



MAITREYA PROJECT PRESS PACK DECEMBER 2013

For further information please contact:

maitreya@fpmt.org

<http://fpmt.org/maitreya/>

The Maitreya Project, Kushinagar

According to Buddhist scriptures Maitreya will be the next Buddha, and will teach the path of loving-kindness.

“The very name ‘Maitreya’ means loving-kindness. In today’s world, we really need loving-kindness.”
– *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

State Government of Uttar Pradesh and Maitreya Project shared vision and spirit of partnership

Kushinagar is one of the 4 most holy Buddhist pilgrimage sites being the place where Shakyamuni Buddha passed away and was cremated. Historically Kushinagar was a flourishing Buddhist city and home to a number of the great Buddhist monastic universities. Ancient textual reference predicts that when Maitreya, the future Buddha, appears on earth, it will be in Kushinagar.

Buddhism around the world is fast growing and taking on vital relevance. Pilgrims and spiritual seekers in ever-growing numbers are coming to India.

Development of the Buddhist Circuit in North India is a core part of Indian National and Uttar Pradesh State Tourism strategy.

For more than 12 years, the Maitreya Project has worked with State Government of Uttar Pradesh in planning construction of a magnificent statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha in this key Buddhist pilgrimage site in India. The Project plans to construct a complex of mixed-use buildings for the benefit of pilgrims, tourists, and the local community.

The Maitreya statue, when built, is likely to be approximately 200 feet tall depending upon the total land available, and on nearby Kushinagar Airport, and Airports Authority of India, height restrictions. This great monument depicting the future Maitreya as the embodiment of loving kindness and peace will be designed and built to last 1,000 years as a catalyst for world peace. At this fragile juncture in world affairs, such a monument is highly relevant and is expected to assume international significance. Technically, architecturally, as well as spiritually, and as a symbol of peace, the statue is

expected to quickly become regarded as one of the major Buddhist destinations of the world.

The Maitreya Project has been conceived with the sole purpose of bringing benefit - spiritually, in education, healthcare and, directly and indirectly, economically throughout its planned 1,000 year lifetime. Besides the core project of setting up of the Maitreya Statue, Maitreya Project intends to engage in social programs aimed specifically at providing employment, education and healthcare.

Realizing the great potential of the Maitreya Project, and to further public benefit, the Uttar Pradesh State Government invited the Maitreya Project to locate at Kushinagar.

The State Government recognized that the Maitreya Project will have a major positive impact on the development of the Kushinagar area, as well as on tourism in India, Uttar Pradesh, and on Buddhism, and peace in the world.

The UP Government and Maitreya Project 'shared vision' sees the integrated development of the Kushinagar Region and the Maitreya Project as a joint endeavor to be undertaken in a spirit of partnership. Such partnership supports the creation of planning and implementation mechanisms which will permit the potential of the project to be developed within the 1,000 year context.

The 'shared vision' includes the appropriate and sustainable growth and development of the Kushinagar region in the context of a 1,000 year timeframe. Within this, the Kushinagar Region with the Maitreya Statue will become a major international landmark, pilgrimage, and tourist destination.

Maitreya Project is based on the premise that loving-kindness is the fundamental cause of peace, and that inner and outer peace share a cause and effect relationship. Thus, the actions which follow from the altruistic attitude of loving-kindness lead to peace for the individual, the family, the community, the nation, and the world.

As its focus, Maitreya Project is planning to build a magnificent statue of Maitreya Buddha in Kushinagar, next to the holy sites of the historical Buddha's passing away and cremation, in this area which is so rich in spiritual heritage.

The Kushinagar Special Development Area

In Kushinagar, the Uttar Pradesh State Government in northern India has generously provided approximately 275 acres of land for the site of the Maitreya Project.

Together, the Maitreya Project and the UP State Government have created a comprehensive plan for development of the area surrounding the Project administered by the Kushinagar Special Area Development Authority.

Education & Healthcare Programs

To create both immediate and long-term benefit, Maitreya Project is planning a range of social programs focusing on education and healthcare. These will be based at the Maitreya Project site in Kushinagar.

In time, both the education and healthcare programs will be developed and expanded to meet the specific needs of communities within the Kushinagar Special Development Area.

Maitreya Project Universal Education Program

The first Maitreya Project Universal Education School was established in Bodhgaya, Bihar. The unique curriculum, emphasizing ethical development as well as academic achievement, is designed to cover primary, secondary and vocational education. Based on this pilot experience, Maitreya Project plans to develop education in the Kushinagar area. It is planned that no fees will be charged. Uniforms, books, and meals, as well as some healthcare and residential accommodation will be provided.

Maitreya Project Healthcare

The Project plans to develop a healthcare net to provide, primary and secondary care, and mobile clinics to provide care to outlying areas. This modern healthcare system will be continuously expanded to serve the Kushinagar Special Development Area.

Jobs & Infrastructure

The Project's construction phase will employ hundreds of skilled and semi-skilled workers as well as professionals. Hundreds more will be employed in industries supplying materials and services.

After completion, there will be employment for staff to operate and maintain the Project's activities and provide hospitality services to visitors year-round.

By acting as a catalyst, Maitreya Project will attract other beneficial investment and development to the region, creating more long-term employment opportunities. As a result, the region's economy and civic life will evolve and develop in a positive direction, quite naturally.

The vision is that by building the statue to last 1,000 years, generations, and millions of people will ultimately benefit.

Environment & Sustainable Development

In an age when environmental awareness and sustainability is so critical to the ecological integrity of the planet and welfare of all beings, Maitreya Project's commitment to environmentally sound, sustainable development is a fundamental principle.

Passive energy solutions, recycling, and water conservation are examples of modern technologies which are being incorporated into the design of the facilities.

These solutions will help to ensure the 1,000 year lifetime of the facilities. They will demonstrate and encourage the wider use of sustainable development.

Why Charitable Programs Alone Are Not Enough?

Maitreya Project plans to provide key charitable services to address specific needs in the Kushinagar Special development Area.

However, Maitreya Project believes that, in addition to charity, it is essential to ensure long-term sustainable opportunities are created with an infrastructure that will support appropriate civic development.

The Maitreya statue, park and facilities, will generate long-term employment via construction, maintenance, hospitality and community services. The follow-on development in the region, which will be catalyzed by Maitreya Project's presence, will create even more employment.

The Maitreya Universal Education system will prepare students with the skills they will need to support their families and lead their communities.

Healthcare programs will give high quality care as well as training medical professionals for serving their communities.

Thus, Maitreya Project's vision combines charitable educational and medical facilities along with the enduring spiritual focus of the Maitreya Buddha statue, to directly and indirectly foster sustainable whole-community economic and civic development, both now and for generations to come.

Why Build Such a Large Statue?

World focus, inspiration, and Buddhist tradition are the reasons for the scale of the Maitreya Project statue.

The Buddhist tradition has a long history of building very large Buddha statues – the more notable a statue is, the more people will hear of it and have the chance to benefit from it.

Buddhists do not worship religious objects. Rather, they are used as inspirational tools towards the creation and spread of positive human qualities – in this case, loving-kindness, along with associated attitudes such as peace, compassion and wisdom.

The intention is that the size and beauty of the Maitreya statue will bring this sacred symbol of loving-kindness to the attention of many people throughout the world, inspiring kindness and thereby bringing inner and outer peace.

Why not just build schools and Clinics?

Some have suggested Maitreya Project should just build schools and clinics. Maitreya Project aims to be a wholly sustainable development. Education alone is not a sustainable solution. Even with the best education, if there are no local jobs, students are likely to leave rural areas in search of work. Likewise, providing healthcare alone relieves suffering, but by itself, is not sustainable. The Maitreya Project vision is of sustainable development - the statue is the catalyst bringing visitors, pilgrims, and economic benefit, the educational and healthcare programs improve lives, and the project provides jobs and opportunity for local people. In this way the Project will be sustainable.

The Maitreya Project Park

The Maitreya Buddha statue will be constructed in a complex including in time, shrines, a museum, and library, and other functional rooms and pavilions.

Surrounding and extending from the Maitreya statue, the Maitreya Project Park will contain other Buddhist statues, stupas, meditation pavilions, and quiet groves in which visitors can peacefully stroll, meditate and find inspiration.

Project Costs

Preliminary estimates only, indicate the completed Project will cost approximately 400 crore Indian rupees if the height of the statue is 200 feet.

The consequent private and public sector investments to support the development of such a major project are likely to exceed that sum significantly.

Maitreya Project is funded solely by donation and the sponsorship of individual items of religious art and sculpture.

Timeframe

Engineering and architectural work will begin when Maitreya Project Trust assumes possession of the approximately 275 acres of land.

It is expected construction of the Maitreya Buddha statue may take 5 years to complete.

In the meantime, the healthcare program will commence within the first half of 2014, followed by the educational program.

Why has the Project taken so long?

Creating the necessary conditions for the Project to begin has been far more complex than anyone could have anticipated. Land acquisition is an understandably complex and sensitive issue and given the area of land involved. Everyone who has worked on bringing the Project to this point has done so with their utmost best efforts for which Maitreya Project Trust is deeply grateful.

FPMT - Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

<http://fpmt.org/>

FPMT is the lead sponsor of the Maitreya Project. The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition is an international, non-profit organization, founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935-84), a Tibetan Buddhist monk. The Foundation is dedicated to the transmission of Mahayana Buddhist values worldwide through teaching, meditation, and community service.

FPMT provides integrated education through which people's minds and hearts can be transformed into their highest potential for the benefit of others, inspired by an attitude of universal responsibility. FPMT is committed to creating harmonious environments and helping people develop their full potential of infinite wisdom and compassion.

FPMT activities world-wide include;

- Monasteries and Nunneries in 6 countries
- Meditation Centers in 37 countries
- Health and Nutrition Clinics
- Hospice Services
- In-Prison programs
- Building the statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, by the Maitreya Project in Kushinagar, and Bodhgaya, Bihar, India
- Publishing houses
- Universal Education for Compassion and Wisdom schools and programs
- Perpetual Sponsorship of Sera Monastic University Food Program
- Animal welfare programs

The Maitreya Project Vision

Maitreya Project was conceived by the late Lama Thubten Yeshe, a well-known Tibetan teacher who devoted his life to making Buddhism available to people worldwide. Lama Yeshe's main disciple and current Spiritual Director of FPMT and Maitreya Project, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, has carried this vision forward. It was Lama Yeshe's original wish to build a large Maitreya statue in Bodhgaya, Bihar, in order to repay the kindness of

Mother India where Buddhism began and flourished, and which has so generously provided refuge for the Tibetan community. Lama Yeshe planned that a huge Maitreya Buddha statue would continuously inspire the essential human qualities of loving-kindness and compassion.

Maitreya Project also in Bodhgaya

The Maitreya Project which is already underway in Bodhgaya will continue in parallel with the Maitreya Project in Kushinagar.

Maitreya Project Founders

Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935 - 84)

Lama Yeshe was born in Tibet and educated at the great Sera Monastic University in Lhasa. With his main disciple, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe established Kopan Monastery near Kathmandu, Nepal. In 1974, the Lamas founded the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT).

Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Zopa Rinpoche was born in Thami, Nepal in 1946 and was recognized to be the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama. When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Lama Zopa Rinpoche became Spiritual Director of FPMT, and carried forward Lama Yeshe's activities and projects. Lama Zopa Rinpoche remains Spiritual Director of the FPMT and of the Maitreya Projects in Bodhgaya and Kushinagar – both of which are coming to fruition under his guidance.

Osel Hita

Osel Hita was born, in 1985, to Spanish parents and was recognized as the re-incarnation of Lama Thubten Yeshe. Osel is continuing traditional Tibetan studies, as well as a degree course in a Western curriculum, and is closely following the Maitreya Project's progress.

Maitreya Project Trust

The Maitreya Project Trust, in close cooperation with State Government of Uttar Pradesh and FPMT, will be responsible for development of Maitreya Project in Kushinagar.

The Maitreya Project Heart Shrine Relic Tour

To help promote the Maitreya Project, a collection of sacred Buddhist relics has been touring the world for the last 11 years. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Spiritual Director of Maitreya Project, has collected these rare and sacred relics specifically to bless the Heart Shrines of the proposed Maitreya Buddha statues, the monuments to loving-kindness to be built in Kushinagar and Bodhgaya.

The Relics

The collection includes relics of the historical Buddha and his closest disciples, as well as other well-known Buddhist masters from Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan traditions.

The Purpose

The purpose of the Heart Shrine Relic Tour is to inspire people, whatever their beliefs and faith, to come together to experience the blessing of loving-kindness which is the only true cause of peace, which is embodied within the relics.

Buddhists believe these relics have appeared because of each Master's qualities of wisdom and loving-kindness. As such, these relics are the very heart of the Maitreya Project.

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