

**1. (One whose mind is calm and still,
Speaks with peace, acts with goodwill.
With wisdom bright and freedom true,
That one is serenity itself.)**

(Dhammapada)

**2. (Like a deep and silent lake
Still and pure like crystal waters.
The wise one hears the Dharma's truth.
A pure mind is a peaceful mind.)**

(Dhammapada)

ADIDA PAGODA

The Light of Compassion and the Awakening of Humanity

Author: Thich Chuc Xuan | Published on: April 24, 2025 | Views:.....

(Vesak is not merely a religious ceremony but also an occasion to remember and apply the humanistic values that Shakyamuni Buddha has left for humanity.

From His journey to enlightenment, this message evokes awareness and compassion and encourages each individual to become a light that illuminates oneself and the world.

Core values such as compassion, wisdom, and equality remain timeless in modern life, guiding people toward inner peace and inspiring a society rooted in harmony, justice, and love.)

(THE LIGHT OF COMPASSION AND THE AWAKENING OF HUMANITY)

On the Occasion of the United Nations Day of Vesak in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Introduction

Namo Shakyamuni Buddha

In today's world, amidst the turbulence of wars, pandemics, climate change, and deep spiritual crises, humanity yearns for a light of compassion and awakening to illuminate the path, helping us transcend ignorance and suffering.

The Vesak Day, officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 as a global spiritual and cultural celebration, is a sacred occasion for the global Buddhist community and humanity at large to commemorate three holy events in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha: His Birth, Enlightenment, and Passing into Nirvana.

More than a religious ritual, Vesak is a profound reminder of the timeless humanistic values the Buddha bequeathed to all beings. Throughout His journey toward enlightenment and liberation, a radiant light of compassion has shone worldwide, guiding humanity to transcend delusion and suffering and return to peace and awakening.

WHEN HUMANITY LONGS FOR SPIRITUAL LIGHT

In a world flourishing in material achievements yet deeply unsettled in spirit, people are confronted by war, hatred, ambition, and loneliness—leaving many adrift within their lives.

Amid such turmoil, the light of compassion and wisdom from the Enlightened One Shakyamuni Buddha—becomes a lighthouse, illuminating the way for a lost humanity wandering through the ocean of existence.

Within this vast universe, the appearance of a fully Enlightened One, such as Shakyamuni Buddha, is a rare and extraordinary event—like the dawn breaking through an eternal night. From ancient India, this light has spread across continents, transcending boundaries of language, race, and belief, calling humanity to return to the values of loving-kindness, mindfulness, and human dignity.

Each time a candle is lit in offering on the Buddha's birthday, it is not merely a ritual act but a reminder of a deep spiritual revolution, a light of mindfulness affirming that each of us can become a beacon of awakening, illuminating our own lives and the world, dispelling the darkness of delusion that lingers in the corners of the human mind.

Today's Vesak celebration is not only a time for offering flowers and lighting candles but a sacred opportunity for self-reflection—to awaken our true humanity, to nourish loving-kindness, and to make sincere aspirations to serve and uplift life.)

(The Buddha's Birth – An Awakening, Not a Religion)

The birth of the Buddha was not meant to establish a religion to be worshipped but to awaken humankind from the long slumber of ignorance.

He did not teach beings to believe in miracles or rely on divine salvation but pointed to a path of practice that leads to enlightenment and peace—liberation from delusion and suffering.

According to historical texts, Queen Maya gave birth to Prince Siddhartha in the Lumbini Garden beneath the radiant Asoka tree. Upon his birth, the prince took seven steps, and at each step, a lotus bloomed. He raised one hand to the sky, one hand to the earth, and proclaimed:

“Above the heavens and below the heavens, I alone am the Honored One.”

This statement was not one of pride but a profound declaration of the inherent enlightenment within every human being. As stated in the **Lotus Sutra**:

“All sentient beings possess Buddha nature.”

Therefore, the Buddha's birth was a historical event and a symbol of light entering the world, illuminating the path for sentient beings to transcend suffering and live with mindfulness and love.

The day of the Buddha's birth marks the beginning of the light of compassion, wisdom, and liberation shining beyond worldly attachments.

He came not to indulge in royalty but to transform how beings perceive life, guiding them on the Middle Way, avoiding the extremes of indulgence and self-mortification toward peace and liberation.

FOUR GATES, FOUR TRUTHS THAT SHOOK HIS HEART

Prince Siddhartha was raised in the palace of Kapilavastu, surrounded by luxury and splendor. Yet even amidst wealth and power, he was deeply concerned about the suffering of human existence.

One day, he requested to visit the city through its four gates.

At each gate, he encountered:

- An old man, frail and trembling, symbolizing the suffering of aging.
- A sick person writhing in pain, representing illness.
- A corpse being carried to cremation, confronting the inescapable truth of death.
- A serene ascetic, living beyond worldly attachments, representing the path to liberation.

These four sights revealed to him the core sufferings every being must face: **birth, aging, illness, and death.**

His heart trembled with compassion:

*His heart was pierced with sorrow and care,
Seeing old age, sickness, and death everywhere.
The stench of corpses chilled his breath,
He vowed enlightenment to rescue him from death.*

In the **Anguttara Nikaya**, the Buddha later taught:

“There are four truths that no sentient being can avoid: birth, aging, illness, and death.”

ENLIGHTENMENT UNDER THE BODHI TREE – A NIGHT OF AWAKENING

Leaving behind the palace, his throne, his wife and child, Prince Siddhartha entered the forest to begin a great journey toward liberation.

For six years, he practiced extreme asceticism, reducing his body to skin and bone. Eventually, he realized that self-mortification did not lead to enlightenment. He abandoned this path and chose the **Middle Way**—a path free from both indulgence and extreme austerity.

Beneath the sacred Bodhi tree by the Nairanjana River, on the full moon night of Vesak, his consciousness awakened as the morning star arose. He shattered ignorance, understood the nature of all phenomena, saw through the cycle of birth and death, and realized the path to liberation—attaining **Supreme Perfect Enlightenment (Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi)**.

“Bhikkhus, I have attained enlightenment. I have seen suffering and the path to its cessation.”

(Anguttara Nikaya)

From then on, the Buddha taught the **Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, Dependent Origination, Non-self**, opening the way to liberation for all beings.

BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS: COMPASSION, WISDOM, AND LIBERATION

The Buddha’s truths are not based on blind faith, but on direct realization. Teachings such as the **Four Noble Truths, The Eightfold Path, Dependent Origination, Non-self, Rebirth, Nirvana, compassion, wisdom, equality, and liberation** are not only spiritual principles—they are scientific and humanistic truths.

He taught:

- **Compassion:** Loving without discrimination.
- **Wisdom:** Seeing the true nature of all phenomena.
- **Equality:** Every being has Buddha-nature and can attain enlightenment.
- **Liberation:** Not through prayer, but through practice.

“No one can save another. Return to yourself. Let the Dharma be your light.”

(Mahaparinibbana Sutta)

The **Five Precepts** encouraged by the Buddha form the universal foundation of ethics:

No killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no false speech, no intoxication.

The Buddha said:

“Do no evil, cultivate good, purify the mind—that is the teaching of all Buddhas.”

(Dhammapada)

BUDDHISM FOR EVERYONE – FOR ALL TIMES

The Buddha did not preach a doctrine of blind belief but opened a universal path of practice. Thus, Buddhism is not only for Buddhists but for all who seek awakening, love, and freedom from suffering.

Famous thinkers have affirmed:

“If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism. Buddhism requires no revision to keep up with scientific discoveries. It does not demand blind belief but encourages understanding and free thought.”

Albert Einstein

“The Buddha is the embodiment of infinite compassion. He showed the way out of suffering through wisdom and love.”

Rabindranath Tagore

“The Buddha was the first in human history to teach that one can attain liberation by their effort, without relying on deities or miracles.”

Swami Vivekananda

“The Buddha’s teachings form a practical philosophy based not on blind faith but on personal observation and experience.”

Aldous Huxley

“The Buddha showed a path of awakening, through which humans can overcome suffering by understanding the nature of mind and reality.”

Thomas Merton

VESAK – LIGHTING A LAMP WITHIN THE HEART

Every Vesak season, we not only commemorate the birth of the Buddha,

But it is also an opportunity to return to ourselves—

To ignite the light of mindfulness in the midst of life’s uncertainties.

The Buddha was not only born once in Lumbini.

Each time a person awakens, each time compassion arises,

That is the manifestation of a Buddha.

“Light a lamp within the heart—it shines brighter than a thousand lanterns swaying in the wind.”

(Teaching of Zen Master Pháp Thuận)

In Celebration of the Buddha’s Birth

Lotus blooms in Lumbini, golden Dharma light,

He was born to save the world, brightening the skies.

Life's four trials, deep human pain—
Birth, aging, illness, death: impermanence remains.

He left the palace, let go of the throne,
Under the Bodhi tree, he broke every chain.
Venus shone bright, Enlightenment was attained,
He illuminated the world across all domains.

Vesak returns in fragrance and hue,
Compassion shines in impermanence, too.
The wondrous Dharma spreads far and wide,
The Buddha's light still guides with timeless pride.

(Thích Chúc Xuân)

THE CORE VALUES THE BUDDHA BROUGHT

The first value the Buddha offered to humanity was **compassion**—
Unconditional love.

He taught that true love knows no boundaries and no divisions among people.
Compassion is the foundation of every noble act,
The origin of harmony and peace within society.

The second value is **wisdom**
not merely intellectual knowledge,
but insight into the true nature of life,
Into impermanence and the path beyond suffering.
Only when we deeply understand the nature of things
Can we transcend pain and confusion?

Another fundamental teaching is **equality**.
The Buddha declared that all sentient beings possess Buddha nature.
Whether kings, nobles or the poor,
All have the capacity for awakening.
His teachings emphasized that all beings have equal right.
To seek enlightenment and liberation.

THE LIGHT OF COMPASSION IN MODERN LIFE

The Buddha's values remain deeply relevant today.
In a world filled with anxiety, conflict, and suffering,
His compassionate light continues to inspire us—
helping us live more kindly, see more clearly,
And meet life's challenges with a peaceful heart.

Compassion is not only love for family and friends,
But also for all beings, regardless of who they are or where they come from.
The Buddha taught that when our hearts open with compassion,

We stop discriminating, stop hating—
And the world becomes more beautiful.

His wisdom is the ability to see deeply into the nature of things,
freeing us from meaningless worries,
And showing us a path to live meaningfully.
The Buddha taught that when we dwell in the present moment,
without clinging to the past or future,
We find peace in our hearts.

Conclusion

In today's world, where people face countless challenges,
even after more than 26 centuries,
the light of the Buddha's compassion and wisdom still shines brightly.
His teachings are more meaningful now than ever.
We can apply these core values—**compassion, wisdom, and equality**—
to build a peaceful, just, and loving society.

Vesak is a time to reconnect with the deep spiritual values the Buddha taught.
It is a time to awaken our own compassion, wisdom, and equality.
The lessons from his life remain timeless—
not only for Buddhists, but for all humanity.

The Buddha's compassionate light will forever guide us,
illuminating our spiritual journey in this challenging world.
Let us share that light together—
so that this world may become a better place for all.

On this occasion of Vesak,
may all venerable monks and nuns be blessed with health and peace,
may the lamp of wisdom always shine bright,
and may all lay practitioners and fellow beings live in happiness, harmony,
and diligence on the path of practice.

Namo Shakyamuni Buddha.

References

[1] *The Lotus Sutra – Chapter on Bodhisattva Never Disrespectful*
(*Kinh Diệu Pháp Liên Hoa, Phẩm Thường Bất Khinh*)

[2] Interpretation based on the teachings of the *Anguttara Nikāya*
(*Diễn giải dựa trên giáo lý Kinh Tăng Chi Bộ*)

[3] *Dhammapada – Verse 183* (translated by Most Venerable Thích Minh Châu).
Original Pali:

“Sabba pāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā, sacittapariyodapanaṃ, etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ.”
(*Kinh Pháp Cú – kệ số 183, bản dịch HT. Thích Minh Châu*)

[4] Article: “*The Buddha Through the Eyes of Global Thinkers*” on **phatgiao.org.vn**, published on May 25, 2019.

URL: <https://phatgiao.org.vn/duc-phat-duoi-goc-nhin-cua-cac-danh-nhan-the-gioi-d36261.html>

(Note: Circulated article; original source not yet verified.)

[5] Same article as [4], published on **phatgiao.org.vn**, May 25, 2019.

URL: <https://phatgiao.org.vn/duc-phat-duoi-goc-nhin-cua-cac-danh-nhan-the-gioi-d36261.html>

[6] Same article as [4], also referenced in:

Lectures from Colombo to Almora (1897) – *Swami Vivekananda*

[7] Quoted from *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945) by **Aldous Huxley**,

Referenced in the article “*Buddhism and Science*” on **thuvienhoasen.org**

URL: <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a26975/phat-giao-va-khoa-hoc>

[8] Quoted from *Mystics and Zen Masters* (1967) by **Thomas Merton**,

Referenced in the article “*Interfaith Dialogue: Christianity and Buddhism*” on **thuvienhoasen.org**

URL: <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a28134/doi-thoai-lien-ton-thien-chua-giao-va-phat-giao>.