

7 BUDDHA

1. Shakyamuni came not to destroy, but he was the fulfilment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus.

2. I would like to see moral men like Gautama Buddha, who did not believe in a Personal God or a personal soul, never asked about them, but was a perfect agnostic, and yet was ready to lay down his life for anyone, and worked all his life for the good of all, and thought only for the good of all. Well has it been said by his biographer, in describing his birth, that he was born for the good of the many, as a blessing to the many. He did not go to the forest to meditate for his own salvation; he felt that the world was burning, and that he must find a way out 'Why is there so much misery in the world?'-was the one question that dominated his whole life. .

3. Buddha was a great Vedantist for Buddhism was really only an offshoot of Vedanta, and Shankara is often called a "hidden Buddhist".... Buddha never bowed down to anything, neither Veda, nor caste, nor priest, nor custom. He fearlessly reasoned so far as reason could take him. Such a fearless search for truth and such love for every living thing the world has never seen.

4. What was in this country before Buddha's advent? Only a number of religious principles recorded on bundles of palm leaves-and those too known only to a few. It was Lord Buddha who brought them down to the practical field, and showed how to apply them in the everyday life of the people. In a sense, he was the living embodiment of true Vedanta.

5. To help the suffering world was the gigantic task to which Buddha gave prominence, brushing aside for the time being almost all other phases of religion; yet he had to spend years in self-searching, to realise the great truth of the utter hollowness of clinging to a selfish individuality. A more unselfish and untiring worker is beyond our sanguine imagination, yet, who had harder struggles to realise the meaning of things, than he? It holds good in all times that the greater the work, the more must have been the power of realisation behind.

6. Listen to Buddha's message-a tremendous message. It has a place in our heart. Says Buddha: "Root out selfishness, and everything that makes you selfish. Have neither wife, child, nor family. Be not of the world; become perfectly unselfish." A worldly man thinks he will be unselfish, but when he looks at the face of his wife it makes him selfish. The mother thinks she will be perfectly unselfish, but she looks at her baby, and immediately selfishness comes. So with everything in this world. As soon as selfish desires arise, as soon as some selfish pursuit is followed, immediately the whole man, the real man, is gone: he is like a brute, he is a slave, he forgets his fellow men. No more does he say, "You first and I afterwards, but it is "I first and let every one else look out for himself.

7. Buddha is the only prophet who said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and

be good And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is.

8. Buddha was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from your childhood; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then, if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it".

9. There were other great men, who all said they were the Incarnations of God Himself, and that those who would believe in them would go to heaven. But what did Buddha say with his dying breath? "None can help you; help yourself; work out your own salvation.

10. He said about himself, "Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky; I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will reach that too if you struggle for it".

11. Bereft of all motive power, Buddha did not want to go to heaven, did not want money; he gave up his throne and everything else, and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals with a heart as wide as the ocean. He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals, to stop a sacrifice. He once said to a king, "If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better, so sacrifice me." The king was astonished.

12. To many the path becomes easier, if they believe in God. But the life of Buddha shows that even a man who does not believe in God" has no metaphysics, belongs to no sect, and does not go to any church, or temple, and is a confessed materialist, even he can attain to the highest. We have no right to judge him. I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha's heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others come by Bhakti-love of God, Yoga, or Jnana.

13. He alone can be religious who dares say, as the mighty Buddha once said under the Bo-tree.... When the temptation came to him to give up his search after truth, to go back to the world and live the old life of fraud, calling things by wrong names, telling lies to oneself and to everybody, he, the giant, conquered it and said, "Death is better than a vegetating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battlefield than to live a life of defeat".

14. It was the Great Buddha, who never cared for the dualist gods, and who has been called an atheist and materialist, who yet was ready to give up his body for a poor goat. That Man set in motion the highest moral ideas any nation can have. Wherever there is a moral code, it is a ray of light from that Man.

15. Buddha was one of the Sannyasins of the Vedanta. He started a new sect, just as others are started even today. The ideas which now are called Buddhism were not his. They were much more ancient. He was a great man who gave the ideas power. The unique element in Buddhism was its social element.

16. Buddha was more brave and sincere than any teacher. He said: "Believe no book; the Vedas are all humbug. If they agree with me, so much the better for the books. I am the greatest book; sacrifice and prayer are useless." Buddha was the first human being to give to the world a complete system of morality. He was good for good's sake, he loved for lovers sake.

17. What Buddha did was to break wide open the gates of that very religion which was confined in the Upanishads to a particular caste. What special greatness does his theory of Nirvana confer on him? His greatness lies in his unrivalled sympathy. The high orders of Samadhi etc. that lend gravity to his religion, are almost all there in the Vedas; what are absent there are his intellect and heart, which have never since been paralleled throughout the history of the world.