

Vishwa Shanti Stupa

Speech of His Excellency Shri Murlidhar C. Bhandare, Governor of Orissa on the Occasion of the Inauguration and Dedication Ceremony of Vishwa Shanti Stupa, New Delhi on 14.11.2007

I feel honoured for the opportunity given to me to be with you all on this auspicious occasion of the inauguration and dedication of Vishwa Shanti Stupa here at New Delhi. While paying my obeisance to Lord Bhudha and rich tribute to Nichidatsu Fujii fondly called as Fujii Guruji, I convey my greetings and good wishes to all on this momentous occasion. The dedication of Shanti Stupa coincides with the celebration of 60 years of India's independence and also 50 years of Indo-Japan friendship. The Shanti Stupa built here is the latest monument in addition to the existing number of Shanti Stupas already erected in India at places like Rajgir, Vaishali, Darjeeling, Wardha and Kalinga, the State of Orissa from which I came was known earlier. I have already visited Kalinga Shanti Stupa on the top of Dhauli Hill on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar and experienced the eternal peace.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Shanti Stupa Society and the disciples of Fujii Guruji for their consistent effort and contribution to the building of peace not only in India but also through out the World. It has been dedicatedly working for the preservation, promotion and propagation of Bhudha's preaching to build a better world to live in. Fuji Guruji was greatly impressed by the principle of peace and non-violence of Gandhiji and became his life long admirer.

I feel proud to have come from the land where Emperor Ashoka became Dharmasoka from Chandasoka seeing the senseless bloodshed in the famous Kalinga War which was fought in the name expanding territory and meaningless power. The dramatic conversion of Ashoka at the battle ground led him to embrace Buddhism and went on to become one of the most fervent Buddhist emperors promoting peace and tolerance not only among his subjects but also in neighbouring territories. Today his legacy continues in South Asia, China, Korea and Japan, as Buddhism continues to expand beyond national boundary bringing humans closer with its message of non-violence and peace.

The dedication of Shanti Stupa in New Delhi is another addition to the monumental journey that began with Emperor Ashoka who built number of stupas in India and abroad. The Shanti Stupa in the Delhi is the realisation of the dream of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Fujii Guruji and it will definitely add to glory and attraction of the city and will provide a serene environment.

The august audience is well aware of the life and works of Gautam Budha. He was the one who had attained Nirvana at the age of 35 through persistent efforts and came to be known as Budha, the Tathagata, the perfectly Enlightened one. This transformation is acknowledged as one of the biggest events to have occurred in the world of humanity. Though he lived and preached in India, Gautam like other prophets belongs to the whole world and his message is truly universal. The world today needs his message of love, tolerance and universal peace more than ever before.

The personality of Lord Budha and the methods adopted by him to preach his message helped the spread of Buddhism. He tried to fight an evil by goodness and hatred by love. He always maintained poise and remained calm whatever may be the situation and handled it with compassion and presence of mind. Let me cite a simple incident. It is said that on one occasion an ignorant person abused him. The Budha listened on silently and when the person stopped abusing, the Budha asked "My son, if a person does not accept a present what will happen to it". His adversary replied "it remains with the person who has offered it". The Budha then said "my son, I do not accept your abuse".

What touches me most is that the Budha said in clearest possible words that he was no more than a guide or a teacher and that the duty to act or to follow the specified path necessarily devolved upon every individual. He used to tell everyone to be a lamp unto himself so that in the midst of enveloping darkness one has to find one's way with the help of the lamp of reason.

Lord Budha said, desire is the root cause of all sorrows and it must be given up. Whether it is the Budha's Panchasheela or Eightfold Path or Paramita Sutras of ten transcendental virtues, all teach excellent code of morals to lead life in a clean and pure path to attain peace. Buddhism means casteless society based on equal rights. It lays

no emphasis on the attainment of heaven, nor is it necessary. To be happy in the present life, one should practice the ethics of morality, non-violence, equality and universal brotherhood. This is the eternal truth taught by the Budha.

The Stupa, the most characteristic of all Budhist monuments reminds us of the Tathagata and his teachings, which are so relevant even today. The Shanti Stupa is a symbol and reminder of the potential of awakening within each of us of Budha's great teachings.

Lastly, I wish the Shanti Stupa Society all success in promoting the ideals of love, kindness and tolerance, which are much needed qualities for the survival of the humanity today. May the glorious and melodious sound of Ahimsa continue to reverberate in this world and continue to remind all of us of Lord Budha's preachings. Let Lord Budha's blessings guide us to the path of peace, love and tolerance. May I conclude with these noble words.

Budham Saranam Gachami
Dharmam Saranam Gachami
Sangham Saranam Gachami

Jai Hind