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Transaction No. 26

**GAUTAMA BUDDHA**  
**THE INCOMPARABLE PHYSICIAN**

By

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## PREFACE

Not only in Buddhist countries but in other parts of the world as well the 2,500th Anniversary of the Supreme Attainment of Gautama, the Enlightened One, has been celebrated with enthusiasm and in a reverent spirit. Especially in India, the land of his birth, has the Anniversary brought forth wide-spread and reverent tributes to the spiritual stature of India's great Son and acknowledgment of the world's debt to His simple but profound message. It has been wrongly described as pessimistic and a philosophy of negation. He recognized the ubiquity of suffering, but if he diagnosed the world's malady he pointed also to its cause and its cure. His prescription for happiness was not only the elimination of hatred and malice, the ceasing from evil in thought, feeling and deed, but also the cultivation of compassion, noble thoughts, desires and actions, and serenity. Millions have kindled spiritual aspiration at His flame.

This Transaction is a companion one to No. 25 in the Institute's series, in which' Dr. A. N. Upadhye dealt with the Buddha's contemporary, the great Jain teacher Mahavira. and his philosophy of life.

This address on "Gautama Buddha, the Incomparable Physician" was given on May 24th at the Special Meeting with which the Institute's Buddha Week closed. The lecturer, Major-General S. L. Bhatia, I.M.S. (Retd.), an eminent physician, spoke under the chairmanship of Dr. M. V. Govindaswamy, Director of the All-India Institute of Mental Health. The Chairman commented on the truly practical injunctions of the Buddha as conducive to health of body and of mind.

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# GAUTAMA BUDDHA

## THE INCOMPARABLE PHYSICIAN

Today is Vaisakh Purnima—a sacred day in the annals of Buddhism. It was on the full moon day in the month of Vaisakh that Lord Buddha was born; it was on this day, that he achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya; and it is also the day on which he finally attained Parinirvana.

It is appropriate that on this day we should celebrate the 2,500th Anniversary of that Event. These celebrations have been going on in the Institute since the 17th of May 1956,

Buddha is deeply enshrined in the hearts of all of us. The message He gave to humanity is as universal, fresh and full of meaning today, as it was during His lifetime. He was born especially to free humanity from sorrow and suffering. He was essentially humane and full of compassion for all mankind.

Once he thus described himself:—

” Brethren, I am a Brahmin given to begging, my hands are ever pure, I am wearing my last body. Incomparable Physician and Surgeon am I." (*Iti-Vuttaka-100.*)

Incomparable Physician and Surgeon truly !

As a healer of human ailments, bodily as well as mental and spiritual, He was indeed incomparable. The fundamental emphasis in His teachings was on treating all life with respect and having compassion for all living things— doctrines which are the very foundations of the art and science of medicine.

Every great religion has a central idea, on which rests its whole philosophy of life. With Christianity it is Charity; with Hinduism, Realization; with Judaism, Law; with Zoroastrianism, Purity; with Islam, Faith; and with Buddhism, Suffering or *Dukkha*.

*Dukkha* forms the main element of Buddhism. Buddha often emphasized that He came into the world solely for the reason that He might once and for ever relieve humanity of its *Dukkha*. It is the fundamental belief and cardinal tenet of His entire system.

*What is Dukkha?* He answered:—

This, O Monks, is the Aryan Truth of *Dukkha*.

Birth is *Dukkha*; Old Age is *Dukkha*; Sickness is *Dukkha*; Death is *Dukkha*; to be united with the unloved one is *Dukkha*; not to obtain what one desire is *Dukkha*; in short the fivefold clinging to this Earth is *Dukkha*.

To appreciate fully the role of Lord Buddha as a great Physician who healed suffering and sorrow, let me recall at the outset some of the main events in his life.

He was born under the Sal tree, in Lumbini Park in the neighbourhood of Kapilavastu which is near the border of Nepal. As a token of reverence for Lord Buddha, Emperor Asoka erected here a pillar bearing the inscription— “Here was the Enlightened One born " (*Hida Bhagavam Jateti*).

At Kapilavastu resided the chiefs of the Sakya clan, amongst whom Siddhartha was born. Siddhartha's father, Suddhodana, and his mother, Maya Devi, both belonged to this clan. His father was the ruler of the place. It is said that the mother of Siddhartha died seven days after his birth, and that he was brought up by his maternal aunt, Prajapati Gautami. He spent his early years devoted to education, in ease and comfort. At the age of sixteen he was married to

Yasodhara and they had a son, whose name was Rahula. For many years he saw nothing but the beautiful and the pleasant. But there came a time when he wanted to see the world beyond the gates of the palace. This he did.

During these visits, he first saw an old man who was dressed in rags and looked extremely haggard, infirm and pitiful. Then he saw a sick man, suffering from some deadly plague, who lay on the ground moaning and complaining of severe pain. Siddhartha went and lifted him. But as he did not know what was wrong with him, he asked Channa his charioteer, who replied (*The Light of Asia*):—

Great Prince I this man  
Is smitten with some pest; his elements  
Are all confounded; in his veins the blood,  
Which ran a wholesome river, leaps and boils  
A fiery flood ; his heart, which kept good time.  
Beats like an ill-played drum-skin, quick and slow;  
His sinews slacken like a bowstring slipped;  
The strength is gone from ham, and loin, and neck,  
And all the grace and joy of manhood fled :  
This is a sick man with the fit upon him.

And then after a while he saw a lot of people wailing and crying, and a bier upon which they lay a corpse, which was subsequently cremated. Then spake the Prince:—

"Is this the end which comes  
To all who live? "  
" This is the end that comes  
To all," quoth Channa;  
    . . . Siddhartha turned  
Eyes gleaming with divine tears to the sky.  
Eyes lit with heavenly pity to the earth ; . . .  
Then cried he, while his lifted countenance  
Glowed with the burning passion of a love  
Unspeakable, the ardour of a hope  
Boundless, insatiate: Oh I suffering world;  
Oh! known and unknown of my common flesh.  
Caught in this common net of death and woe,  
And life which binds to both! I see, I feel  
The vainness of the agony of earth.  
The vainness of its joys, the mockery  
of all its best, the anguish of its worst;  
Since pleasures end in pain, and youth in age,  
And love in loss and life in hateful death.  
And death in unknown lives, which will but yoke  
Men to their wheel again to whirl the round  
Of false delights and woes that are not false.  
. . . . Channa! Lead home again I  
It is enough! Mine eyes have seen enough,"

The sight of old age, disease and death affected the young Siddhartha profoundly. This was the turning point in his life. At the age of about 29 he renounced all family ties, and retired to the forest to seek enlightenment and to find the cause of sorrow and suffering and the means of alleviating them.

After this great renunciation, he placed himself under the spiritual guidance of a number

of teachers, and ultimately enlightenment came to Him at the age of about thirty-five, under the Bodhi tree at Gaya.

When He saw that sorrow and suffering oppressed all mankind, compassion touched Him: He made up his mind to preach the great truths that He had discovered. With this object He went to Banaras, which was the centre of religious thought! at the time. It was at Sarnath, near Banaras, that He preached His first sermon.

I have visited both Gaya and Sarnath. How I wished when I was there, that Lord Buddha might appear once again and preach another sermon to mankind to end all sorrow and ill will, and to bring peace and happiness on earth! There is much need for his teachings in the world today.

He preached the Four Great Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. He collected disciples around Him and made many converts amongst who were His own father, His wife, and His son. Ananda, his constant companion, was a cousin of His. Among the many patrons and benefactors of the Buddha is the famous name of Kivaka, who was physician in ordinary to Bimbisara, King of Magadha. He was appointed by the King to attend as a physician on Buddha and his followers. Lord Buddha died in 544 B.C. at the ripe age of eighty at Kusinara.

Buddha, you will observe, was led to a life of renunciation owing to the existence of disease and death around Him. Thus the starting point of Buddhism is not dogma or belief in the supernatural, but the fact of human sorrow and suffering. Its goal is to find a refuge from the miseries of this world. He impressed on men the need of leading an intellectual and moral life of self-discipline and self-culture. He pointed to the cause as well as the remedy for all the maladies of the body and the mind. It can readily be imagined how under these circumstances the term "Incomparable Physician" is so appropriately applicable to Him ; He is a Healer, in the best and broadest sense of the word, of all our bodily and mental troubles.

He advised that men in order to be happy must get rid of all hatred and malice, all indulgence in lower desires, all lying and evil thoughts. Let them substitute good thoughts and worthy desires, feelings of charity and compassion, and be serene and composed. He showed in His own life the effects of the practice of His precepts. He taught what was practicable and reasonable, and He has exerted a mighty influence upon the human race.

His was an enquiring mind. He did not accept things as they were. He had the courage and initiative to show where things were wrong, and how to put them right. Buddha was essentially a man of action. He based his practical advice on the facts of man's existence and developed His practical philosophy by observation and minute study of human nature. Thus the Dhamma He preached concerned itself with the affairs of life as observed from day to day. This is particularly evident from the following incidents in His life, where He plays the role of a true physician.

(i) TEND THE SICK

Now at that time a certain brother was suffering from dysentery and lay where he had fallen down in his own excrements.

And the Exalted One was going His rounds of the lodgings, with the venerable Ananda in attendance, and came to the lodging of that brother.

Now the Exalted One saw that brother lying where he had fallen in his own excrements, and seeing him He went towards him, came to him and said "Brother, what ails you?"

" I have dysentery, Lord!"

“ But is there anyone taking care of you, brother? ”

“No, Lord.”

“Why is it, brother, that the brethren do not take care of you? ”

“I am useless to the brethren, Lord: therefore the brethren do not care for me.”

Then the Exalted One said to the venerable Ananda: “Go you, Ananda, and fetch water. We will wash this brother.”

"Yes, Lord," replied the venerable Ananda to the Exalted One. When he had fetched water, the Exalted One poured it out while the venerable Ananda washed that brother all over. Then the Exalted One taking him by the head and the venerable Ananda taking him by the feet, together they laid him on the bed.

Then the Exalted One, in this connection and on this occasion, gathered the Order of Brethren together, and questioned the brethren, saying:

“ Brethren, is there in such and such a lodging a brother who is sick ? ”

” There is, Lord.”

" And what ails that brother ? ”

“ Lord, that brother has dysentery.”

“ But, brethren, is there anyone taking care of him ? ”

“No, Lord.”

" Why not ? Why do not the brethren take care of him ? "

“That brother is useless to the brethren, Lord. That is why the brethren do not take care of him.”

“Brethren, ye have no mother and no father to take care of you. If ye will not take care of each other, who else, I ask, will do so? *Brethren, he who would wait on me, let him wait on the sick.* ”

“If he have a teacher, let his teacher take care of him so long as he is alive, and wait for his recovery. If he has a tutor or a lodger, a disciple or a fellow lodger or a fellow disciple, such would take care of him and await his recovery. If no one takes care of him, it shall be reckoned an offence.”

Thus you see how tenderly Lord Buddha himself nursed the sick and enjoined his followers to do the same.

#### (ii) VISITING THE SICK

Thus have I heard: Once the Exalted One was staying near Rajagaha in the Great Grove, at the Squirrels' Feeding-ground?

On that occasion the venerable Vakkali was staying in the potter's shed, being sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease.

Now the venerable Vakkali called to his attendants, saying: “Come hither, friends! Go ye to the Exalted One and, in my name worshipping at the feet of the Exalted One, say unto Him: “Lord, the brother Vakkali is sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease. He worships at the feet of the Exalted One.” And thus do ye say: “Well were it, Lord, if the Exalted One would visit brother Vakkali, out of compassion for him.”

The Exalted One consented by His silence. Thereupon the Exalted One robed Himself, and, taking bowl and robe, went to visit the venerable Vakkali.

Now the venerable Vakkali saw the Exalted One coming, while yet He was afar off, and on seeing Him he stirred upon his bed.

Then said the Exalted One to the venerable Vakkali: "Enough, Vakkali! Stir not on your bed! There are these seats made ready. I will sit there." And He sat down on a seat made ready.

So the Exalted One sat down and said to the venerable Vakkali:

"Well, Vakkali, I hope you are bearing up. I hope you are enduring. Do your pains abate and not increase? Are there signs of their abating and not increasing?"

"No, Lord, I am not bearing up. I am not enduring. Strong pains come upon me. They do not abate. There is no sign of their abating, but of their increasing."

"Have you any doubt, Vakkali? Have you any remorse?"

"Indeed, Lord, I have no little doubt, I have no little remorse."

"Have you not anything, Vakkali, wherein to reproach yourself as to morals?"

"Nay, Lord, there is nothing wherein I reproach myself as to morals."

"Then, Vakkali, if that is so, you must have some worry, you must have something you regret."

"For a long time, Lord, I have been longing to set eyes on the Exalted One, but I had no strength enough in this body to come to see the Exalted One."

"Hush, Vakkali! What is there in seeing this vile body of mine? He who seeth the Dhamma, he seeth me: he who seeth me, Vakkali, seeth the Dhamma. Verily, seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me: seeing me, one sees the Dhamma."

(And when the Master had discoursed on the impermanence of all things, He went away.)

You will note how Lord Buddha counsels the sick, not to attach any importance to the mere fact of seeing His body, but to see the Dhamma. "Seeing the Dhamma, one sees me." It is really the Dhamma which gives real consolation and satisfaction to the sick man.

### (iii) PATIENT AND NURSE

"There are five characteristics, brethren, possessed of which a sick man is hard to nurse.

"He will not take remedies, or he observes no moderation in taking remedies, or he does not follow the drugs prescribed, does not disclose the real nature of his ailment to the nurse who desires his welfare; (nor does he tell him) whether his sickness wanes or waxes or stands still: lastly, when he is impatient of his bodily feelings that arise, painful, sharp, cutting, bitter, grievous, unpleasant, life-destroying.

"Such, brethren, are the five characteristics possessed of which a sick man is hard to nurse.

"And the five characteristics (which make him easy to nurse) are the opposites of these.

"There are five characteristics, brethren, possessed of which one is of no use as a nurse. One is incapable of prescribing medicine, one does not know the proper remedies, what is good and what is bad, one administers what is unfit and does not administer what is fit; *one*

*nurses the patient out of greed and not out of charity*; one is squeamish about the removal of excrements, saliva, or vomit; one is incapable of teaching the patient from time to time with pious talk, incapable of cheering him, of stirring him, and comforting him.

“Such, brethren, are the five characteristics possessed of which one is of no use as a nurse,

“And the five characteristics (which make one a good nurse) are the opposites of these.”

These remarks apply to both Doctor and Nurse.

These fundamental truths are well known to all of us who belong to the profession of medicine. They are as much a source of guidance today as they were in Buddha’s time.

#### (iv) TYPES OF SICK MEN

“There are these three sorts of sick men, brethren, to be found in the world. What three?

(i) “Herein, brethren, a sick man, whether he obtain proper diet or not, whether he obtain proper medicine or not, whether he obtain proper nursing or not, does not recover from his sickness.

(ii) “Herein, brethren, a sick man, whether he obtain all these things or not, nevertheless recovers from his sickness.

(iii) “Herein, brethren, a sick man, though he receives not any of these things, recover from his sickness.”

These observations are also well-established truths and are appreciated by all practitioners of medicine.

#### (V) COMFORTABLE WORDS

Thus have I heard: The Exalted One was once staying among the Bhaggi, at Crocodile-Haunt in Bhesakala Grove in the Deer Park. Then the housefather Nakulapitar came to the Exalted One, saluted Him, and sat down at one side.

As he sat there, the housefather Nakulapitar addressed the Exalted One, saying: ‘Master, I am a broken-down old man, aged, far gone in years, I have reached life’s end, I am sick and always ailing. Moreover, Master, I am one to whom rarely comes the sight of the Exalted One and the worshipful brethren. Let the Exalted One cheer and comfort me, so that it be a profit and a blessing unto me for many a long day.

“True it is, true it is, housefather, that your body is weak and cumbered! For one carrying this body about, housefather, to claim but a moment’s health would be sheer foolishness. Wherefore, housefather, thus should you train yourself: *‘though my body is sick, my mind shall not be sick.’* Thus, housefather, must you train yourself!”

Then Nakulapitar, the housefather, welcomed and gladly heard the words of the Exalted One, and rising from his seat he saluted the Exalted One by the right and departed.

How wise these words: “*Though my body is sick, my mind shall not be sick*”!

The great contribution of Buddha as an “Incomparable Physician” is the compassionate and tender manner in which he attended to the needs of body and mind, of the sick, and the lofty ethical standards He laid down for the guidance of those who practice the art and science of Medicine.

Suffering is inexorably bound up with life. The word "Dukkha" translated as "Suffering" has a wide meaning. It includes every state of physical and mental distress, and is associated with diseases both of mind and of body. Buddhism attempts to find a remedy for these. In this connection I may perhaps remind you of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. They constitute the fundamental doctrines of the Buddhist faith.

The Four Noble Truths are:—

1. *Sorrow and Suffering*: These are inherent in all phenomenal life. Suffering includes all bodily and mental discomfort and pain.
2. *The Cause or Origin of Suffering*: This is ignorance and desire born of ignorance, *i.e.*, greed, infatuation with sense objects, etc.
3. *The Extinction of Suffering*: This comes from the realization that there is an escape from suffering through self-discipline.

Enraptured with lust, enraged with anger, blinded by delusion, overwhelmed, with mind ensnared, man aims at his own ruin, at other's ruin, at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences mental pain and grief. But if lust, anger and delusion are given up, man aims neither at his own ruin, nor at other's ruin, nor at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences no mental pain and grief. This is Nibbana immediate, visible in this life, attractive and comprehensible to the wise.— (*The Word of the Buddha*)

4. The noble truth of the Noble Eightfold Path that leads us step by step beyond the realms of suffering, straight to peace and refuge.

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of:—

(1) *Right understanding*: The understanding of Right Knowledge, the understanding of the impermanence of all external phenomena; right views, unprejudiced, intelligent and tolerant.

(2) *Right-mindedness*: This implies thoughts free from lust, thoughts free from ill will and thoughts free from cruelty.

(3) *Right Speech*: Truthful, honest and kindly speech. One should abstain from lying, talebearing and harsh language.

(4) *Right Behaviour or Right Action*: Peaceful and peace-bringing, upright and benevolent.

(5) *Right Living*: Any occupation that neither harms nor hinders any living being, should be followed. One's vocation should not violate the law of non-violence, harmlessness and the Unity of life beneath the diversity of all its forms. And further, only he who is free from violence is capable of right meditation.

(6) *Right Effort*: The persevering effort to control thoughts and deeds, to destroy that which is harmful or demeritorious, to cultivate that which is helpful or meritorious, to overcome ignorance and desire, and thus to progress on the Path.

(7) *Right Attentiveness*: Keen observation of life, and all personal thoughts, acts, intentions and their causes; observation of the body and the mind. Recollection of past experience, awareness of present experience and thoughtfulness as to the future.

(8) *Right Concentration*: Right concentration in its widest sense is that kind of mental concentration which is present in every wholesome state of consciousness, and is, therefore, accompanied by Right-mindedness, Right Effort, and Right Attentiveness.

These Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are capable of universal application, and to us in the medical profession they are of special significance as the effective means for alleviating both bodily and mental pain and suffering. This is the great contribution of Buddhism to the noble Art of Healing.

India is indebted to Buddhism for many things, such as architecture, sculpture, painting and engraving. It is also greatly indebted to it for science and culture, and especially for the growth of medicine. The best era of Indian medicine was contemporaneous with the growth of Buddhism. Asoka (third century B.C.) and other Buddhist Kings established public hospitals and schools of medicine attached to them. This was in accordance with the injunction of Buddha, that whosoever would wait on Him should wait on the sick. Charaka, the author of the well known *Charaka-Samhita* was the court physician of the Buddhist King Kanishka.

Nagarjuna, the well-known Buddhist Sage, infused new life into the science of Ayurveda. To his lofty intellect and wise scholarship, India owes the revised edition of *Susruta* now in use. The latter part of the treatise which bears the name *Uttaratantra* is entirely the result of Nagarjuna's independent research and thought. In the true spirit of a real Buddhist, Nagarjuna popularized the science of Ayurveda by teaching it without reserve to all classes without distinction of caste. Even now the work on Ayurveda read by beginners is the work of Vagbhata, a Buddhist.

It is not unlikely that Ayurvedic medicine influenced Greek medicine. At the time of Alexander's Indian expedition (327 B.C.) Hindu physicians and surgeons enjoyed a great reputation for superior knowledge and skill. Some writers even maintain that Aristotle, who lived about this time, got many of his ideas from the East. There is no doubt that there was close contact between India and Greece in those days, for we learn that, apart from Alexander's visit, Megasthenes was sent as an Ambassador from Greece to the court of Chandra- gupta, King of Magadha. When Asoka ascended the throne he was largely inspired by Buddha and His teachings. The original temple at Bodh-Gaya was built by Asoka. This great Monarch had contacts with the Kings of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Ceylon and other countries, where he spread the teachings of Buddha. Thus our modern medicine which is said to be the direct outgrowth of the old Greek medicine also inherits the noble teachings of Buddha the Incomparable Physician.

All sciences and arts were studied in the chief centres of Buddhist civilization, such as the great Buddhist University of Nalanda. It is said that the very bloom of the intellectual life of India, whether it found expression in Buddhist or Brahmanical works, was contemporaneous with the period in which Buddhism flourished. Buddhism spread to Ceylon, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan and other countries in South-East Asia. Wherever Buddhism entered the life of a people, it always gave it refinement and embellishment. For instance, in Japan Buddhism introduced art and medicine. For centuries there education as well as the care of the sick and the poor was in the hands of Buddhists.

Like Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Buddha left no written records. But whatever He said made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of His listeners, who passed on the teachings of the Master to their successors. His followers wrote down conscientiously what they had heard. These writings comprise the main source of inspiration for us today. His words traveled to many lands and transformed the lives of the people.

It is a remarkable fact in history, that in the sixth century B.C., there was a powerful mental ferment over the whole area between Greece on the one side and our dear land of

India and China on the other. Almost simultaneously in point of time lived Buddha and Zoroaster, Lao Tzu, Confucius, Thales and Pythagoras, Parmenides and Empedocles. Those great minds appearing in widely separated centres of civilization made a great contribution, which resulted in a leap forward in thought and a new birth of ethics. They in fact put humanity on its feet and gave it both dignity and grace.

Medicine is part of the general culture of the human race and its history is part of the general history of civilization. With the awakening of the human intellect and the revival of learning and ethics in the sixth century B.C., medicine too took a great step forward, and this was due to no small extent to the contribution of Lord Buddha, which was threefold:—

- (i) He introduced the highest ethical principles in the treatment and nursing of the sick. This he did by both personal example and precept. He condemned those who treated the sick out of greed and not out of charity.
- (ii) By introducing the method of direct observation in studying human problems, he gave a great impetus to the progress of medicine which took place in India during His time and for some centuries after Him.
- (iii) In treating a sick person, He paid equal attention to his body and his mind. . He asked the patient to train himself thus: — “Though my body is sick, my mind shall not be sick.”

There is need at the present juncture to go back to Buddha and listen attentively to His words, which still echo across the centuries, words full of wisdom, compassion and love, which will serve as a soothing balm to the sick and sorrowful humanity of today, especially in this age of Atom and Hydrogen Bombs.

Buddha had schooled Himself to strict discipline, and through that self- discipline there emerged such rare sweetness, which imprinted itself on the minds of those who come in contact with Him. Buddha is depicted through the ages seated in a calm and serene manner, gently smiling upon mankind and the world around Him. That smile, which is so full of compassion and loving kindness, will be there till the end of time. He was a man who had attained supreme happiness and who was anxious to make all others as happy as He was. In this He plays the true role of an Incomparable Physician, who is there to heal the physical as well as mental and spiritual ailments of the human race.

May I commend to you Lord Buddha's last words which He addressed to Ananda:—

“Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye places of refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one except yourselves. And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be lamps unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast to the Truth as their lamp and holding fast to the Truth as their refuge, shall look not for refuge to anyone besides themselves—it is they, Ananda, among my Bhikkhus who shall reach the very topmost height! But they must be anxious to learn.”

These noble words contain a message for all humanity and will be there to comfort and guide us for all time.

Today we honour Him and pay our sincere homage to Him, as a great religious Teacher, a great Lover of mankind, and the finest flower of the soil of India, the greatest Indian in recorded history, as our Prime Minister has said. This Incomparable Physician prescribed

effective remedies for our sorrows and sufferings, remedies which are capable of universal application.

It is my earnest prayer, that Lord Buddha may bless us all; that He may always enlighten our path with His eternal light; and that, like the true and Incomparable Physician that He was, He may continue to shower His sublime gifts of love, compassion, kindness and benevolence on the human race; and that by removing all sorrow and suffering He may promote everlasting peace and happiness on this Earth.

O Serene, O Free, thou Soul of infinite Sanctity,  
Cleanse this earth of her stains, O Merciful.

(Rabindranath Tagore)