



## Contemporary Relevance of the Ethical Teaching of Lord Buddha

**Dr. Sarat Sarma**

Associate Professor

Dhanamanjuri College of Arts,

Dhanamanjuri University, Imphal, Manipur

Email ID: [vranishrm@gmail.com](mailto:vranishrm@gmail.com)

Contact No.: +91 70051 86907

### Abstract

*The ethical teachings of Lord Buddha, rooted in the principles of compassion, non-violence, mindfulness, and interdependence, remain profoundly relevant in contemporary society. In an era marked by global crises—such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and mental health challenges—Buddhist ethics offer a transformative framework for sustainable and harmonious living. The core tenets of the Five Precepts (abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxication) provide a moral foundation that aligns with modern values of human rights, social justice, and ecological responsibility. Buddhist emphasis on ahimsa (non-violence) resonates with movements advocating peace, animal rights, and conflict resolution. Similarly, the concept of right livelihood encourages ethical economic practices, countering exploitative capitalism. Mindfulness, a key aspect of Buddhist practice, has gained global recognition in psychology and wellness, aiding stress reduction and emotional regulation. Furthermore, the teaching of dependent origination underscores the interconnectedness of all beings, reinforcing contemporary ecological and humanitarian perspectives. In a world grappling with ethical dilemmas posed by technological advancements, political polarization, and consumerism, Buddha's teachings advocate balance, ethical discernment, and inner transformation as pathways to collective well-being. Thus, the timeless wisdom of Buddhism continues to inspire solutions for modern challenges, promoting a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world.*

**Keywords:** Buddhist Ethics, Compassion, Mindfulness, Non-violence (Ahimsa) Contemporary Relevance



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Man is a very fortunate being. Fortunate because he has got the most developed form of head and heart. Perhaps he is the finest synthesis of matter, mind and spirit. But what a tragedy that he is not happy! Man is living a miserable life full of pain and suffering. He is yet to emancipate himself from the miseries of mundane life. It is true that science and technology have completely revolutionised our way of life. They have given us every comfort of material life. However, in spite of huge amount of wealth and money that he acquires through various means, he is still suffering from inner loneliness. He feels the horror of emptiness. Man is still unable to get rid of tension, greed, meanness, selfishness and various other evil thoughts.

Today our world is torn by hatred and strife. We have broken up into different communities, groups and nations fighting with one another for our narrow and selfish goals. Now we are passing through a very unfortunate time. In fact, we are facing a severe crisis. This crisis, however, is neither a material crisis nor an intellectual crisis. It is a moral and spiritual crisis in man's life. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his essay International Peace truly says:

"The crisis that is facing us is not a material or an economic crisis; it is not an intellectual crisis. It is a moral and spiritual crisis."<sup>1</sup>

This clearly says that material achievements cannot, in any way, solve the deeper problems of human life. We must go beyond the material realm in order to find out a solution for such a problem. This means we have to go deeper into the moral and spiritual level. The importance of moral and spiritual disciplines in our life cannot be denied. Unless man strictly follows these disciplines, he cannot liberate himself from the bondage of pain and suffering in life. He will never be happy and thus he will not be able to generate peace in the society.

Human society can never free itself from the various evils, which it has been experiencing throughout the past many centuries. It is, however, tragic that hardly anything is done to improve the life of man morally and spiritually. Man is not a mere biological organism. It is very much true that he has a physical body. But this does not exhaust his totality. His physical aspect is a very small part of his totality. He is also a moral and spiritual being. When man is dominated by his physical body, he cannot rise above his organic level. The deeper moral and spiritual problems of man cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Towards A New World, Delhi, 1989, p. 111.



solved by his material achievements. They belong entirely to different levels. Therefore, it is at this higher level that we have to look for the solution of the crisis. belong entirely to different levels. Therefore, it is at this higher level that we have to look for the solution of the crisis.

The evils in man are to be cleansed. It is by cleansing these evils that man becomes happy and generate peace in the society. This act of purification cannot be done by material objects, which increase our wants and selfishness the more we possess them. It is to be done through the practice of moral and spiritual disciplines. We must not forget that the enemy that we have to fight today is not capitalism or communism. It is our own folly, our spiritual blindness, our love of power and our lust for domination. We have the responsibility for deciding whether the human race is to prosper or decline, whether our conduct will lead to a beginning or an end. It is a challenge that faces us with danger and opportunity, world destruction or world peace.

At this critical moment, what is important is a transformation in the nature of human being. The attitude of man is to be changed. The heart of man is to be enlarged. For this, man must know himself. Knowing only his physical aspect is not enough. He must also try to know the vast world of his inner life, which is immensely powerful. Here lies the root of all his activities. The change in human nature must come from this root. Today we very much need the guide of a philosophy, which can change our nature by bringing changes in the very root of our inner life. Here comes the importance of the ethical teachings of Lord Buddha. Today when there is rapid moral and spiritual degeneration Buddha's ethical teachings can become the light, which shows the golden path in the darkness of our mundane life.

The message of Lord Buddha has got tremendous relevance for humanity everywhere. It is neither some kind of magic nor some form of cheap mystery. It is a pure message of human growth, development and fulfilment. The evils in the society are the evils in human being extended. Material force is, of course, powerful. But that power in matter does not come from the matter itself. It is generated only when human elements are added to them. Matter in itself cannot control man, but man can control matter. Man is the most important factor in all forms of interactions for the growth and development of the society.

This message of Lord Buddha directly helps to improve the most important aspect of human being - his moral and spiritual aspect, which control all his external activities. Prof. C. D. Sharma beautifully writes:



"The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path have a meaning for us even today. The Enlightenment which dawned upon the mortal Siddhartha and transformed him into the immortal Buddha, serves us even today." <sup>2</sup>

## 2. LORD BUDDHA - A LOVER OF MANKIND

Lord Buddha was a profound humanist whose heart was full of love and compassion for man. He was a great lover of mankind. He lived in our midst as a human being. The uniqueness of the Buddha was his deep interest and extreme involvement in man and his problem of suffering in life. The entire personality of the Buddha was completely shaken by the temporality of the world, the changing phases of the mortal beings and the frustration of life. They changed the direction of his life. He did not want to associate himself with the human mockery. He could not tolerate the pain and suffering of this miserable life.

The fact that the painful scenes of life deeply moved him and 'spiritual transformation' occurred to him proves his sincere love for mankind. He was very much eager to heal their sorrows. He was the perfect embodiment of love and self-sacrifice whose heart always overflowed with compassion on seeing human sufferings. His sole effort was to show us the path of liberation from the bondage of pain and suffering in life, and attain the perfect state of peace and tranquillity. Therefore, he renounced all the good things of earthly life and went through tremendous penance and self-suffering in order to find out a permanent solution for the problem of suffering in life. He did not renounce the material world as a coward or a beggar but as a seeker of truth.

The 'great renunciation' of all the pleasures of mundane life for the attainment of the highest truth is the most significant event in his life. It is the highest sacrifice a person can do for the welfare of the whole mankind. The 'great renunciation' of the Buddha is the perfect example of his love of mankind. He left his beloved son, wife, parents, relatives and friends for his ultimate journey to highest knowledge and perfection.

He underwent tremendous self-suffering in order to find out the golden path for the emancipation of mankind from the bondage of pain and suffering in life. He was successful in his effort.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. C. D. Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Delhi, 1987, p. 69.



His "*Four Noble Truths*" and "*Noble Eight-fold Path*" are the most important discovery for the moral and spiritual upliftment of the entire mankind. He worked the remaining years of his life to enlighten the common people so that they may live a good and meaningful life. His teachings are meant for the betterment and improvement of life on earth. They are the clear lights in the darkness of our mundane life. They teach us the basic problem of suffering in life and also give us the golden path by following which we can overcome the miseries of life.

Lord Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher. He condemned the discussion on metaphysical problems as futile. He basically taught us the truth of pain and misery in life; and showed us the path for the cessation of misery. Human life is full of miseries. According to him, the immediate duty for us should be to get rid of them. His anti- metaphysical attitude also implies his deep concern for the practical problem of life. He was not interested in the discussion of metaphysical problems of god, soul, life after death or before birth etc.

For him, such discussions will be of no help when mankind is suffering from the miseries of worldly life. Buddha compared a metaphysician to a foolish man whose heart is pierced by a poisonous arrow and who, instead of taking it out while away his time on idle speculation about the origin, the size, the metal, the maker and the shooter of the arrow. When he was asked any metaphysical question, he always avoided them by saying that they were neither profitable nor conducive to the highest good.

The Buddha emphasizes self-control, thoughtfulness, moral conduct, purity of mind, goodwill, love, compassion and peace. He discarded all the indeterminable questions regarding the nature of the world, the relation between the soul and the body, the condition after the attainment of Nirvana etc. Buddha taught us not to waste a moment in useless disputes. Metaphysical discussions lead to disputes; they do not lead to purity, peace and calm. There is perfect peace and purity in the realization of *nirvana*.

Buddha was a firm believer in the moral and spiritual potentialities of human being. There is no place of god or any divine power in his scheme. According to him, man has got enough moral power to attain the highest moral perfection and spiritual realization. He attained nirvana, the ultimate mission of life only through his personal endeavours and intelligence. He was not guided by a god or a divine force. He did not believe in such a power. He was his own guide. According to Buddha, man is his own master. He determines his own fate and destiny.



The Buddha said:

"The self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord?"<sup>3</sup>

Buddha, therefore, taught us to work out our own emancipation. He only discovered and showed the path to liberation, nirvana. One must tread the path oneself. He further says:

"You should do your work, for the Tathagatas only teach the way."<sup>4</sup>

Buddha never claimed himself to be other than a human being. He had no inspiration from any god or divine force. He attributed all his achievements and attainments to human effort and intelligence. The Buddha is a man par excellence. He was very much perfect in his 'human-ness.' Buddha was also a critical man. He never asked his disciples to follow him without questioning. He never considered himself as an agent of God on earth nor as a prophet whose doctrines should be accepted without any critical scrutiny. He advised his disciples that they should examine even the *Tathagata* himself, so that they might be fully convinced of the true value of his teachings. Thus, Buddha gave full freedom of thought to his disciples. He never thought of controlling the *Sangha* (order of Monks), nor did he want the *Sangha* to depend on him. "The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions."<sup>5</sup> Besides the freedom of thought, the tolerance allowed by the Buddha is also astonishing to us. He told us to honour not only our own religion but also the religions of others.

Buddha also strongly reacted against all kinds of superstitions. He did not believe in ceremonies and rituals. Buddha said:

"These ceremonials are all wrong. There is but one ideal in the world. Destroy all delusions; what is true will remain. As soon as the clouds are gone, the sun will shine."<sup>6</sup>

He always raised his strong voice against all forms of hollow beliefs. These beliefs, he thought, simply make life more complicated and confuse our mind. They stand in the way of our mental and moral development. "Buddha felt the hollowness of the host of beliefs which people were wont to regard as articles of faith. He hated that man should play the fool for nothing. He raised his voice in indignant protest against superstition and unreason and bade his disciples cease playing with

<sup>3</sup> The Dhammapada, XII., 4

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, XII., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Walpola Rahula: What the Buddha Taught, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Buddha and His Message, 1992, pp. 20-21.



trifles and realise the spiritual laws of the world. He denied the divinity of the gods and undermined the authority of the Vedas".<sup>7</sup>

Gautama Buddha was also a great preacher of equality. For him, all are equal. Every man and woman have the same right to attain spirituality. According to him, no distinction of caste, creed, colour, birth, sex etc. are of any value so far as man's holier life is concerned. In fact, he aimed for the emancipation of the whole mankind from the miseries of life. He opened the door of *nirvana* to everybody. The enlightened one should postpone his own liberation till the entire mankind is liberated. This universal humanistic outlook is a very rare thing in the history of human civilization. Buddhism is a religion of humanity, kindness and equality. Buddha's life is a perfect embodiment of all human virtues - love, compassion, charity, forgiveness, non-violence, renunciation, simplicity etc. His life itself is his philosophy. His humanism gives us a new hope and light in the darkness of our present century.

Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture **Buddha's Message to the World** delivered in San Francisco, on March 18, 1900 said:

"The life of Buddha has an especial appeal. All my life I have been very fond of Buddha I have more veneration for that character than for any other - that boldness, that fearlessness, and that tremendous love! He was born for the good of man. Others may seek god, others may seek truth for themselves; he did not even care to know truth for himself. He sought truth because people were in misery. How to help them, that was his only concern. Throughout his life he never had a thought for himself. How can we ignorant, selfish, narrow minded human beings ever understand the greatness of this man?"<sup>8</sup>

### 3. TEACHINGS OF LORD BUDDHA

Lord Buddha was a great humanist whose heart was full of love and compassion for the suffering of mankind. He completely renounced all the pleasures of worldly life and passed through tremendous self-suffering in order to find out the path for the emancipation of mankind from the bondage of pain and suffering. His spiritual transformation speaks much of his deep love and concern for the humanity. He has given us an eternal message, which is of permanent value.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. 1, 1989, pp. 356-357.

<sup>8</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Buddha and His Message, 1992, pp. 25-26.



Buddha was always eager to discover the correct path to ultimate happiness. He succeeded in his effort. He showed us the way. His sermon starts with the *madhyama marga*, that is, **the middle path**. His teaching is that man's moral life consists in avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Nothing is to be gained by indulging our appetites and passions nor by mortifying our flesh. The most appropriate path is the middle path. It is through this path that we can establish harmony and mutual love in the society.

The discovery of his Four Noble Truths is a great achievement for the whole mankind. It is Lord Buddha's message for the moral and spiritual upliftment of the entire humanity. This discovery unfolds the fundamental truth of life, that is, the truth of suffering. It also shows us the path by following which we can overcome the bondage of pain and suffering in life.

In his First Noble Truth, Lord Buddha very rightly mentions the fundamental truth of life, that is, it is full of suffering. Every kind of experience contains misery in one form or other. From our birth till our death, we are bound to live in the midst of suffering. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan writes:

"In the whole history of thought no one has painted the misery of human existence in blacker colours and with more feeling than Buddha."<sup>9</sup>

With all our material and intellectual achievements, we are still unable to emancipate ourselves from the bondage of suffering. Suffering in life always disturbed Buddha's mind. In fact, suffering was the centre of his thought. He was very much eager to heal the sorrows of the suffering mankind. Therefore, he went deeper into the very root of suffering in order to find out its cause.

In his Second Noble Truth, after very deep investigation, he discovered that ignorance of truth is the fundamental cause of suffering in life. Buddha established this in the light of the doctrine of Dependent Origination, which says that everything has a cause. The doctrine of Dependent Origination (*Pratityasamutpada*) is the most important doctrine in Buddhist Philosophy. It is the backbone upon which the entire edifice of Buddhism rests. Buddha gives great importance to the understanding of this doctrine. According to him, without a proper understanding of this doctrine it is hardly possible to understand his teachings. That is why he calls this doctrine the *Dhamma*.

According to the doctrine of *Pratityasamutpada*, everything depends on some conditions. On getting the cause, the effect arises. Any form of existence is conditional being dependent on a cause.

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Oxford University Press, Delhi, vol. 1, 1989, p. 362.



Buddha explained the cause of suffering in life through the light of this doctrine. Suffering being a fundamental fact of life comes out of something. It must depend on some conditions.

To explain the cause of suffering, Buddha established a chain of twelve links. There is suffering in life because we are born. If we were not born we would not have experienced all these pains and sufferings. Birth again has its cause. It is the will to be born. The will to be born is due to our mental clinging to objects. Why do we have this clinging? We have this clinging because of our thirst or desire for objects. We have the craving to enjoy the objects of this world. This craving, this thirst for enjoyment is due to sense-object contact.

The cause of this sense- object-contact is the presence of the six sense organs; the sixth sense being the mind. These organs are again dependent on psycho-physical organism. We have this organism because of the initial consciousness of the embryo. This initial consciousness is again due to our past impressions. And lastly, these impressions are due to ignorance of truth. Therefore, ignorance of truth is the root-cause of all the miseries and sufferings in life. This causal chain may also be explained in the following way:

**Past life**

1. Ignorance (*avidya*)
2. Impressions of karmic forces (*samskara*)

**Present Life**

3. Initial consciousness of the embryo (*vijnana*)
4. Psycho-physical organism (*nama-rupa*)
5. Six sense-organs including mind (*sadayatana*)
6. Sense-object-contact (*sparsha*)
7. Sense-experience (*vedana*)
8. Thirst for sense-enjoyment (*trsna*)
9. Clinging to this enjoyment (*upadana*)
10. Will to be born (*bhava*)

**Future Life**

11. Birth or Rebirth (*jati*)
12. Old age and death (*jara-marana*)

The above chain consisting of twelve links is the wheel of existence -birth and rebirth. The first two links are related to the past life whereas the last two to future life and the remaining eight to present life. This is the vicious cycle of birth and death. Here death is not the end, rather it is the beginning of a new life. This chain is technically called *Bhava-chakra* or *Samsara-chakara* or *Janma*



*marana-chakra* or *Dharma-chakra* or *Pratityasamutpada-chakra* etc. This chain can be destroyed only when its root-cause, that is, ignorance is removed which is possible only through knowledge. Therefore, ignorance is bondage and knowledge can remove it to attain the state of liberation. Buddha affirmed this in his Third Noble Truth. This Noble truth is the truth of the cessation of suffering.

Buddha's last and Fourth Noble Truth gives us the famous '**Eight-fold Path**' (*astangika-marga*) consisting of right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration which leads to the cessation of suffering. This path is meant for the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind. This is the path by following which we can stop suffering in life. Buddha himself followed this path to get rid of all miseries. This path is also known as the middle path since it avoids all kinds of extreme views.

By right view, Buddha means the knowledge of the four noble truths. The knowledge of these truths alone helps moral reformation, which can lead us towards the highest goal of ultimate happiness. No speculation on metaphysical issues can take us to the path of moral reformation. Therefore, we must first of all try to acquire the knowledge of the four noble truths so that we may conquer ignorance.

The only acquisition of the right knowledge would be meaningless unless one determines to reform one's life in their light. Therefore, one should resolve that one should follow only truth. The moral aspirant is asked, therefore, to renounce worldliness, to give up ill-feeling towards others and desist from doing any harm to them. These three constitute the contents of right determination. Right determination should not remain a mere 'pious wish' but must issue forth into action. Right determination should be able to guide and control our speech.

Right speech consists in abstaining from lying, slander, unkind words and idle talk. Besides right speech, one should follow the rules of right conduct, which includes the five vows-abstention from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication. Besides renouncing bad speech and bad actions, one should earn one's livelihood by honest means. Even for the sake of maintaining one's life one should not take to any kind of forbidden means. While one tries to live a reformed life through the light of the above moral steps, one is constantly knocked off the right path by the deep-rooted evil ideas and also by the fresh ones, which are constantly arising in the mind. Therefore, he cannot make any moral progress unless he put a constant effort to completely root out the evil thoughts from his mind and prevent new ones from arising in it. However, since our mind cannot be kept empty,



we should always make constant endeavour to fill it with good thoughts, and also to retain them in the mind. This fourfold constant endeavour-negative and positive constitutes the essence of right effort.

By right recollection or mindfulness, Buddha wants us to have constant remembrance of the real nature of things. We should always be vigilant about our body, mind, sensations, and ideas. They should be controlled so that they may not stand in the way of our journey towards enlightenment. This is also necessary for keeping off attachment to things and grief over their loss. The last step of this path is right concentration.

A moral reformer who has successfully guided his life by the above seven disciplines and thus freed himself from all passions and evil thoughts is qualified to enter step by step into the four deeper and deeper stages of concentration. When he passes through this last step, he is absolutely free from all kinds of baser passions and attains ultimate happiness, that is, nirvana. "Nirvana is the free state of consciousness, the tranquil state of our internal nature, and the highest emotional state of spirituality and blessedness."<sup>10</sup>

The Buddha declared nirvana as the greatest condition and the greatest happiness. Therefore, the mission of Buddha was to help mankind to attain the ultimate goal of *Nirvana*, that is, the goal of ultimate happiness. "He (Buddha) invited everyone to enter into that state of freedom which he called *Nirvana*. All must attain to it one day; and that attainment is the complete fulfilment of man."<sup>11</sup> The attainment of this state of mind is possible in this life itself. By nirvana Buddha means nirvana in this very life.

Lord Buddha's message has created a great appeal to the common people. Swami Vivekananda, in one of his speeches delivered at San Francisco said that Buddhism was the most gigantic spiritual wave ever to burst upon human society. His teachings inspired everybody-laymen, householders, monks and women. The message of the Buddha reached distant places. People accepted his teachings whole-heartedly wherever he went. P. T. Raju writes:

"Buddha was so sublimely human and appealed to the masses with such charm that it was easy for Buddhism to spread over the whole of Asia."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> B. M. Barua, *The Role of Buddhism in Indian Life and Thought*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Calcutta, vol. VIII, 1991, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> P. T. Raju, *The Philosophical Traditions of India*, Delhi, 1992, p. 115.



## 4. CONCLUSION

Buddhism is a very rare phenomenon in the history of mankind. It was a great spiritual movement that took place in this sub-continent in the six century B.C. Historically it was the most important religion because it was the most tremendous religious movement that the world ever saw. There is no civilization on which its effect has not been felt in some way or other. During such time when people had to cross hills, mountains and deserts with immense difficulties, Buddhism was able to spread its message throughout the length and breadth of our country. It even went beyond our frontiers to Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Malaya, Java and Sumatra in the south and to Tibet, China, Japan, Korea and Nepal in the north. Its message reached many countries of the western world.

Many great personalities including staunch atheists were also very deeply influenced by the life and teachings of the Buddha. The great British philosopher, Bertrand Russell while reviewing a book in 1923 in the New Statesman writes:

"Of all the religions which prevail in the world, I am attracted to early Buddhism."<sup>13</sup>

Even today, Buddhism is influencing many nations of the world in one way or other. There are thousands of people who are willing to come under the spiritual fold of this remarkable religion. Buddhism becomes more popular as time goes on. This is because of the deep love, concern and compassion for man in the message of Lord Buddha. These should be the fundamental basis for living together on this earth. It is a message of love and respect among all the living beings. In the Buddhist ocean the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians and all are one. In fact, Buddhism aims at establishing a harmonious world in which everybody lives together happily. Hence its message has got more relevance today than ever before.

The message of Lord Buddha very clearly tells the profoundest truth about man, lying at the core of his being. Human being is not only this tiny organic system. There is a deeper spiritual dimension within man beyond his physical, neurological and psychic dimensions. He is physically limited, but spiritually unlimited. It is only through this that he can achieve the highest and the best. When we realise this truth, something great and extraordinary happens. So far as this truth and man's capacity to realise it is concerned, there is no difference between the rich and the poor, the great and the small.

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Our Heritage, Delhi, 1989, p. 65.



The realisation of this truth is the birth-right of every human being. This is to be achieved by our individual effort. When we succeed in this effort, we shall be different from what we are. The evils in us will die naturally. We shall no longer take interest in the mockeries of mundane life. There will be tremendous growth and development of human qualities such as love, compassion, charity, non-violence etc. The urgent need of our time is the proper utilization of the spiritual potentiality of man.

Lord Buddha was the perfect embodiment of love and compassion. He is an excellent example of renunciation and sacrifice. His fundamental message is the service of man. He taught us how to live together on this earth with all our differences. His ethical teachings aim at cleansing our mind of impurities and disturbances such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness. This is what mankind needs most today. Our world is torn by hatred and strife. It is full of violence. Here Buddha's message is that we should develop a heart of love and understanding. He taught us to overcome anger by non-anger and hatred by love. His message is a path of survival for us today.

Lord Buddha's message has got permanent value being eternal in character. His ethical teachings are meant for the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind. They are the moral disciplines by following which we can overcome the baser passions of our nature and get rid of all the defects, which are already there in our hearts. Buddha was a man who was much ahead of his time. He was a man who told us what we should do if we want to recover our harmony, love and friendship.

According to Buddha, if we want to live in brotherly love, the way we are proceeding in this world is not the way to do it. We have broken up into different sects, communities and nations fighting with one another. Ours is a world torn by hatred and strife. Here Buddha's message is to develop the heart of love and understanding by overcoming anger by non-anger and hatred by love. In spite of all the weaknesses of human being, Lord Buddha never loses hope in man and his capacity to have spiritual transformation. Dr. Radhakrishnan beautifully writes:



"The Buddha aimed at the development of a new type of free man, free from prejudices, intent on working out his own future, with reliance on one's own self, attadipa. His humanism crossed racial and national barriers."<sup>14</sup>

If we sincerely follow the ethical teachings of Lord Buddha, we can develop peace and harmony in our own self and in our relationship with others. This will enable us to live truly and meaningfully. If we achieve this, the rest will naturally take care of itself. The problems in the society are the problems in human being extended. If we are able to solve the basic problems of the individual with the help of Buddha's ethical teachings, the problems in the society will naturally disappear. Hence, the ethical teaching of Lord Buddha has immense contemporary relevance. His message will always be a golden light in the darkness of our journey.

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<sup>14</sup> P. V. Bapat, General Editor, 2500 Years of Buddhism, 1971.



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