

THE LIGHT THAT SHONE AT GAYA

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Generations of men and women who seek the Truth of life, and the wise and prudent who make an attempt to solve the unceasing problems of sorrow and suffering commemorate a remarkable event that took place in the peaceful deer-grove of Isipathana, Benares in India. Two thousand five hundred and sixty years ago in the sixth century B.C. Gauthama Buddha preached his first sermon to his five disciples on the Esala Full moon day. This was in the wake of the Thathagatha's Enlightenment that took place two months earlier, on the Full-moon day of May, at Gaya, later known as Buddha Gaya.

Prince Siddhartha, the son of King Suddhodana of Nepal having renounced all worldly pleasures, realising the untold suffering his fellow beings have to face, had practised yoga in solitude which included extreme methods of torture, pain and suffering with the aim of finding a solution to the riddle of life and death. Observing through meditation and concentrated effort that self-torture and extreme suffering could never give rise to birth of wisdom, Gautama selected the Middle Path, devoid of extreme pleasure and suffering. This brought him wisdom, and finally while meditating under the Bodhi Tree at Gaya he gained the highest Enlightenment that a human being can aspire to — the all-knowing wisdom embodying the four Noble Truths.

This unique incident of the Enlightenment is recorded in the annals of Human Civilization as the Dawn of the eternal truth. Yet it was at Benares that the great one revealed to the Devas and Brahmas headed by his five hermit disciples, that all beings possess an unceasing cycle of birth and death which can be named as Samsara, and this cycle is created and maintained by “Thrushna” or desire. This first sermon at Benares imbibes the essence of his realisation of the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold path that leads to the final salvation of man from this world of suffering.

Sir Edwin Arnold in his poetic rendering in his "Light of Asia" thus recorded this unsurpassable event of his Enlightenment.

"But, when the fourth watch came, the secret came
Of Sorrow, which with evil mars the law,
As damp and dress hold back the gold-smith's fire.
Then was the Dukkha — Satya opened him
First of the "Noble Truths"; how Sorrow is

Shadow to life, moving where life doth move"

In the "Dhamma Chakka" sermon the Lord preached to his five disciples he addressed them as follows:

"Dve - me bhikkawa an tha pabbajithena nasevithabba, yochayan Kamesu Kamasukallikanu Yogo hino gammo pothujjniko dukkho, anarie, anaththa sanhitho, Yochayam athathakilamathanu Yogo -"

This means that there are two extremes that Bhikku or Yogi who aspires to deliver himself from worldly suffering should not associate himself with, i.e. Kamasukallikanu Yogo or indulgence in extreme pleasures of life, and Athhakilamathanu Yogo or undergoing self-torture, both the extremes been ignoble and harmful. Further he revealed for the first time in the long history of mankind that acute ignorance of the world and life within makes the fellow beings blind to the Four Noble Truths that underline the entire course of existence, all suffering that follow and ultimate death.

Life, as impermanent in all its supposed to be pleasures is a chain of sorrows such as decay, disease, separation from the beloved and hence first comes the truth of suffering. Then in the light of cause and effect the cause of suffering or the Trushna becomes the Second Noble Truth. Then the fact that this cause should be annihilated to end suffering is the Third Truth. The way for the annihilation of the Cause of Suffering, is the Fourth Noble Truth.

Lord Buddha, in his great compassion towards the millions of beings suffering and groping in the Darkness of Ignorance has granted the light of wisdom for salvation in the eight-fold path that should be followed and practised for attaining the eternal bliss of Nirvana.

It is thus that 'Buddha Gaya' rendered the eternal light of wisdom to mankind in dispelling the darkness of Ignorance and Suffering. It is the bounden duty of every thinking human being to ponder wisely about one's own life and surroundings, and observe whether the reasoning and the teaching of the Blessed One render acceptable the truth and facts of life and its many secrets and riddles. It is only such independent thinking in the light of the Four Noble Truths that will bring a deep solution of one's riddles and sorrows.

May all beings be happy.

