

SIDDHARTHA FESTIVAL, 11TH – 13TH NOVEMBER, 2016

Talk by Suresh Baudha on the Buddha: India's Pride (translated)

The struggle, before becoming a Buddha – the struggle on the waters between a particular river between the *Shakyas* and another tribe, due to that, the Buddha decided and made the strong resolution to renounce.

This is one rare example where a prince who, instead of becoming a king, gave that up. He led a life which then led to liberation and happiness for people throughout the world.

And here it is that the lord Buddha practised for 6 years, and he began teaching the dharma to benefit not only the human realm, but also many other realms as well – non-human realms, like the realm of the gods and so forth.

Here, Suresh-ji is referring to the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings, the Vinaya (the rules) which connect with morality (shil), sutras connected with Samadhi (meditation, penance) and the Abhidhamma pitaka, connected to wisdom.

There was a lot of confusion around at the time of the Buddha, a lot of theistic thought. Due to the coming of Lord Buddha, all kinds of confusion and thought were cleared away and people began leading a life that was beneficial.

The teachings taught during Buddha's time are being followed by many people even now – and many people are able to follow these teachings to achieve peace, harmony and development of their spiritual lives.

The teachings were for all, were given to all. Amarapalli, Vaishali (north of the Ganga) and due to that, all of these centres were affected and many people entered the path of the dharma.

So Buddha had this capacity to change people's minds with his power. If you take the example of the great, violent terrorist Angulimala, who was a very deeded person – who even the armies of Prasenajith were afraid of, he was totally subdued by the power of Lord Buddha, and he became a disciple as well. This just shows the power of Buddha in his capacity to change people's minds.

Then we have the example of the great emperor Ashoka, who, if not for the Buddha, **would've gone the same course as other great kings. But due to the power of the Buddha, he completely changed his outlook and became a peaceful person and helped spread the dharma far and wide.**

He is making a heartfelt appeal to the people of India to please think back, to what it must **have bene like during Buddha's time. These times where** –places like Rajgir, Nalanda, Bodh Gaya – these places were fresh, monuments were there, people were coming for pilgrimages

and people were much more Buddhist in their outlook. Please think back to that time when Buddhism was flourishing.

So partly due to Ashoka, Buddhism went abroad – his son and daughter played a great role in this – it spread into South East Asia, Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka and so forth. Of course, the Nalanda University played a great role in this process with scholars like Nagarjuna, Bodhidharma, Padmasambhava and so on.

So of course, at a certain point, Buddhism finished in India – and one reason for this is the lack of a good sangha, and a lack of scholarly monastics to carry on this tradition.

Due to the teaching of the Buddha spreading far and wide, spreading abroad and spreading happiness and peace – the wisdom teachings – so many people were helped. This civilization of India, due to that, is called a wisdom culture – a wisdom-based civilization that has helped people all over the world.

So the Buddha taught everyone, and he taught people how to live. Quoting a Pali verse which relates to how to care for your mother and father, how to care for your relations, and how to serve people. This and the eightfold path, and many other teachings are involved with the social and economic, and also in terms of good governance – all these are there, taught by Lord Buddha.

A great many scholars, so many kings, so many saints kept this *parampara* – this tradition alive for so many centuries.

We owe so much to Anagarika Dharmapala who came here in the last years of the 19th and the early 20th century, helped to revive Bodh Gaya and Buddhism – to remind us Indians of the greatness of our tradition.

So whatever may have been the misdemeanours of the British in India, we do owe them a great debt of gratitude for having uncovered and restored to their pristine glory the pilgrimage places of Buddhism, and to others who are responsible for restoring the glory and the Buddhist culture, helping the revival of it in India.

Then we have the tremendous contributions of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the first law minister of India, who tried to understand Buddhism and especially its economic and social aspects from the perspective of compassion and Bodhichita, to help revive Buddhism in India especially for the downtrodden, and the untouchables of India.

He is thanking the people from abroad, especially the Tibetan masters for having exported Buddhism from here – keeping it, preserving it, nourishing it and then bringing it back to the land of its birth, India – we have an incredible debt of gratitude to these masters. He is expressing his heartfelt gratitude towards them for that, and hoping that due to the blessings and teachings of these great masters, we may be able to revive Buddhism in India.

So this is an appeal to Indian brothers and sisters. Now we really need to import the dharma back into the land of its birth. He feels we are ready here in India, but we need your help – we **don't need much hardware, we only need Buddhist software, and we are ready for that. So please, help us.**

Just like a car company (Mahindra), if it stops car production, it is finished. In the same way, in India, we need to make sure that the Buddhist Company continues its production of scholarly people so that nirvana, enlightenment and wisdom need to be continually produced in the factories of India. Otherwise, what's the point? We might just be finished.

He is saying that he never thought he'd have the opportunity in his life to share his feelings in this way, his thoughts in front of such an illustrious assembly of gurus and so forth, under the Bodhi tree in this holy place. He has that opportunity, and he offers his heartfelt thanks in this place where even one leaf of this Bodhi tree is worth so many Taj Mahals. You've given me the opportunity to say what I wanted to, and many thanks to the Bodh Gaya temple management community, to Rinpoche and to all the people involved in this program.

All of us from different places, different colours, different faces – we are united here with the Buddha mind. We are all unified here in this place due to the blessings of Lord Buddha – so that is the reality of our situation here and for this, Suresh-ji is deeply grateful and thankful.

He is saying that he comes from Sankhisa, one of the lesser known pilgrimage places where Lord Buddha descended after teaching his mother in heaven. He says that if you come there, you can go to heaven the same way the Buddha came down.

He gives his thanks to all of you.