

# Buddhism the Basis of Asian Culture

G. Roerich

*Address delivered at the Kalimpong Vaisakha celebration.*

To-day we commemorate the Day of the Founder of the mighty movement of thought which for the first time in human history had overcome racial and class barriers, and strove to create a new type of free man, free from prejudices, who was to work out fearlessly his own salvation, an attitude characteristic of early Buddhism and expressed in the simple but significant words of the Founder—*atmadipo bhava*—"Be your own Light."

On this day it is fitting to remember the cultural mission of Buddhism throughout Asia, and its tremendous impact on the peoples of Asia. For fully a millenium Buddhist thought and culture has been the Culture of Asia. Of all the cultural movements which sprang on Asia's soil, Buddhism has the undeniable right to be called the Humanism of Asia. Because of its spirit of tolerance, it succeeded in creating a cultural climate in which cultural contacts were able to grow and became

strong. In restoring old ties between nations, we will do well to remember this past, for what was possible in the past is also possible in the present and future. We must realize that there has been a time when the whole of Central Asia, north of the Himalayas, from the sea of Aral in the West to the Pacific coast in the East was predominantly Buddhist. Along thousands of miles of ancient caravan routes, the word of the Buddha and with it the message of Indian thought and culture, travelled far and wide bringing into life centres of refined culture and thought. And in the present time signs are not wanting that powerful forces are again at work in a renascent Asia. In the last few years, we have witnessed, the revival of ancient caravan routes in a modern form, the motor engine and the aeroplane supplanting the old camel and mule transport. This indicates that a new epoch of greater unity is at hand, when ancient

ties become once more a living thing, a force for the general good.

India, China and ancient Iran, these three mighty centres of Asian culture, have influenced each other in the domains of philosophy, art and literature and have evolved a rich and colourful cultural pattern which for centuries has been the source of inspiration for many countries of their common borderland. The study of Central Asian culture helps us to realize the essential cultural unity of Asia, erected on a Buddhist foundation. It is the duty of every Indian, and of the young generation especially, to be mindful of this great cultural past, to study and cherish it, and to proclaim its message in the name of greater unity of purpose.

India and China, these two giants of Asia, are again striving towards a harmonious collaboration in the service of a New Age in which Buddhists have their part to play "for the good of the many."

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*"It is in Buddhist thought and in no other that India, China, and Japan, representing the East, could be united as one."*

D. T. Suzuki



Correspondence

## Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee's Appeal To the Right Hon'ble U Nu,

*Prime Minister of Burma*

Hon'ble Sir,

Only a few days ago, we have had the pleasure of expressing by telegram our earnest craving to see you with a view to appeal Your Excellency for revival of the sacred Lumbini; but most unfortunately, we were told by the Burmese counsel that it would not be convenient for Your Excellency to spare time in the course of your momentous tour of India.

We therefore venture to put the facts in writing and sincerely hope that our prayers as set forth below will receive Your Excellency's most favourable consideration.

That Lumbini, the birth-place of the Enlightened One, though glorious, is yet in such a state of disorder which immediately calls the attention not only of the Buddhists of Nepal, but it urges the entire Buddhist World for their voluntary and philanthropic assistance to restore the charm and glory that it had once possessed under the patronage of the King like Ashoka the Great. What a pitiful sight it is, to see the present state of the sacred land! So our plan is to embody a noble aspect behind it and that to put the Lumbini on an equal footing with other eminent pilgrimages of the world

by restoring its former status of grandeur and which can only be accomplished by dint of voluntary help and close co-operation among the Buddhist people.

In this connection, we had also requested the Govt. of Nepal for grant of two major assistances viz. Land and transport facility for the pilgrims. It is laudable of the Govt. of Nepal to approve the sanction of the grant of 33 bighas land and has assured us that an immediate step will be taken to provide the transport facility by construction of road which would establish a direct link between Bhairahawa and Lumbini.

Now remains the question of installing Viharas, rest-houses and other accommodations necessary for pilgrims, for which we largely count upon the assistance of the people of Burma. It may please Your Excellency that we have had some correspondences with the Buddha Sasana Council in this connection and our delegates to the Third World Buddhist Conference held at Rangoon, had the pleasure to meet the members of the Sasana Council. In the course of our delegates' conversation with the members of the Council, the Hon'ble members assured the delegates

that they would do their best to extend their assistance for the achievements of object as mentioned above. Furthermore, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of Burma, Sir U Theing Maung, during his valuable visit at Lumbini has also left a remark about the restoration of the sacred land.

Over and above all, the year 2500th year of Maha Parinibhana will shortly fall in the forth coming year 1956 and it is our earnest expectation to complete the undertakings before this time. Your Excellency is well aware of the fact that all the Buddhist countries are going to observe this auspicious year with due promptitude and grandeur. But will it please Your Excellency to see the Lumbini the home of the Buddhist Doctrine, exposed to negligence when all the Buddhist over the world will be celebrating the occasion in their own gorgeous fashion? Certainly not.

So we request you once again to extend Your Excellency's precious co-operation to appeal the Govt. and the people of Burma for the implementation of this noble undertaking.

Yours in the Dhamma,  
**BHIKKHU MAHANAM**  
Secretary, Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee.



# LUMBINI



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## Ourselves

Yet another new venture in the service of Buddhism! It is just possible this too may be taken as a publication for the sake of publication. But to some of us it has been a long felt need.

We have wanted a forum, wherein Buddhism may be studied, discussed and preached unblushingly. This is not always an easy task. Often a little more than ordinary courage is needed.

We have needed a few columns, wherein unnecessary stress may not be laid on the purity of this form of Buddhism or that. We have needed a publication, however humble, to propagate the central and fundamental teachings of the Blessed One.

We have decided to name these regular prints as "Lumbini" for a specific reason. Lumbini is known all the world over as the sacred birth place of our Lord Buddha. Perchance the regeneration of Lumbini to-day may bring

about the renaissance of Buddhism in this age.

Out of the four sacred places of pilgrimage Lumbini, Buddhagaya, Sarnath and Kusinara—Lumbini alone still remains, relatively speaking, in a most regrettable, neglected and dilapidated condition. One of the tasks of "Lumbini" would surely be to draw the attention of the authorities concerned and of devotees all the world over to do their duty towards the birth place of the Tathagata.

Everybody knows that the present is a most remarkable period in the history of Buddhism. The coming year 1956 would be the 2500th year after the passing away of our Lord Buddha—the year of the Buddhist renaissance for the good of the many, for the welfare of the many.

Last year, when an invitation to hold its fourth session in Nepal was extended on behalf of Dharmodaya Sabha to the World Fellowship of Buddhists, all the delegates from all the four corners of the earth accepted it enthusiastically, for they thought that no other country or countries could better claim the honour of hold-



ing the World Fellowship of Buddhist Conference in the 2500th year of the Parinirvana of our Lord than those very ones where the Buddha was born, where He attained enlightenment, where He preached His first sermon and where He attained Parinirvana.

One of the tasks before this humble messenger of Buddhism would be to keep the future delegates of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, and the pilgrims to sacred places, informed as regards the preparations being made both in Nepal and India, to celebrate the fourth session of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and to welcome devoted pilgrims of all countries to all sacred places in the forthcoming year—an occasion the like of which may never occur in the lives of most of us.

A magazine is often supposed to be the mouthpiece of this organisation or that. 'Lumbini' will be striving to become a mouthpiece serving the interests of all the Buddhist organisations, anywhere and everywhere, free from the prejudices of East and West or North and South.

Struggle and competition are the slogans of the present civilised world. But it is co-operation that is the cure of our ills.

We seek it and trust that we will find it.

## Welcome to "Lumbini"

### Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim's Message

It gives me great pleasure to learn of the dawn of "Lumbini"—a journal which aims to devote itself to the cause of Buddhism. Lumbini and Kapilavastu are great places very intimately connected with our Lord. They have been paid less attention until now not because that they are less sacred places of Buddhists but because the Government and people have not been able to appreciate their importance so far. By the noble efforts of Dharmodaya Sabha of Nepal, the revival of Kapilavastu's fame should not take long. The difficulty of access to that historic spot will be overcome, I believe, by the erection of suitable rest houses and Dharmashalas for the pilgrims. And thus will be forged those cultural links—the ideal "Lumbini's" able editors are striving for.

I wish the Magazine and its noble cause every success.

Sd/-. P. T. Namgyal  
Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim.

## LUMBINI

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