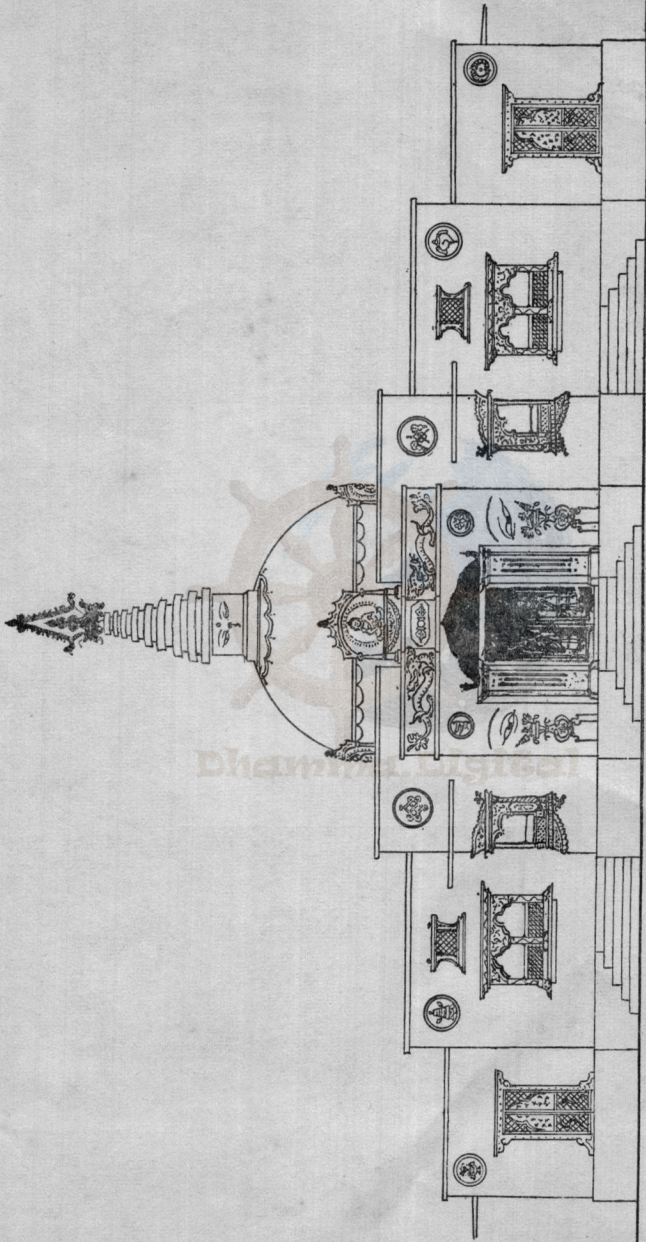


NEPAL

THE
BIRTH-PLACE OF BUDDHA



A
MEMORANDUM
FROM THE DHARMODAYA SABHA
TO THE
THIRD WORLD BUDDHIST CONFERENCE
RANGOON, BURMA
DECEMBER 3rd 1954



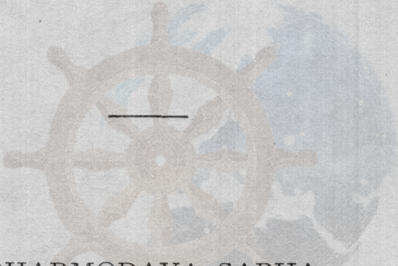
Sketch plan of a proposed Vihara at Lumbini, estimated cost Rs. 1,50,000/-

Delegates from Nepal

TO THE

THIRD WORLD BUDDHIST CONFERENCE :

1. Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana (*Leader*)
2. Bhikkhu Amritananda (*Deputy Leader*)
3. Sri Maniharsha Jyoti Upasak
4. Sri Jagat Lal Upasak
5. Sri Nhuche Bahadur Vajracharya



DHARMODAYA SABHA,
SRIGHA VIHAR, NAGHAL TOLE,
KATHMANDU, NEPAL.

A REPORT ON THE PRESENT STATE OF BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

IN spite of persecutions and in the face of distinctly apathic attitude constantly maintained by past regimes Buddhism is still the faith of more than half the population of Nepal. Tamangs, Sherpas, Lepchas, Kiratis, Gurungs and the majority of the Newars are Buddhists but the Buddhism as practised by them is of a very mixed character. While the Newars are Mahayanists the others profess Lamaism and recently Theravada has found favour with a certain section of the people. It is largely due to the introduction of Theravada and the reverses that it met with at first that an awakening has come among the people and attempts have been made to rescue and restore Buddhism to its original purity.

With the establishment recently of a democratic government headed by the Hon'ble Sri M. P. Koirala under the benign rule of H. M. the King Tribhuvana Bira Bikram Shah Deva the suppression of Buddhism has ceased and the tide has turned. It was a happy occasion when H. M. the King visited Anandakuti Vihara in 1951 thus breaking the age old tradition which forbade the Gurkha rulers of Nepal to enter a Buddhist temple and worship the Buddha. Under the new regime Buddhism has received definitely much encouragement and something has already been done for its revival.

In addition to the numerous Buddhist temples in the towns and villages which have always attracted large numbers of people on all occasions some new temples have been built and these have become centres of Theravada teaching. An elementary Buddhist school has been opened at the Kalimpong branch of the Dharmodaya Sabha and at Kathmandu, the Anandakuti Vidyapith has been reorganised as a residential Buddhist school and put on more strong footing with aid from Government. Extensions to the Anandakuti Vihara itself has also been made.

Besides frequent public meetings and lectures organised by the Dharmodaya Sabha, it sent a delegation to the Chatta Sangayana held at Rangoon in May, 1954. This is the first delegation sent abroad from Nepal in which women also took part. On the occasion of the Sangayana the Government of Nepal presented an image of the Buddha to the Peace Pagoda in Rangoon and sent the Ven'ble Amritananda, General Secretary, Dharmodaya Sabha, and Sri Sher Bahadur Sahi, Governor of Bhairawa and Chairman of the Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee, as special representatives. To the second session of the Sangayana which commenced from November 15, the Ven'bles Sakyana and Vivekananda have been sent to participate. Five more monks have been sent to Burma, to study the Pali Tripitaka on scholarships kindly offered by the Union Buddha Sasana Council.



Swayambhu Chaitya at Kathmandu

The Dharmodaya Sabha is now concentrating its efforts in the restoration of the sacred Lumbini Grove and the Government have already made a grant of 25 *bighas* of land. The Lumbini Committee of the Dharmodaya Sabha has before it a plan for the construction of a temple at Lumbini.

It is gratifying to note that following an appeal made by the Sabha to help it restore the sacred birth-place of the Buddha the Union Buddha Sasana Council of Burma is taking a keen interest in the project. The Hon'ble U Thein Maung, Vice-President of the Council and Chief Justice of Burma conferred with the members of the Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee when he made a pilgrimage to Lumbini last year and assured the Committee of all possible help from the Union Buddha Sasana Council.

A large, beautiful image of the Buddha has already been received from Burma for installation in the temple at Lumbini, and some contributions have also been received from Burma, Ceylon, Japan, Penang and Thailand. The name of the Rt. Rev. Phra Maha Virawongse of Parana Niwas Temple, Bangkok, must specially be mentioned in this connection.

The Buddhist centres had more visitors this year than ever before. Mention must be made here of the conversion of a Swedish couple, Mr. and Mrs. K. H. Wagner, at Anandakuti Vihara in Kathmandu recently. Besides a good-will mission from Thailand there were visitors from Ceylon, Japan, France, Switzerland and the United States of America.

With the air linking of Bhairawa Lumbini has been brought to within a few hours' distance from Kathmandu.

While reviewing the present state of Buddhism in the country during a meeting of the Working Committee of the Dharmodaya Sabha a resolution was passed that the 4th World Buddhist Conference be organised in Nepal on the occasion of the 25 hundredth anniversary of Maha Parinibbana of The Buddha. The resolution was duly com-

municated to H. M. the King and the Hon'ble Sri M. P. Koirala, Prime Minister, and the Government have given assurance for full support to the Dharmodaya Sabha in holding the Conference. The present Delegation has been instructed to move a resolution in the Conference in Burma that the next Conference be held in Nepal under the auspicious of the Dharmodaya Sabha.

The Conference will no doubt receive a great impetus in the revival of Buddhism in Nepal.

LUMBINI

To nearly one fifth of the entire human race Lumbini is sacred beyond all expression, for, here 'the Buddha Sakyamuni was born'. From the earliest days it has inspired the imagination of the pious Buddhist. In the twentieth year of his illustrious reign King Asoka, accompanied by the ancient and venerable Upagupta, made a pilgrimage to the sacred place and caused to be recorded thus :

(A) Devana(pi)yena Piyadasina lajina visati-vasavhi-sitena atana agacha mahiyite hida Budhe jate Sakyamuti ti

(B) sila vigadabhi cha kalapita silathabhe cha unsapapite hida Bhagavam jate ti

(C) Lumbini-game ubalike kate athabhangiye cha.

Translated, it reads :

(A) When King Devanampriya Priyadarsin had been annointed 20 years, he came himself and worshipped (this spot) because the Buddha Sakyamuni was born here.

(B) [He] both caused to be made a stone bearing a horse (?) and caused a stone pillar to be set up (in order to show) that the Blessed One was born here.

(C) [He] made the village of Lumbini free of taxes and paying (only) an eighth share (of the produce).

The incidental discovery made by Dr. A. A. Fuhrer in December 1896 of this inscription aroused great interest throughout the entire Buddhist world for it has established beyond all doubt the exact location of the Lumbini grove where, under a sal tree, Siddhartha was born to Mahamaya



Asoka Pillar at Lumbini

Devi, 2498 years ago. Ruins of former towns have also been uncovered around the site and some of them are believed to be that of Kapilavastu. Further excavations will no doubt reveal more and release many a story and legend from the stones lying buried under the wilderness. When Hsuan Tsang, the great Chinese scholar and traveller, visited Lumbini, eight hundred years after Asoka, he found it already a wilderness and the pillar itself split by lightning and the capital lying about on the ground. Nobody apparently could read the inscription on the pillar. Thus the birth-place of the Buddha was lost to the world till Dr. Fuhrer rescued it from oblivion at the end of the last century.

Some attempts have since been made to protect the holy site and pilgrims from all Buddhist countries have continued to visit it in spite of all sorts of hardships experienced by them. A good deal of attention has recently been paid to it on account of the efforts made by the Dharmodaya Sabha to make it occupy once more its rightful place among the places of Buddhist pilgrimages. Once more, after many centuries, the anniversary of the thrice-sacred Vaisakh Purnima is being celebrated at Lumbini under the auspicious of the Sabha.

The Dharmodaya Sabha to which the Government of Nepal have handed over the custody of the sacred spot, is now considering ways and means for the reconstruction of the grove and for making it easily accessible to pilgrims. A sub-committee of the Sabha, the Lumbini Dharmodaya Committee, has been formed to look after the sacred spot. The Committee consists of two Government officials, the Governors of Bhairawa and Taulihawa, one non-official local representative and three members of the Dharmodaya Sabha.

The programme before the Sabha, besides that of restoring Lumbini, may be briefly stated as follows :—

- (i) Propagation of Buddhism through the Press and in the traditional way, by means of sermons, by

publications of translation of the Tripitaka with commentaries and of other important Buddhist literature.

- (ii) To publish pamphlets and books and a magazine in English in order to bring Buddhist countries closer.
- (iii) To encourage young people to study Buddhism by providing them with facilities and scholarships not only in the country but also abroad.
- (iv) To encourage the Buddhists of other countries to make pilgrimage to Nepal by providing them with information and all kinds of facilities.
- (v) To provide facilities for Buddhist scholars to carry on the researches in the vast amount of Buddhist literature available in Nepal.
- (vi) To train workers for missionary work in order to carry the Teachings of the Tathagata to the remotest village.
- (vii) To construct and maintain a vihara in every village with a considerable Buddhist population.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

As soon as he had attained enlightenment the Buddha returned to Kapilavastu and with that the history of Buddhism in Nepal begins. The earliest converts were the Teacher's own kinsmen—the Sakyas. The Teacher is also believed to have travelled far into the interior into the central valley, where he made a thousand converts. A story current in Nepal recounts how the Teacher was received by King Jitedasti. There still exists a shrine some twenty miles eastwards from Kathmandu known as Namu-Buddha or Namura believed to have been erected to mark the spot where the Teacher preached the Vyaghri Jataka. Ananda, the foremost disciple of the Buddha, is said to have also

visited the valley on some other occasion to see some of his kinsmen.



Namo Buddha at Namura

The origin of the valley itself is attributed to the Bodhisatwo Manjusri who is believed to have come from China. Manjusri discovered a lake and the story says that after having drained it laboriously he settled down with his followers. To this day Manjusri is greatly venerated both in Nepal and in China.

Buddhism flourished in all its glory in those early centuries. It was an age of intense activity. Some of the greatest teachers like Nagarjuna, the founder of Mahayana Buddhism, lived in Nepal. Many of the temples and monasteries existing to this day belonged to that period. In the 20th year of his reign King Asoka came all the way from his capital Pataliputra (modern Patna in Bihar, India) to pay his homage to the birth-place of the Buddha. In the valley itself he not only left an everlasting land-mark

in the history of the country by laying the foundation of the town of Lalita Patan but left his daughter Princess Charumati married to the Nepalese Prince Devapala as well. A vihara on the suburbs of Kathmandu, by its very name of Chabahi, reminds us of Princess Charumati to this day. Some of the stupas built by Asoka are still existing.

In the 7th century A.D. the Nepalese introduced Buddhism to Tibet. Srong-san-Gampo, the Prince of Tibet, had come to see his trans-Himalayan neighbour, and Amsuvarman, the king of Nepal, initiated him into Buddhism. Following the example set by Asoka, Amsuvarman gave his daughter, Bhrikuti Devi, in marriage to the Tibetan Prince. Among images and other things taken by the Princess to Tibet was a begging bowl that had once belonged to the Buddha himself. As soon as the Princess arrived at her new home, she plunged herself in the task of propagating Buddhism in her husband's domain. Not only a cultural link was thus established between Tibet and Nepal but the latter also helped build Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, by sending technicians. It is therefore no wonder that the Tibetans looked upon the Nepalese Princess as a deity; to them, she has become a legendary figure, too good to be a mere human being. A temple dedicated to her stands to this day at the Tibetan capital.

Hsuan Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller, has left a record of Nepal of those days. The king, he writes, "has sincere faith in Buddhism. He is a Li-ch's-po (Licchaivi) and is a man of high character and distinguished knowledge." People professed both the "Greater and Lesser Vehicles".

"Recently there was a king called Yang-cho-ma-mo (Amsuvarman) who has known far and wide for the steadiness of his judgement and sagacity. He composed a treatise on sacred rhythm. He encouraged learning and respected virtue."

Our picture of those early days is made clearer by a brief yet graphic account left by another traveller from the same country, Wang Hiuen-t'se. The king, Narendra

Deva, to whom the traveller went as an emmissary from his king, is described as having the prestige and pomp of an Oriental sovereign. He shows a marked devotion to Buddha. The pavillions of his palace are covered with delicate workmanship. In the middle is built a tower of seven stories, the grandeur and wealth of which is more remarkable. The people are fond of bathing, of dramatic representations and of astrology. The houses are of wood painted and sculptured. Numerous monasteries shelter the Buddhist priests. Commerce prospers and trade is well



Maha Buddha at Patan

rganised. Irrigation makes the soil of great value. Narendra Deva is also recorded to have sent a mission to China and that was the beginning of frequent interchange of diplomatic missions between the two countries. Nepalese artists and traders sometimes went as far as China and the famous Czenzes Khan had a Nepalese artist in his court.

For a long time Nepal served as a link between the two great centres of civilisations in Asia—India and China. Scholars like Santarakshita, Kamalashila and Dipankara Prigyan brought to Nepal and Tibet their great learning and knowledge from the universities of Nalanda and Vikramasila while from Tibet came the great Atisa.

The loss of India to Buddhism dealt a fatal blow to Buddhism in Nepal also. As the wave of persecution of Buddhists in India began to spread, those who were fortunate enough to escape with their lives sought asylum in Nepal. The ruthless suppression of Buddhism in India has been vividly described by Dr. Oldfield. In his words, 'the final catastrophe was brought about in the 9th century by Shankaracharya, a bigot Brahmin, who was not content with refuting their doctrine, destroying their literature, turning most of their finest temples and putting their priests and sages to the sword, induced a furious persecution against all persons, of every age and rank, and of either sex, who professed or protected the religion of Buddha.'

In the course of his fanatical career, Shankaracharya arrived in the valley of Nepal in pursuit of the fleeing refugees and having succeeded in converting the ruler of the land to his fanaticism, he inflicted the greatest injury to Buddhism in Nepal. Of the original mass of Buddhist scriptures and *Sutras* numbering some 84,000 volumes a great deal has been destroyed, the monks driven from the monasteries and the temples plundered and destroyed.

Pursuing his infamous mission still northwards, Sankaracharya was killed in Tibet, but the injuries inflicted by him took a long time to heal.

As Buddhism ceased to be a living faith in India Brahmanism gained ground in Nepal also. It was not however

until the early 15th century A.D. that a marked preponderance of Brahmanic influence was felt in the Nepalese national life when King Jayasthiti Malla introduced the caste system in Nepal and drew up a form of social set-up strictly in accordance with Hindu teachings. A greater blow was however to come in the 18th century when the Nepalese lost their kingdom to the Hindu chief of Gorkha.

Writing about Buddhism in Nepal in 1880 A.D. Dr. Oldfield, a student of Nepalese Buddhism, observed most lamentably, "It is now in the last stage of its existence; it is rapidly being supplanted by Hinduism and before the lapse of another century the religion of Buddha—after enduring for upwards of 2000 years—will, in all probability, be as extinct in Nepal as in the plains of Hindustan."

THE REVIVAL

The fears of Dr. Oldfield fortunately did not materialise and before the lapse of another century there were attempts to rescue and revive Buddhism in the country. Inspired by the movement started in India for the revival of Buddhism by the late Anagarika Dharmapala some young men in Nepal took up the cause in Nepal. The name of Sri Dharmaditya Dharmacharya will go down to posterity as the pioneer in this great task. Forerunner of the Nepalese monks, Mahapragnya who was ordained by a Tibetan monk at Mt. Nagarjuna, near Kathmandu, and four others were, however summararily expelled by Maharaj Chandra Shamsher in the year 1926. The Tibetan monk who had come to restore the ancient Swayambhu stupa, was also turned out of the country.

Suppression of Buddhist activities continued. Often the workers were harassed, jailed or even exiled. But inspired by the Ven. U Chandramani Mahasthvir of Burma resident at Kusinagar, the Bhikkhus Pannananda and Dhammaloka, despite great hardships, came forward determined to carry on the noble task. Gradually a few more Ven. monks, Amritananda, Aniruddha, Mahanama, Subo

ghananda, Sakyananda and Buddhaghosa, joined the ranks of the earlier workers.

The year 1944 will always remain a year to be remembered by every Buddhist. Hatred when added to jealousy can do great harm. The Prime Minister-Maharaja of Nepal, Juddha Shamshe Jung Bahadur Rana, supplied with fabrications and idle stories, and acting on impulse, decided to lay his heavy hand upon this small community of Bhikkhus. There were about 8 Bhikkhus and a few nuns at Kathmandu then. Most of them were ordained at Kusinagar by the Ven. U Chandramani Mahasthvir. A few had taken to the yellow robe in Ceylon and Burma. The community was leading a quiet existence in the Viharas, mainly at Kindol Vihara, an ancient place of Buddhist worship, and at Ananda Kuti Vihara, both on the spurs of the Swayambhu Hill at Kathmandu.

On the 30th of July, 1944 the Government served a notice to the Bhikkhus to cease forthwith (1) the giving of sermons, (2) the performing and observing of Buddhist ceremonies and festivals and (3) the ordaining of any one into the Sangha (not even one born a Buddhist). An even stranger injunction was added that the monks and nuns must return to worldly life. Failing to comply with these fantastic demands the whole community was to be expelled from the country and the doors shut upon them for ever. A grace of three days was given them to think it over and reform'.

The Sangha was perturbed at these impossible commands which came like a bolt from the blue. They denied having ordained any one into the Sangha (if the law of the land is against this) and they refuted the charge that they had ever engaged in unlawful oratory. The Government were however adamant in their attitude and decided to remove the community from the country. The conditions imposed by the Government were such that no self-respecting person, much less those belonging to the order of the Buddha, could comply with them. They could not sign their own death warrant. So they decided boldly to

leave the country, inspite of the Vassa (rainy season) as the Government would not permit them to stay any longer. T



Khasht Chaitya at Chabahil

nuns were permitted to remain in the Viharas during the Vassa, on condition that they are to return to lay life at the end of the period, but if they decided contrary they too faced expulsion.

This action of the Government brought the yellow-robed community before the people who were greatly agitated by the flagrant denial of freedom of thought and worship to the order of the Blessed One. In the conditions then prevailing, however, no one could help more than lend moral support to those who had been forced to go into exile

The Bhikkhus arrived at various places in India. The news of their expulsion was received with much surprise and great grief. Meetings were held at several places to protest against the unjust treatment meted out to the Sangha in Nepal.

THE DHARMODAYA SABHA

The monks in exile conceived the advisability of forming a society in order to maintain some sort of cohesion amongst themselves and to do such service as they could possibly render to the Sasana from India. On the 30th of November, 1944, then, a meeting was convened at Sarnath (India) by the Bhikkhus and some Nepalese philanthropists living at that time in India and the DHARMODAYA SABHA was founded with the Ven. U Chandramani Mahasthavir and Bhadant Ananda Kausalyayana as the President and Vice-President respectively. Membership of the organisation was thrown open to the laity too. The aims and objects of the Dharmodaya Sabha were defined as (1) to propagate the teachings of the Buddha in Nepal through the Press and (2) to encourage young, promising people to study Buddhism by awarding scholarships. The workers of the Sabha drew their inspiration from the Ven. U Chandramani Mahasthavir and Bhadant Ananda Kausalyayana, whose wise guidance has helped them in their difficult days and made it possible to carry out successfully all the important activities of the Dharmodaya Sabha.

The day the Dharmodaya Sabha was founded will go down in the history of Nepal as a red letter day. For it marked not only the beginning of a new era for Buddhism in Nepal but it virtually brought about a renaissance in Nepalese (Newari) literature. It will be noted that the Newars had a rich store of their own literature but with the decline and fall of the civilisation of the Newars towards the close of the 18th century A.D. the flow of fresh literature stopped and the rigorous control and hostility of the regime that succeeded that of the Newar Malla kings hastened its decay. When the Dharmodaya Sabha brought out

publications in the Newari language it was subjected systematically to unnecessary harrassment in order to discourage it.

In 1946 a Good-Will Mission from Ceylon, under the leadership of the Ven. Narada Maha Thera visited Nepal and he was able to obtain a permission to build a 'chaitya' at Kathmandu in the name of Ceylon. Although a Nepalese monk, yet the Ven. Amritananda had also accompanied the Mission, as he was not one of those expelled from Nepal. He represented to the then Prime Minister, Padma Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, the case of the exilled monks and His Highness was good enough to permit one among the monks to return home. An assurance was also given that the ban on the return of all the monks will be lifted soon.

The Ven'ble Narada Maha Thera visited Kathmandu again for the opening ceremony of the Sri Lanka Chaitya where a sacred relic brought from Ceylon was enshrined. A sapling of the sacred Bo Tree of Anuradhapura was also planted and a Sima for Bhikkhus was established. On the suggestion of the Ven. Narada Maha Thera to the then Prime Minister, Mohan Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana, a holiday to Buddhists in the service of the Nepal Government was given on the thrice-sacred Vaishakh Purnima.

Since its establishment in 1944 at Sarnath, the Dharmodaya Sabha has been working unceasingly. Early in 1947 the Sabha's headquarters were removed to Kalimpong (W. Bengal) in its own building where a library was established. The headquarters have now been shifted to Srigha Vihar, Kathmandu, and an elementary school has been opened at Kalimpong. The Sabha publishes a monthly Newari journal, the *Dharmodaya*, under the editorship of the Ven. Mahanama. Since their return the monks have been able to establish several new viharas all over the country. Mention of newly built viharas at Kathmandu, Patan, Bhojpur (East Nepal) and at Pokhara and Palpa-Tansen in West Nepal must be made.

A number of Nepalese merchants and philanthropists residing at Tibet and India have also helped this great task

Without their help, of course, much could not have been achieved. Mention must be made particularly of Messrs. Jyoti Brothers whose help and constant devotion alone have made possible the execution of many of the Sabha's activities.

With the establishment of a democratic Government in Nepal in 1950 the Dharmodaya Sabha was able to extend its activities. Since 1951 the Vaisakh Purnima was declared a national holiday throughout the country.

With the active support and co-operation of the Government, the Dharmodaya Sabha was able to bring the sacred relics of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana Arahants to Kathmandu from India. A reception committee was formed for the purpose with H. M. the King as President, the Hon'ble Sri B. P. Koirala and the Hon'ble Sri G. M. Singh, then Ministers in the Government, as Vice-Presidents and the Ven. Amritananda as Secretary. Invitations to visit Nepal on the occasion were extended to the heads of Buddhist states and to Buddhist organisations and individuals in India, Burma, Ceylon, Japan, Tibet, Thailand, Cambodia, Sikkim, England, U.S.A., Germany, etc., and to the Ambassadors for China and France in India.

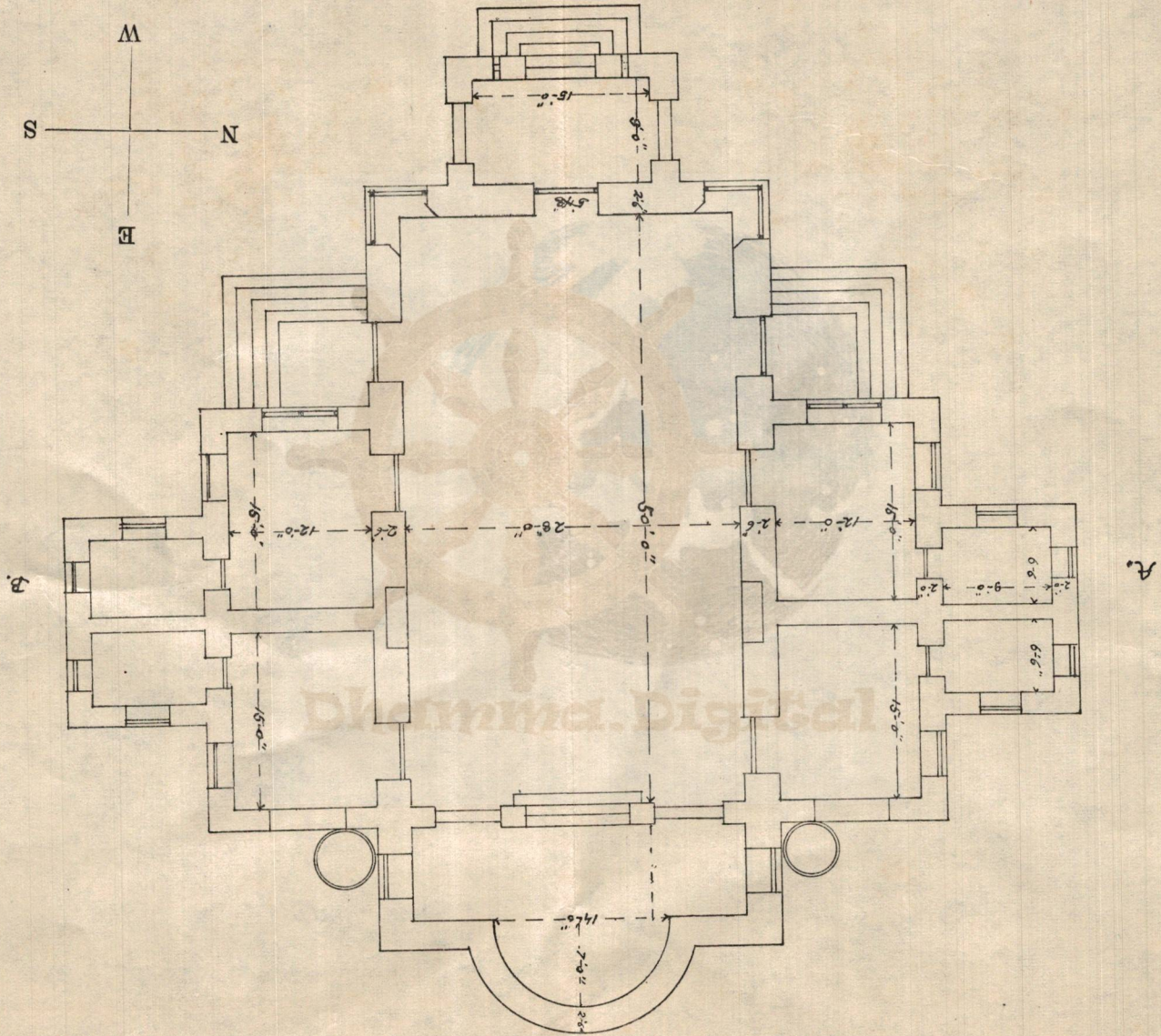
The Dharmodaya Sabha has also been able to take part in international conferences. To the First World Buddhist Conference held by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Ceylon, the Sabha sent the Ven'ble Amritananda and Sri Maniharsha Jyoti, the Hony. Treasurer of the Sabha, and in the Second Conference held in Japan two representatives namely, Ven'ble Amritananda and Sri Kesar Lal took part. Two observers, the Ven'ble Buddha Sagara and Sri Triratna Lal also attended the Japan Conference.

Once more Nepal is moving among other Buddhist nations, and in concluding this brief memorandum let us humbly appeal to our brethren in *dhamma* to help, by all means at their disposal, in restoring to Nepal its ancient heritage—Buddhism.

May all living beings be well and happy.

E N D.

Foundation-sketch map of the proposed Vihara at Lumbini



DHARMODAYA SABHA

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HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF NEPAL

TRIBHUVANA BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEVA.

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VEN. U CHANDRAMANI MAHA THERA.

Vice-Presidents :

VEN. ANANDA KAUSALYAYANA THERA.

VEN. DHAMMALOKA THERA.

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BHIKKHU AMRITANANDA.

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SRI PUSHPARATNA SAGAR

SRI MURTIMAN SHAKYA

SRI PURNA KAJI TAMRAKAR

SRI DHARMADITYA DHARMACARYA

SRI GYANA JYOTI

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Gyanamala—by Bhikkhus Dhammaloka and Amritananda
Buddha Guna—by Bhikkhu Dhammaloka
Mahajayamangala Gatha—by Bhikkhu Karmashila
Buddha Jivani—by Bhikkhu Amritananda
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Hwanaga—by Hridaya
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