

**Speech of H.E the Governor of Bihar Shri Ram Nath Kovind
on the occasion of 46th Anniversary of Rajgir Peace Pagoda,
atop Ratnagiri Hill on 25-10-2015, 10.00 AM**

Venerable Chief Monk of Nipponzan ¼निपोन्जन½
Myohoji ¼मायोजी½, Reverend Shanti Shugei ¼शुगेई½ Ji,
Venerable Monks and Nuns of the Sangha, Pressident of
Santoku ¼सानटोकू½ Co. Ltd. of Japan, Mr. Kesuke ¼केसूके½
Horiuchi ¼होरीयूची½, Delegates of the "C.G.C. Pilgimage
Mission of India Buddha Monument", Brothers and
Sisters !

On the occasion of the pious 46th Anniversary of the
Rajgir Vishwa Shanti Stupa, as I stand here on this
Ratnagiri hill, facing the Griddhakuta ¼गृद्धाकुटा½ Hill, from
where Lord Buddha preached, I feel both elevated and
overwhelmed by a feeling of immense humility. Lord
Buddha has been a noble saint and mentor of mankind.

His teaching of humanism, harmony, renunciation,
peace and non-violence, as also the eightfold-path
unfolded by him, have illuminated the mind of mankind,
for more than two millennium.

The Stupa itself is symbolic of the enlightened one or the Buddha, who expressed sentiments of compassion, equality, inclusiveness, contentment and the development of the intellectual personality liberating the mind. We are all gathered here today not only to revere the memory of a compassionate and intellectual sage, but also to look at ourselves in the light of peace, harmony and co-existence as a universal truth juxtaposed with injustice, conflict, discrimination and discord.

Rajgir has been the very cradle of Buddhism that was sanctified by the Buddha himself.

Ancient Girivraja, later named as Rajgrha or the "House of the King," ascended to fame under the patronage of King Bimbisara and his son Ajatsatru around 550 BC. History has it that it was during the reign of Bimbisara that Buddha spent most of his rainy seasons or varshavasa at Rajgrha. The Griddhkuta hill was where he resided and preached. Rajgir has many historical sites which are part of earliest Buddhist legacy and visited by millions of devotees from across the globe.

Since the time of Buddha, the world has undergone major transformations and boast of great developments in the field of science and technology but its record as far as the human-ness is concerned, a lot still needs to be done. The Buddha's universal message for peace and co-existence based on reaching out to all beings with loving kindness, is critically relevant to us when human-created contradictions are casting its long gloomy shadows in the present world.

Most Ven. Fujii Guruji who initiated and developed the idea of building Shanti Stupas across the world, was a saint and like all true saints he had the good of the humanity in his mind. He wanted the Stupas to be the symbol of the eternal message of Peace and brotherhood.

Built by Ven. Fujii Guruji and designed by renowned Buddhist Artist and architect Upendra Maharathi, this pristine white Peace Pagoda is the first Pagoda to be built in modern India and has contributed immensely to the idea of world peace.

In 1956 when India celebrated the 2500 years of Buddha Jayanti, Ven. Fujii Guruji was invited and

entrusted the task of reviving the Buddhist glory of the ancient land of Rajgriha. From here began the journey of this Shanti Stupa. And now although over four decades have gone, the legend, legacy and the relevance of this Stupa continuous to grow from strength to strength. This in a way is reminiscent of the Ashokan rule, where people and state joined hands in propagating the message of peace and equality.

Now after 46 years, this Shanti Stupa has become a symbol of eternal message of Buddha.

The greatest admirer and propagator of Buddha's teachings was the son of this holy region of India, Emperor Ashoka. He was a military genius and fought many ferocious battles. Perhaps nobody in his time could have ever imagined that he could convert into an apostle of peace. But this is what precisely happened. He renounced war and Ahimsa became the state policy. The Ashokan edicts very minutely and elaborately describe the concept of a welfare state.

King Ashoka was the first one to have built Pagodas as an object of veneration.

Before I conclude I would like to share with you a fortunate event in my own life.

You all will be happy to know that I, as a political and social activist, was closely associated with the Chief Patron and Founder President of Rajgir Buddha Vihar Society Late Shri Morarji Desai, who became Prime Minister of India from 1977 to 1979. I recollect that Morarji Desai used to take a lot of interest in the development and maintainance of Rajgir Vishwa Shanti Stupa as well as the smooth functioning of Rajgir Buddha Vihar Society by exchanging exhaustive correspondence with Most Ven. Fujii Guruji.

It was probably in the year 1974 that Most Ven. Fujii Guruji had visited India and made a personal call to Morarji Desai at his New Delhi residence at No-5 Dupleix Road after he had resigned as Finance Minister and Dy Prime Minister from Indira Gandhi Cabinet. I remember that on one evening Most Ven. Fujii Guruji with his disciples entered the bungalow of Morarji Desai with chanting and beating of drums. I saw Morarji Desai coming out and welcoming Fujii Guruji with folded hands.

For me it was a rare occasion when a staunch follower of Lord Buddha was having cohesive and comprehensive dialogue on World Peace with Morarji Desai who happened to be a believer in Sanatan Dhrama, but both had a common goal, namely, World Peace. I feel privileged to have physical glimpse of Most Ven. Fujii Guruji on that day.

Brothers and Sisters, I extend my felicitation to everybody present here specially those foreign delegates who travel each year for the anniversary function and am confident that in days to come this historical city of Rajgir will gain in eminence and will become a centre of cultural, religious and educational excellence, where great minds will once again confer and conclave in the ancient tradition of Nalanda.

Now on this remarkable and solemn day, let us again affirm our unfailing dedication to the cause of peace and fraternity of people.

Thank you ! Jai Hind !!

Presentation-Public Relation Section, Raj Bhavan, Patna