

## WHY I AM A BUDDHIST

*from a talk given in Worli, Bombay*

Some people say that Buddhism is just an Eastern religion. This is what some Christians in the West say. They say that because Buddhism is an Eastern religion it cannot be understood and practised by people in the West. Such Christians forget that Christianity itself is of Eastern origin.

But Buddhism is, in fact, not an Eastern religion. It is a universal religion. Even though Buddhism originated in India, it spread over the whole earth. Buddhism can be understood and practised anywhere in the world, because Buddhism addresses itself to the individual human being regardless of race, nationality, caste, sex, or age. Buddhism is, therefore, the religion of man.

This is one of the reasons why I am a Buddhist. I believe that humanity is basically one. I believe that it is possible for any human being to communicate with any other human being, to feel for any other human being, to be friends with any other human being. This is what I truly and deeply believe. This belief is part of my own experience. It is part of my own life. It is part of me. I cannot live without this belief, and I would rather die than give it up.

To me, to live means to practise this belief. Therefore this belief is part of my religion. It has nothing to do with the way in which I dress, nothing to do with what I call myself. It is a matter of the way I am, the way I exist. It is the way I naturally function in the world.

This is what religion really is. It is what you most truly and deeply believe. It is what you are prepared to die for. It is your life. It is what makes you what you are. It is what makes you behave in the way that you do. Religion is therefore a very important thing. In fact, it is the most important thing.

