

# **Preservation and Protection of Buddhist Historical Sites and Monuments**

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In this great conference I am going to discuss about the *Preservation and Protection of Buddhist Historical sites and monuments*.

Before I make some statements of my own, allow me to quote some of the well-known people concerning with the topic. Sir Edwin Arnold said: "The Buddha is the light of Asia." Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, considered the Buddha to be the greatest son of India.

On my part, I would like to state that the Buddha belongs, not only to the Buddhist followers but also to everybody in the world, in brief, to the history of the world heritage. This is because H. G. Wells, a world famous writer, mentioned about the Buddha in his book "*The Three Greatest Men in History*":

"In the Buddha you see clearly a man – simple, devote, lonely, battling for light – a vivid human personality, not a myth. He too had a message to mankind universal in character. Many of our best modern ideas are in closest harmony with it. In the some ways, the Buddha is nearer to our needs and us. He was more lucid upon our individual importance, sacrifice and service than other religious founders."

As the Buddha belongs to the world, so we all human beings have a responsibility to preserve the holy places of the Buddha and Buddhist historical monuments. Among the many famous historical sites, I would like to mention a few.

## **Lumbini - The Birthplace**

About 200 years after demise of the Buddha, Lumbini garden, very great beautiful panorama, became a village that vandalizes the atmosphere of a holy place. We know the fact according to Asoka's stone pillar. While the Buddha is alive, this garden described lovely and greatly, but Asoka's record mentioned as *Lumbini Gama*, "Lumbini village".

U Thant, a Former General Secretary of the United Nations, did much to restore and preserve the Birthplace of the Buddha getting the help of UNESCO since 1969. I would like to take the opportunity to honor the holy works of U Thant. And I am also proud to say that he was a Myanmar citizen. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

## **Bodhgaya - The Enlightened place**

Over 200 years after the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana*, the Mahabodhi Tree, where under the Buddha attained the Enlightenment unaided and unguided by any super natural agency was destroyed and ruined by one of King Asoka's queen. At the same way over 1000 years after demise of the Buddha, army of Turkey smashed the Bodhi Tree. As you, all know King Asoka was a very pious Buddhist. Even though Asoka was a very devoted King, but even in his royal time or during his reign, his queen destroyed the Bodhi Tree.

So all my dhamma brothers and sisters, we should focus on how to preserve and sustain the holy places of the Buddha and the Buddhist Historical monuments now a day. We have to find out the ways to protect the Buddha's places at this very great conference.

Nowadays, religious beliefs and moral values are waning especially among younger generation. Therefore, we solicit each and every religious leader to focus on the ways to preserve the Buddhist Historical sites and monuments.

Here in the very significant conference of the United Nations day of Vesak, I would like to mention about a Sasana hero, Anagarika Dhammapala from Sri Lanka. He devoted his time and energy to organize the Mahabodhi Society. He tried hard to regain the authority at the Mahabodhi Temple from those who did not honor the holy place so that the sacred place of the Buddha could be well preserved. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

In the Mahabodhi temple there were so many symbols of other religions. (put in Hindu temple in Mahabodhi) By the power of his effort and the abilities of his organization we, who honor the Buddha, have the opportunity to preserve the Mahabodhi Temple. Recently, the United Nations has declared Mahabodhi Temple as the world heritage. We do like to honor the United Nations for its holy works at this very important conference held in BKK, Thailand. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

### **Thupas - Cetiya**

As soon as the Buddha entered into *Mahaparinibbana*, the kings from eight countries had the holy relics of the Buddha equally and established *stupas* and enshrined the holy relics in them. During 200 years these *stupas* have been destroyed. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

In 236 BC King Asoka collected the holy relics and built many *stupas* throughout the world and then enshrined relics in them. Again, within 2200 years, the *stupas* ruined and disappeared on the earth unfortunately. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

Here are many statues were demolished by others and you may see our Buddha's statues unsuitable places. Those are in the market for sale, in the hotel for decoration and so on.

Most venerable Sirs, my dear dhamma brothers and sisters, In the light of this disheartening situation, our true responsibility is we must find out the ways to preserve the Buddhist historical sites and monuments in this very moment.

### **Bagan - Ancient city of Myanmar**

There are many ancient pagodas built in Bagan in 11 century AD. We all people in Myanmar are on the way to preserve at our best those Buddhist heritages together with ministry for cultures and ministry of religious affairs. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

### **Sagaing Hills**

There was a cultural city in Myanmar last 700 years ago. Sasana heroes and scholars appeared in that city named Sagaing. One of them, Venerable Ariyavamsa wrote a famous book named *Abhidhamma tika* while living in this monastery. And then Taung Phila Sayadaw wrote Vinayanissaya, translation books in to Myanmar. (*PowerPoint pictures here*)

### **Four Requirements for Preservation**

There are four essential requirements for preservation of the Buddhist Historical heritage sites and monuments. They are as follows: 1. man power; 2. money power; 3. material power, and 4. mind power.

When we talk about man power, we need to mobilize the power of monks, government, educated persons, technicians and people from all walks of life for the preservation of Buddhist historical sites. Just as different nations with different political outlooks united in forming the United Nations, we Buddhist should try to unite our Buddhist Nations and form United Buddhist Nations. In order to reach that stage we need a powerful spirit of Buddhist Brotherhood. The foundation of that spirit is friendship, understanding, forgiveness and patience. I do believe that the present conference will contribute a great deal to building friendship and mutual understanding among Buddhist Leaders. *(PowerPoint pictures here)*

For the preservation of Buddhist sites we also need money power and material power but the most important prerequisite for it is mind power. However much money, material and man power we have, without character, moral and virtue we cannot implement any plan effectively.

Therefore, at this conference on the United Nations day of Vesak I would like to urge all Buddhist leaders and all friends in Dhamma to safeguard, maintain and preserve the Buddhist historical sites and monuments by using these four powers.