strengthen and uplift the poor. Under the Ayushman Bharat yojna, the government is providing free benefits of healthcare up to 5 lakh rupees each year to more than 50 crore poor and downtrodden people.

Friends, it was this idea of inclusiveness and oneness that instantly changed Buddha's life. He was a prince with all world comforts, but he who upon seeing a poor man, his own pain and suffering, realized that both of them weren't actually different. It was this realization that instilled itself in Buddha and ignited in him the lamp of knowledge and compassion. The more we instill this belief in ourselves, the more human we shall become. To make the 21st century the most vital age of human development and consciousness and for the sake of humanity, these steps must be taken.

It is unfortunate that after breaking free from the shackles of foreign rule, not enough focus was given on taking care of our rich heritage. A country that doesn't take care of its culture and values and doesn't hand over a better and improved civilization to its upcoming generation can never be called complete. Keeping this in mind, our government is working on protecting our culture, including preserving Lord Buddha's memories.

There are nearly 18 states in our country that have a holy shrine associated with lord Buddha. Some of these are nearly 2000 years old, which draw people from across the world. This makes it important to constantly update the facilities at these places for travellers. Therefore, there is an action plan in place for a Buddhist circuit.

More than 360 crore rupees have already been sanctioned for this Buddhist circuit. This will help develop the spread of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

Besides, the Transport and Road Ministry is working on providing essential facilities on the Gaya-Varanasi and Kushinagar route. The

Transport Ministry organizes an International Conclave on Buddhism every two years. Many knowledgeable people are expected to be present in this conclave this year as well. The purpose of such events is to spread the values of our culture. and more and more people get a chance to visit different Buddhist shrines.

The Central Government is also helping its neighbouring countries to conserve their Buddhist heritage and treasure. The Ananda temple in Myanmar is being renovated and chemically preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India. Two years ago, this temple was ruined in an earthquake.

Various other places where the government and ASI are working are Bamiyan in Afghanistan, Angkor Vat in Cambodia, the Ta Prohm temple in Cambodia, Vat Phou temple in southern Laos and the My Son temple in Vietnam. The government is also working on preserving and digitising the old scripts found in the Gandan monastery in Mongolia.

Today I would like to make a request to the concerned Indian government's ministries. It is known that throughout the country, at various Buddhist institutions and monasteries, that translations are being undertaken to conserve and protect the Buddha's educational sermons. Is it possible to bring this work on to one portal? Can a website be developed where the Buddha's ideas and values, which are being gathered by various institutions, be brought together for people to access. I would request Dr Mahesh Sharma to take this work in his hand and try and complete it in the given time period.

We, friends, are fortunate to still be in possession of the Buddha's teachings, which date back to nearly 2500 years. When I use the word fortunate, you should ponder over the circumstances behind it which I am talking about. Our ancestors have had a huge role to play in this. It was their effort towards preserving all of this that we today are being able to celebrate Buddh Purnima in this way.

They for the best part of 2500 years, tried as hard as possible to keep this legacy decorated and hand it over to the next generation. The upcoming generation is now awaiting your efforts and commitments towards this cause.

Its my heartfelt desire, that as you start leaving from here, I would want you to think of some five to ten commitments that you think you may fulfil by 2022, the year our country would be celebrating its 75th Independence Day.

These commitments may be related to preserving our culture, or be it spreading the ideas of Buddha. But it is my request that each and every person, institution and organisation present here makes some sort of commitment to be completed by 2022.

This effort on your part shall play a big role in fulfilling the dream of 'New India'. We know difficulties will surely be there, but with the blessings of Lord Buddha, I am sure that all of you will fulfil whatever commitment you make.

On the auspicious occasion of Buddh Purnima, I am thankful to those who have given me the opportunity to sit at the feet of Lord Buddha, and pray to him. I am grateful for our interaction today.

Once again, I would like to end, by wishing you all a very happy Buddh Purnima.

Thank you.

*“Cannot a few youths of our country dedicate themselves for  
the restoration of the Buddhist heritage and make it a mission in life?”*

*– Rabindranath Tagore*



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