

THE TEN EXCELLENCES OF BUDDHISM

BY

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The lecture being given is on the subject of the goodness of Buddhism.

The word Buddha literally means the Enlightened one, or Great and Excellent Sage. Therefore, Buddhism is the religion of enlightenment. Lord Buddha is excellent not merely because of wealth, beauty and so on: but he is so especially because of his goodness, wisdom and enlightenment.

This is the reason why we Buddhists consider our religion a supreme way of life.

Just how excellent is Buddhism? I shall endeavor to explain this question point by point, as follows:-

1. Buddhism makes no distinction of class or caste and places no importance on formal adherence to creeds.

Lord Buddha taught that man does not become good or evil because of his cast or social status or as a result of believing a creed.

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He is good or evil on account of his own action: that is, by evil action he is bad man and by good action he becomes a good man. Even going to a heaven or a hell or obtaining Nirvana is not a matter of one's class or one's creedal belief. King, pauper, rich man or scholar may enter into a hell or a heaven or attain Nirvana. That is why Lord Buddha considered caste, class and creeds as being pointless.

In Buddhism, the question of seniority among monks depends on the date of ordination and also on knowledge and not at all on their previous social condition, A prince and a laborer who enter the order the same day are equal. Too much regard for class distinctions gives rise to damaging results. It can destroy the unity of group or of a nation and hold back the progress of a country. For these reasons, Lord Buddha counseled against such false distinctions.

2. Buddhism is a religion of compassion and unselfishness, as will be shown.

Our personal likes and dislikes are not to be mistaken for good and evil. We must see all things as they are and judge causes by effects. In order that good effects might prevail, Lord Buddha established certain precepts (good causes) and the first of these concerns abstention from killing. This is unlike some religions which teach that animals were created by God for the sake of sustaining human beings.

In this matter, Lord Buddha said that all living beings obtain birth by themselves, that is, they build action and action builds them in return, then they rebuild new action...In this way, action and reaction keep the wheel always moving round. Again, living beings appear in the world, and their birth is dependent upon condition which they themselves have made. It is not God that creates them and, therefore, all living beings, including human and animal, have freedom, liberty, and the right to live their lives on earth equally, It is not that human beings have special rights and privileges above animals, but that they are just more powerful and more clever and have made laws to suit themselves.

3. Buddhism propagates or broadcasts mercy, or loving-kindness, to all living beings all over the world countlessly and endlessly.

Lord Buddha ever taught his disciples to use their mind to radiate Metta (mercy, or loving-kindness) to all living beings everywhere, no matter what kind of living beings they might be. If they are human, there should be no modification as to what nation they are subject to, nor what nationality they have. If animals, they should not be modified according to their kind. Metta should be radiated towards all the animals including the smallest, such as insects etc. This point is again different from any other religions for some religions say that the killing from any living being other than mankind is not evil; still

other religions believe that it is justifiable to kill any man who is regarded as heretic, for should that man profess any other religion than his own kind he becomes an enemy, Therefore, killing him is regarded not as an evil, but as the highest goodness.

4. In Buddhism no one is commanded to believe in the teachings. The matter is left to the individual's own thoughtful examination.

Witness to this appears generally in the three pitakas or Buddhist Sacred Texts. Lord Buddha never commanded anyone to believe in his teaching; but that he must believe of his own accord. It is his own choice. Instead of commanding a man to believe, the Buddha recommended, *“Do not believe what I tell you until you have thoroughly and critically examined what I say with your own wisdom”* (Again this is different from many religions that forbid their believers (or faithful) to criticize their own religion.) In Buddhism, Lord Buddha is the Enlightened One who speaks only Truth; so His teachings consist of reason and the result of reason. Therefore, Buddhism is not affected unduly by differences of opinion or any criticism of the Teaching. This makes clear to us that Buddhism gives all kinds of freedom, liberty and rights for us to use as we like.

5. Buddhism teaches mankind to help itself.

One Buddhist stanza says in Pali language:-

“Attahi attano natho,

Ko hi natho paro siya

Attana hi sudantena

Natam Labhati Dullabham”:-

“Let you yourselves help yourselves

Who is any other that should help you?

For a man who has practised or trained himself well, He shall obtain the excellent refuge”

This may be compared with the English proverb- “God helps those who help themselves” It is the effect of Lord Buddha’s teaching which causes Buddhists everywhere to love freedom, and not to surrender nor give themselves to any form of slavery anywhere. This effect includes a nation too; that is, it makes a nation professing Buddhism to love independence and to dislike a state of colonialism or dependence upon someone else. Possibly, because of this effect, Buddhists do not like the work of their own hands to pass through the hands of others, before coming back to them who first made it. This is the style of

Lord Buddha on no occasion condemned anyone to go to hell; nor did he send anyone to heaven or Nirvana. Such, again, comes by man’s own good or bad actions, while Lord Buddha is merely the teacher or leader...as is written in the Dhammapada;-

“Akkha taro thata gata”:-

“All the Buddhas, including me, are only showers of the Way.”

The choice of walking along the Path or not depends upon the man concerned in the matter. Here again is a difference from other religions in which God is supposedly capable of condemning one to hell or sending one to heaven and. When someone has committed sins of all kinds, if he knows the way of flattering his God such as praying or worshipping, then his God apparently loves him and forgives him. In this way a man is encouraged to be careless for no matter how serious the sin, if he flatters God he shall be forgiven. In this way too, he is conditioned to wait upon the help of others rather than to be self-reliant.

6. Buddhism is an absolutely pure religion. It is meant by this that Buddhism is not a bloody or blood-spilling religion.

From its beginning till now-over two thousand five hundred years-Buddhism has never been the cause of warfare. Once there was an event of interest in Buddhist history in this respect. After Lord Buddha’s death or Parinibbana, and after his body been burnt, all Kings and Brahmins who were believers and followers of the Buddha went to kusinara in order to ask for portions of his relics. At first, the Mallas (the governors of Kusinara) did not agree to their demands, and a war over the relics came near to breaking point. But a wise Brahmin named Dona brought about a conciliation. The Mallas of

Kusinara then consented to the others wishes, and war was averted. From then till now there has been no war in name of Buddhism, So, it can be said that Buddhism is a pure religion in this regards.

Moreover, the Exalted One himself disallowed the propagation of his teaching by weapons or force of any kind. Many other religions have been propagated by weapons and force, and many religious leaders have been both Kings of their Kingdoms and, at the same time, the dictators of their own religions. Although there are some religions which have not been propagated by force, Yet they have cause religious wars to occur; and therefore these are not regarded by Buddhism as being pure religions.

7. Buddhism is the Religion of reason, based on the law of Cause and Effect.

Lord Buddha said that all things occur from an immediate cause and that there is always a basic reason for that cause – Nothing occurs without reason, no matter whether we know that reason or not . Throughout all life no effect comes without a reason or causes such Avijjha (Ignorance), Tanha (Craving), Upadana (Grasping), Kamma (Action) etc.

The things one desires such as Labha (Income), Yasa (Title,Dignity), Pasamsa (Honour,Praise),Sukkha (Joy, Happiness), and Conversely, the things undesirable such as Alabha (Loss,Expense), Ayasa (Belittlement, Indignity), Ninda (Dishonour,

Blame, Censure), and Dukkha (Suffering, Unhappiness). All are the effects of reasonable happenings, and the bad effects from bad causes.

In most cause these good or bad reasons are built by ourselves, so we built our own fortune or misfortune accordingly. No god or any others can do it for us. Therefore let you build good fortune for yourselves, and do waste time waiting for others to build for you. If you wish goodness you will build only goodness, and will attempt to abstain from all bad thought and action as much as you are able

The whole principle of ariyasacca(Noble Truth) and Paticcasamuppada (Dependent origination) can be expressed in English as Reason and Effect. Samudaya (Origin of suffering) and Magga (Path) are the reasons; and Dukkha (suffering) and Nirodha (Extinction of suffering) are the effects.

Paticcasamuppada is preached as reasons and effects depending upon each other; that is to say a condition is firstly a reason and then it becomes an effect of itself, and so on like the links in a chain. This principle is in harmony with modern science, when makes Buddhism more up-to –date than any other religion in the world.

8. In Buddhism there is no monopoly of position.

In Buddhism, anyone has equal rights to wish to be in a position of choice: common disciple excellent disciple, solitary Buddha or Supreme Buddha. He or she who so desires any such position must practise the same spiritual perfections or per-requisites known as the Ten Paramitas. These ten spiritual perfections are:-

- (1) **Dâna**, or charity, almsgiving.
- (2) **Sila**, or Morality
- (3) **Nekkhamma**, or renunciation or freedom from sexual lust.
- (4) **Panna**, or right knowledge. Wisdom or insight.
- (5) **Viriya**, or energy, virility, manliness, heroism.
- (6) **Khanti**, or patience, forbearance.
- (7) **sacca**, or truth, truthfulness.
- (8) **Adhitthana**, or confirmed determination.
- (9) **Metta**, or loving-kindness, compassion
- (10) **Upekka_ā**, or equanimity.

The difference of how soon one may attain the ten perfections depends upon one's aspiration for positions mentioned. He, who aspires for only low positions, may attain the paramitas in a short time; whereas he who aspires to a high position usually must wait a long time before fulfilling the ten perfections. In other religions, no one except God can be God, no matter how much good the deliver does.

He can never be on the same level as God himself. Even the leader of religion can never attain to Godhood.

The fact that Buddha has no monopoly of position is just one more aspect of the excellence of Buddhism.

9. Buddhism is a religion of Peace.

Evidence is shown as is written in the Dhammapada, where the Lord Buddha said:-

“Natthi santiparam Sukham”

“There is not a more excellent happiness than Peace.” And he uttered again thus:-

“Jayam veram pasavati,

Dukkham seti parajito

Upasanto sukham seti

religion he professes, has hope of receiving happiness and joy both in present and future lives. Conversely, anyone who professes to be a Buddhist, but does not practise what he professes to be, will have very little hope of deliverance and happiness because he engenders the opposite effect. Again, Lord Buddha advises that if all beings, both human and animal, shall regard themselves as being related in the circle of birth and death, this will make for greater friendship; because, when a man feels himself to be the relation to any living

being, then he does not entertain any ideas of destroying that being, but loves and gives help instead.

Now, as much as has been said in these ten excellences of Buddhism, yet there is much more of this noble religion to be learned by anyone who is interested. I have only taken a part to illustrate how much goodness Buddhism bears for people.

Whether or not Buddhism would be able to lead the world to greater brotherhood, peace, happiness and deliverance; and whether it would be able to prevent world war,

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“Hitva jayapara jayam”

One who conquers others builds enemies.

One who is defeated does not sleep in a happy condition.

While he who abandons both thoughts of either conquest or capitulation, is peaceful and sleeps well”

At the same time that Lord Buddha advised against conquest of others, he praised the effort of conquering oneself; for he also said:-

“Yo sahasam sahasena

Sanga me manuse jine

ekanea jeyyamatta nam”

save sangmajuttamo.”

“One who conquers thousands of men in war is not regarded as a true conqueror.

But he who conquers only one man, namely himself, is regarded as a supreme victor.”

Here, conquest of oneself lies in overcoming one's own heart, of overcoming Kilesa or defilement (mind-defiling passion.) This is a truly excellent conquest, for such a person who has done this is happy even when alone, and is never dangerous or harmful in any way to others.

If the whole world were to become Buddhist this is how things would be; and I hope this human world will find peace and happiness. For this reason all the Buddhists everywhere ought to help one another to propagate the Dhamma and spread Buddhism all over the world.

10. Buddhism is the religion of Friendship.

Evidence on this point is to be found in one of the Sutras where the Buddha said that friendship was the whole basis of his teaching. Lord Buddha is the friend of all beings who may obtain deliverance through his friendship. He also said that all beings throughout the world should be regarded as friends and relations of one another in birth, old age or decay, disease or illness, and death. And that they should be regarded as friendly beings upon this single fundament. He always taught that Buddhists should never be the

enemies of the people who follow other religions or to regard them as heretics, and moreover, he said that whoever lives rightly, no matter what and be suitable as a religion for all people of the world, this I leave to be dependent upon your own consideration.

In conclusion, I beg to give my blessing. May you all obtain happiness, peace, success and deliverance.