

Ramgram stupa is sacred because it contains relics of the Lord

Therefore this stupa is pure and sacred for devotion.

The repeated devotion to this stupa leads to peace

And, peaceful mind of a man drives to harmony

Harmony transforms offerings into merit

And merit then opens the spiritual path.

(redone from a Tibetan saying)

Lord Buddha, a great preacher and reformer of the contemporary world of sixth century B.C. was born in Lumbini, now situated in Rupandehi district of Nepal. He was the only offspring of the king Suddhodana of Shakya Republican state of Kapilavastu. His home town was Kapilavastu and his earlier name was Siddhartha Gautama. He abdicated his prince hood, palace and kingdom at the age of 29 and became a wandering monk. He rendered the dynamic message for free thinking, humanity, equality, fraternity, peace and nonviolence to the whole human race till his last breath.

According to the Buddhist text Mahaparinibbana sutta Lord Buddha went into great deliverance at the age of 80 in Kushinagara of India in fifth century B.C. and was cremated there. Knowing the demise of the Lord in Kushinagara, kings and other claimants arrived on the spot to claim the corporal relics of the Lord. Then the holy relics was divided into eight parts and distributed to eight claimants.

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Koliya kingdom was one among the eight who received one portion of the relics. King of that time brought the relics and built the stupa containing that relics in his capital town which was then known as Ramagrama. All other seven claimants who received the relics also built the stupas in their respective country. During that era the construction of the stupa was considered an act of highest piety.

After erection of the stupas containing the relics of Buddha all eight places became important pilgrimage centers and devotion for Buddhist. Ramagram is one of them and thus visited by all the eminent Buddhist pilgrims since the stupa was erected.

In third century.B. C. Emperor Asoka who was the most devoted follower of Buddha thought of opening all eight stupas and redistribute the relics into 84000 parts and enumerate the stupas all over his country.

After opening seven other stupas, Emperor Asoka proceeded to the last eighth one also. But he could not do so because of the obstruction caused by Nagas who were guarding and worshipping the stupa day and night.

Being impressed so much by the arrangements and devotion of the Nagas Emperor Asoka left the place and returned to his palace. In such a situation the stupa remained quite safe in its originality and holy relics were not taken away. Ramagram stupa remains intact with its original contents.

Due to such amazing instance of the history and unique example of appliances for worship adopted by the Nagas, this stupa became more famous and important pilgrimage center for the people of entire Buddhist countries.

In course of time, two most courageous and illustrious Chinese pilgrims arrived at the spot and recorded about Ramagram. Their name is Fa-Xian and Huen-Tsiang who visited the site in fifth and seventh centuries respectively. The first pilgrim Fa-Xian wrote about the place:

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Going- east from Buddhas's birthplace, and at a distanced of five yojanas (about 40 miles), there is a kingdom called Rama. The king of this country, having obtained one portion of the relics of Buddha's body, returned with it and built over it a tope, named the Rama tope.

Fa-Xian further describes- By the side of it there is a pool, and in the pool a dragon, which constantly kept watch over(the tope), and presented offerings to it day and night. When King Asoka came forth into the world, he wished to destroy the eight topes (over the relics), and to build (instead of them) 84000 topes. After he had thrown down the seven (others), he wished next to destroy this tope. But then the dragon showed itself, took the king into its residence and when he had seen all the things provided for offerings, it said to him "If you are able with your offerings to exceed these, you can destroy the tope, and take it all away, I will not contend with you." The king, however, knew that such appliances for offerings were not to be had anywhere in the world, and thereupon returned (without carrying out his purpose).

(Afterwards), the ground all about became overgrown with vegetation, and there was nobody to sprinkle and sweep(about the tope),but a herd of elephants came regularly, which brought water with their trunks to water the ground and various kinds of flowers and incense, which they presented at the tope.

Fa-Xian adds on: He (the monk) prevailed on the king of the country to form a residence for monks; and when that was done; he became head of the monastery. At the present day there are monks residing in it. The event is of recent occurrences"

After two hundred and little more years next eminent pilgrim the Hiuen Tsiang arrived on the spot and wrote:

From this (Lumbini) going east 200 li or so, across a wild and deserted jungle, we arrive at the kingdom of Lan-mo(Ramagram). The kingdom of Lan-mo has been waste and desolate for many years. There is no account of its extent. The towns are decayed and the inhabitants few. To the south-east of the old capital (town) there is an old stupa, in height less than a hundred feet."

This was the stupa containing the Koliyas's eighth share of the Shakyamuni's relics, with the attendant monastery seen by Fa-xian now on the verge of collapse, but still surrounded with all

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the old stories of attentive elephants and the dragon guardian who had prevented Emperor Asoka from removing the relics.

Not far from the neighborhood of this stupa is a Sangharama, with a very priests attached to it. Their conduct is respectful and scrupulously correct and one Sramanera manages the whole business of the society. When any priests come from distance, he entertains them with the greatest courtesy and liberality, during three days they keep them in their society, and offer them the four necessary things.

The old tradition is this: Formerly there were some Bhikshus who agreed to come together from a distance, and to travel to worship this stupa. They saw when they had arrived a herd of elephants coming and departing together. Some of them brought in their tusks shrubs(leaves and branches) other with trunks sprinkled water, some of them brought different flowers, and all offered worship(as they stood) to the stupa. When they the Bhikshus saw this, they were moved with joy and deeply affected. Then one of them giving up his full orders(ordinations, vowed to remain here and offer his services continually(to the stupa) and expressing his thoughts to the others, he said(I needed, considering these remarkable signs of abounding merit, count as nothing my own excessive labors during man by years amongst the priests. This stupa having some relics of Buddha by the mysterious power of its sacred character draws together the herd of elephants, who water the earth around and the bequeathed body(of the saint). It would be pleasant to finish the rest of my years in this place, and to obtain with the elephants the end (at which they aim). They all replied "This is an excellent design; as for ourselves, we are stained by our heart (sins) our wisdom is not equal to the formation of such a design, but according to your opportunity look well to your own welfare and cease not your effort in this excellent purpose.

Having others departed from him, he again repeated his earnest vow and with joy devoted himself to a solitary life during the rest of his days in service to this stupa.

On this he constructed for himself a leafy pannasala(a residence with roof covered with the leaves) led the rivulets so as to form a pool, and at their proper season gathered flowers and watered, swept and gardened the stupa surroundings. Thus during a succession of the years he preserved without change of purpose.

The kings of the neighboring countries, hearing this story, greatly honored him, gave up their wealth and treasures and together founded the Sangharama(a monastery). Then they

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requested (the sramanera-a novice monk) to take charge of the affairs of the congregation and from that time till now (when Huein Tsiang was there) there have been no interruptions in the original appointment and a sramanera has ever held the chief office in the convent,

At present;, Nawalparasi district has been regarded the main part of the Ancient Kolian Kingdom and one can see the historical Ramagram stupa near the village of Ujjaini to the south east from district headquarter Parasi Bazar at a distance nearly five kilometers. It is nearly 250 Kilometers south west from Kathmandu and 50 kilometers east of Lumbini.

Had proper excavation, conservation and development of this place been done like that of Lumbini, Kushinagar and Saranath, it would be a glorious place in Nepal for the Buddhist pilgrims and ordinary tourists as well.