

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE DHARMA CHAKRA DAY CELEBRATION
ORGANIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST
CONFEDERATION**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, July 24, 2021

I am very happy to participate in this celebration of Asadh Purnima, which is observed as Dharma Chakra Day. I had the good fortune of planting a sapling from the Holy Bodhi Tree in the Rashtrapati Bhavan premises today. Earlier too, in November 2017, I had obtained a sapling from the Mahabodhi Tree and planted it in a garden at Rashtrapati Bhavan. That six-inch sapling now stands six feet tall. The sapling I planted today will also grow to become a tree. These trees will remain in Rashtrapati Bhavan as lasting symbols of the Buddha's expansive and compassionate worldview.

I heard the chanting of the Mangalgatha while planting the sapling. That invocation for the blessings of the Buddha has a very reassuring refrain which says, "तं तेजसा भवतु ते जय मंगलानि". It means, 'Through that power of the Buddha may there be auspicious victories for you.' The world needs the power of the Buddha in the form of love, compassion, non-violence and healing to conquer the forces of violence, disease, conflict and poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to note that today's event is also being held at the Mulgandha Kuti Vihara, the holy site of Buddha's first teaching, the Dharma Chakra Pravartana Sutra.

I commend the initiative of the International Buddhist Confederation for organising this event today. I appreciate the efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism led by Mr. G. Kishan Reddy for supporting this global event. I have been told that the Mahabodhi Society of India and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also partners in the

efforts for celebrating this day internationally. They deserve special praise for their contribution to this major event.

I believe that the appeal of Buddhism goes much beyond the nearly 550 million formally ordained followers of the faith. People belonging to other faiths, and even sceptics and atheists feel attracted to the teachings of the Buddha. This universal and eternal appeal of Buddhism is due to its logical, rational and simple answers to the fundamental problems faced by human beings across time and place. The Buddha's assurance of putting an end to suffering; his emphasis on universal compassion and non-violence; his message to pursue morality and moderation in all aspects of life, have inspired countless people over the last 2600 years since his first sermon at Sarnath on this very day.

The Buddha's well documented life contains invaluable messages for humanity. He commanded great trust and respect even among his critics and opponents. They would become his followers. He had acquired this spiritual power because he remained steadfast in his adherence to the truth.

In this virtual gathering of practicing Buddhists, everyone is aware of the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Pancha-sheel, the Three Pitakas, the Three Gems and the Three Shelters. Most of you are also aware of the major sermons by the Buddha, starting with his first sermon at Sarnath and culminating in the last at Vaishali.

It is important to stick to the essence of the teachings of the Buddha and not get lost in several different interpretations and variations of it. In this context, the objectives of the International Buddhist Confederation are laudable. I am told that the governing theme of IBC is, "Collective Wisdom, United Voice." Your effort in providing a common platform for all Buddhist traditions and organisations to serve humanity is praiseworthy. Application of Buddhist values and principles in addressing issues of global concern will help in healing the world and making it a better place.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I feel proud in performing my duty to preserve, protect and defend a Constitution which is substantially based upon Buddhist values. I am proud to share with this virtual gathering that behind the seat of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the popularly elected house of the Indian Parliament, are displayed the words 'Dharma Chakra Pravartanaya.' This visible reminder of the ideals of the 'Dharma Chakra Pravartana Sutra' inspires our Members of Parliament to follow the spirit of the first sermon of the Buddha. The 'Dharma Chakra' is depicted at the centre of our National Flag. India's National Emblem is also taken from the Sarnath lion capital of the Ashokan pillar. It can be said that the national symbols of the Republic of India always remind everyone of the Buddha's 'Dharma Chakra Pravartana Sutra' at Sarnath.

The chief architect of the Constitution of India, Babasahab Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar ensured that the Buddhist principles of equality, justice, fraternity, peace and harmony found expression in the governance of the Republic of India. As we know, Babasahab was an authority on the life and teachings of the Buddha.

Dear friends,

Reeling under the impact of COVID-19, the world, more than ever before, needs the healing touch of compassion, kindness and selflessness. These universal values propagated by Buddhism need to be adopted by all in their thoughts and actions.

I hope today's world gets inspired by the Buddha's infinite compassion and resolves to overcome all sources of human suffering. I pray that human society follows the ideals of the Buddha and works to make our planet a more hospitable habitat.

I convey my warm greetings to all of you on this very auspicious occasion.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!