

# Buddha's message

SUKOMAL BARUA

Today is the Holy Buddha Purnima, the most sacred and most significant day for Buddhists all over the world. On this happy day the Buddha was born at the Lumbini Garden in 624 BC, attained Enlightenment under the Bo-tree at Gaya in 589 BC, and passed into Mahaparnibbana at Kushinara in 544 BC. The three-sacred events of Buddha Purnima are of great significance to the people of the world. It is observed all as the most blessed day with peace, happiness, universal love and purity.

The Buddha, whose name was Siddhartha Goutama, lived in northern India in the 6th century B.C. His father, Suddhodhana, was the ruler of the kingdom of the Sakyas (in modern Nepal). His mother was queen Mahamaya. According to the custom of the time, he was married at the age of sixteen to a beautiful and devoted young princess named Yasodhara.

The young prince lived in his palace with every luxury at his command. But all of a sudden, confronted with the reality of life and the suffering of mankind, he decided to find the solution -- the way out of this universal suffering. At the age of 29, soon after the birth of his only child, Rahula, he left his kingdom and became an ascetic in search of the true solution of the suffering of mankind.

For six years the ascetic Goutama wandered about the valley of the Ganges, meeting famous religious teachers, studying and following their systems and methods, and submitting to rigorous ascetic practices. But that did not satisfy him. So he abandoned all traditional religious practices and their methods and went his own way. It was thus

that one evening, seated under a Bo-tree on the bank of the river Neranjana at Gaya, at the age 35, Goutama attained Enlightenment, after which he became known as the Buddha "The Enlightened One."

After his Enlightenment, Goutama the Buddha delivered his first sermon to a group of five ascetics, his old colleagues, in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. The sermon was: "Go ye O Bhikkhus, for the gain of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of men. Proclaim O Bhikkhus the doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness perfection and purification."

From that day, for 45 years, the Buddha taught all classes of men and women -- kings and peasants, brahmins and outcasts, bankers and beggars, holy men and robbers -- without making the slightest distinction between them. He recognised no differences of caste or social groupings, and the way he preached was open to all men and women who were ready to understand. At the age of 80, the Buddha passed away at Kushinara.

The Buddha was neither the son of God nor the God-sent Avatara and Super-Powered Debata but, being a son of Man, he rebelled against the teaching of Brahmanism. Thus, he compels nobody to believe in God or gods, nor does he prevent anybody from doing so. Buddha encouraged men to think independently, so it has never been the habit of the Buddhist to force, or desire to force, his convictions on those of other faiths.

Buddhist teachings were very practical and derived examples from life. They showed man's practical and moral life without the prevailing practice of rituals and ceremonies. The emphasis was on the character of men, all of whom



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were, according to him, capable of attaining Buddha-hood only by their individual moral practices. No one can pave the way for the other.

Accordingly, no priest or the like was necessary here, God had no room in his Dhamma -- the causal chain, the Conditioned Genesis and the Law of Dependent Origination. This is a fundamental principal of his teachings: "When this arises that comes into being: When this ceases that does not come, man is in a state of becoming and there is a continuity of individuality."

Buddha says man is motivated to

act out of greed, which consists of the desire to gratify his senses and sex as well as the desire to gratify his egoistic impulses. He is also motivated to act out of hatred, which consists of the desire to destroy or eliminate what he dislikes and also out of erroneous beliefs.

The Four Noble Truths are the kernel of the Buddha's teachings. He said: "Blind to the Fourfold Aryan Truths of things, and blind to see things as they really are."

Buddha's teachings condemn not only killing but also hatred and violence, which lead to the destruc-

tion of life -- human or any other living being. "A feeling of infinite tenderness for all living beings one must cultivate in the consciousness and in the heart the feeling with which a mother defends with her life her son. All living beings are my offspring and I am the child of all," Buddha said.

Buddhism promotes the practice of Five Precepts (Pancasila) -- not to kill, not to steal, not to indulge in unlawful sex, not to tell lies and not to take intoxicating substances. It also teaches the moral values taught by Buddha, which help to abstain

from torture, adultery, trafficking, raping and robbing women and children, falsehood, slaughtering and violence, and peace, happiness and harmony etc. can be established in the moribund society.

Besides, in Buddha's universal theory Brahnavihara, the Four Components -- maitree (loving kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy) and upekkha (indifference) -- can drive away all the defilements, misunderstandings, fundamentalism and unwholesome activities from the society. If human society can adopt these virtues and qualities, then the world can be the kingdom of heaven for all beings.

Buddhism says: "There is a path to peace. Hatred never ceases by hatred; overcome hatred by love and compassion. This is the way of universal peace. Those who love me should show it by loving all. Conquer greed; thereby one becomes the unconquerable victor. Every man loves liberty and freedom. Don't interfere with another's freedom."

Therefore, at this crucial hour in the history of mankind, we consider it necessary to remind all people about the concepts of Panchashila and Brahnavihara, which are very essential at this moment. They are needed so that we can progress towards this ideal and not regress, so that we go forward together as brothers and sisters for the sake of peace and wellbeing in the universe, without being selfish and taking sides against one another. Let us follow the Buddha's universal teachings for making a heavenly world. *Sabbe Satta Sukhita Hontu* (may all beings be happy).

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The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

## What the Libyan resistance needs

MAHMOUD GEBRIL ELWARFALLY

In late February, as the Libyan opposition gained strength, the regime of Col. Muammar Gadhafi predicted there would be "rivers of blood" and "hundreds of thousands of dead" because of the uprising.

At the time, little stood between him and this chilling threat. But thanks to decisive action from US and the international community, the pulse of freedom still beats strong in opposition-controlled areas of Libya.

Even while fighting for our lives, we have begun to put the building blocks in place for a free society. The interim government, the Transitional National Council, has managed to fight a war, keep the lights on and reopen the schools.

The people of Benghazi, the base of our struggle, are participating in traffic control and trash collection, and creating newspapers and radio stations that reflect the new spirit of tolerance and freedom. Policies are debated passionately in open forums. All of this would have been unthinkable three months ago.

The council's 31 members -- lawyers, human rights advocates, former military officers and business owners -- come from all regions of Libya. Many, like me, were educated in US. In our march to freedom, we are strengthened by a belief in peace, justice and equality. The dark days of Gadhafi's rule have taught us that a free and democratic society based on a fair and transparent justice system is the only way forward.

We will work to ensure that the peaceful transfer of power occurs through ballot boxes and legal institutions. The bedrock of our state will be a constitution written by the Libyan people and endorsed in a public referendum.

The lives of too many innocent Libyans have already been lost. The council unequivocally condemns the

killing of noncombatant Gadhafi loyalists. When the fighting stops, we will be faced with the difficult task of healing a nation traumatized by decades of violence. The council will not only create institutions based on the rule of law, but also begin a reconciliation process to unify Libyans on both sides of this conflict.

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defeated and the key institutions of a new government must be created. For this we will need more help. During my visit to Washington this week, we are asking the Obama administration and Congress to do the following:

Intensify Nato operations: Nato saved our lives, but many Libyans remain in danger. With United States' help, Nato needs to maintain the tempo of its actions and provide more support to protect civilians.

Even though the opposition just succeeded in taking back the airport in Misurata, for example, Gadhafi's forces continue to attack civilians and try to prevent the flow of aid into the city.

Officially recognise the Council: We ask US to join France, Gambia,

Italy and Qatar in recognising the Council as the sole legitimate representative of the Libyan people until free elections can be held.

This signal would further isolate the Gadhafi regime in Tripoli, heighten opposition morale and improve access to diplomatic and humanitarian assistance.

Accelerate access to frozen Libyan assets: In February, US froze \$33 billion in assets that the Gadhafi regime had moved outside Libya. In Rome last week, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton committed to releasing frozen funds or devising an alternative financing plan; this needs to happen expeditiously.

Whether through loans, trust funds or other mechanisms, we desperately need this money to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance, and to begin rebuilding Libya.

Sustain humanitarian aid: The impressive American and international response helped avert an even greater humanitarian crisis. With thousands of displaced persons and widespread destruction, the need for assistance grows.

We know it is our fight to win or lose, but there is also much at stake for the international community. If the Libyan revolution stalls or is defeated, a vindictive or resurgent Gadhafi and his regime will present the world with a greater danger than even Osama bin Laden. The faster the regime comes to an end, the better it will be for Libya and the safer it will be for the world.

Mahmoud Gebril ElWarfally, interim prime minister of the Transitional National Council of the Libyan Republic, is the author of "Imagery and Ideology in U.S. Policy Toward Libya, 1969-1982."

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## Amending the Constitution

A.B.M.S. ZAHUR

The people of Bangladesh sacrificed a lot to attain independence in 1971.

They had the vision to establish a secular democratic country. Their dreams were shattered in less than four years of independence with the assassination of Bangabandhu. After the death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the country was run by military dictators. Democracy returned to Bangladesh in 1990 and its still continuing (with a break for 2 years).

Due to political pressure the then BNP government brought the 13th amendment to the Constitution to introduce a non-party undemocratic system known as caretaker government (CTG) for conducting nation election on completion of the term of the incumbent government. In introducing the system it was thought that it would wither away after a few elections under it. In reality, it could not bring any change of attitude of our major political parties. As such, we are now grappling with the issue of CTG.

The Chief Justice of Bangladesh is retiring on May 17, i.e. within less than four days the Supreme Court will decide on three constitutional amendments: (a) 13th amendment; (b) 5th amendment; and (c) 7th amendment. The Supreme Court gave verdict on abolition of CTG. Considering the people's and the state's security, peace and discipline it observed that for maintaining continuity the 10th and 11th national elections may be held under CTG.

Regarding appointment of head of CTG the retiring chief justice or any justice of the Appellate Division may be considered if the parliament amends the constitution through reforming CTG.

The court judgment, inter alia, states that the 13th amendment has to be nullified in consideration of the fact that the provision clashes with the constitution. Even though the provision is not legal it is given validity in consideration of the greater interest of the people and the state.

Due to people's uprising against Gen. Ershad's regime the then military government fell, and the 5th national election was held in 1991 under a sort of CTG. At that time there was no provision for

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CTG in the constitution. Later on, the then BNP government, by amending Articles 58(b), 58(c), 58(d) and 58(e) of the Constitution, introduced the system of CTG in February 1996. This amendment is the 13th amendment.

Subsequently, three Supreme Court lawyers filed a writ petition against the 13th amendment in October 1999. Due to appointment of one as justice of the High

Court and death of another lawyer Mr. Md. Abdul Mannan has been considered as the appellant. On August 24, 2004 the High Court declared the 13th amendment as valid and allowed appeal against the verdict directly. The Appellate Division hearing continued from March 1 to April 6, 2011.

The introduction of the system of CTG was made because of the pressure of the then opposition party. The system was to act as a palliative for unhappy parties of position and opposition. It appears that objective was not attained. It failed to generate trust and confidence amongst the major political parties.

The verdict of the Supreme Court resulted in different views. We see that the Supreme Court aimed at considering various problems relating to working of the parliament, which is not operating properly due to lack of understanding between the government and the opposition.

Though the opposition has rejected the judgment outright because of some self-contradictions and confusion in the judgment, we may consider its acceptance because of our existing political scenario. For smooth progress of democracy mere repairing of the damage to the constitution may not bring significant benefit to the people. What is needed is a clear realisation by major political parties that democracy is possible if leading politicians of major political parties concentrate more on the need of the people and less on their parties' interest. We may welcome the judgment of the Supreme Court nullifying the CTG.

The writer is a former Joint Secretary