

### An Update from Kushinagar

Maitreya Buddha embodies kindness. An important part of both Maitreya Projects is the practical application of kindness in terms of social work, health care, education, job creation and economic development. Those are really the objects of the projects. In Kushinagar, that vision has been developed and is maintained and supported through close cooperation with the state government of Uttar Pradesh,” Peter Kedge, the international coordinator for the Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project, told *Mandala* in February.

On December 13, 2013, the Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project took an enormous step forward: the state government of Uttar Pradesh handed over an initial tranche of 275 acres (111 hectares) of land for the statue, which will be at least 200 feet (61 meters) tall. The land is directly adjacent to the holy pilgrimage sites of the Parinirvana Temple and Rambar Stupa in Kushinagar, the location of Buddha Shakyamuni’s parinirvana and cremation. The land transfer was marked by a grand ceremony held on the land and attended by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Maitreya Project trustees, many government officials, including the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, and an audience exceeding 100,000.

“Since the foundation stone laying ceremony, we have been working to build a management team with its center of gravity now in India under the auspices of the Maitreya Buddha Project Trust in India,” Peter said. “We are delighted to welcome on board Nimai Vijay, one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s students in India, as the full-time project manager.” Nimai will lead the Indian team and work closely with the project trustees.

Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project’s current focus includes moving the 24 foot (7.3 meter) tall statue of Maitreya Buddha from Maitreya Project land in Bodhgaya to Kushinagar, where it will remain until the large statue is built.

## Maitreya Buddha: Bringing Loving Kindness to the World

By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

*The state government of Uttar Pradesh, India, handed over a large tract of land to the Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project on December 13, 2013. At the ceremony marking the land transfer, FPMT spiritual director Lama Zopa Rinpoche offered the following remarks to gathered dignitaries and an audience more than 100,000.*

I am thanking from my heart His Excellency the Honorable Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, the Ministers for Culture, Tourism, 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 to this world, and especially to India.

My heartfelt thanks to the state government of Uttar Pradesh 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



*Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav during the ceremony, Kushinagar, India, December 13, 2013. Photo by Andy Melnic.*

Another priority is the establishment of health care services. “The project is preparing to purchase its first mobile clinic to serve Kushinagar-area villages,” Peter explained. “The mobile health care service will be combined with a summer campaign for the distribution of mosquito nets in villages where malaria is a major problem. For the colder winter months, the health care service will be combined with the distribution of blankets to those in need.”

For Saka Dawa, the project is planning the first religious ceremony on the site and hopes to have the 24-foot statue installed by then.

To learn more, visit Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project’s new website at [www.maitreyabuddhakushinagar.org](http://www.maitreyabuddhakushinagar.org).

To offer support to the project in Kushinagar, visit: <http://my.fpmt.org/donate/maitreyabuddhaprojectkushinagar/>

You can read *Mandala*’s complete coverage of the Maitreya Projects online: [mandala.fpmt.org/tag/maitreya-project/](http://mandala.fpmt.org/tag/maitreya-project/)

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. ...

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 Buddhadharmā, the next after Shakyamuni Buddha, who will descend in this world also in India and perform the 12 holy deeds, as Shakyamuni Buddha did. I discovered in a teaching from His



From left: On the stage at the foundation stone laying ceremony, a scale replica of the Maitreya statue to be built at Kushinagar; Lama Zopa Rinpoche during his speech with Maitreya Project trustee Ven. Kabir Saxena interpreting into Hindi, Kushinagar, India, December 13, 2013. Photos by Andy Melnic.

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 to the hearts of everyone in this world, and especially to India.

Not only the team 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 Uttar Pradesh 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 United States, 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. ...

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. 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.

Colophon: Lama Zopa Rinpoche speaking at historic foundation stone laying ceremony for the Maitreya Project in Kushinagar, India, December 13, 2013. Lightly edited by Ven. Ailsa Cameron. Excerpted for inclusion in *Mandala*.