

## MESSAGE OF BUDDHA

[On 29 July 1983, **Hon'ble Smt. Indira Gandhi**, Prime Minister, inaugurated the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology . We reproduce here the Inaugural Address in extenso. Hon'ble Smt. Indira Gandhi spoke extempore. Editors of **Bulletin of Tibetology** are responsible for the transcription of the Address as printed below and own all responsibility for any errors and omissions.]

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you this morning and specially for a function such as this.

Naturally, my mind goes back to 1958 when I came with my father at the inauguration of this Institute. It was an important event then and it is an important event today.

As some of the speakers have said, this is repository of Tibetan lore, not only of Buddhism, but also of its theology, of literature, art and science.

As you have been told, the land was kindly donated by Sir Tashi Namgyal and I am glad to see how well the Institute has developed since then.

### UNENDING JOURNEY

Life's journey never really ends. So the work ahead and the road ahead is always stretching before us. The great importance of this Institute is that so much, so many of our treasures, have already been lost.

Many people with the spirit of adventure have travelled into Tibet and these parts in centuries gone by, and we admire their spirit and their interest in our philosophy, our religion and other aspects of our lives. But, they did take back with them many of our treasures in the shape of idols or manuscripts or Thankas and other items. And, it is so today, some of the best pieces are found not within our country, but far across the oceans.

We must try to get back what we can over the years. As you all know, that here also, apart from the manuscripts, these manuscripts contain also the Tibetan renderings of ancient Hindu texts which had been lost before. So there is a vast scope for research and for the search of knowledge.

## OUR CONCERN AND BUDDHA'S ANSWERS

In our country, we are much concerned with poverty and economic backwardness, and it is right that it should be so, for poverty is degrading and dehumanising. But we see that in many parts of the world, although poverty as such has gone but degradation of another kind and dehumanisation continues.

The Buddha sought answers to these age-old problems of sorrow, disease and death. He found that one could rise above them only by going deep within oneself, by looking at and treating one's fellow beings with compassion and love.

As has been said in some of the speeches made here, this is the message most needed in our world of today and, perhaps, till humanity exists. It is true that my father had a special feeling for the Buddha, for this spirit of search for truth, for the spirit of self-reliance. We speak today of self-reliance in the economic field, but Buddhism searched for it in the sense of self-reliance on one's own inner strength and resources. The search for truth and reality is a permanent one and each of us has to find our own way.

## IDEAL OF TOLERANCE AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

India has been fortunate that throughout the vicissitudes of our history, though many thought-streams that have come from different directions, we have kept to certain ideals. We have the ideal of tolerance—though it is true that we forget it quite often, but, nevertheless, it remains as an ideal—and we strive towards it.

On the whole, we have viewed the world in its entirety, seeing no contradiction between faith and reason, between religion and science, between mind and matter or even between the natural and the super-natural. We have kept to certain—or try to keep to certain—spiritual values, and we have not seen them divorced from the wellbeing, the material wellbeing of our people.

People abroad often talk of India as being a spiritual country or the Indian people being spiritual people. Now, as a people, we are neither more spiritual nor less materialistic than any other people in the world. And, if you look into our history, you will see that it was in periods of material prosperity, in period where there was tolerance and encouragement of different thoughts, that we also reached the highest peaks of spiritual attainment and today we are trying to follow the same path.

## THE ONLY SHELTER AND REFUGE

Today's conditions may get far more difficult. Earlier, people were there in their monasteries, in their ashrams or even in the country, isolated from the winds that blow from other cultures and other thoughts. Today, we are buffeted by them in quite a different manner, much more fiercely, through the media, through the press, through what we see happening around us.

However much we want to protect ourselves, we cannot really protect ourselves. The only shelter, the only refuge is to see how we can—and this has been India's genius—how we can transform, how we can adapt, adopt, observe what is good in these winds, and reject what is not of relevance to us, or which can cause harm to us and our country. I think this is the genius of our country which has enabled us to keep an unbroken tradition alive through thousands of years, and to take what is good and relevant from different thoughts. This is what gives us today what we call our composite culture, and enables the people of different faiths to live in harmony with one another.

## ENERGY

Everything that you say, can say, about the world applies to the individual. We speak the greatest need today of the world is energy. Energy is the base of all progress, all development—whether it is industry, or agriculture, science or anything else. It surely is the greatest need of the individual also.

Energy—not for destruction, but for use to be able to do good, to be good to oneself; because, ultimately, if you are not if you do not have something within yourself, you cannot possibly give it to others.

We do want people to look towards India and our thoughts, and many, many are looking towards it today with different points of view—some superficially, some as an escape, but an increasing number with some seriousness.

This can be sustained if we ourselves are giving the same importance to this philosophy. Not in any sense looking backwards, but seeing its timelessness and its eternal values. In this quest, we are trying to move ahead as a nation. But as I said earlier, that each one of us is solitary. We can find guidance in the words and examples of the great souls and the great men and women who have gone before us.

## “WE MUST WALK ALONE”—IF NEED BE

But, in the journey towards fulfilment, we must be, we are, alone. We have to undertake this journey and we have to bear its hardships alone. Gurudev Tagore has said that if no one walks with us, we must walk alone—“EKLA CHOLORE”. And, the Buddha said it much earlier to Ananda, “Be a lamp unto yourself”. So, we have this light within ourselves; it is a question of being able to see it, or being able to reveal it, or being able to use its strength and energy for good.

Nothing in the world is purely good or purely bad. It is what use you make of it. Whether it is science, whether it is knowledge, whether it is any tools that we have, we can use them for constructive purposes, we can use them for destructive purposes.

## SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism spread from India far and wide, and it is influencing now a very large portion of the world's population. And, although India at one stage seemed to have forgotten it, in part as Buddhism, although many of its ideals and values were adapted and absorbed, we find now resurgence here and abroad.

It is a light which can guide our path and can take the world away from the destructive, the greed, the looking towards the superficial rather than the deep which can be with us always.

Dr. Radhakrishnan once said that ‘to be an Indian doesn't merely mean to be born in India or to have the citizenship of India. It means allegiance to certain principles, certain ideals, certain values’. And, these, of course, are found in full measure in the teaching of this Great Soul, Gautama Buddha.

## CONTROLLING REACTIONS TO ENSURE HAPPINESS

We are surrounded by all kinds of happenings and, when Gandhiji said that we should not be blown off our feet, I think what he meant was that we cannot control circumstances, but we can control our reactions to them. And it is our reaction and what we do in the different circumstances, which can strengthen us— as individuals, as people, and as a nation.

So today, on this day when we remember those who contributed so much to this Institute, to the great thoughts which inspired the wisdom which is contained in the manuscripts here, let us once more look to the ideals of tolerance, of compassion, and of love, which

are the only things which can take us towards the good and the eternal, which can bring us fulfilment and real satisfaction, and what is called happiness.

People use that word today for many things. But it is something far deeper. It is not something that comes and goes; it is something which is many-sided and which all human beings are capable of finding, no matter what their circumstances, no matter what the difficulties. It was this search in which the Buddha and our old sages and Rishis and Munis were occupied.

### THE INNER LIGHT

Now we perhaps not all of us, can reach those levels, not all of us can go down so deeply. But we have within us the capacity to find the essence of it within ourselves, and I think that is the basic message of the Buddha and all other great souls who have guided our people.

I hope this light will go forth, this radiance from this Institute, and those who study here to give this message all over the world.

I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Silver Jubilee celebrations of this Institute and in laying the Foundation Stone for the Research and Development Centre of this Institute. And, I am happy to know that the degree course is now being recognized in North Bengal University and I hope it will soon be part of your own University and your own studies.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with you all!