

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's speech during historic handing over of Kushinagar land to Maitreya Project
Lightly edited Ven.Ailsa Cameron
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I am thanking from my heart to His Excellency, the Honourable Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, the Ministers for Culture, Tourism and Home Guard and Professional Education and the rest of the compassionate leaders who are attending the Maitreya Project celebration in Kushinagar and bringing peace and happiness in this world, and especially in India.

My heartfelt thanks to the UP Government for giving Maitreya Project the land and to all the farmers who offered their land for the Maitreya Project to bring not just peace and happiness, but ultimate happiness, with total cessation of the oceans of samsaric suffering – the sufferings of rebirth, old age, sickness, death and so forth; second, samsaric pleasures, that which are suffering; and the foundation of those sufferings, pervasive, compounding suffering – and full enlightenment, the complete cessation of even the subtle obscurations and the completion of all realizations, to the six types of numberless living beings, especially in this world, and especially in India.

The Maitreya Project came to be in Kushinagar when we had great difficulties in obtaining land for the Maitreya statue in Bodhgaya for such a long time. I requested His Holiness the Dalai Lama for advice, and His Holiness requested in front of the Buddha statue in the Bodhgaya Stupa and the answer came out Kushinagar. The evolution is that Kushinagar came from Buddha and His Holiness.

In regard to the purpose of the Maitreya Project, there are general benefits and particular benefits in this world. The general benefits are that Maitreya Buddha will be the fifth founder of Buddhadharma, the next after Shakyamuni Buddha, who will descend in this world also in India and perform the twelve holy deeds, as Shakyamuni Buddha did. I discovered in a teaching from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru that Kushinagar will be the place where Maitreya Buddha will be born. I thought it very auspicious that Maitreya Buddha will show the holy deed of taking birth in Kushinagar.

Building this statue of Maitreya Buddha, Loving Buddha, will bring loving kindness in the hearts of everyone in this world, and especially in India.

Not only the organization working for this statue, but all the people who offered the land and who work on building the statue will become the first disciples of Maitreya Buddha, will receive teachings from Maitreya Buddha and will also receive the prediction of their enlightenment.

In regard to the particular benefits, in the near future the whole world will be full of wars, with so many people being killed; there will be famine all over the world, with so many people dying; and there will be sicknesses everywhere in the world, with so many people dying. The more Maitreya Buddha statues that are built, the more this suffering will be decreased and able to be stopped. This is a very, very important reason.

Therefore, I would like to thank very much the UP Government and the farmers of Kushinagar.

The Tibetan Buddhism that Tibetan lamas studied, practiced and actualized, with incredible numbers becoming bodhisattvas and buddhas, has now spread almost all over the world in a way that never happened before. In the USA, Australia and some other countries, the fastest growing religion is Buddha's teachings, which were taught in India by Shakyamuni Buddha and also by the Indian pandits, the Six Ornaments (Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti) and the Two Supreme Disciples (Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha), whose paintings are here around the people, on the right and left sides. These great Indian pandits wrote commentaries to Buddha's teachings, such as the five great treatises of sutra: *Pramanavartika* (the science of mind that logically proves reincarnation, karma, that Buddha is pure and reliable as well as his teachings and so forth), *Abhisamaya-alamkarika* (which shows how to develop compassion to all living beings, that which is the source of peace and happiness, enlightenment and the details of the path to enlightenment and the qualities of Buddha), *Madhyamaka* (study of the two truths: the whole of existence is embodied in the two truths; the ultimate wisdom of shunyata can totally eradicate the root of the suffering of samsara, the ignorance), *Abhidharmkosha* (details of the mind and mental factors, the evolution of the world and so forth) and *Vinaya* (the morality, or ethics, to achieve rebirth as a human being or deva; the monks' and nuns' discipline, which is the basis to achieve the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom, to achieve liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, the omniscient mind, the peerless happiness, for sentient beings).

Then there were many other great pandits and many great meditators in Tibet from the four Mahayana traditions: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug. There were Padmasambhava; Gyalwa Longchenpa; the five great Sakya lamas, including Sakya Pandita; Marpa and Milarepa; Lama Tsongkhapa; and so forth, who wrote many commentaries to what Buddha had explained. So, like this, Tibetan Buddhism came from India. There's no other separate Buddhism that Tibetan lamas practice that didn't come from India. Shantarakshita, Lama Atisha and so forth brought Buddhism from India to Tibet, so everyone must know that which was being taught in India by Shakyamuni Buddha and what the fully distinguished Indian pandits taught, the knowledge of Buddha, wide and deep like the Pacific Ocean, in the great Buddhist university of Nalanda, which had 300 pandits, and there was also Vikramashila, has not

been degenerated. In Tibet these have been the main teachings, the main practice and the main path to actualize, so it has flourished in Tibet, even though it was stopped after Mao Zedong took over Tibet.

Now, mainly because His Holiness the Dalai Lama was able to come to India, along with some learned lamas, Buddhism is able to flourish so much in India. It is a good time to offer the knowledge, and not just intellectual understanding but the experience of realization, back to the Arya Mother Land, India, and to the Indian people. It can be returned by learning and by realizing the Buddha's teachings.

Buddhism has not only spread all over the West, but even top scientists are finding it very scientific and that they have much to learn from Buddhism. So, this is basically Indian Buddhism. You must rejoice and appreciate that this Buddhism is what came from India.

In regard to helping the Kushinagar community, I would really like to begin by offering medical services, and then assess whatever other needs the community has. My heart is there. Building the statue is also a social service. So many hundreds, or thousands, of people will find jobs so that they can look after their families and send their children to school.

Please pray for the success of the Maitreya Project. I hope we meet again when the statue is up. Thank you very much. Please, everyone, enjoy the celebration. Thank you very much from my heart to the monks who did the dances and prayers, the performers and everyone else who worked so hard for this function.