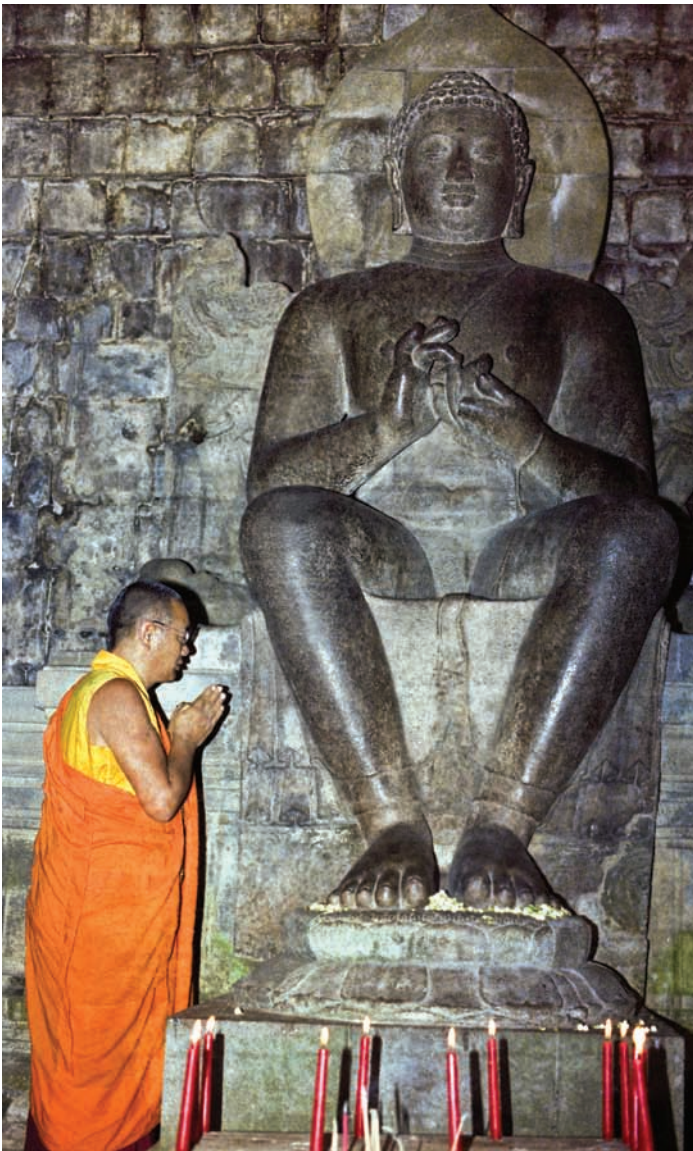




THE MAITREYA PROJECT: BIG LOVE, UNIVERSAL LOVE



Lama Yeshe's famous signature



Lama Yeshe with Maitreya statue, Indonesia, 1979

In Kushinagar, India, a town in the state of Uttar Pradesh where Shakyamuni Buddha passed away, a remarkable FPMT project aimed at ending the suffering of all living beings is becoming a reality. The Maitreya Project incorporates a 500-foot (152-meter) statue of the future Buddha, Maitreya, public temples, meditation halls, exhibitions celebrating Shakyamuni Buddha's life and teachings, a monastery and nunnery, countless pieces of religious art, schools and healthcare including a hospital of international standard.

The name *Maitreya* comes from the Sanskrit word "maitri," which means, as Lama Yeshe explained, "universal love." The historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived approximately 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, taught that due to the inevitable degeneration of the times, his own teachings would last just five thousand years before disappearing from the world. During this degeneration, the lifespan of human beings will decrease, as will their morality, health and fortune. There will be periods of famine, disease and continuous warfare. At the height of this degeneration, Maitreya Buddha will descend to the world from the Tushita Pure Land in the form of a great spiritual leader and demonstrate the path of universal loving kindness.

Lama Yeshe displayed a great affinity with Maitreya Buddha and expressed a wish to teach all of Maitreya's key works. Lama taught extensively on two of Maitreya's five famous texts¹, *Dharmadharmatavibhanga* and *Madhyantavibhanga* and he also taught a course at Maitreya Instituut in the Netherlands, on the yoga method of Maitreya in 1981.

Those fortunate enough to have known Lama Yeshe know that he did not waste words. Lama was

¹ Maitreya's five texts are: *Discrimination of Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena (Dharmadharmatavibhanga; Chö-dang-chö-nyi-nam-par-che-pa)*; *Discrimination of the Middle Way and the Extremes (Madhyantavibhanga; U-dang-tha-nam-par-che-pa)*; *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras (Mahayanasutralamkararika; Theg-pa-chen-po'i-do-dé'i-gyän-gyi-tsig-le'ur-che-pa)*; *Ornament for Clear Realization (Abhisamayalamkara; Ngon-par-tog-pa'i-gyän)*; *Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle (Mahayanottaratantrashastra; Theg-pa-chen-po-gyü-la-mä'i-tän-chö)*.

famous for his crystal clear, though unconventional, way of communicating and his ability to cut across cultural differences and relate to others heart to heart. For instance, when signing off letters and messages, especially in the later years of his life, Lama would end his missives with “big love.” Perhaps Lama’s continuous message of “big love” wasn’t simply a cute expression; rather, “big love” might have been Lama’s skillful way of expressing Maitreya Buddha’s message of one, big, universal love into simple language easily accessible to the Western mind.

SEEDS FOR MAITREYA PROJECT ARE PLANTED

In 1977, Lama Yeshe visited Disneyland in Anaheim, California and was impressed with the Audio-Animatronic Abraham Lincoln featured there which charismatically delivers the Gettysburg Address. Shortly after the visit, in 1978, he informed Harvey Horrocks, Peter Kedge, Nicole Couture and Ven. Yeshe Khadro about his vision to build a large statue of Manjushri at Manjushri Institute in Cumbria, UK. It was to be several stories high and would “speak” recorded teachings, just as the Disneyland robot had done. Peter Kedge remembers, “This was the first time I recall Lama talking about building a giant statue. Here we all were completely overwhelmed with what we had taken on at Manjushri Institute [est. in 1976], and Lama was planting yet another extraordinary vision before us. That statue was never built, but four years later Lama began talking about building a giant statue of Maitreya Buddha.”

In 1982, two years before his passing, Lama visited Tibet alone. At this time, Tibet was just beginning to be accessible to visitors and China was in the early stages of opening up to commerce and tourism. During this trip, Lama was inspired by the large statues of Maitreya Buddha that still stood in Tibet.

Following this visit, Lama began mentioning to people, including Lama Zopa Rinpoche, his plan to build a huge Maitreya Buddha statue in Bodhgaya, a city in the Indian state of Bihar, where Shakyamuni Buddha achieved enlightenment. Merry Colony, who served as co-director for the Maitreya Project from 1993 until 1995, remembers Lama’s plan well. While riding in a rickshaw on the main road into Bodhgaya, Lama turned to Merry and said, “I want a huge Maitreya Buddha statue here. I want it so big that the planes flying overhead will see it. And I want it to talk!” In mid-1983, Lama wrote a letter to Ven. Kabir

Saxena, then serving as director of Root Institute, explaining that he wanted a Maitreya statue in Bodhgaya, at least the size of the Boudhanath Stupa, and he wanted it to be “speaking teachings.”

Lama felt that the essential quality of Maitreya Buddha, universal loving kindness, is both fundamental and critical for the world. Further, Lama suggested that the statue would benefit Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, and that the local benefits of building the statue would serve toward thanking the people of India for giving Buddhism to the world.

When Lama passed away in 1984, Lama Zopa Rinpoche took Lama’s wish to build the huge Maitreya statue to heart. This endeavor became known as the “Maitreya Project.” Rinpoche quickly received energy and commitment from students interested in bringing Lama’s wish into reality. At first they received no specification of an appropriate size for the statue – only that it had to be “huge.”

Over the years, and through many yet to be told extraordinary difficulties, the details of this “huge” statue have taken shape as successive students of the lamas held the title of “Director” starting with Prodipto Roy, Joya Roy and Ven. Kabir Saxena around 1985-1986 and then passing the responsibility to Ven. Yeshe Khadro in 1991.

THE FIRST LAND

In early 1995, Lama Zopa Rinpoche appointed Dutch monk, Ven. Marcel Bertels, director of the project. After two frustrating years (1993-1995) of attempting to secure land in Bodhgaya suitable for construction, previous co-directors Merry Colony and Owen Cole welcomed Ven. Marcel’s fresh enthusiasm for this critical preliminary work. As Ven. Marcel quickly learned, land in Bodhgaya was only available in small parcels. Over time, by making approximately 20 separate purchases, Marcel was able to buy a total of nearly 35 acres of land. However, even though all of the parcels were sited near each other they were not entirely contiguous. Attempts to solve this and other important issues with the State Government of Bihar at the time were unsuccessful. It is only now, almost 20 years later, under a very different State Administration, that the Bodhgaya land problems are being solved.

BIGGEST STATUE IN THE WORLD

While the land issues were being sorted, Lama Zopa Rinpoche was traveling and promoting the Maitreya Project, especially in Taiwan. On one visit, a famous



A silhouette image of the Maitreya Project statue in reference to other well known statues and monuments.

Taiwanese architect, C.Y. Lee, whose company built the tallest building in Taiwan and one of the tallest in the world, Taipei 101, asked how large the biggest statue in the world was, in attempt to suggest a size for the Maitreya statue. When he was told 421-feet (128 meters), Mr. Lee replied, “That’s too small!” He then proposed that the Maitreya Project statue should become the biggest statue in the world. This proposal was accepted enthusiastically by Rinpoche, and thus, the height of 500-feet (152-meters) was determined, with the added specification that it should last at least 1,000 years.

More than simply a “huge” statue with a spiritual component, education, healthcare and economic benefits were factored into the project’s mission. And even further, as Rinpoche explained at the 1996 bhumi puja (a ground breaking ceremony), when the initial land was consecrated, “Our main goal is not the statue itself. The main goal is the peace and happiness of all sentient beings. Maitreya Buddha is the embodiment of all the buddhas’ loving kindness; therefore this statue is essential for the cause of love and happiness in this world.”

From the inception, messages of support were received from His Holiness the Dalai Lama; the President, Vice President and Prime Minister of India; and the Governor and Chief Minister of Bihar.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Between 1997 and 2001 the main challenge for the Maitreya Project was to determine technically, if such an extraordinary public building could be

designed, constructed and maintained for 1,000 years, and if so ... how?

Expertise was gathered from many leading architectural and engineering companies around the world. An architectural competition was held, the team was assembled and more than 100 architects and engineers began work. They worked continuously for two years developing techniques that would enable a magnificent “cathedral” to be constructed in the form of Maitreya Buddha.

KUSHINAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH

By the time this initial phase of preliminary planning was completed, it was clear that Bihar, given the political climate under the political administration of the time, was an impossible site to begin construction. In 2001, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and the Board of Directors decided to move the location of the Maitreya statue out of Bihar state. This was a most difficult and painful decision to make as Lama’s original wish was to build in Bodhgaya. After consultation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, initiated by the State Government of Uttar Pradesh (who was entirely keen to have the project in their state), the town of Kushinagar was selected as the new site, one that would bring the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people over the longest time.

Accordingly, in June 2001 Maitreya Project confirmed this decision with the State of Uttar Pradesh which most enthusiastically welcomed the Project. A comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Maitreya Project Trust and the Government of Uttar Pradesh on May 9th 2003.

The landsite offered by the State Government of Uttar Pradesh is part government owned and part privately owned. The state government first has to acquire the private portion in order to make it available to Maitreya Project. The process of acquisition must follow the regulations of India which are very precisely set out by law. This process has been proceeding under successive state governments and the numerous bureaucrats responsible for its implementation ever since the MOU was signed, and the process is still on track to a satisfactory conclusion. It is the way of rural India that such complex processes take much more time than would be expected elsewhere in the world.



For example, the highly successful 100-acre Akshardham Hindu Complex in Delhi, India, which attracts 70% of tourists visiting Delhi, took 37 years from initiation of the concept to completion².

Maitreya Project has worked to keep the process moving forward at every stage, advocating strongly on behalf of local landowners. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has publicly announced their intention to offer exceedingly generous compensation rates, and many other important facilities, on behalf of local people. Of course, this is a big transition for the landowners who are mostly non-Buddhist farmers, and some have expressed great concern, even outrage at the prospect of losing their land. Atul Chopra, Indian citizen and Maitreya Project Advocate and Legal Advisor (he became a lawyer specifically to be able to best advise Maitreya Project) explains, “As far as the Hindus are concerned, there has never been a single voice raised ever against the Maitreya Project, nor the Buddha, neither in Kushinagar nor anywhere in the country. In fact, Hindus consider the Buddha as the ninth reincarnation of Lord Vishnu.

“There has been some criticism amongst some of the farmers whose land is being acquired by the Government. This criticism is very natural and would happen for any other project in which land was being acquired. We addressed this problem by explaining to the farmers about the benefits of the healthcare and education facilities which will be provided to them free of cost for years to come. We also took a delegation of the farmers’ leaders to Bodhgaya and showed them our projects there. In fact the delegation stayed at Root Institute and came back very satisfied after seeing all the social work being done by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.”

Tony Simmons, art program manager, website developer, executive Director of both Maitreya Project Trust in Uttar Pradesh, India, and Maitreya Project Society in Bodhgaya, India, explains, “We’re not just building a statue. This is a project aimed at developing and raising the standards of living in the whole area, in the whole region. The idea is that we will build a statue and with the statue, as with anything of that magnitude, especially in a place like Kushinagar, which is one of the Buddhist holy places in the world, there come pilgrims, there comes tourism and from that comes

money. Take Bodhgaya for instance. Bodhgaya is a sleepy little town normally throughout the year, but the only reason Bodhgaya has developed at all economically is because of Buddhist pilgrimage sites. Maitreya Project has the potential to really transform the entire area in Kushinagar in terms of economic growth, in terms of education, in terms of health care.”

Tony goes further, “But to be really honest, the scope of peoples’ problems is a lot deeper than simply giving medicine or giving education, even though these are great, fantastic. There has to be something to change people’s minds or it’s all just superficial. So, in that respect, I think a symbol like Maitreya, a really powerful symbol, can go such a long way, changing somebody’s mind, somebody’s peace of mind.”

“The path of the project until now has certainly not been an easy one,” reflects Atul Chopra. “We have encountered great obstacles but always there have been solutions. As far as the Buddhist principles are concerned, we have never lied or given any misinformation to anyone. We have dealt with everyone with patience and never indulged in any bribe. We have never misused any funds allocated for the project. There is also a unique thing which we have experienced about this project: Sometimes we have come up against extremely difficult situations which could have stalled the project. But, all of a sudden there would be a government office reshuffle, or something else unexpected, and the matter got resolved quickly. I can only say that this statue wields a massive amount of power and solves its own problems.”

MOVING FORWARD

Maitreya Project has substantially completed the Scheme Design phase of the engineering work in the areas of research, design, development and planning for the Maitreya statue and its throne building, park and sacred art collection. As soon as Maitreya Project receives the landsite they can resume the technical and engineering planning work from the point where it was put on hold in 2001, and detailed design and on-site work are poised to begin.

As requested by the State Government of Uttar Pradesh, the first activities on Maitreya Project land in Kushinagar are planned to be the development of a Maitreya Education Project school, based on the highly successful Maitreya Project Universal Education

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akshardham_%28Delhi%29

School in Bodhgaya, and the Maitreya Healthcare Project hospital and clinic. Both the education and healthcare facilities will be expanded over time.

Plans for construction of the proposed statue will continue in parallel with these humanitarian activities. Resuming such work and re-establishing the necessary momentum will take time but Maitreya Project expects that once the foundations for the statue and throne building have begun, it will take approximately five years to finish the statue.

BODHGAYA, BIHAR

Since 2001, conditions in Bihar have improved greatly, land issues are close to resolution, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche is determined that a Maitreya Buddha statue must still be built in Bodhgaya to fulfill Lama Yeshe's original wish. Also planned for the Maitreya Project Bodhgaya landsite is a temple and facilities to accommodate the annual Gelugpa Monlam festival. When Monlam is not in session the facilities will be available as a residence for Indian and other monks.

MAITREYA PROJECT HEART SHRINE RELIC TOUR

For many years, Lama Zopa Rinpoche has been collecting relics of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, and other Buddhist masters from around the world, for placing in the Heart Shrine which will be located inside the Maitreya statue at the level of the heart chakra.

The Heart Shrine Relic Tour, an ongoing tour of these holy objects to locations around the world, began in March 2001 in Taiwan, when a number of sacred relics collected by Lama Zopa Rinpoche were displayed in Taipei. Nine years later, there have been more than 500 Relic Tour events in 51 countries on six continents, during which well over a million visitors have been blessed by these relics.

In 2004, due to the increasing number of invitations to host the holy relics, Rinpoche authorized the collection to be divided so that more than one collection could tour the world simultaneously.

Once the Maitreya statue is completed, some of these relics will be enshrined in the Heart Shrine of the statue, but others will continue to tour in order to benefit more



Holy relics of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni



Buddha blessings for a lucky dog on the Heart Shrine Relic Tour

people. Lama Zopa Rinpoche said at an FPMT Board meeting in 2007:

“I didn't know the Relic Tour would be of such great benefit to the world – create such devotion. I think this is Buddha's actions, working through the relics to benefit sentient beings – Buddha giving blessings to people through the relics. People enjoy the relics so much, generate so much devotion. Devotion is the source – from devotion we get blessings, from blessings we get realizations, the strength to engage in the path.

“The Relic Tour is one way to bring world peace, through people changing their mind. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, ‘outer peace through inner peace.’ So the relics take a very important role in world peace. That's the purpose for the Buddha leaving relics.”

Please visit the Heart Shrine Relic Tour page of the Maitreya Project website for numerous testimonials of people around the world transformed and inspired by the tour: www.maitreya-project.org/en/relic/letters.html



PEACE POWER

By Ven. Lhundup Nyingje (Ven. Paula Chichester)



Many describe a blessing from the holy relics as a “transforming” experience

Buddha’s blessings. Both Ven. Roger [Munro] and I felt this power while blessing people for hours a day. I used to think that the Maitreya Statue was a good project because it was a good thing to have a big symbol for peace in the world, but now I understand that the statue itself will make peace in the world because those relics are going to be inside the heart of the statue and they will broadcast that blessing around the world, like a radio broadcasts radio waves. Peace power. So, now I am very happy to be helping with the project. Just taking those relics around the world helps to make peace. Anytime anyone opens up to their tender feeling, to their heart of love, the world becomes a more peaceful place. Rinpoche’s relic tour is a wonderful thing, and I thank Victoria and Peter and everyone who makes that show happen.

Ven. Nyingje was a Relic Tour Manager in Africa during 2009. This year she plans to accompany the relics during their second visit to Vietnam.

I had some faith in the power of holy objects, but it was mainly based on my faith in [Lama Zopa] Rinpoche and his word that they have power. After being on the relic tour, my scientific inquiring mind now understands this power based on empirical evidence. I have seen thousands of people transformed by the presence of these relics. I have felt them transform my own mind. And now, I have even seen them light up! They emit some sort of transmission that can make a person open to their hearts and to the hearts of others – I don’t know how but the relics seem to connect people to the enlightened experience, what we call

TO CREATE THE PERFECT STATUE

By Peter Kedge, director and CEO of Maitreya Project since May, 1997

The Maitreya Project was born from Lama Yeshe’s seed wish to build a “huge” statue of Maitreya Buddha for the benefit of all. As the project developed, our task expanded to account for a 500-foot (152-meter) statue, the largest in the world, one that would last 1,000 years.

One of the first challenges was selecting materials and designing a support structure that would withstand the wind storms, monsoon downpours, earthquakes and floods likely to occur in the next millennium.

However, engineering was not the only challenge. Depending on the culture and tradition of Buddhism, Maitreya Buddha has been depicted in a variety of ways. Some cultures show Maitreya as the Laughing Buddha. The Vajrayana tradition shows Maitreya wearing many beautiful ornaments, while other traditions show



Lama Zopa Rinpoche advising Denise Griffin on all aspects of the statue prototype

Maitreya in a simple form, either standing or sitting.

To make the Maitreya statue recognizable and appealing to many traditions, it will be depicted in a simple form, without ornaments, wearing monk’s robes and sitting on a throne with a lotus cushion under Maitreya’s feet. The hands of the Maitreya Buddha will show the mudras of teaching and giving.

The creation of the life-size prototype for the Maitreya statue relied on a combination of many inputs which were coordinated and carried out by UK sculptors Denise and Peter Griffin, both trained in Western and Asian traditions. Their work was overseen by Lama Zopa Rinpoche with advice from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, master sculptors from Bhutan and other qualified Buddhist advisors.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche spent days with Denise Griffin working on the shape of the nose and eyes, the subtlety of the smile, the position and poise of the hands, fingers, and every other aspect.

The next challenge, which really became all-important, was not only how to build a statue that would last 1,000 years; the real challenge was how to enlarge, by 100 times, this incredibly beautiful, subtle, hand-sculpted, life-sized prototype that was the result of so much care, thought, meditation and prayer.

After a great deal of research into the ways in which other big statues were constructed, a number of decisions were made. The outer skin, or form, of the statue would be cast in bronze. There would be almost 35,000 m² of bronze. The supporting structure could be assembled using stainless steel members, bolted together and encased in extremely high-grade concrete. The foundations would also be made of high-grade concrete encased by a stainless steel reinforcing bar sunk more than 100ft into the ground, supporting a huge mass of concrete with stainless steel reinforcing bars running through it. This would withstand all foreseeable natural disasters, wear and tear and even changing technologies.

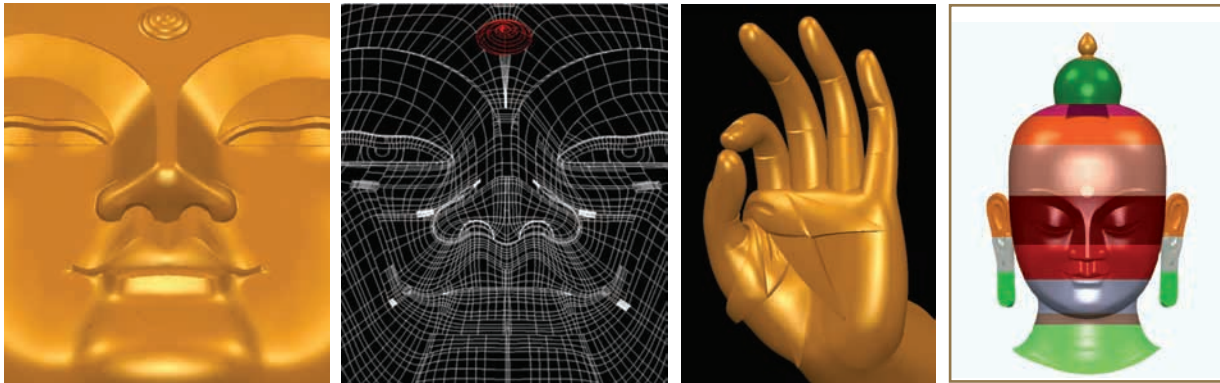
The most crucial decision, in a way, was not to use traditional methods of manually enlarging the prototype to the 500-foot (152-meter) scale. We decided to scan the prototype using a high-resolution camera that collected millions of three dimensional points corresponding to the statue's surface. The result of this process was a "point cloud." This was a three-dimensional computer file made up of millions of points. However, while this captured the surface shape of the prototype, if that alone were to be enlarged by 100 times the result would be the same point cloud but with spacing between the points much greater, and the result would look something like the surface of a golf ball which is faceted. Another process had to be introduced. The process is called surfacing. More sophisticated computer software is applied to the point cloud. According to an algorithm of the way in which the surfacing program is designed a smooth surface is drawn over the point cloud. This works well for the smooth surfaces. However, whenever

an abrupt change of plane occurs – for example the lips, the eyelids, the edges of the robes – the surfacing program cannot perfectly follow the original. At that point it was necessary for the original sculptors to come and manually work with the computer model to correct the surfacing model at these plane changes. This was undertaken in the UK at the premises of one of the world's leading manufacturers of engineering software. Denise Griffin spent three months at Delcam Ltd. working to re-sculpt the prototype, but this time on the computer. The final result was a computer model that now became the prototype for the full sized statue.

But even then the exquisite beauty of the original prototype and the subsequent computer model prototype was not *perfect*. The proportions of the statue in terms of head, torso, arms and legs were perfect but the symmetry was not. The manually sculpted face was not entirely symmetrical, neither were the feet. What the computer model enabled us to do was to vertically split the head and look at each half separately then mirror each half on itself



Maitreya's throne will be a 17-story public building with room for temples, meditation halls, teaching facilities and exhibition spaces



From Left: From prototype scan to “surfaced” computer model. The “surfaced” right hand in the mudra of “predicting the time of the disciples’ enlightenment”. Planning the plate divisions for mold making and casting of full size bronze panels.

giving two different, but perfectly symmetrical, faces from which we could choose the most perfect, the most beautiful. Similarly each foot was inspected, and one of each was chosen and then mirrored on the computer model giving as close to a perfect Buddha form as possible.

The next challenge is to convert a high-resolution computer file into a perfect 500-foot (152-meter) statue. First the computer file is divided into panels. This requires that architects, engineers, artists, and foundry men all agree on where clear divisions can occur.

Molten bronze can then be poured into the mold and a single panel produced. To ensure the panel is precisely correct and to compensate for shrinkage in size as the molten metal cools the same computer file that produced the molds is used this time with another type of milling machine that will trim the edges of the panel so they will precisely fit to the next panel. The same file is used again, this time to measure the panel’s surface, to ensure that its shape is also precisely the shape required.

The process of assembly has to be similarly precise. Once the support structure is in place the panels have to be fixed to it. The panels are then welded together and the welds are ground and polished to become invisible. Alignment of the plates during assembly is done using the computer model and laser surveying techniques by which each panel is moved into position, aligned and fixed so that the final appearance will be as smooth as the computer model.

The technology involved in all these steps is absolutely extraordinary but to do anything other than produce the most perfect possible model using

the best, most sophisticated and practical techniques available is simply not worth doing. The original handcrafted prototype took four years. The art was so subtle, the expression, the poise so exquisite that the biggest challenge of all was how to retain that perfection. The result will hopefully inspire countless millions over centuries and millennia.

As a direct result of Maitreya Project’s efforts and planning, Gaya Airport, which is located just 6 km from Maitreya Project’s land in Bodhgaya, is now functioning as a small international airport. It was Maitreya Project’s engineering team that designed the runway, apron and terminal for the new Gaya Airport.

Further, Maitreya Project has provided the impetus for the successful development of a number of innovative technologies:

- Methods of reverse engineering to accurately make the finished statue from the life-size prototype, including computer scanning and surfacing as well as mold making and bronze casting.
- Methods for assembling, aligning and welding the bronze plates that will cover the statue.
- Construction and maintenance techniques for ensuring the statue and building will last 1,000 years.
- A new technique whereby pure gold can be inkjet printed. As a result, the Prajñāparamita Sutra and other Buddhist texts, can be perfectly reproduced in pure gold.

Even though neither the Bodhgaya nor Kushinagar statues have yet been physically built, Maitreya Project has already seen many accomplishments. We're incredibly optimistic about the future benefit this project will bring, not just to India, but to the world.

THE SPIRITUAL LOGIC OF THE MAITREYA STATUE

By Lama Zopa Rinpoche

It is a tradition in some of the monasteries in Tibet to build a very large Maitreya Buddha statue. One of the benefits of a big statue is that the bigger it is, the more people will come to it for prayer and spiritual practice. Just seeing the statue becomes unimaginable purification for sentient beings' minds. The seed of liberation and enlightenment is planted in the mind just by seeing the statue.

On top of that, circumambulating, making offerings and so forth, paying respect – everything becomes a cause for enlightenment.



Every step has been taken to design a Maitreya statue that is inspiring and beautiful to everyone

Regardless of faith, the object also has power. The power of the statue arises from the Buddha's mind. It comes from the inconceivable qualities of the Buddha, from so many prayers that Buddha made in the past while he was a bodhisattva.

We do not have a pure mind at the moment to see Buddha, so the karma we have is to see only the statue. The existence of the teachings depends on the existence of the statue. When people no longer have the karma to see Buddha directly, they can see a Buddha as, for example, statues and stupas. Buddhas manifest not only in human form but also as statues, relics and so forth to allow sentient beings to purify their negative karma and create the cause for happiness and enlightenment with each circumambulation, prostration and offering they make.

Manjushri asked Buddha Shakyamuni about this and the Buddha replied, "In the future, sentient beings making offerings to statues make the same amount of merit as making offerings directly to me."

It is said in the sutra, *The King of Concentration*, that even if one looks with anger at a drawing of the Buddha it causes one gradually to see ten million Buddhas. It purifies disturbing thoughts and karmic obscurations, which are obstacles for developing love and compassion.

It is also mentioned by the great Indian Pandit Chandragomin that when one builds temples, no matter how many insects are killed, they all get purified. They don't get reborn in the hell or animal realms. The numberless sentient beings, who see this statue, make prayers, offerings and circumambulation, will be able to develop the good heart of love and compassion. They will achieve peace, happiness and success in this life and the next, achieve the ultimate happiness of liberation from samsara, and the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Connecting with holy objects is the easiest way for sentient beings to accumulate merit because it can be done without cultivating pure motivation, which takes much effort for the mind unaccustomed to renunciation, bodhichitta or right view.

Due to the power of a holy object, as soon as offerings, circumambulations and prostrations are done in conjunction with the holy objects, they immediately become the cause of enlightenment. Usually most of us have delusions – no matter how much we don't like to get angry, still it takes years to reduce anger, to control anger. But with holy objects it is so easy.

It says in the sutra *Stainless Beaming One*: "Even the shadow of a holy object touching a bird or a fly, even water from a holy object touching one, or even a person hearing the



construction of a holy object, these purify the five uninterrupted negative karmas, and those sentient beings will always be protected and paid attention to by the Buddhas. They would achieve the complete path to enlightenment and wouldn't return."

It will be the same with the statue of Maitreya Buddha. My wish is that by building this statue, others will be inspired to build even higher.

First published in Mandala, November-December 2000, edited here for space.

Maitreya Project remains a hugely complex undertaking in technical, legal, financial and administrative terms. Looking back, the project has covered a remarkable distance in its relatively short life. The efforts of thousands have contributed to the project's burgeoning success. And this effort, this incredible example of perseverance and dedication, originates in the seed wish of one special Lama who imagined the possibility of one, big universal love.

Extensive information on the benefits of the Maitreya statue can be found on the Maitreya Project website: www.maitreyaproject.org



As evidenced in this issue's feature story, FPMT has an incredible investment in the power of holy objects.

Holy objects are wish-fulfilling because they represent the limitless potential of the future. They represent the Buddhas we will become. The Dharma we will speak. The Sangha to which we'll belong. As Lama Yeshe told us years ago, "Anything is possible. Everything is possible." Lama Zopa Rinpoche advises that, "Everything exists on the tip of the wish." Holy objects represent a wish, an aspiration toward a future without suffering. A future with no division. No duality. Just one, big, universal love.

Lama Yeshe concluded his 1981 teachings on the yoga method of Maitreya Buddha, held at Maitreya Instituut in the Netherlands, with a simple but powerful dedication. With his words, let's also dedicate any goodness we have generated by rejoicing in FPMT's holy object projects as Lama Yeshe advises:

"Well, I think that's all we have time for. Buddhism believes that my consciousness and yours can unite in the ocean of universal conscious energy, so that's the beauty of our having come together here. Even though we have different personalities, different noses, different mouths, different ears, and different nationalities, we have still somehow come together and been able to communicate with each other. That really signifies universal love, the meaning of Maitreya. In the true sense of the word I think we *are* Maitreya. So we're very lucky and I'm grateful for this opportunity.... Finally, let's dedicate whatever experience we've had generating love and compassion and touching reality to the benefit of all beings in the universe – through this energy, may they attain the qualities of Maitreya." ☸

For further, more extensive information about holy objects please see the Holy Objects Resource Guide located at:

www.mandalamagazine.org.