



**SPEECH MADE
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY
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PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA
AT THE CEREMONIAL
OPENING OF THE
14TH GENERAL
CONFERENCE OF
THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP
OF BUDDHISTS
ON AUGUST 2ND, 1984**

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The World Fellowship of Buddhists was founded in 1950. I was present at the first meeting held in Colombo and as a member of the Government of Sri Lanka rendered such help as was necessary.

We remember today all those, Sri Lankans and others who helped to inaugurate this noble venture. I am sure no one will object if I specially mention the name of the late Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, one of the great pioneers of this movement. We remember him with affection and gratitude.

There are 350 delegates from 34 countries present with us today. I welcome all of you to the land of Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhism, to which the majority of the Sinhalese people have been faithful for twenty-five centuries. They have been so since the day the Arahata Mahinda, son of the Emperor Asoka, on the hill of Mihintale converted Sri Lanka's

Monarch, Court and People to take refuge in the Triple Gem, (the Trividha Ratna); the Buddha ; the Dhamma and the Sangha.

It was the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang in 600 A.D. unable to cross over to Sri Lanka from a Port in Western India owing to a revolution here, lamented his inability to visit, "Sri Lanka the Holy Land, centre of the Theravada Sasana, without a knowledge of whose books one cannot obtain a true knowledge of Buddhism".

The followers of Mahayana and Theravada accept in common many tenets of the Buddha Word.

They take refuge in the Triple Gem.

They accept the three characteristics of Phenomena ; Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta.

They believe in the Four Noble Truths (Chaturarya Satya). Dukkha, the cause of Dukkha, the Elimination of Dukkha, and the Way of Elimination.

They try to follow the Noble Eightfold Path (the Arya Astanga Marga).

I inquired from one of the best known scholars and students of Mahayana, Dr. Suzuki, when I met him in Tokyo in 1951 about the difference between the

two and he said "why worry about the differences. Consider where they agree" and he mentioned what I have just stated.

Modern physicists, as a result of their experiments and research conclusions, are coming close to acceptance of the Buddha's explanation of phenomena.

Based on these Truths the Buddha advised humans to so behave that the endless journey of Birth and Death in Samsara ceases, and Nibbana is attained. Nibbana he said is Alobha, Adosa, Amoha ; the eradication of Lobha (Greed), Dosa (Hatred), Moha (Ignorance).

That is the goal of all Buddhists and the only Way to attain that State is to follow the Eightfold Path of Seela, Samadhi, Pragna ; to live according to the moral code preached by the Buddha (Seela) ; to practise Meditation outlined in the Sati-Patthana Sutra (Samadhi) ; and the attainment through Meditation of Wisdom beyond the Mundane (Pragna).

"Perhaps never while the World has lasted", a Buddhist Scholar of repute has written, "has there been a personality who has wielded such a tremendous influence over the thinking of humanity. And who so recognises this will also recognise that almost two and a half millenniums ago the Supreme

Summit of spiritual development was reached, and that at that distant time in the quiet hermit groves along the Ganges already had been thought the highest man can think”.

If each one of us tries in his humble way to practise what the Buddha preached and what the World Fellowship of Buddhists seeks to persuade us to do, to follow in the footsteps of the Buddha, Peace will prevail among us, in our Lands and in the World.

REFERENCE

