

To

Air Vice Marshal, His Highness, Sikandar-Saulat,
Iftikhar-Jl-Mulk, AL-Haj Nawab Mohammad Hamidullah
Khan, Bahadur, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., C.V.O., LL.D.
Ruler of Bhopal.

from

The Maha Bodhi Society of Sri Lanka and India.

May it please Your Highness,

Historical records indicate that the State of Bhopal over which your Highness rules was the ancient State of Malwa in the Province of Avanti which was famous as a centre of Buddhism and of Buddhist culture.

Buddhist Chronicles such as the Mahavansa bear witness to the fact that the village of Sanchi situated in Diwanganj Sub-Division of Bhopal State is the same as Chetiyagiri of old, which in the time of the Emperor Dharmasoka was a great Buddhist Monastery, and in the time of the BUDDHA, the residence of some of His most venerable disciples such as Abhayakumara, Isidatta, Isidasa, Dhammapala, Sona and Maha Kaccayana.

This famous town of Sanchi with its beautiful shrines and extensive monasteries enjoyed the protection of kings belonging to the dynasties of Maurya, Sunga, Andhra and Gupta for twelve hundred years and served as a nerve centre of Buddhist civilization radiating its benign influence over many lands. In the thirteenth century, however, because of the vicissitudes of time, it fell into decay. And, now, once more, owing to the laudable efforts of Your Highness' Government the ruins of that glory have been conserved and stand as masterpieces of Buddhist Architecture second to none elsewhere in the world.

We are grateful to Your Highness for the invitation extended to us for a conference between the members of Your Highness' Government and representatives of the Maha Bodhi Society in order that this ancient place of worship at Sanchi, hallowed by its association with the highest manifestation of Buddhist culture, may be restored to grandeur by the gracious assistance rendered by Your Highness to the efforts of the Maha Bodhi Society directed to that purpose.

Sir Alexander Cunningham, once Archaeological Commissioner of India, who discovered the relics of the BUDDHA'S two chief disciples, Sariputta and Moggallana, removed these relics to England about 60 years ago. We are delighted to be able to state that the Indian Government, in response to an appeal made by the Maha Bodhi Society on behalf of the Buddhists, has agreed to use its good offices for the restitution of these relics. Our Society has decided to enshrine them once more in Sanchi, in accordance with conditions to be agreed upon by Your Highness' Government and the Maha Bodhi Society. We entreat Your Highness' support to the endeavour of the Maha Bodhi Society to make proper provision for the enshrinement of these venerable relics.

It is our earnest hope that by such collaboration between Your Highness' Government and the Maha Bodhi Society this famous citadel of Buddhism will regain its ancient prestige and once more draw to itself the homage of the many millions of Buddhists throughout the world. We also fervently hope that this act of graciousness on the part of Your Highness will serve to strengthen further the ties which

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even now unite so closely the two countries of India and Ceylon and make the State of Bhopal a centre of Buddhist pilgrimage. Such a consummation will, we feel sure, be as welcome to Your Highness as it is to us.

Two thousand two hundred and fifty three years ago Asoka's royal son, the Venerable Arahant Maha Mahinda, setting forth from the monastery at Vedisagiri erected by his mother-queen Vidisadevi-completed the greatest missionary activity in the history of Buddhism by taking to the people of Lanka the noble teachings of the BUDDHA. On that occasion there was forged between our two countries of Bhopal and Ceylon a link that has persisted down the ages. May this meeting of ours further strengthen our mutual cordiality and goodwill.

On behalf of the Buddhists we wish Your Highness and Your Highness' subjects all prosperity and peace. May the blessings of the Holy Triratna, and the protection of whose shrines has been so earnestly undertaken by Your Highness, shield you from all harm, enhance your glory, prolong your life and increase your happiness.

Paravahera Vajiranana Thero
Amaradasa Patnapala.

Rajasinha Hewavitarne.

Parakrama Prasanna Siriwardana.

7th January, 2489.B.E./1946.C.E.