



Personal.

D. No. 2435-C
1912-ho.

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Dasr-i-Sultani
Bhopal.

7th December, 1940.

Subject :- Buddhist relics.

My dear Major Edward

With the publication of the news in the Statesman of the 3rd February, 1940, that relics of Buddha's disciples, Sariputta and Mahamoggalana, at present in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, were, after the war, to be handed over to the Mahabodhi Society, for enshrinement in the Buddhist temple in New-Delhi, my Government took steps to stress the importance of restoring them to Sanchi. It will be recalled that along with certain other antiquities of artistic and archaeological interest, they were taken away by Sir Alexander Cunningham, when he visited Sanchi in 1851. In 1920, the Bhopal Government represented that the antiquities, according to list furnished, may be returned to Sanchi to be housed in the Sanchi Museum. Sir John Marshall, the then Director-General of Archaeology in India, had, in one of his letters, said "No doubt, the most appropriate place in which to

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*(Copy already furnished to the Bhopal Agency as enclosure to Mr. Abbasi's D.O. letter No. 447-B, dated the 24th February, 1940).

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preserve the objects taken from the Stupas would be on the site of Sanchi itself." The claim was, however, not pursued, as both the Director-General and the Political Agent in Bhopal, felt that as a matter of policy, the British Museum would not agree to their restoration. But now that the London Museum authorities are prepared to take sentiments into consideration and allow the relics to return to India, naturally the most appropriate repository for them is the place from which they were removed, and I strongly press its claim.

If the Mahabodhi Society does not consider a Museum a suitable place for the exhibition of relics of sacred significance, the Government of Bhopal are prepared to make suitable arrangements for their enshrinement with such reasonable facilities as religious interests of the Buddhist pilgrims may require.

There is one further point that might also be stressed in this connection. The enshrinement of these relics at a place in British India without any justification or claim, in this case New-Delhi, could only be at the expense of Sanchi. Pilgrim traffic is always a source of material indirect benefit to the State, and my Government must necessarily regard this diversion of Buddhist pilgrims to New-Delhi as lacking

in attention to the interests of Bhopal State.

I am writing this personal letter to let you know how I feel in this matter. I should be grateful if you would kindly take adequate steps to ensure the return of these sacred relics to the place to which they belong, viz:- Sanchi.

Yours very truly
Saunderkhat

To

Major C.G.N. Edwards, I.A.,
Political Agent in Bhopal,
BHOPAL.