

Speech of His Excellency, Shri Ram Nath Kovind
on 12th International Tipitaka Chanting Council
on 02/12/2016 at Bodhgaya

Respected Venerable Monks,
Ambassadors, Commissioner, Magadh
Division Sri Lian Kunga Ji, DIG Sri Saurav
Kumar Ji, District Magistrate Kumar Ravi Ji,
SSP Smt. Garima Malik Ji, President,
International Tipitaka Chanting
Council, Secretary, Bodhgaya Temple
Management Committee, Mr. Dorjee, Council
Member Wangmo Dixey, fMD I h½,
Distinguished guests and delegates.

It gives me a great pleasure to address you all today. It is of particular importance that the international Tipitaka $\frac{1}{4}$ rfiVdk $\frac{1}{2}$ Chanting Ceremony continues to flourish, and is now in its twelfth year at the Place of Enlightenment. On behalf of my country India, and in particular, the people of Bihar State, I thank you all for visiting the Seat of Enlightenment. I welcome you all to this most holiest place.

The great world religion Buddhism is centered on Mahabodhi Mahavihara, the great temple built by the Gupta Emperors in the fifth century and still standing in its full majesty today. It is truly wonderful to see this

ancient temple resounding once again with the teachings of the great saint, the Mahamuni Buddha, as it did in earlier times.

I am pleased to welcome so many senior representatives from the Buddhist communities of South East Asia. We are honored that you chose to visit our country again and again, and sincerely hope that your visit will be a productive and pleasant one. India is a land of many religions, and it is wonderful that Buddhism has its heart here. Your presence is a reason for great rejoicing and an inspiration to the millions of Buddhists who live in the ancient land of the Aryadesh.

The Buddha as we know was a supreme human being, who through His own effort, attained Final Deliverance and Perfect Wisdom, and became 'the peerless teacher of gods and human beings.' He is a 'Saviour' only in the sense that He showed all human beings how to liberate themselves from all sufferings.

The Buddha was the first most active missionary in the world. He travelled from place to place for forty-five years preaching His doctrine to the masses and the intelligentsia. Till His last moment, he served humanity both by example and by precept. His distinguished disciples followed suit.

Penniless, they even travelled to distant lands to propagate the Dhamma, expecting nothing in return.

Bihar is a state of India with an extraordinary wealth of Buddhist remains. With over 1,500 proven sites dedicated to Buddhist activity, we hope once again that Bihar can become a center for Buddhist pilgrimage, as it was in ancient times. Now, there are many initiatives to improve the facilities and transportation between these great sites of Buddhist pilgrimage, and we see a great opportunity to improve the experience for pilgrims whilst retaining the atmosphere of these ancient places. We are sure that your

attendance here at the chanting ceremony can only help to bring this about. We hope to see more and more Buddhist monks walking through the Jetthian Valley, the corridor of the Buddha Valley. There are so many ancient ruins left today which one day we hope will encourage greater participation of international pilgrims.

It is inspiring to realize that this great country of India is home to the teachings of the Buddha, and to reflect on the importance the words of the Blessed One have had, both on India itself and on the whole world.

India has held a special place in world culture, with its tolerance for diversity,

interest in spirituality and belief in non-violence, and these traditions can be traced directly to the huge influence of the Blessed One.

Indeed we need more than ever for such spiritual wisdoms to come forward and to continue to guide us in current world conditions. In this regard, India can be a great example, a world leader, in creating a society that goes beyond materialism, beyond self-interest, and in demonstrating the conditions that make for lasting happiness and meaning in our human condition.

I am therefore delighted that you have made such efforts to come and visit us, and

am pleased to welcome all the delegates from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam who have come here to Bodhgaya to pray together at this sacred and most enlightened place on this earth.

Buddhist monks represent the teachings of the Buddha, so it is particularly moving to see so many gathered here to recite his words at the place of Enlightenment, and to feel again the words of wisdom activating the blessings that reside here. It is a symbol of great hope for humanity to see such an assembly and feel the loving kindness that radiates from your dignified presence.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee, the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, and all the local officials that work to make this event possible. I would also like to thank the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International, Mrs. Wangmo Dixey for their dedication and their selfless commitment to bringing the message of peace by organizing these precious gatherings for the benefit of all. We would also like to thank all the volunteers, sponsors and friends in dharma who have made this ceremony so beautiful.

Thank you again for visiting Bodhgaya,
and all the other sites that grace the State of
Bihar. Once again, I extend my best wishes.
May we continue to hear these teachings year
after year under this most Sacred Bodhi Tree
for the benefit of all beings.

Jai Hind.

Presentation-Public Relation, Raj Bhavan, Patna