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THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING¹

by

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The carrying out of the principles taught by the Buddha needs on the part of the practiser the friendly mind, and so the Path of Virtue of the Buddha, which leads to concentration and wisdom, may be called the way of friendly feeling, *Mettāyana Magga*, since one who practises virtue (*sila*) bestows on all living beings freedom from fear, hatred, injury, and distress, and as the feeling of amity impels the understanding Buddhist to be virtuous, kindness becomes the dominant note of the Buddhist way of life.

The virtuous man will be, possessed of intelligence, gentle, humble, docile, energetic, free from indolence, unshaken in adversity, modest of demeanour, wise, impartial to all, one who wants to have friends, bountiful, free from avarice, a leader, a guide, and an instructor. Such a man is clearly one who can be called a model citizen. He is driven to action by the Law of Righteousness, which inspires right exertion for the overcoming of ill. It is not possible for one who sees the world with friendly eyes not to exert himself for the good of others. So, it is said by the poet thus:

*Parahitakaraṇāya baddhakakṣyāḥ
cirasipatrvane vasanti santah
na punaramarasundarisahāyāḥ
kṣamapi nandanakanane ramante.*

The virtuous, who have girded themselves for right exertion, would abide long in the grove in hell where the leaves are swords

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for the doing of good to others. But without the ability to do good they would not for even an instant be attached to Sakra's Delightful Park, with its divine nymphs. It was in keeping with this principle of the Bodhisattva that in our times Mahatma Gandhi wished to be reborn amongst the poorest, the lowliest and lost.

The lives of the Buddha and his Noble Disciples, and his well-known disciples like Dharmasoka bear witness to the great spirit of friendliness which the Dhamma generates in one who follows it. It was from the time that Dhammasoka began to tread the way of friendly feeling after turning away from the cruel way of the sword that the teaching of diligence (*appamāda*), which he had learned from the Arahant Nigrodha the novice take effect in him through his progress in right endeavour, which is one of the principal features of the Buddha's teaching and is the mark of the diligent. The opposite of diligence is negligence, sloth, indolence, which leads to death and not immortality, according to the first verse of the portion of the Dhamma which Asoka heard from the young saint. The verse runs thus: Appamādo amatapadam pamādo maccuno padam appamatta na miyanti ye pamatta yathā matā, Diligence is the way to the deathless; negligence is the way to death. The diligent do not die. The negligent are as it were dead. "

In one who is endeavouring to do good with heart endued with friendly feeling the barriers of greed, hate, and delusion, which keep men from helping one another, disappear, and the will to progress towards the lofty, the true, and the good, becomes fully active. The importance of the Buddha's teaching for the world's happiness and well-being lies largely in its power to awaken men to a sense of reality and to make them energetic in the service of others. The Buddhist life when it is lived fully is one dedicated to the good of all living beings, and it is fully lived when it is established in confidence in regard to the truth, and in virtue and wisdom.

A community or society becomes truly great only when good men arise in it. And good men arise when the great virtues are practised by its members. But how can great virtues be practised when the great path trodden by the noblest of beings is forgotten, and men walk along paths that lead to hate and destruction? It is when there are persons with outstanding qualities of conduct and intellect that a community becomes free from the plague of fanaticism and the insecurity of extremist action as well as from the heartless exploitation, oppression, and suppression, of the weak by the strong. To protect a community from being overwhelmed by these evils there is only one way. That is the harmless, non-violent way praised by the wise, and proved to be the best by centuries of experience of mankind. That way is where through the development of men of character, intellect, intuition, and vision, the foolishnesses and pettinesses of the unthinking are cancelled and expunged and nullified. That way is closed where intelligence is at a discount, and the wise who are the signposts to that way of the enlightened are neglected.

(Concluded)

**"Try not to become a man of success,
but rather try to become
a man of values."**

(Widely attributed to Albert Einstein)

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