

HOLY OBJECTS OF FPMT

FPMT spiritual director Lama Zopa Rinpoche's vast vision for FPMT includes the creation of hundreds of thousands of holy objects around the world. Holy objects are very important to Rinpoche and the FPMT for enabling students to create merit and purify negative karma on their path to enlightenment. Among the largest holy objects currently being planned and built are the very big Maitreya Buddha statues in Kushinagar and Bodhgaya, India, and the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in Victoria, Australia. Due to the hard work and dedications of countless people everywhere, these projects are making progress.

GIANT STEPS FORWARD FOR The Maitreya Projects



Lama Zopa Rinpoche arriving at the Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project foundation stone laying ceremony, Kushinagar, India, December 13, 2013. Photo by Andy Melnic.

What started out as a wish of FPMT founder Lama Yeshe to build a very large Maitreya Buddha statue in India has blossomed into two separate and distinct projects to build very large Maitreya Buddha statues: one statue in Kushinagar in the state of Uttar Pradesh and one in Bodhgaya in Bihar. The Bodhgaya project statue will have Maitreya in the enlightened aspect (cross-legged) and the Kushinagar project will have Maitreya in the bodhisattva aspect (sitting with his legs down). In this issue of Mandala, we have an update on the project in Kushinagar. In our next issue, we hope to have an update from Bodhgaya.

In February, FPMT spiritual director Lama Zopa Rinpoche shared this letter explaining the developments and how students can support the projects:

My very dear students, kind benefactors, friends and others who have compassion for sentient beings – not just compassion, but taking responsibility to free all sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric sufferings – to all, I am expressing hello and hope you are all well.

Now we have two Maitreya Projects. As you may have already heard, Maitreya Project Bodhgaya has started and the process is happening, but now the statue will be smaller; this is due to the situation of the world and my advice. Maitreya Project Bodhgaya has been taking a long time; the reason is that there were many, many obstacles.

The other Maitreya Project is happening in Kushinagar – Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project. Kushinagar is where the Buddha showed the holy deed of passing away and where the future Buddha Maitreya will take birth, which is part of the 12 deeds.

The reason we considered Kushinagar is because the state government of Uttar Pradesh previously had the idea to build a large Buddha statue when they heard that the great Buddha statues of Bamiyan were destroyed. Then the state government of Uttar Pradesh heard about the Maitreya Project and on a number of occasions requested His Holiness the Dalai Lama to bring the Maitreya Project to Uttar Pradesh. His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggested that we check where to build the Maitreya statue, because in Bodhgaya there had been so many obstacles. In front of the main Guru Shakyamuni Buddha statue inside the Bodhgaya Mahabodhi Temple, His Holiness the Dalai Lama used the traditional method of *mo* [divination], using tsampa balls. The checking was done very carefully and His Holiness the Dalai Lama held my hand while he did the *mo* himself and the answer came ... Kushinagar.

We agreed for the project to move to Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh. Now it has been many years that we have waited to receive the land for the project. Recently the new Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav made great effort to have the land given to Maitreya Buddha Kushinagar Project and recently there was a large ceremony handing over the land with the Uttar Pradesh chief minister present and myself. In addition, His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent a message of congratulations on the occasion.

The Maitreya statue in Kushinagar will be bigger than the one in Bodhgaya. The statue in Bodhgaya will be smaller, but there will be other things on the land in Bodhgaya for benefiting sentient beings, and we will host the Mönlam prayer festival and other large prayer festivals and teachings, especially with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Due to karma these two projects happened, so now we need to complete both of these Maitreya statues for the benefit of all sentient beings. In addition to these projects, I also want to build other large Maitreya statues in different parts of the world.

One of the general benefits of building large Maitreya statues is that after Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings no longer exist in the world, when Maitreya Buddha comes, those who have helped in the building of the statues will be some of the first disciples of Maitreya Buddha and receive the prediction of enlightenment directly from Maitreya Buddha.

Then the particular benefits: the more statues of Maitreya Buddha there are in the world the more it helps to minimize or stop wars, famine, diseases, tsunamis, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc., in this very dark period when so many people suffer so much. Due to the result of building many Maitreya statues, this decreases the very dark time of so much suffering. So this is my reason for building many Maitreya statues.

Therefore, I am requesting everyone to pray for the success of the two Maitreya Projects for the benefit of sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha. Students can recite different Maitreya prayers, such as *jam pal ku zug ma* and the Maitreya Buddha mantra and make strong prayers to Maitreya Buddha. Begin with bodhichitta motivation and while reciting Maitreya Buddha mantra, loving kindness nectar light rays emanate from Maitreya Buddha's heart and purify yourself and all six realm-sentient beings and you all become enlightened. Visualize that all sentient beings become Maitreya Buddha. Think that all the obstacles to the two Maitreya Projects (in Kushinagar and Bodhgaya as well as any other Maitreya Buddha statues being built in the world) are purified and all success comes very naturally and most importantly the statues are MOST beneficial for sentient beings. At the end dedicate strongly by reciting *jang chhub sem chhog rin po chbe* and *ge wa di yi nyur du dag*.

Also, if you do Medicine Buddha practice, that is very powerful for one's prayers to be successful; so you can recite the Medicine Buddhas' names seven times and dedicate for the success of these projects.

With much love and prayers,
Lama Zopa

"Prayer for a Statue of Maitreya" (*jam pal ku zug ma*) can be found online: <http://fpmt.org/education/teachings/texts/prayers-practices/>