

115th Birth Anniversary of
Pandit Dharmadhar Mahasthavir

**7TH PANDIT DHARMADHAR
MEMORIAL LECTURE**

Justice Arunabha Barua



**All India Federation of Bengali Buddhists
&
Dharmadhar Smritiraksha Samity**

50R/1A, Pandit Dharmadhar Sarani
Kolkata - 700 015

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GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA : HIS PERVASIVE HUMANISM

by

Justice Arunabha Barua
Former Judge, Calcutta High Court

27th July, 2015



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7th Pandit Dharmadhar Memorial Lecture
on
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On the Occasion of 115th Birth Anniversary of
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Published by
Dr. Sujit Kumar Barua, General Secretary
All India Federation Of Bengali Buddhists
&
Dharmadhar Smritiraksha Samity
50R/1A, Pandit Dharmadhar Sarani, Kolkata - 700 015
Printed at : Rohini Nandan, 19/2 Radhanath Mallick Lane, Kol - 12

PREFACE

Pandit Dharmadhar Mahasthavir (1901-2000) was a legendary Buddhist monk personality who shined over the sky of Indo-Bangladesh sub-continent in the greater part of 20th century. Born in a remote village of Dharmapur in Chittagong district of Bengal, now Bangladesh, in 1901 Bipin Chandra, son of Harchandra Barua, became orphan at the early age of 13. Thereafter he joined the monastic life and went to Sri Lanka for higher education in Pali and Buddhist scriptures. Having completed his education he returned to India and obtained the degree of Tripitaka Visharad from Sanskrita Shiksha Parishad. Thereafter he taught Pali and Buddhist literature at Mahamuni Pali school, Nalanda Vidyabhavan and Calcutta University. He was also adept in Jaina, Vedanta and other Indian philosophies.

The depth of Dharmadhar Mahasthavir's knowledge in Buddhism and comparative religion can be assessed from his original books, translation of important Pali texts and essays published in different journals including Nalanda of which he was the founder editor. Contemporary scholars of Bengal highly appreciated his knowledge and command over Bengali language. His recognition as a learned Pali scholar came from the President's award and gold medal from the Asiatic Society.

He was a role model to the Bhikkhu Sangha and the first Sangharaj of Bharatiya Sangharaj Bhikkhu Mahasabha. He possessed a phenomenal memory. To the laity upasakas and upasikas he was the most venerable Dharma teacher. This is specially relevant today when we are celebrating 150 years of Revival of Theravada Buddhism in Bengal.

To keep his sacred memory alive we have already taken some steps. A Dharmadhar Smritiraksha Samity was constituted under whose banner Dharmadhar Memorial Lecture is organised on the occasion of his birth

anniversary each year. Dharmadhar Welfare Trust is committed to complete the construction of Dharmadhar Satabarshiki Bhavan with generous donation from government and private sources and to undertake various welfare activities through a registered body called Dharmadhar Welfare Society. Vidarshan Shiksha Kendra founded by late venerable Prajnajyoti Mahasthvir was the last resting place and centre of activities of Pandit Dharmadhar Mahasthvir. The members of All India Federation of Bengali Buddhists are inspired by the ideals of this great monk who was the pathfinder of Bengali Buddhists in the post-Independence era. With their combined efforts this series of Dharmadhar Memorial Lectures have been organised since 2009. This Year's speaker is Justice Arunava Barua, former judge, Calcutta High Court and a man of profound wisdom. The theme of his lecture is "Goutama: The Buddha : His Pervasive Humanism:". We are grateful to him.

Kolkata
27th July 2015

Dr Brahmada Pratap Barua

Chairman, Pandit Dharmadhar Welfare Trust,
President, All India Federation of Bengali Buddhists
Dharmadhar Smritiraksha Samity
and Vidarshan Siksha Kendra

GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA : HIS PERVASIVE HUMANISM

— Justice Arunabha Barua
Former Judge, Calcutta High Court

The talking point of to-day is what the title suggests and might hopefully serve to the extent I might humbly try. So, we may begin with some great tributes from one of our greats, Rabindranath Tagore, to the greatest of the greats in our religion, **The Buddha.**

“Buddha, my Lord, my Master,
Thy birthplace is truly here
Where cruel is the world of men,
for thy mercy is to fill the blank
of their utter failure, To help them
who have lost their faith and
betrayed their trust; to forget themselves
in thee and has forgot their
malignant day”

And Tagore yet again to Him in solemn submission :

“Remove the blackness of all sins,
Victory be to thee.
Sprinkle the world with water
of everlasting life;
thou who art of the fountain of peace,
of welfare, of holiness, of love”

For His boundless sympathy, kindness and amazing, ‘wonderful love’ to all beings, another great son of our soil, *Swami Vivekananda* had said in one of his illustrious speeches that *Buddha* was the “*Greatest Humanist on Earth*”.

A *HUMANIST* is one who is, simply, all for the good and welfare for the people, for the society and for the humanity at large without even the need of orthodox religions rites and rituals, set ideas and beliefs. *A humanist is necessarily humane, that is, kind, tolerant, sympathetic as well as empathetic towards his fellow human beings having no conceit, ill-will or egos.* He is truly dedicated to *selfless service to humanity.* Humanism advocates, among others, *equality, liberty and fraternity* for all in a civilized society irrespective of their caste, creed, religion and sex. The Buddha and Buddhism stand out for all of these, individually and collectively. *The Buddha was one of the greatest Teachers of humanism, of 'Humanistic Buddhism' with His invaluable precepts and practices, codes of human conducts to follow in our daily life in order to achieve abiding peace, harmony and happiness.*

In this connexion we may mention only one very important element or characteristic, out of many, of humanistic Buddhism. And this is called *METTA* in the primary place. It is a sublime state of mind for basic *humanitarian thoughts and action.* The Pali term *METTA* essentially means and signifies - *loving kindness, generosity, goodwill, benevolence* and the sense of *universal love* towards all beings. These are so significant and extremely useful in our personal, family and social behavior. "*METTA*" essentially tenders the heart, broadens the mind, cool and composed. 'Metta' once thought and sincerely practised in our daily social life can alleviate the most common deadly vices of all times, *ANGER* ('dosa'). *Buddhist 'Metta' embraces all living beings, even animals not excluded.* Thus, the Buddha advices :

"Just as a *mother* protects her only *child* even at the risk of her own life, even so one should cultivate boundless loving - kindness towards all living beings".

At the height of Metta lies the identification of oneself with all beings making no difference between oneself and others. *The so-called "I" is lost in the whole; Ego and separatism disappear. Oneness is established.*

Together with this, one other great trait of Buddhism is '*Ahimsa*' or '*Karuna*', that is *harmlessness* or *COMPASSION.* *KARUNA* is a softness of the heart which cannot bear with the sufferings of others. Siezed with the virtue of *Karuna* or compassion, a man or woman tries his/her best to help the distressed, the victims

of atrocities, cruelty and violence perpetrated by the powerful against the poor and the helpless.

Buddhist '*METTA*' appeals to both the rich and the poor because Buddhism stoutly stands by the lowly, the needy, the destitute and the distressed irrespective of their caste and creed.

Buddhist "*COMPASSION*" forms the fundament principle for both Buddhist laymen and Bhikkhus. As is truly said that he whose mind is free from selfish desires, hatred and cruelty and is filled with the qualities of *selflessness, loving-kindness and harmlessness* is likely to be the most blessed one not only to himself but to others which in fact is the need of the hour in the vicious, strife - torn world of ours to-day. In fact, these are all *basic human qualities*, only they will have to be nourished and developed, in mind and body, in the right ways the *Buddha has untiringly shown to the humanity* for the entire world for the sake of *cessation of jealousy, hatred and ill-will* by one person against another, one community against another, one country against another which breed "*terrorism*" and escalating *mindless violence* as we unfortunately see to-day all over the world, day-in and day-out.

In this context, talking of Buddhist precepts of harmlessness and non-violence; *Aldous Huxley* writes :

"Indian pacifism finds its complete expression in the teaching of the Buddha. Buddhism teaches *ahimsa* or harmlessness towards all beings. It forbids even laymen to have anything to do with the manufacture and sale of arms, with the making of poison and intoxicants, with soldiering or the slaughtering of animals".

And it is pertinent to mention what the *Buddha* had himself advised *His disciples*, thus :

"Wherefore, *O Bhikkhus*, however men may speak concerning you, whether in season or out of season whether appropriately or inappropriately, whether

ourteously or rudely, whether wisely or foolishly, whether kindly or maliciously, us, O Bhikkhus, must you train yourself - Unsullied shall our minds remain, either shall evil words escape our lips, *Kind and compassionate ever shall we abide with hearts harbouring no ill-will*. And we shall enfold those very persons with streams of loving thoughts unfailing and we shall radiate the whole wide world with constant thoughts of loving-kindness, ample, expanding measureless, *free from enmity, free from ill-will*". (Emphasis Supplied).

Now, we may distract a-while when talking about the Buddha and His great, sublime teachings and plethora of precious advices. He gave to his disciples. And many of them, immensely enriched and benefited, became very learned, scholarly Monks themselves to *serve the Buddhist community*, in fact, to serve the *society at large* here and in several countries - imparting, sharing, disseminating, propagating and teaching the *great language of humanity the Buddha stood for Buddhism itself to serve, to sustain*.

One such great *Buddhist Monk* was PANDIT DHARMADHAR MAHASTAVIR whom we commemorate to-day in profound love, adoration and reverence.

Venerable Dharmadhar was one of the most learned of Buddhist Monks most erudite and scholarly in Buddhist language and literature. He was a teacher and writer of great eminence, sound in his knowledge of Buddhist teachings, philosophy and culture and self-less social service on the lines the greatest of Masters, the Buddha, had prescribed and propagated. A true "*Bhikkhu*", as the Buddha had wanted His disciples to become, *Pandit Dharmadhar* was pre-eminently one, in his thoughts and actions in respect of the Metta and Karuna of Buddhism as spoken to above.

Incidentally, it was my good fortune in my younger days to come across Bhante Ven Dharmadhar almost in a family-way. The reason is, my father, Late Kshirode Prosad Barua, who belonged to the West Bengal Civil Service (WBCS) and later, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS,) came close to Pandit Dharamadhar whom he invited to our Hooghly home and met Bhante here also on occasions. Both of them, like intimate friends, sometimes had pretty long discourse on Buddhism and my father, being in key administrative job in the Govt., took *Bhante's generous and*

precious advice to put into practice in humanitarian service to people, specially the helpless, homeless, poor and backward sections of the social community in distress which his job commitment had demanded. My father was reasonably well-versed in Buddhist culture and philosophy and had the opportunity to lecture on Buddhism in different functions. In some of them, I was a keen listener and small learner but I found that Pandit Dharmadhar's spiritual influence on him was remarkable.

We are all indebted to Pandit Dharmadhar Mahastavir - a wonderful person, a true humanist, ever so sober, self-less and serene, for all of us to remember and remind now and for all time to come.

Now, back to the main topic of the memorial lecture, only some of the significant observations and comments by persons of eminence may be laid down for some comprehensive understanding of the matter.

After a stupendous struggle of six strenuous years, in his 35th year, the ascetic 'Gotama', unaided and unguided by any supernatural agency, and solely relying on His own efforts and wisdom, eradicated all defilements, ended the process of grasping, and, realizing things as they truly are by His own intuitive knowledge, became a 'Buddha' -the Enlightened or Awakened One.

The Buddha was a human being. As a man He was born, as a Buddha He lived, and as a Buddha His life came to an end. He was immortal being. He became an extraordinary man because of his unique, outstanding characteristics as a human being. It is said of Him that there was no religious teacher who was '*ever so godless as the Buddha, yet none so god-like*'. *He never arrogated to Himself any divinity.*

Also, Buddha's greatness lies in the fact that He proclaimed to the world the latent possibility and invincible power of the human mind. He showed the way for our emancipation from the eternal cycle of suffering in life and death by attainment of the eternal bliss of 'Nirvana' by our own efforts without depending on an external God. He taught the world the noble ideal of selfless service.

In this context, the *DALAI LAMA*, in his extremely illuminating article "*BUDDHA DHARMA AND SOCIETY*" has said thus, in brief.

“For many centuries man has been talking about *justice, harmony and peace*. In these modern days of material abundance and stupendous advancement in science and technology it seems that the more sophisticated our lives become, the less we seem to be conscious about these high ideals. And yet, there is no doubt about the need of these, for *without them the very survival of the human society is at stake*. As followers of the Buddha Dharma, we must make our contributions towards the realization of these.

..... To achieve the three we have to be concerned about them in terms of human benefit in the long run, to be concerned about the welfare of others, not only because of their belief in humanity but it is in their self interest., There is a growing need for human understanding and a sense of universal responsibility. *The key to the achievement of all these high ideals lies in generating a good and kind heart*. For unless we develop a feeling of humaneness, we can neither hope to achieve *universal happiness nor lasting peace.*” (emphasis supplied)

.... *Buddhism* is one of the many religions which teaches us to be less selfish and more compassionate. It teaches us to be *humane, altruistic* and to *think of others in the same way we think for ourselves*. Our daily thoughts and actions should be directed towards the benefit of others. The practice of Buddhism in essence is, *not to harm others in any circumstances but to help others as much as possible*.

Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has given a great tribute to the greatest humanist, the Buddha, thus :

“In Gautama the Buddha, we have a master mind from the East second to none so far as the influence on the thought and life of the human race is concerned, and sacred to all as the founder of a religious tradition whose hold is hardly less wide and deep than any other. He belonged to the history of the world’s thought, to the general inheritance of all cultivated men, for, judged by the intellectual integrity, moral earnestness and spiritual insight, he is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in history”.

In the last leg of our discourse, we will like to take up one of the most important

aspect which is intrinsically co-related therewith - "*Buddistic Humanism*" and '*Human Right's Concepts*' of to-day, in principle and practice. We all are aware how flagrant violation of human rights has been a matter of deepest of concern in our social, political and national life all the world over.

"the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*", Preamble proclaims thus :

"Whereas recognition of the *inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights* of all members of the *Human family* is the foundation of *freedom, justice and peace in the world*".

The focal point or the primary concern of the *Human Rights Concepts* is reaffirmation of the faith in those rights which are *fundamental to the existence of every individual human being*. It proclaims the *worth and dignity of one as a human person*. It declares the *equal rights of men and women*, irrespective of their *caste, religion and nationality*. Human rights are inherent in our nature; it is a part of our self.

Buddhism, by and large, echoes the same principles on several counts on humanism and basic humanitarian concepts the Buddha, even thousands years ago, with His supreme wisdom perceived and indeed, put them to practice.

As a matter of fact, both *Buddhism and human rights concepts are near-allied*. Both speak of the existence of a human society free from hunger, pollution, violence, tyranny and oppression. Both deal with a bunch of our basic human qualities - to be mindful to the millions who suffer and this suffering is endless, the pain perennial. Both tell us about peace, harmony, good-will, universal love and fellow-feeling amongst all members of the human family.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in one of his excellent articles said that Buddha always stood for equality. He also explained to tell us that it is sometimes a misconceived notion that the only thing Buddha taught was '*Ashimsa*', that of course He taught '*Ashimsa*', which is a great doctrine but the *Buddha taught* many other things besides '*Ahimsa*'. "He taught us as a part of his religion, *social-freedom, intellectual freedom, economic freedom and political freedom*. He taught *equality, equality not between man and man only but between man and woman*. It would be difficult to

find a religious teacher to compare with Buddha whose teachings embrace *so many aspects of the social life of a people* and whose doctrine are so modern and whose main concern was to give salvation to man in his life on earth and not to promise it to him in heaven after he is dead”.

Indeed, the Buddha vehemently stood against the evils of *caste-system* that impeded the development of mankind and He was for providing *equal opportunities for all*. He declared that the gates of deliverance were open to all, in every condition of life, high or low, saint or sinner, who would care to turn a new leaf and aspire for perfection (the ‘Angulimal’ story for example). Also, in *human rights perspective*. He was the one who tried to do away with the vice of ‘*slavery*’. His great loving kindness and harmlessness prompted him to prohibit *slaughter or sacrifice of hapless animals*.

That as the issues of individual, social political and economic freedom touched the mind of the Buddha who in fact did teach about it and so about equality and others as aforesaid for individual dignity and social development, similarly, issues of equality, dignity, right to life and personal liberty and freedom from atrocities, torture or violence including domestic violence on women and children are, among others, basic human rights issues touching upon the fundamental right of a citizen guaranteed by our Constitution.

In our country, unfortunately, *indignity, inequality, atrocities and violence* perpetrated everyday on our women constitute *gross violation of human rights*. And it is for the *women* the Buddha was so *just and kind*. For example, on one occasion while the Buddha was having some talk with King *Kosala*, a messenger appeared to inform the King that a daughter was born unto him Hearing this the King was naturally displeased. But the Buddha assuredly comforted him, saying :

“A woman child, O Lord of men, may prove
Even a better offspring than a male”

Also, the *Buddha*, *unlike any other religious teacher*, *paid a glowing tribute to women* and mentioned four main characteristics that befit a woman with the saying :

“Some women are indeed better (than men)

Bring her up. Lord of men.

There are women who are wise, virtuous, who regard mother-in-law as a goddess, and who are chaste To such a noble wife may be born a valiant son, a lord of realms who would rule a Kingdom”.

Thus, to all intents and purposes, even at those very olden times, the Buddha had the moral courage, sense of justness to tell this and uphold the dignity of a woman, generally looked down upon and disgraced, truly to uphold and protect the woman's 'human right' as well.

Just as Buddha admitted “SHUDRAS” into the *Bhikshu Sangha*, He also permitted ‘Women’ to become *Bhikshunis* This establishment of the *Order of Bhikshunis* was real blessing to many of them, who were made carelessly confined in cottages and palaces. As is said, in this *Order*, queens, princesses, daughters of noble families, widows, bereaved mothers, helpless women, courtesans - all despite their caste and rank met on a common footing, could enjoy true peace and live in free atmosphere so long denied to them. Many, who otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, distinguished themselves in various ways and gained their emancipation by seeking refuge in the Order.

The world is torn apart to-day by continuous conflicts and clashes, in ideas and actions, by endless violence, by the harrows of war and terrorism. Peace and happiness are turning out to be myths, not realities.

And so this message of the Buddha in the verse of *DHAMMAPADA* :

“Victory breeds hatred,
for the conquered sleep in sorrow;
above victory or defeat
the calm man dwells in peace”.

A truly human rights activist, like a true Buddhist must believe and tell that
“Never in this World does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love and let a

man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good". Buddha's pure humanistic sense of supreme love and kindness, His divine feeling of togetherness and universal brotherhood may find this poetic appeal from the core of heart :-

"Awake ! awake ! O Sleeper of the land of shadows,
wake ! expand !
I am in You and You in me, mutual in love,
Fibres of love from man to man
Lo ! We are One ! "

This is the *ONENESS* we all desperately aspire to achieve - Unity in diversity.

Indeed, the Buddha's pervasive humanism which is essentially a part of Buddhism itself is the need of the hour. Through this, in precepts and in practice, we can contemplate a new vision of reality, fundamental changes in our thoughts, ideas, attitudes and actions, our perception of values and thus culminating in a spiritual upliftment that is so essential to sustained social progress, the development and refinement of human culture and humanism.

In that, truly speaking, the *Buddha's invaluable teachings and preachings* hold the *key to the solution*. They essentially deal with the *Man and his Mind*. It is the right mind-set, the right thought, right attitude, right work and action. It is the mind that guides us to believe what is good or evil, what is rightful or what is wrongful. Mind gives us the right track of life in search of truth and salvation. As is aptly said - "Mind is our best friend and yet the worst enemy" Buddhism shows us the right way, the discipline, the morality and purity of our human conduct which through the intense practice of Buddhist *Meditation* can bring *real peace and happiness* and lead us to the cessation of human suffering for all time to come - the attainment of NIBBANA. *Buddhism basically relates to the precious codes of conduct the Buddha had persistently prescribed for all to follow and practice* and also, specifically the practice of *PANCHASHILA* for *eternal peace and happiness for all beings on Earth* And if some message of His Dhamma must help, here is one, in vivrant verse :-

"A little more kindness, a little less creed,
A little more giving, a little less greed,

A little more smile, a little less frown,
A little less kicking a man when he's down.
A little more 'we', a little less 'I'.
A little more laugh, a little less cry.
A little more flowers on the pathway of life.
And fewer on the graves at the end of the strive".

In conclusion, we might be with our Tagore again in this scintillating heart-throb of humanism :

"Into the mouths of those
Dumb, pale and meek,
We have to infuse the language of the soul,
Into the hearts of those
Weary and worn, dry and forlorn,
We have to minstrel the language of humanity".

My sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to all of those, good souls, who have founded this beneficial Trust in the name of our great Pandit Dharmadhar Mahastavir, to all of those who had kindly thought of my humble presence and delivering the important annual Memorial Lecture of Dharmadhar Smritiraksha Samity. Thank you very much indeed - all of you, for your kind presence and participation in this august gathering.

"Bhabatu Sabbamangalam"



Justice Arunabha Barua

Justice Arunabha Barua, MA (Eng), LLB, a former Judge of the Calcutta High Court, belongs to an illustrious Bengali Buddhist family, Chittagong. His father, Late Kshirode Prasad Barua, was the first IAS (Indian Administrative Service) in the Bengali Buddhist Community with his son, Arunabha, to become the first in this community to hold the constitutional post as a High Court Judge. His maternal grand father, Late Dr. Mahima Ranjan Barua of Chittagong, a British Citizen later, was a Professor of Trinity College, Cambridge. His elder brother, Gautam Barua, a British Citizen, alumnus of the London School of Economics, is an economist.

Justice Barua, before in High Court, held several important assignments as Chief Judge, City Civil & Sessions Court, Judge, Special Court, TADA & CBI, Principal Secretary (Law), Govt. of WB. After retirement, he had been the Chairman of Appellate Tribunal, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India. Thereafter, since 2008, he has been in professional assignments in several Arbitral Tribunals and also since then, is the Chairman, Permanent Committee, Govt. of W.B. constituted under orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Justice Barua is a trained resource person in 'Gender & Law' from the reputed Warwick University of Law, UK, being nominated by the National Judicial Academy, Supreme Court of India and having official meetings and visits in U.K. with the British High Court and Supreme Court Judges. He is also now a Member of the International Council of Jurists, London, U.K.

Justice Barua is actively associated with several social, philanthropic and religious institutions of repute, and with other interests, had several occasions to excel in sports and music.

Justice Barua has several landmark judgements and illuminating articles/speeches published/screened in newspapers, television, curriculum of studies and journals on the subjects like, Buddhism, social justice, Gender&Law and human rights, in India and abroad.