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Lumbini
लुम्बिनी



Lumbini: The Birthplace of Lord Buddha
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997

THE BIRTHPLACE OF
LORD BUDDHA AND
THE FOUNTAIN OF
BUDDHISM AND
WORLD PEACE

LUMBINI
NEPAL



"All conditioned things are impermanent"
— when one sees this with wisdom,
one turns away from suffering.
This is the path to purification.

Maggavagga: "The Path"
(Verse 277)



LUMBINI NEPAL

THE BIRTHPLACE OF LORD BUDDHA AND
THE FOUNTAIN OF BUDDHISM AND WORLD PEACE

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The Lumbini Development Trust, Government of Nepal is responsible for implementing the UN initiated Lumbini Master Plan and managing, protecting and excavating within the Greater Lumbini Area. Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal is the Patron and the Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation is the Chairman of the Trust.

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Premier Destination for
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Spirituality and Peace



KATHMANDU
NEPAL

The Prime Minister

FOREWORD

I am delighted to write this foreword. It is a matter of great pleasure that Lumbini Development Trust is bringing out a photo-book "Lumbini Nepal: The Birthplace of Lord Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace."

Lumbini was an integral part of Shakyas ganarajya (Shakyas Republic) with its Capital in Kapilvastu. It was an advanced city state by all standards of that period. Organized in the principle of republican system of governance, it was a flourishing republic and with a kingship elected by the people and thus governed under the able leadership of Shakyas. The recent excavation establishes the cultural and architectural significance of the Shakyas Ganarajya. It was in this very land, the famous philosopher Kapil invented the 'Sankya', known as the philosophy of numbers.

As Buddhism spread to the rest of Asia and the world, transferred alongside was the vast collection of knowledge and wisdom, ideas about life and livelihood, messages about social harmony and universal fraternity.

Today, the shared asset of Buddhism connects countries in Asia and beyond. Many of our people follow Buddhism as their core faith and the rest respect it as a pool of enlightened ideas and source of inspiration.

Buddhism has served for generations as the fountain of humanity; as the belief system focused on the quest for betterment of human beings, society and the world. Like other belief systems, Buddhism, too, talks about the distinction between the worldly and eternal, the transient and the endless. Yet, the unique appeal of Buddhism lies in its care of life and nature. One does not have to wait for the next life or another world to find happiness. Ultimate joy can be attained

by anyone, any time, in this very world, in this very life. For this, we should just discard the hatred, self-interest and violence, and should fill ourselves with the spirit of compassion, fraternity and benevolence.

Buddhism thus seeks to empower people. Buddhism is rediscovery of humanity; disciplining, organizing and transforming of oneself, and, by setting example, transforming the rest of society. Its ultimate aim is to attain harmonious organization of society and world order: order that is based on justice, universal fraternity, peaceful co-existence, and human dignity.

Buddha, Buddhism and Lumbini are inseparable. Buddhism cannot be disassociated from Buddha; it also cannot be disassociated from Lumbini. To understand Buddha it is important to understand Lumbini. Visit to Lumbini is, therefore, once in a lifetime experience for those who follow Buddhism and those who admire its grandeur.

I am confident that the book would be of valuable read covering the board spectrum regarding the implementation of Lumbini Master Plan, exploration, excavation and conservation of archaeological sites scattered in Kapilvastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi districts.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Trust for the remarkable publication.

Once again, I would like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to the Lumbini Development Trust family for this creative endeavour.

4 July, 2019

K P Sharma Oli



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

LUMBINI DEVELOPMENT TRUST

"Lumbini, Nepal: The Birthplace of Lord Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism & World Peace"



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lumbini is one of the most sacred places in the world. The archaeological remains are the evidence of the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centers since the 6th century BCE and was inscribed on the list of World Heritage in 1997. We are extremely privileged to present this wonderful memorabilia book on "Lumbini, Nepal: The Birthplace of Lord Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace" along with the Buddhist Circuits of Nepal to all Buddhist pilgrims, peace lovers and visitors. This book contains details of the major Buddhist heritage sites in Nepal along with descriptions of the historical, archaeological and cultural attractions that are worth visiting.

Five United Nations Secretaries General made it a point to visit Lumbini, because this place symbolizes ultimate peace and harmony. The then UN Secretary General U. Thant advised the Government of Nepal to develop Lumbini as an international pilgrimage and tourist center during his visit to the site on April 23, 1967. Accordingly, the Master Plan of Lumbini was designed by a renowned Japanese architect, Prof. Kenzo Tange and approved by the Government of Nepal and United Nations in 1978 for the systematic development of Lumbini. After the formation of Lumbini Development Trust in 1985, preservation, development and promotion of Buddhist heritage monuments in the Greater Lumbini Area including the implementation of the Master Plan are being carried out under the aegis of the Trust. Today, Lumbini is a potential destination for more than 535 million Buddhists and even larger number of visitors who are interested in peace and culture.

We are deeply grateful to all erudite scholars who have provided scholarly ideas and views in preparing this book. We also acknowledge that publishing this book would not have been possible without the support of the entire Lumbini Development Trust family. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Gyanin Rai, Ms. Pasang Sherpa and Mr. Ananda Shrestha for their untiring efforts. We are equally indebted to Mr. Saroj Bhattacharai, Mr. Kai Weise, Mr. Basanta Bidari, Ms. Sumnima Udas, Dr. Milan Ratna Sakya, Mr. Hari Dhoj Rai and Ms. Nina Sharma for their invaluable feedback and input along with editing the manuscript.

Also warm thanks are due to Most Ven. Phra Sribodhivides, Prof. Robin Coningham, Prof. Yukio Nishimura, Prof. Roland Lin, Ven. Amphol Thong, Ven. MontriChinklang, Mr. Bharat Bandhu Thapa, Dr. Tomoko Mori, Mr. Ram Chandra Sedhai, Ms. Nabha Basnet Thapa and Mr. Chandra Pathak for the photos and images.

Finally, on behalf of the Lumbini Development Trust, Government of Nepal, we would like to invite visitors and Buddhist pilgrims from around the world to the Sacred Birthplace of Lord Buddha, a UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as Buddhist Circuits of Nepal.

Venerable Metteyya Sakyaputta

Vice Chairman

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIES-GENERAL IN LUMBINI

Lumbini has been the focus of interest for UN Secretaries- General, five of whom have visited Lumbini and expressed their strong support for Lumbini's development.



Dag Hammarskjöld

March 1959

“Like glittering sunbeams the flute notes reach the gods in the birth grotto.”



U Thant

April 1967

“The Visit to Lumbini was “one of the most important days of my life”
“Since early 1968, various phases of development works have been carried out both by the Government of Nepal and by United Nations Organizations and the project has now reached a stage where financing from voluntary contributions will be needed before it can become a pilgrimage center with adequate facilities for pilgrims and tourists. In this connection I would like also to express my personal appreciation to the Government of Nepal for the initiatives they have already taken. May I also express my sincere hope that both interested governments, individuals and private groups will make generous contributions in cash or kind to help in the implementation of what I consider to be a most worthy project.”



Kurt Waldheim

February 1981

“Through the efforts of the Government of Nepal and with financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, a Master Plan has been completed by the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange. However, it is necessary to make these plans a reality. It is my hope, therefore, that government, private institution and individuals will make generous contributions toward this most worthy undertaking.”



Javier Perez de Cuellar

March 1989

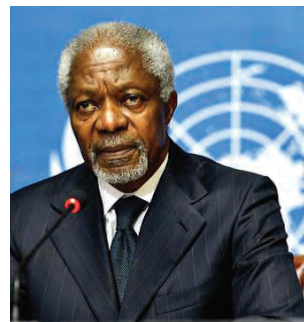
“Buddha’s message of compassion and devotion to the service of humanity is more relevant today than at any other time in history. Peace, understanding and a vision that transcends purely national boundaries are imperatives of our insecure nuclear age.

The United Nations is proud to have whole-heartedly supported this project from its inception. I wish to take this opportunity to further state that it will continue to play its parts in support of this undertaking which related most closely to the spiritual and cultural heritage of humanity.”



Boutros-Boutros Ghali

“The implementation of the Lumbini Master Plan is still in progress. I should therefore like to call on international community, governments, private institutions and individuals to consider contributing to the cause of preserving the tradition of the Buddha - that of compassion and devotion to the service of humanity.”



Kofi Annan

“As the most sacred place of pilgrimage for the world’s Buddhists, Lumbini provides yet another illustration of the inter-connectedness of all people, across borders and across time. As a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site, Lumbini reminds us how much the world’s religions can teach us, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, believers and non-believers alike. And let us applaud the commitment to tolerance that allows a Buddhist summit to be held in an officially Hindu country. The world could use many more such examples of religious harmony.”



Ban Ki-moon

November 2008

“I am awestruck by the beauty and profound significance of this sacred site, the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha. I am moved by the life journey of a Prince who left behind all comfortable circumstances to confront the hard realities of life, later becoming founder of the one of the largest religions. As Secretary General of the United Nations, I sincerely hope that the life, philosophy and the teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha will guide us to promote peace, harmony and reconciliation among people of different religions, belief, culture and creed.”

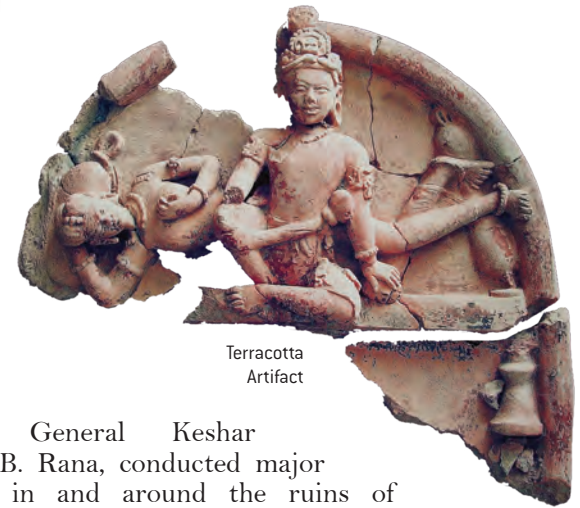


A view of archaeological excavation and Mayadevi Temple (1972 CE)

CHRONOLOGY

623 BCE - 1900 CE

- 623 BCE: Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who later became Sakyamuni Buddha, was born in Lumbini, Nepal.
- 249 BCE: Emperor Asoka visited Lumbini and erected the Pillar with inscription (Brahmi script and Pali language) to pay homage to The Buddha's birthplace.
- 350- 375 CE: Monk Zhi Sengzai belonging to the Chin Dynasty visited Lumbini and described about the birthplace.
- 399-413 CE: Fa-hsien, a Buddhist monk, native in the Shanxi province in China came to Lumbini and given detail accounts of the birthplace.
- 636 CE: Hsuan-tsang, the most important pilgrim monk visited Lumbini. He left detailed descriptions of Lumbini during his visits.
- 1312 CE: Ripu Malla, King of Western Nepal, came to Lumbini. He was the last visitor to leave evidence of his visit prior to the site remaining in oblivion for centuries.
- 1896: General Khadga Shamsher, the Governor of Palpa, organized an expedition together with Dr. Anton Führer and re-discovered the Asoka Pillar, which marks Sakyamuni Buddha's birthplace.
- 1899: Babu Purna Chandra Mukherji discovered and identified the Nativity Sculpture and different phases of construction of Mayadevi temple.



Terracotta
Artifact

1901 - 2000

- 1933-1939: General Keshar Shamsher J.B. Rana, conducted major excavations in and around the ruins of Lumbini.
- 1951: King Tribhuvan showed a keen interest to develop and preserve Lumbini and initiated forming a four member, Lumbini Administrator Committee.
- 1956: King Mahendra visited Lumbini and proposed for Lumbini's development at the Fourth Assembly of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and promotes the provision of new pilgrim facilities.
- 1956: The Ancient Monument Preservation Act provided the Department of Archaeology, the authority to "preserve ancient monuments, control the trade in archaeological objects, excavate ancient monuments sites, and acquire and preserve ancient monuments and archaeological, historical or artistic objects".
- March 1959: UN Secretary-General Daag Hammarskjöld visited Lumbini.
- February 1962: Debala Mitra of Archaeological Survey of India excavated the base of the Asoka Pillar.



The then King Mahendra and former UN Secretary General U Thant

- April 1967: UN Secretary-General U Thant visited Lumbini, and initiated international support to develop Lumbini for pilgrimage and tourism.
- 1970: The International Committee for the Development of Lumbini is formed in New York under the chairmanship of Nepal's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The committee including representatives from Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Republic of Korea.
- 1970-1971: Babu Krishna Rijal excavated ancient Lumbini Village as inscribed in the Asoka Pillar.
- 1972: The Advisory Panel for the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini requested Kenzo Tange to prepare the Master Plan for Lumbini.
- 1972-85: Excavation and conservation activities carried by the Department of Archaeology.
- 1975: The Government established Lumbini Development Committee
- 1978: The Government of Nepal and the UN approved the Master plan for the Development of Lumbini prepared by Kenzo Tange.
- 1981: UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim visited Lumbini.
- 1985: The Lumbini Development Trust Act is approved by the Government of Nepal and LDT is entrusted to implement the Master plan of Lumbini and safeguard Lumbini Development Area.
- March 1989: UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar visited Lumbini.
- 1992-1996: Mayadevi Temple was excavated by the Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and the Japan Buddhist Federation. The result of the excavation was the discovery of the exact birth-spot of the Buddha which was shielded by a stone block. Tilaurakot (Kapilavastu district) and the relic stupa of Sakyamuni Buddha in Ramagrama (Nawalparasi district), are included in the Tentative World Heritage List.
- 1997: Lumbini is inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage Property.
- 1998: The First World Buddhist Summit was held in Lumbini and declaration was passed "Lumbini as the "Fountain of World Peace".
- 1999: UNDP commissions a Vision and Scoping Mission led by Dr. Young Hoon Kwaak and Dr. Abelardo Brenes were visited to Lumbini to develop the idea of Lumbini as the "Fountain of World Peace".



After 2001

- 2001: The International Buddhist Conference held in Lumbini.
- 2002: The Government established the Gautam Buddha International Peace Award.
- 2003: The restored Mayadevi Temple opens to the public on 16 May 2003 to celebrate the birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha.
- 2004: The Second World Buddhist Summit declared Lumbini as a “World Peace City”.
- 2005: Last meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini (16 September) on the sidelines of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York.
- 2008: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon visited Lumbini.
- 2010: Asian Development Bank begins South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project which included upgrading the Gautam Buddha Airport as an International Airport near to Lumbini.
- 2010: Hon’ble Deep Kumar Upadhaya initiated resolution to establish “International Peace City” and to complete the Lumbini Master Plan. Legislature Parliament of Nepal formed 19 members Resolution Implementation Monitoring Special Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chairperson of Constituent Assembly.
- 2010-2021: UNESCO/Japanese-Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World’s Cultural Heritage project entitled “Strengthening the Conservation and Management of Lumbini, the Birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha, World Heritage Property” is launched to address conservation and management issues and challenges facing the World Heritage property.
- 2011: The Greater Lumbini Development National Steering Committee is established by the Cabinet of Nepal with the mandate to develop a Master Plan for the Greater Lumbini Area while respecting the Kenzo Tange Master Plan and to garner international support for the development of Lumbini.
- 2011: First Gautam Buddha International Peace Award conferred to Dr. Tadatashi Akiba, the mayor of Hiroshima, and Mr. Tomihisa Taue, the mayor of Nagasaki, were the first recipients of the award in recognition of their contribution towards advocacy of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Each of the awardees was offered USD 25,000.
- 2012: The Government of Nepal celebrated “Visit Lumbini Year-2012”.
- 2013: Archaeological excavations under UNESCO/JFIT led by Professor Robin Coningham have uncovered evidence of a structure at the birthplace of the Buddha dating back to the 6th century BCE. This is the first archaeological material linking the life of the Buddha - and thus the first flowering of Buddhism - to a specific century.
- 2014: Master Plan for Lumbini World Peace City, Preservation and Development prepared by Prof. Young Hoon Kwaak with the auspicious of the Korea International Cooperation Agency.
- 2014: Government of Nepal declared Lumbini Project as a pride of nations.
- 2016: International Buddhist Conference declared “Lumbini Nepal: The Birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace”.
- 2018: International Buddhist Conference held in Lumbini with the main theme of “Lumbini Nepal: The Birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace”.
- 2019: Nepal Peace Conference 2019 jointly organized by the Lumbini Development Trust and University of Winchester on Religion and Culture in Conflict and Peace: Reconciliation and Peace Building in South Asia.



Standing Sakyamuni Buddha
7th century style
Swyambhu, Kathmandu

THE ARRAY OF THE BUDDHA'S ADORNMENTS

Come commune with the Sage, the Lion of the Śākyas.
Sublime, supremely brilliant, and pure,
The light of wisdom he radiates dispels darkness.
Peaceful in form, his mind is virtuous and tranquil.

“Take as your master the one with natural mastery of the Dharma,
An ocean of wisdom, with power both vast and pure,
The sovereign of the Dharma, the all-knowing lord of sages ,
A god of gods, revered by gods and humans alike.

“Go before the Peaceful One, the One Who Is Liberated,
He who has mastered those minds that are difficult to tame
And whose own mind is free from the snares of Māra,
For seeing him and hearing him is not without benefit.

“With supreme devotion, go, all of you,
Before the One Who Is Peerless in Illuminating the Dharma,
Who dispels darkness and shows the sublime way
With peaceful conduct and knowledge infinite in scope.

“As the king of doctors, he dispenses divine nectar,
Conquering the evil hordes with his courageous eloquence.
He is a friend of the Dharma and knows the ultimate.
He is a peerless guide who illuminates the path.”

Homage to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas!



Pilgrims offering water and flowers on the archaeological ruins



THE PATH TO THE SACRED GARDEN



Monks procession along with candle light at Mayadevi complex

According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya*, a Buddhist scripture, Sakyamuni Buddha told his faithful disciple Ananda, before he passed away, that there were four places that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence – Lumbini, where the Tathagata was born, Bodhgaya where he became fully enlightened, Sarnath where he set “rolling the unexcelled Wheel of the Dhamma” and Kusinara where he “passed into the state of Nibbana”.

Lumbini, a place which Sakyamuni Buddha himself designated as a sacred site, was no less than a piece of heaven on the earth during the time of Prince Siddhartha’s birth. As Chinese traveller Xuan Zhang would relate in the seventh century CE, Lumbini was “a splendid garden embedded with stupas and monasteries.” Buddhist scriptures, while comparing it to Chittalata, the captivating grove of devas, Indra’s paradise, describe Lumbini as a blessed garden “with blooming Sala trees and bees of five colours humming among masses of beautiful flowers.”

Located in the Terai region in the southern part, Province No. 5 of Nepal, Lumbini in the age of the Buddha was a beautiful pleasure grove of Sala trees that was looked after by the Sakyas of Kapilavastu and the Koliyas of Devadaha. Twenty-eight kilometres to its west was Kapilavastu, the capital of the Sakyas, and about fifty-seven kilometres to its northeast was Devadaha, the capital of the Koliyas. Mayadevi, the queen of Suddhodana, chief of the Sakya Republic, was so mesmerised by the splendour of the grove that – as described in the Lalitavistara Sutra, another Buddhist scripture –when time came for her to give birth she told King Suddhodana of her wish to go to the pleasure grove where “the Sala, that most wonderful of trees, is now in blossom...the bees are humming and the cuckoos singing...fresh and sweet, the fragrance of flowers drifts through the air.”

Although in Nidanakatha, the introduction to the Jataka commentary, it is said that Queen Mayadevi decided to deport herself while passing Lumbini, “a wood of variegated creepers or the well-decorated banqueting hall of some mighty king”, on her way to her paternal home Devadaha, all legends agree that she gave birth to Prince Siddhartha standing up, holding onto the branch of a Sala tree which, according to Lalitavistara had “its branches spread out, full of lush leaves and clusters of blossoms, and further adorned with numerous flowers from the realms of both humans and gods.” As the story goes, Prince Siddhartha emerged from his mother’s right side, “fully aware and mindful... unstained by any impurities of the womb” and as soon as he was born, stepped onto the ground, with “many hundreds of thousands of gods bathing him in perfumed water and scattering flower petals over him.” It was a full moon day in the month of Vaisakh in the year 623 BCE.

The garden of Lumbini, variously known as Lumbini kanan, Lumbini vatika, Lumbini upavana and Lumbini chittalatavana in early scriptures, is 2600 years later, one of the most sacred places in the world. Over the centuries, although various visions developed of the place where Prince Siddhartha (Buddha) was born, Lumbini continues to be a place of great reverence. A treasure trove of pre-Christian era relics, magnificent monasteries and grand pagodas adorned with rows of multi-coloured prayer flags it is a blend of mysticism and legendary charm – a dreamlike, emblematic place with sacred trees, beautiful flowers, celestial splendour and eternal tranquility.





Nativity of Buddha,
Gandhara







Excavations around the pillar in 1896 and next to the Asoka Pillar
from left: Vincent Smith, Gen. Khadga Shumsher Rana, Dr. Hooey and Duncan Ricketts



Maya Devi Temple in 1899



Asoka Pillar during excavation in 1896

PARADISE LOST & FOUND

Despite being a land of eternal peace, serenity and beauty, despite it being Sakyamuni Buddha's birthplace as proven by the commemorative pillar erected by Maurya Emperor Asoka in 249 BCE, Lumbini has lost in oblivion until 1896 when General Khadga S. Rana and Archaeological surveyor Dr. Alois Anton Fuhrer rediscovered the Asoka pillar, thereby leading to the unearthing of the profound historic and religious importance of Lumbini. The inscription engraved in Brahmi script on the Asoka Pillar testified the authenticity of Lumbini as the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha. The sacred site was then in a state of total abandonment, almost completely covered by mounds and ruins. Dr. Fuhrer recorded the Asokan monolith as 22 feet and four inches high, standing upon a masonry platform, and bearing about 9 feet 8 inches from its bases, a well-preserved inscription of the Mauryan period in five lines. The pillar tapered slightly, as its circumference at the base was 8 feet 3 inches, near the inscribed portion 7 feet 5 inches and at the top 6 feet 6 inches. It also comprised ruins of ancient monasteries, a sacred Bodhi tree and an ancient bathing pond.

The site, however, witnessed major physical changes when Keshar Shumsher JB Rana conducted archaeological research between 1933 and 1939 – which led to the excavation of the early Mayadevi Temple mound and



Aerial picture of Buddha's birthplace in 1970s



Mayadevi Temple before excavation in the 1990s

the temple's reconstruction on the plinth of the *saptarathashikhara* as well as enlargement of the sacred pond.

The present day Mayadevi Temple was rebuilt in 2003 under the aegis of the Government of Nepal and the Lumbini Development Trust.



Prof. Robin Coningham interpreting the excavated postholes and Mauryan brick at Mayadevi Temple

The structural ruins inside Mayadevi Temple date to 6th century BCE to 15th century CE. It consists of 15 box chambers arranged in five rows in the east-west direction and three rows in the north-south direction, besides a circumambulatory path surrounded by an outer wall. The archaeological excavation undertaken by Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and Durham University (UK), led by Professor Robin Coningham under UNESCO/JFIT project during 2010-2013 also uncovered a timber shrine dating back to the 6th century BCE. During excavations, a pre-Mauryan brick structure, from beneath the visible layers of ruin, was also uncovered – indicating that the

first Mayadevi Temple was built immediately after the mahaparinirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha. It would, over time, witness several reconstructions or renovations.

While Lumbini, as the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha, was established during the formation of Buddhist canonical literature – developing from the notion of a simple forest or garden to a celestial place as depicted in the late sutras – it is archaeological research in and around Lumbini that provides us with a more precise understanding of the development of the sites over the past two and a half millennia and which, today, are the central attractions of this sacred site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES





Group of monks are offering light on full moon night

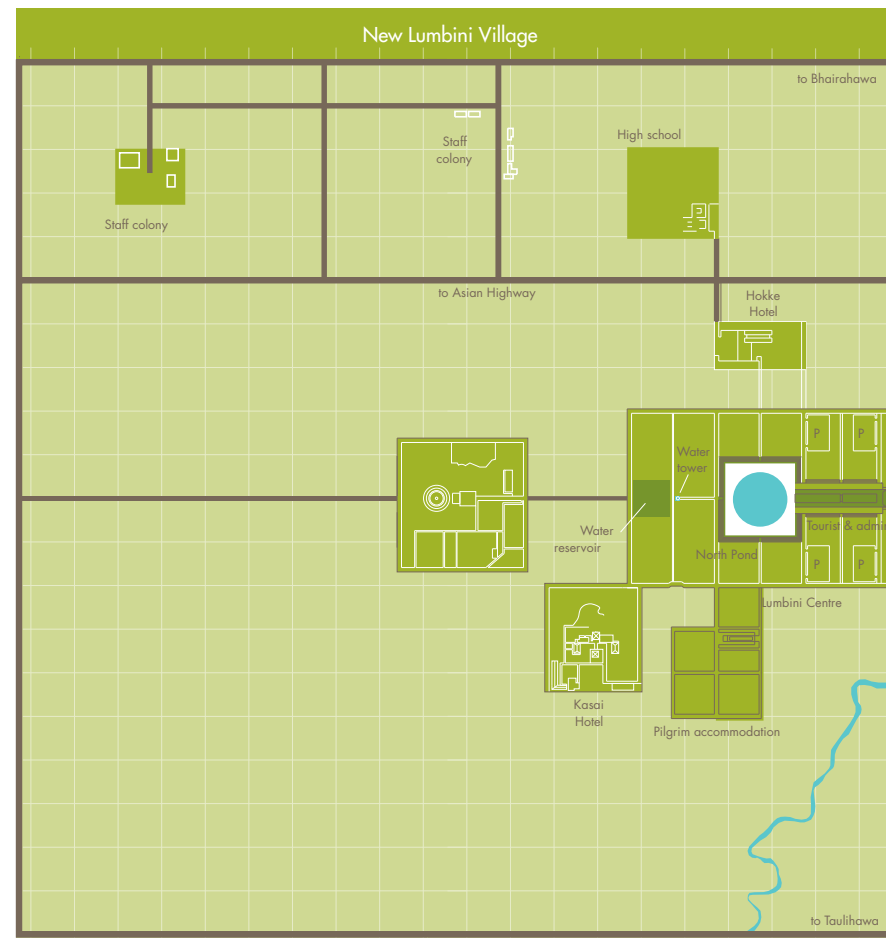


Group of monks are offering candle lamps

NEW TOUCHES

The development of Lumbini as a sacred pilgrimage site was formally initiated by the then King Mahendra in 1956. The turning point though came ten years later. When during a visit to Nepal in 1967, the then Secretary General of the United Nations U Thant, proposed Lumbini to be developed into a pilgrimage and tourism centre. Accordingly, a UNDP mission prepared a report in December 1969 that formed the basis for further planning around Lumbini. In 1970, a 13-member International Committee for the Development of the sacred site was set up, comprising Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Later, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Republic of Korea also joined the committee expanding it to a 16-member body. The ICDL initiated the preparation of the Master Plan for Lumbini to develop it as an international pilgrimage and tourist centre and the plan, conceptualised by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, was finalised and jointly approved by Government of Nepal and United Nations in 1978. In 1997, Lumbini, the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha, was inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites following which UNESCO has been involved in supporting Nepal to conserve the World Heritage Property.

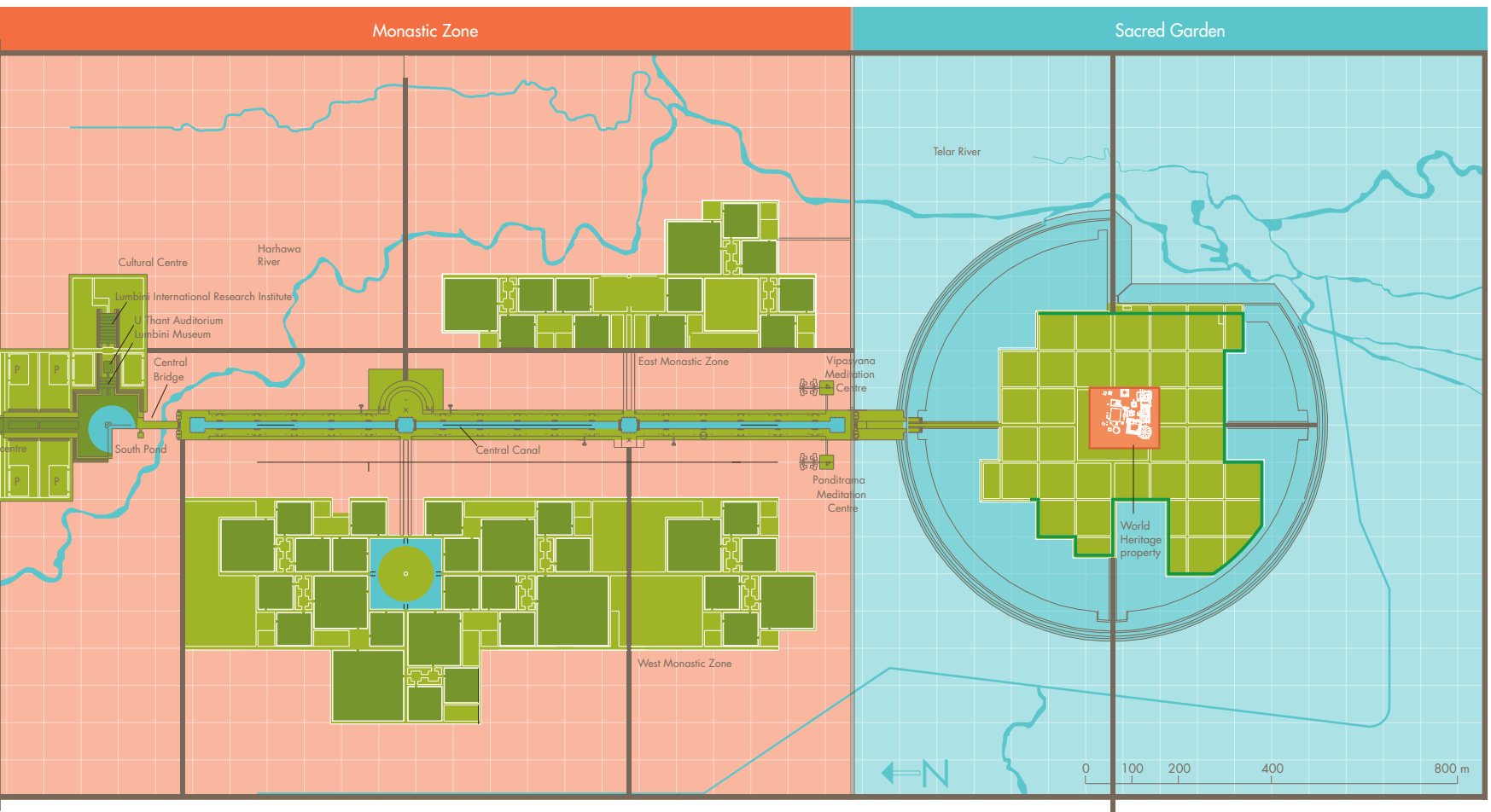
The Master Plan for Lumbini emphasizes Buddhist values reinforcing the symbolism of Lumbini Garden as simplicity and clarity. The geometric interpretation is based on religious symbolism. The entire area is designed as a *mandala*, with the Sacred Garden being the focal point at the centre and circles, squares and lines laid out with definite order, proportions and relations to each other.



Master plan of Lumbini

The vast area has been divided into three zones: New Lumbini Village, Monastic Zone and the Sacred Garden. The central 1x3 mile strip has three components, each with special significance as a religious-cultural-tourism centre. The design is oriented in the north-south direction, with Lumbini Village and the Cultural Centre to the north, and the focal point the Sacred Garden

to the south. On either side of the axis are the monastic enclaves, surrounded by a green forest with every part of the area connected by a central link comprising a walkway and a canal – a major axis that establishes the solitude and sanctity of the Sacred Garden and offers pilgrims time and space to prepare as they approach it.





VILLAGE ZONE

The Village Zone is the habitation area as one approaches Lumbini's focal attraction, the Sacred Garden. It is a area designated to earthly activities – pilgrim and visitor accommodations, a museum, an international Buddhist research centre, a tourist information centre, offices, restaurants, shops, a post office, banks, school, medical centre, a peace pagoda, a bird sanctuary and a staff colony.

The significant landmarks of the Village Zone and Cultural Center are Lumbini International Research Institute, the Lumbini Museum, Visitor Center and Trust Office. The Lumbini International Research Institute, in fact, is the most imposing structure in the village. Dedicated to the study of Buddhism and world peace, it functions in the manner of advanced research institutions affiliated with global universities.

Built and managed with the assistance of Japan-based Reiyukai, it consists of lecture rooms, a library and study rooms for different language sections. The library has an impressive collection of Buddhist texts, manuscripts, journals and research reports, the institute adding to the treasure by publishing important manuscripts on Buddhism. There is also lodging facilities for researchers within the building.

Opposite the institute, on the northern end, is the Lumbini Museum – a one-stop destination to learn all there is to know about Lumbini, ranging from crafts to an extensive collection of stamps that depict Lumbini and the Buddha. It also boasts of exhibits of Mauryan and Kushana coins, religious manuscripts, terracotta fragments and stone and metal sculptures. A central exhibition hall surrounded by four mezzanine spaces and a ground floor space defines the museum. The auditorium has been envisaged as a multipurpose hall to be used for national and international congresses. The hall carries through the uniquely stylised architectural motif of the Lumbini Project on its four walls, with acoustic considerations in the brickwork design.

The Lumbini Village area is where the atmosphere begins to change from the mundane, to the sacred, an enlightening experience when moving from the north entrance to the Sacred Garden, a gradient from an artificial brick-built area to a natural landscape.



Peace Stupa from LDT office



Corridor at Lumbini International Research Institute



Lumbini Hokke Hotel



Lumbini Hotel Kasai



Lumbini International Research Institute



THE *Monastic* ZONE

Comprising of two enclaves— one for Mahayana and the other for Theravada schools of Buddhism —the monastic zone with its meditation centres, stupas and monasteries of various countries — is separated by a long water canal that also boasts of a Eternal Peace Flame in its south end. The harmonious landscaping and monastic buildings blend perfectly with the surroundings.





Eternal Peace Flame



Celebrations on the Central Canal



Aerial view of monastic zone from eastern site

EASTERN THERAVADA ENCLAVE

The eastern Theravada enclave is composed of monasteries from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, India, Sri Lanka, International Nun's, Canada and Nepal's and a Vipassana meditation centre.





Monk Ordination at Royal Thai Monastery



Myanmar Golden Temple



Mahabodhi Monastery



Bodhi Institute



Sri Lankan Monastery



Vipassana Meditation Center



Int'l Nun's Temple



WESTERN MAHAYANA ENCLAVE

The western Mahayana enclave is composed of two meditation centres and monasteries representing China, Germany, Vietnam, France, Austria, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Canada, India, Malaysia, USA and Nepal.







Chinese Monastery



LINH SON TEMPLE
LUMBINI NEPAL



European -Austrian Monastery



Karma Samtenling Monastery



Vietnam Monastery





Singapore Monastery



United Trungram Monastery



Korean Monastery



Panditarama Meditation Center



1000 Buddha's Monastery under construction



Stupa of Manang



Stupa at French Monastery



German Great Lotus Stupa





Aerial view of Mayadevi Complex before construction of footpath



LUMBINI SACRED GARDEN

Spread over one square mile and holding within its embrace a temple, an Asoka Pillar, ruins of stupas and monasteries, a sacred pond and all treasures of that era, the Sacred Garden is today a UNESCO World Heritage Property.



A monk praying to Mayadevi Temple

A vast expanse of green, a pond brimming with history, an ancient monument and a spread of archaeological remains that harks back to a historic past – Lumbini’s Sacred Garden transports one to a bygone era.

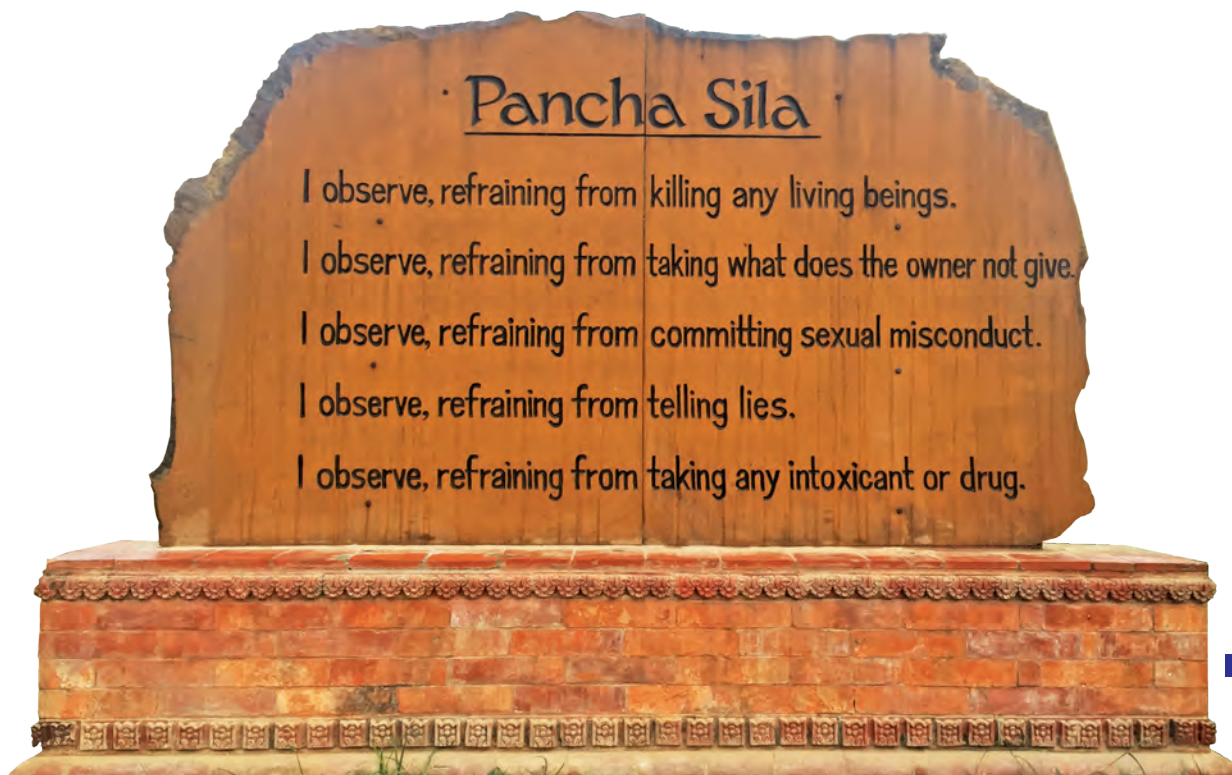
Here, where a marker stone (exact birth-spot) encased within a bulletproof glass enclosure, is where Queen Mayadevi of Kapilavastu, on a full-moon day in the summer of 623 BCE, gave birth to a child who went on to become an apostle of peace, the Light of Asia. As expressed in the *Lalitavistara*, one of the most important *sutras* of Buddhist literature which relates the story of how the Buddha manifested in this world and attained awakening, when Mayadevi stepped out of her fine chariot at

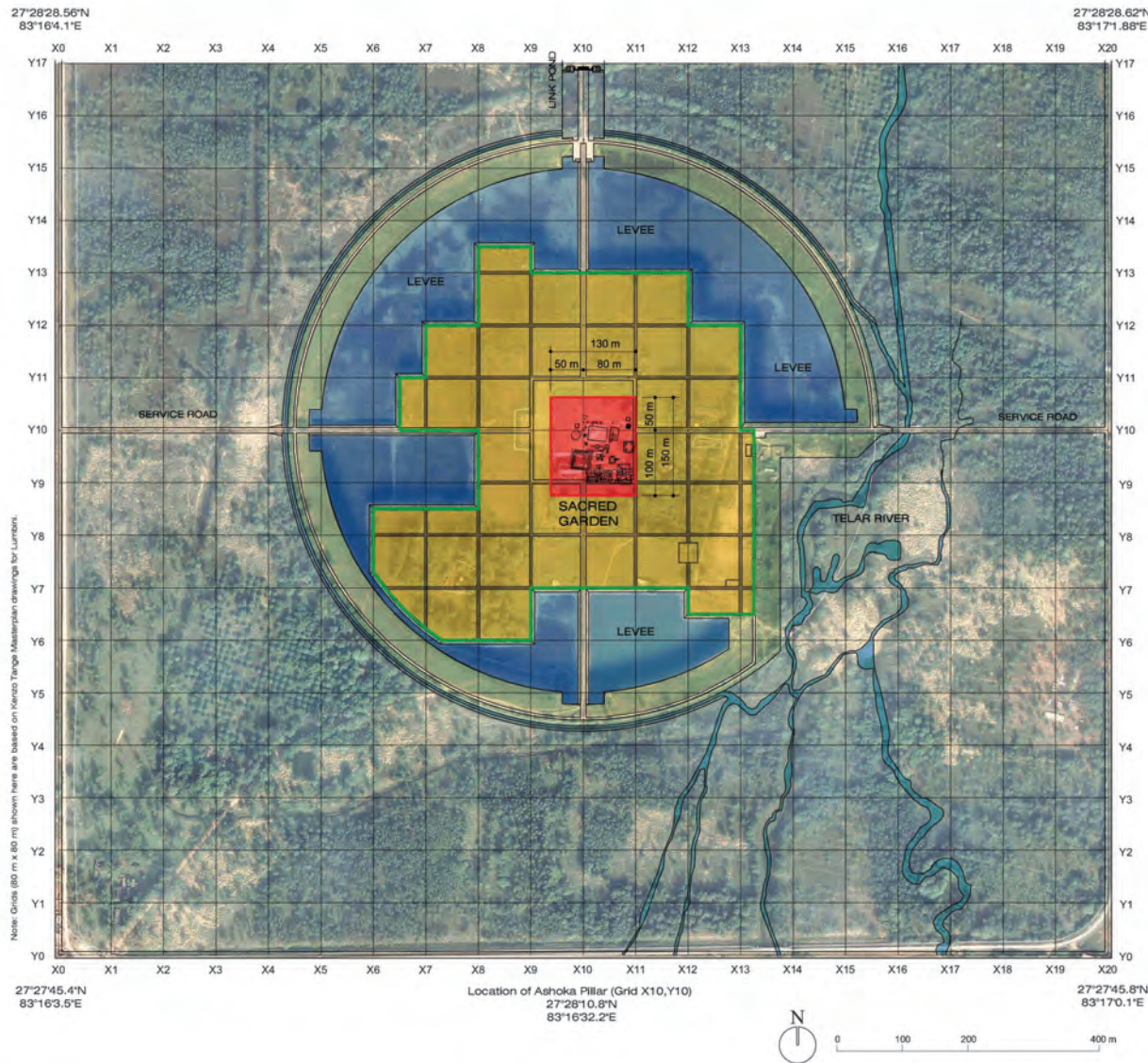
Lumbini grove, “she wandered from tree to tree and from grove to grove... and eventually arrived beneath a very special and exquisite tree... its branches spread out, full of lush leaves and clusters of blossoms and further adorned with numerous flowers from the realms of both humans and gods.” Then, standing upright, holding a branch of the gigantic Sala tree, she gave birth to Prince Siddhartha, the Sakyamuni Buddha, who, immediately after his birth “stepped on the ground” and walked seven steps to the east. The *sutra* goes on to say that wherever the Prince’s feet “touched the blades of grass, lotuses bloomed” – sanctifying the place forever as a Sacred Garden.

According to the *Nidana Katha*, at the time of the birth of Prince Siddhartha, Lumbini was a pleasure grove of Sala trees; “It was one mass of fruits and flowers and amidst the blossoms and branches, swarms of various-coloured bees and flocks of birds of different kinds roamed, warbling sweetly. The whole of the Lumbini grove was like a wood of variegated creepers, or well-decorated banquet hall of some mighty King.” Thus, endowed with incredible natural beauty and immense spiritual significance, the holy garden in Lumbini, has for centuries beckoned devotees, scholars, travellers and powerful monarchs. As the *Maha-ParinibbanaSutta* states, Lumbini is one of the

four places that the Buddha, before he passed away in Kusinara, told his faithful disciple Ananda that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence – Lumbini, being the place of his birth, Bodhgaya where he attained enlightenment, Sarnath where he delivered the first sermon and Kusinara where he would pass into *mahaparinirvana*.

Spread over one square mile, the Sacred Garden is today a UNESCO World Heritage property – holding within its embrace a temple, an Asoka Pillar, a sacred pond, Nativity Sculpture, Marker Stone and other historic treasures of that era.





Criterion (iii):

As the birthplace of the Sakyamuni Buddha, testified by the inscription on the Asoka pillar, the sacred area in Lumbini is one of the most holy and significant places for one of the world's great religions.

Criterion (vi):

The archaeological remains of the Buddhist viharas (monasteries) and stupas (memorial shrines) from the 6th century BCE to the 15th century AD, provide important evidence about the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centers from a very early period.



Statue of Sakyamuni Buddha inside monastery





Mayadevi Temple



Conserved archaeological remains inside Mayadevi Temple



Ancient Monastic foundation within the Mayadevi temple

MAYADEVI TEMPLE

A whitewashed edifice with enclosed walls and a Buddhist stupa-like formation on top, the Mayadevi temple, set in the middle of the Sacred Garden marks the place where Queen Mayadevi gave birth to Prince Siddhartha. Standing over the ruins of an older temple, probably an Asoka stupa, it stands adjacent to Puskarni – the sacred pool – and a sacred garden.

Inside the temple, a wooden walkway allows a view of what archaeologists call the Nativity Sculpture – the sculpture that depicts the native tale of Prince Siddhartha's birth – in its original sanctum. The Mathura sandstone bas relief image depicts the Queen Mother grasping the tree branch with her right hand and giving birth to the Buddha, with Indra and Brahma receiving the infant prince standing upright on a lotus pedestal.



Nativity Scene depicting the standing infant Buddha and Queen Mayadevi holding a branch



Marker Stone deeply buried in the sanctum sanctorum pinpoints the exact birth spot of the Buddha

Zhi Sengzai, known to be the first Chinese pilgrim to visit Lumbini between 350-375 CE mentions the “marvellous tree, which the excellent queen grasped when the Buddha was being born, is called xuhe (a) shoka. King Asoka made a statue of the queen, in the act of grasping [the tree] and giving birth to the prince, out of lapis lazuli... The branches of the tree still shelter the stone statue. The outlines of the marks where the prince walked seven steps are also still

preserved today. King Asoka enclosed the marks with lapis lazuli on both sides, and again had them covered over with one long slab of lapis lazuli.”

Directly beneath the Nativity Sculpture, a few feet below ground level, is the marker stone that pinpoints the exact spot where the Sakyamuni was born.

Recently, archaeologists have even discovered traces of a wooden structure dating to the 6th century BCE.



Sacred Pond

SACRED POND

Approximately 25 paces south-west of the marker stone in the Mayadevi temple is the Puskarini, the holy pond. A square-shaped water body that predates Buddha's birth, the Puskarini is where Queen Mayadevi is believed to have taken a bath before giving birth to Prince Siddhartha. According to some Buddhist scriptures even infant prince Siddhartha was given his first purification bath in the sacred pond's pristine waters.

The Puskarini finds mention in the travel accounts of early Chinese travellers Fahien and Xuan Zhang who visited Lumbini two centuries apart. Fahien's accounts mention a royal park called Lumbini (Lunmin) "where the wife (of the king) took a bath in a pond, left the pond from the north side, took twenty steps forward, grasped a tree with her hand and turning to the east, delivered the prince... The two naga kings bathed the prince and, on the spot where (his) body was washed, a well was built, and from the above-mentioned pond in which the prince's mother bathed, the monks still drink today." Xuan Zhang in his account describes it as "a bathing pond of the Sakya clan, whose

water is clear as a mirror, and on whose surface, flowers are scattered and drift. Twenty-four or twenty-five steps to the north of the pond, there is an Asoka flower tree (Wuyou-hua-shu), which has now already withered; this is the place where the sacred birth of the Bodhisattva took place."

Today, sheltered by a Bodhi tree, the renovated pond with an embankment of bricks and steps to ascend to the water level, also boasts of two wells that were discovered in its northeast and southwest corners during a cleaning process in 1996. It is flanked on one side by a landscaped garden with lush green bushes and Bodhi trees – some of which have wooden benches around them for monks to meditate. A small shrine dedicated to Buddha also finds pride of place under one of the trees.

On another side of the pond lie the ruined foundations of several brick stupas and monasteries that date to the 3rd century BCE. Sixteen votive stupa bases arranged on a platform, like rows of candles lit on an altar, are of special appeal.



Asoka Pillar and Pilgrims

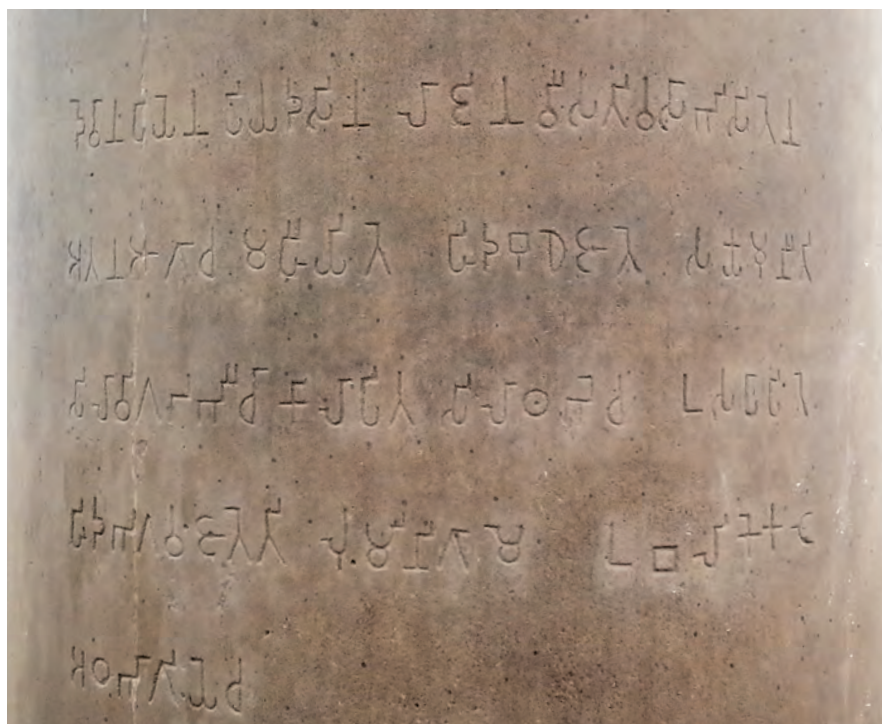


Group of sixteen stupa



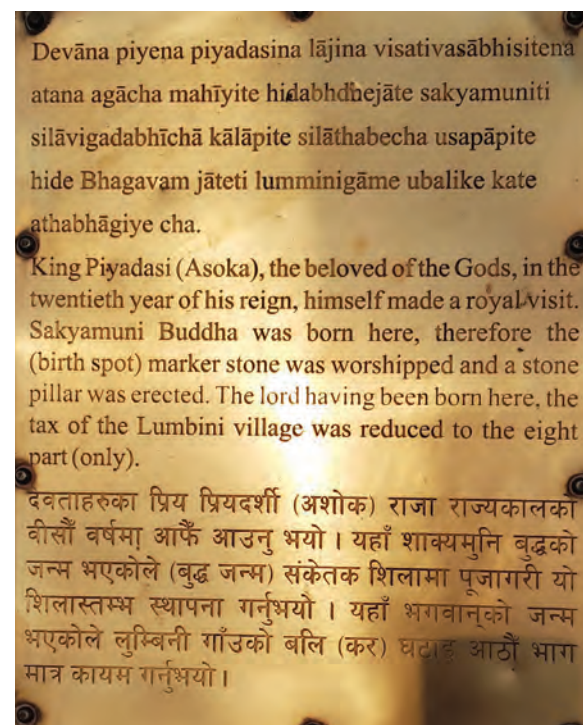
ASOKA PILLAR

Augmenting the Sacred Garden's spiritual, historical and architectural significance is a tall sandstone pillar west of the Mayadevi temple. Rediscovered in 1896, the monolith is an architectural marvel that opened new horizons in the research of Buddhist sites. Erected by Emperor Asoka in 249 BCE, in his 20th regnal year, the pillar was brought and erected to commemorate the Emperor's pilgrimage to the birthplace of the founder of the faith that he embraced after the Kalinga War. The Pillar bears the first epigraphic evidence with the obvious reference to the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha. On the top eastside of the pillar is another inscription that marks King Ripu Malla's visit to Lumbini. Beginning with the Mahayana Buddhist prayer Om Mani Padme Hum, it goes on to declare Sri Ripu Malla Chiran Jayatu, Sangrama Malla – loosely translating to 'May Prince Malla be long victorious'.



Original Inscriptions on pillar in Brahmi script

Unlike other Asoka pillars, no capital animal is found sculpted at the apex of the pillar. From Xuan Zhang's account of "a big stone pillar (da-shizhu), (and) on top of it (they) have made a horse statue (maxiang), erected by King Asoka," archaeologists and researchers deduced that it once surmounted with a horse-capital.



Translations on Pali, English and Nepali languages

The pillar with a circumference of 8 feet and 3 inches at the base, 7 feet 5 inches near the inscribed portion and six feet and six inches at the top is now protected by a disc and an iron enclosure.



Group of monks offering robes at Asoka pillar









A view of Tilaurakot from eastern side



ANCIENT KAPILAVASTU

Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas, in Nepal's Terai region, lies the historical and archaeological site of ancient Kapilavastu. Situated three kilometres north of Taulihawa, the district headquarters of Kapilavastu, it is where Prince Siddhartha spent his boyhood and youth, where he married and fathered a child. It is from here— disturbed by existential human conditions such as sickness, age and suffering— that the Prince set out in quest for the truth, when he was 29 years of age. The site has been on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage inscriptions since 1996.

A bustling administrative centre of the Sakya state in the 6th century BCE, governed by King Suddhodhana, Prince Siddhartha's father, ancient Kapilavastu is today a quiet and shaded neighbourhood, enfolding in its embrace relics of an era long-gone – but not forgotten. In the calm of its surroundings, '13 layers of habitational deposits' and the '1,600 feet X 1300 feet fortified area' – believed to be the main section of the Kapilavastu palace – speak volumes of the times when Sakyamuni Buddha lived the life of a protected Prince.

According to *Dathavansa*, a Pali Buddhist chronicle, the etymology of Kapilavastu can be traced to Sage Kapila who is said to have blessed its establishment "by the sons of Ikshvaku, the ruler of one of the states during that period". Named after the sage, the city came into existence almost 200 years before the Buddha lived. According to Buddhist chronicles *Divyadana* and *Mahavastu*, Kapilavastu was on the banks of River Bhagirathi, now Vana Ganga, close to the hermitage of Sage Kapila. It was a semi-republic with its dwellers, who traced their roots to Saketa, known as Sakyas. Buddhist texts say that Kapilavastu was surrounded by a moat and the walls of the city were made of brick. It was a "prosperous, flourishing town whose streets thronged with elephants, carriages, horses and people" and that the administrative and judicial business of the clan was carried out from a hall called Santhagara in the town.

Since the time of Sakyamuni Buddha until the middle of the 19th century, history speaks of four visitors to Kapilavastu who left behind physical and written evidence of the Buddha's hometown. The first was Buddhist Emperor Asoka who visited Kapilavastu in 249 BCE and erected stone pillars and stupas in honour of the faith he had adopted – of which the three pillars at Lumbini, Niglisagar or Niglihawa and Gotihawa are significant. Thereafter, Chinese travellers FaHien and Xuan Zhang visited Kapilavastu – 200 years apart between them – and left behind accounts that have helped historians understand the socio-political culture of the Buddha's early years of residence. Finally, in 1312 CE, King Ripu Malla visited this ancient town, evidence of which has been left behind in engraved dates in the Niglihawa pillars.

Attempts to locate ancient Kapilavastu began sometime in the mid-1800s. It gained momentum in 1895 with A Furher, an archaeological surveyor, uncovering Chunar sandstone Asoka pillars at Niglihawa and Lumbini and tracing Kapilavastu "over an area of seven miles in length and three-four miles in breadth". After him, Archaeologist P C Mukherjee carried out excavations and discovered a fortification wall around a mound, a pond to the northeast and the eastern gateway – also known as the *MahabhinishkramanaDwara* – through which one full moon night Prince Siddhartha had stepped out to find enlightenment.



Buddhist devotees are listening to teaching of monks



Eastern gate is known as Mahabhiniskramana
Dwara of Kapilavastu present Tilaurakot

The excavated site was identified reasonably faithful to the centuries-old descriptions of Chinese travellers FaHien and Xuan Zhang— lying in the lap of the Himalayas in the north and bounded by River Rohini in the east, Lumbini Gardens and River Acchiravati (present-day Rapti) in the west and the Kosala and Malla kingdoms in the south. Fa-Hien who visited in 403 CE, in *A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*, says:“... there was neither king nor people. All was mound and desolation. At the spot where the old palace of King Suddhodana stood, there have been made images of the Prince and his mother; and at the places where that son appeared mounted on a white elephant, when he entered his mother’s womb, and where he turned his carriage round on seeing the sick man after he had gone out of the city by the eastern gate, topes have been erected...” In 636 CE, Xuan Zhang had counted ten cities, desolate and ruined, its capital overthrown and long deserted. Besides,“there are 1000 or more ruined saṅghārāmas remaining...within the royal precincts are some ruined foundation walls... these are the remains of the proper palace of Suddhodana-rajā...by the side is a vihāra where Bodhisattva descended spiritually into the womb of his mother. There is a representation of this scene drawn in the vihāra.”(Xuanzang, Book 6 - 2) (*Buddhist Records of the Western World*).So how did a flourishing

town come to be such a scene of empty desolation? What caused the stable and flourishing city-state to fall into decline? According to Buddhist text Mahāvamsa, and confirmed by FaHien in his account, this happened not long after King Suddhodhana’s death – in fact, during the last days of the Buddha. Kosala, the kingdom that lay to the south of Kapilavastu, had by 700 BCE become large and powerful. King Virudhaka who was then its king had long been planning revenge against the Sakyas for deceiving his father, the earlier king of Kosala. Virudhaka who had visited Kapilavastu as a boy had learnt that his mother was a woman of low birth, although his father had requested the Sakyas marriage with a Sakya noblewoman. Finding his opportunity after King Suddhodhana’s death, Virudhaka led an army against the core of Sakya political power – Kapilavastu. He destroyed its cities, slaughtered its inhabitants and annexed the region to his kingdom.

Kapilavastu’s archaeological remains ascertain that it was contemporary to the capitals of other kingdoms in this expanse of the lower Himalayan region like Anga, Magadha and Kosala. Like them, the Sakya republic too had a fortification wall, a moat, and gateways in the cardinal directions and linkages to trade routes, establishing without doubt that today’s Tilaurakot was yesterday’s Kapilavastu.



Pilgrims at Tilaurakot

Over the years, several excavations have uncovered many ancient monuments and relics of the royal town of Kapilavastu. Besides the pillars and stupas erected by Asoka, the most noteworthy and historic of the ruins are the earth rampart, the brick fortification, the ancient habitation, the elaborate gateways in the east and west, the twin stupas of Buddha's parents, the royal palace in and around the mound and the 13 layers of human depositions dating between 8th century BCE and 3rd century CE.

Extending over an area of more than five square kilometres, the central portion of the present archaeological site is surrounded by a citadel built at three different periods – the first and second of mud and dating between 600 and 200 BCE, while the third of kiln-burnt brick dating to 150 BCE. The significant eastern gate or Mahabhinishkramana Dwara, the eastern stupa, the Ashita Apsidal Stupa and a defence wall were to be first discovered after which the majestic western gateway complex, six-metre wide roads of different periods, moat, defence walls of three periods and northern twin stupas were uncovered.

A 1974 analysis of excavations divided the chronology of Kapilavastu into five periods – between the 11th-8th century BCE, between 6th-5th century BCE, between 3rd-2nd century BCE, between 2nd century BCE and 1st century CE and then between 1st and 2nd century CE. The Kapilavastu museum exhibits of coins, pottery and terracotta toys that date between 7th century BCE and 4th century CE. Of these exhibitions, the earliest sequences are the pottery / ceramic shards that belong to the painted Grey Ware period of South Asia between the 9th and 6th centuries BCE.

Today, with increasing interest in Buddha's hometown, archaeological interventions under UNESCO/ Japanese Funds in Trust project have taken a new momentum and the latest have identified 136 significant sites in Kapilavastu – 99 in Rupandehi and 40 in Nawalparasi. These includes the sacred Nyigrodharama where Sakyamuni Buddha met his father after attaining enlightenment, Mahavana or Sagrahawa, the massacre site of the Sakyas by King Virudhaka, Kshemavati or Gotihawa, the nirvana site of Krakucchanda Buddha, Shobhavati or Nigalihawa the pillar that was erected by Emperor Asoka is the birthplace of Kanakmuni, the early Buddha of Bhadrakalpa.



Archaeological excavation at the central complex Tilaurakot



Structures of archaeological remains found during excavation at Tilaurakot



Prof. Robin Coningham excavating ancient postholes at Tilaurakot



Archaeological activities at Tilaurakot



Hoard of 3rd century BCE silver punch-marked coins discovered at Tilaurakot



Photography of the trench



Dr. Tokushin Kasai participating excavations



On site briefing to the stakeholders at Tilaurakot



Asoka Pillar in Gothihawa

GOTIHAWA

Situated southeast of Kapilavastu in the Lumbini Zone of southern Nepal and east of the present-day course of River Ban Ganga, Gotihawa lies on a sandbar – a relatively higher elevation than the surrounding plains. Composed of several small mounds – some of which partly lie below the village – Gotihawa is famed for its Asoka Pillar and the nirvana stupa of Krakuchhanda Buddha, the fifth Buddha of the Bhadrakalpa.

According to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, Gotihawa which was known as Khemavati in ancient times is the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha, one of the ancient Buddha who had predicted that King Khema of his time would be the Gautama Buddha of the future.

Both the pillar and the stupa at Gotihawa were built by Emperor Asoka as commemorative signatures of his visit to the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha in 249 BCE. Chinese travellers Fahien and Xuan Zhang who visited Gotihawa approximately two centuries apart – Fa-hein in 403 CE and Xuan Zhang in 636 CE – would mention this pillar, which bore “a lion capital on top”, in their writings. Today, the pillar, with a diameter of 83/79 cm, stands only 3.25 metres in height, on the original basement foundation. Its upper

portion, including the lion capital and inscription, is believed to have submitted to the ravages of time.

Close to the stump of the Asoka Pillar, the nirvana stupa was first discovered and excavated in 1898 by Major Waddell. Rebuilt and enlarged at least twice, the stupa in its first construction was a brick-made structure of concentric rings bounded by a pradakshinapatha or circumambulatory path. The second time around, two more rings and a new pradakshinapatha were added before the stupa was enlarged during the Saka and Kushana eras, spanning end of 1st BCE and 2nd century CE. Typologically, the second and third periods of the stupa corresponds to the Suddhodhana Stupa at Damnihawa and an unexcavated one at Beluhawa.

Boasting of an ancient well and water tank, brick structures of stupas and monasteries in its outskirts, besides remains of ancient pottery, Gotihawa is a treasure trove of yet-to-be discovered ancient relics. Habitation here can be traced to as early 1011 BCE – as ‘impressed ware’ excavated in recent times by a Nepalese-Italian team of archaeologists prove, albeit it is thought to have started developing only in the 6th century BCE.

KUDAN

Buddhist scriptures are replete with references to Nyigrodharama – a place of many significant events related to the life and teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. Chinese travellers, Fahein in the 5th century CE and Xuan Zhang in 7th century CE, refer to several events at Kudan, including the most celebrated welcome of Sakyamuni Buddha by King Siddhodhana after the former's Enlightenment.

Nyigrodharama, a banyan grove, belonged to Nigrodha, the monk who encouraged Emperor Asoka to become a Buddhist and was chosen as the site for Buddha's residence when he visited Kapilvastu in the first year after his Enlightenment. Thereafter, Buddha would stay here on several occasions, and the site would witness several momentous events.



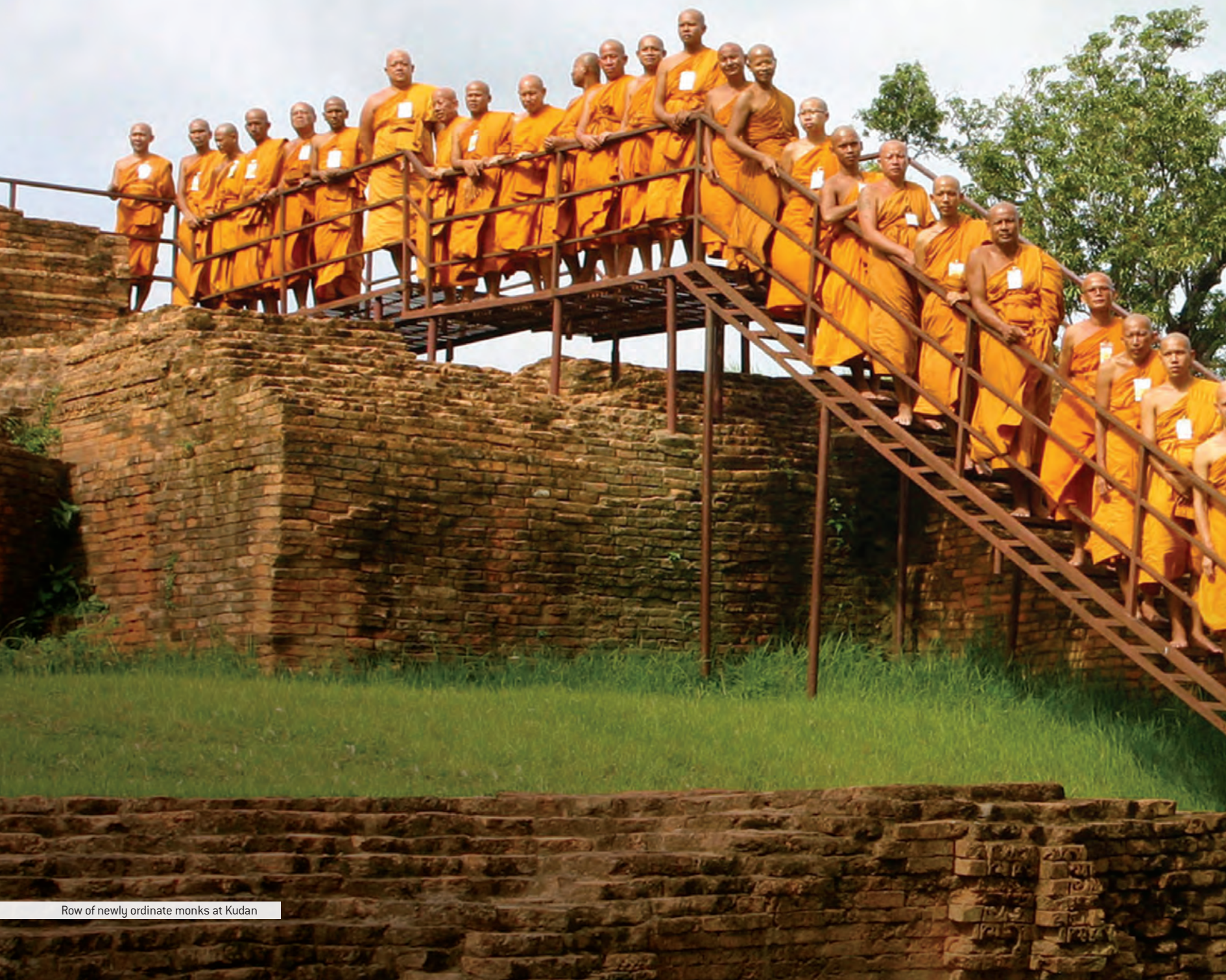
Drone photograph of Kudan



A western view of archaeological remains at Kudan

It is in Kudan that Prince Rahula and many other Sakyas were ordained into the monastic order, the Sakyamuni was offered the Kashaya Vastra by Queen Prajapati Gautami, a monastery was built by King Suddhodhana, a plea was made by Buddha's

closest disciple to allow women to join the *sangha* and several vinaya rules were first promulgated. Traditionally it is believed that the Cariya Pitaka and the Buddhavamsa were preached by the Buddha during his first stay in Nyigrodharama.



Row of newly ordinate monks at Kudan





Archaeological excavation at Kudan

Enclosed in the northwest corner by dwellings and the east by the Taulihawa-Kudan Road, the designated Kudan area measuring ~300 square metres, today boasts three stupas, a pond and a well that was built on the assumption that Sakyamuni Buddha and his sangha would use water from the well during their stay. It is thought that the Sakyas might have even created a lotus pond – the Nyigrodharama Pond – in honour of the Sakyamuni's imminent arrival after his Enlightenment.

Among the major structural ruins that have been identified at Kudan it is the Rahula Stupa, the Suddhodhana Stupa and the Prajapati Gautami Stupa that are most significant today. The Suddhodhana Stupa, that was built during the Sakya period and renovated and restored during the Mauryan, Sunga, Kusana and Gupta periods thereafter, commemorates Sakyamuni Buddha and King Suddhodana's first meeting after the former's Enlightenment, Buddha's discourse on the five suttas of the Majjhimanikaya and



conversion of Sakyas into Buddhists. The Rahula Stupa in the southeastern corner of the site – with an octagonal Shiva temple on its top that was built later by Hindus – was built to commemorate the event and spot where Buddha's son Rahula was accepted into the monastic order while the Prajapati Gautami Stupa in the northernmost part of the garden, marks the place where the queen offered Sakyamuni Buddha a yellow robe. Recent excavations have even identified

a wooden post-hole dating back to the 8th century BCE.

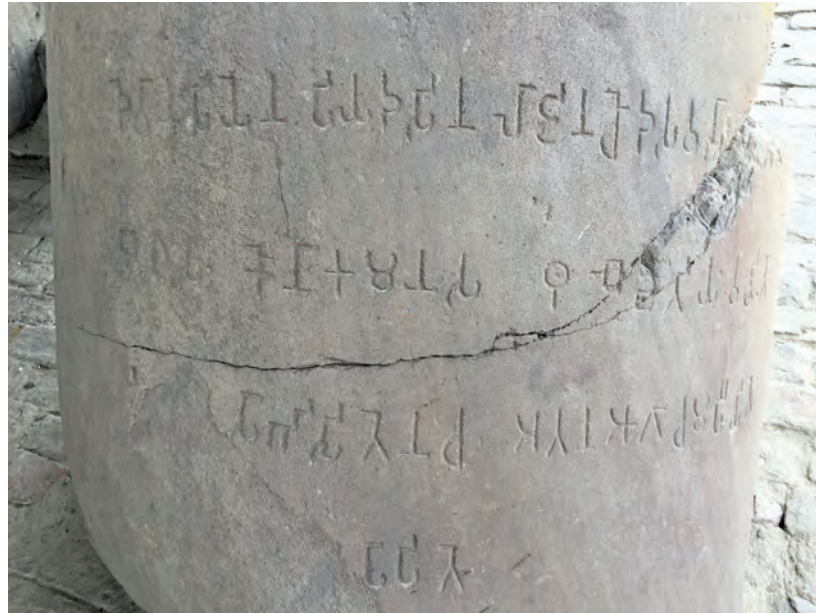
Nyigrodharama finds mention in ancient Buddhist texts as the place where a two-storey assembly hall and a special *vihara* was built for the *sangha* and where Sakyamuni Buddha and about 300 *vikchhu* once spent a rainy season for a retreat. On one of the many occasions that Buddha stayed here, he also consecrated a new assembly hall of the Sakyas.

NIGLIHAWA

Ancient texts mention when Kanakamuni or Konagamana Buddha, the sixth Buddha of the Bhadrakalpa, was born a heavy shower of gold fell on earth. Honouring this as an auspicious sign, he was named Kanakagamana – from kanaka meaning gold and agamana meaning coming.

The place of his birth, then known as Sobhavati and now as Niglihawa, lies 8 km. north-east of Taulihawa. It is a significant archaeological site whose centre of interest is the remains of a broken Asoka Pillar that lies close to a large pond.

The place of his birth, then known as Sobhavati and now as Niglihawa, lies 8 km. north-east of Taulihawa. It is a significant archaeological site whose centre of interest is the remains of a broken Asoka Pillar that lies close to a large pond. Erected by Emperor Asoka in 249 BCE to commemorate his visit to this sacred town, the pillar was rediscovered in 1895 by Dr A. Fuhrer as mentioned by Fahien and Xuan Zhang in their travel accounts.



Original Inscription at Niglihawa Pillar



A view of Niglihawa site

Although both the basement and the capital of the Asoka pillar – with the lion atop – as mentioned by Xuan Zhang are still missing, two parts of the pillar today lie on the west of a big tank, which locals call Niglisagar. The lower portion measuring 10 feet and 6 inches stands slightly tilted above the ground, with an Asoka edict in Brahmi script that reads: *“His Majesty King Priyadarsina, in the 14th year of his reign enlarged for the second time, the stupa of the Buddha Kanakmuni and in the 20th year of his reign, having come in person, did reverence and set up a stone pillar.”*

Besides attesting that Emperor Asoka enlarged the site’s stupa, the longer upper portion of the pillar – 14 feet 9 inches in length with two feet diameter at its uppermost and 2 feet 6 inches at its lower end – has figures of two peacocks and an inscription of Mahayana Buddhist prayer ‘Om Mani Padme Hum’ and ‘Sri Ripu Malla Chiram Jayatu 1234’, meaning Sri Ripu Malla be victorious for long, written in the year 1234, which corresponds to 1312 CE.



A high level monk interpreting Asoka Pillar at Nigihawa





Drone picture of Aaurakot

ARAURAKOT

Approximately two kilometres to the east of Niglihawa, Aaurakot is the site of a citadel that was uncovered during excavations and identified as the natal town of Kanakamuni Buddha. Chinese pilgrims Fahein and Xuan Zhang had in their travelogues mentioned Kanakamuni's town as lying "six to eight miles north of Krakkuchanda Buddha's town" Gotihawa – which approximates Aaurakot.

A rectangular area with remains of brick fortifications and traces of an ancient moat as its highlights, Aurorakot abounds in heaps of ancient ruins. It is thought to have been a rectangular walled fortress whose ruins in the east and south indicate that the fortress had a strong defence system enclosure measures 270×270m.

Its morphology suggests that it was a fortified outpost of a later Kushan period and maybe also a successor-city of Tilaurakot. Remains of two gates leading inside, a raised pathway to a temple and a palace have also been unearthed. A few shards of pottery – mostly red ware and northern black polished ware – were also recovered during the 1972-73 excavations here and geo-physics have been done under UNESCO / JFIT project in 2015.



Geophysical survey at Sagrahawa

SAGRAHAWA

*Identified with Mahavana
of the age of Buddha*

The site of the massacre of thousands of Sakyas by King Virudhaka of Kosala, Sagrahawa is marked by hundreds of commemorative relic stupas that were built in memory of those killed by the invading army. Identified with Mahavana of the age of Buddha, Sagrahawa lies approximately 4 km. to the northwest of Niglihawa and 12 km. north of Taulihawa. Chinese traveler Xuan Zhang while describing the place where members of the Sakya clan were slaughtered mentions the presence of “several thousand stupas”. The forest area is defined by a 1,059 feet long and 225 feet wide lake known as Lumbusagar on whose west and south banks lie ancient ruins of the stupas and

monasteries. The first excavation carried out in 1896 by Dr Fuhrer and identified as “the place of the massacre” also led to the unearthing of seventeen brick stupas, arranged in long symmetrical rows on four sides of the largest square stupa. Fuhrer also claimed to have found relics of the Sakya heroes and motifs of weapons and flowers engraved on bricks laid to cover the relic vases. Many Buddhist scriptures mention that Buddha would often spend afternoons of retreat in the Mahavana during his many visits to Kapilavastu after Enlightenment. Geophysical surveys have been carried out in 2016 and 2018 under UNESCO/JFIT project.



Present view of historic Sisaniya

SISANIYA

The excavation were first undertaken in 1899 by P. C. Mukherhi and further research by Debala Mitra of Archaeological Survey of India in 1962. In 1993-94 joint Nepalese-Italian archaeological investigation team has identified Sisaniya as an important archaeological site. The site, marked by an ancient mound, is thought to have a stupa and a sangharama built by Sakyas. It has also been identified as an important craft centre of the Kusana period based on the evidence – such as iron slogs, glass waste, terracotta figurines and other wares – found during excavations.



Monks praying and giving offering at Sacred Ramagrama Stupa



THE KOLIYA KINGDOM

The ancient Koliya kingdom was like ancient Kapilavastu – a ganarajya, a semi-republic, whose dwellers were also Koliyas who traced their lineage to the Ikshvaku dynasty. Situated in the lap of the Himalayas with River Rohini to its west, and Kapilavastu beyond, it was the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha's mother Queen Mayadevi, his stepmother Prajapati Gautami and his wife Yashodhara.

According to one school of thought, long before Sakyamuni's time, when the population of Kapilavastu's Sakya began to multiply, a group of them migrated to Kol (tree) forest that lay to the east of the Sakya Republic and thus came to be known as the Koliyas. The city which came to be called Kolanagar or Koliyapur, fell on a tiger track (vyagghapatha) and was also known as Vyagghapajja. Later, the name changed to Devadaha, from the sacred pond of the same name near the capital city. Devadaha was at the heart of the ancient Koliya kingdom, around which other settlements developed and flourished. Although, the two chief settlements of the Koliya kingdom have Ramagrama and Devadaha.

Living in adjacent territories and tracing their lineage to the adicca bandhus or kinsmen of the sun, it was natural for the Koliyas and the Sakyas of Kapilavastu to establish marital relations – one that would last until the lifetime of Sakyamuni Buddha. Koliya King Aukaka's son Anjana married Yasodhara, daughter of Sakya King Jayasen, while his daughter Kanchana married Singhahanu, the Sakya prince. Mayadevi and Prajapati Gautami, the two daughters of Anjana and Yasodhara, were married to Siddhodhana, the King of Kapilavastu. Yasodhara, Prince Siddhartha's wife, was also a princess of the Koliya royal house, the daughter of Anjana's son Suppabuddha.

According to *Lalitavistara*, a Buddhist scripture, the Bodhisattva decided to be born in the home of Sakya king, Siddhodhana, because both the maternal and parental ancestry were "irreproachable when it (came)

to any accusations of faults related to one's birth" and had sixty-four qualities that were required for "the family of a Bodhisattva in his final existence". It goes on to say that "looking throughout all Jambudvipa, all the major royal families and royal lines were found to be flawed. Considering this, the Sakya clan alone was seen to be free of faults."

Despite close blood ties, however, the Sakyas and Koliyas would have occasional rifts, especially over the right to the waters of River Rohini which irrigated land on both sides. Legends say that once a bloody feud was averted only by the intervention of Sakyamuni Buddha, during one of the many visits that he made here after attaining Enlightenment.

Like ancient Kapilavastu, the Koliya kingdom too turned into a region of desolation soon after the last days of the Buddha when King Virudhaka of Kosala, the kingdom that lay to the south of Kapilavastu attacked the Sakya Republic. King Virudhaka led an army against the core of Sakya political power, Kapilavastu and Devadaha, destroying its cities and then annexing the region to his kingdom.

Lying east of Butwal and sharing a border with Nawalparasi district in the east Devadaha, the capital of the ancient Koliya kingdom, is a sacred place not only for followers of the Buddhist faith but those who revere the way of life preached by its founder. It is sites that has ties to Prince Siddhartha's boyhood and youth and have been consecrated by him.



Drone picture of Ramagrama

RAMAGRAMA

An immensely significant and noteworthy monument that dates to 6th century BCE, Ramagrama Stupa is the only undisturbed original stupa containing relics of Sakyamuni Buddha and is on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List since 1996.

According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta in Buddhist scripture Digha Nikaya, the ~2,500-year-old mahastupa enshrines relics of the Buddha – an object of devotion and a mnemonic emblem for recalling his teachings and his example.

As the legend goes and finds record in the MahaparinibbanaSutta, soon after Buddha's mahaparinirvana in Kusinagar in 543 BCE, the Malla king "laid the relics of the Blessed One in the council hall, and surrounded them with a lattice-work of spears and encircled them with a fence of bows; and there for seven days they paid homage...with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and perfume, and showed respect, honour, and veneration." When the news reached Magadha, Vesali, Kapilavastu, Ramagrama, Allakappa and Pava, the kings of the respective

kingdoms sent their envoys with the message that since "the Blessed One was of the warrior caste, and we are too...we are worthy to receive a portion of the relics...we will erect a stupa over the relics...and hold a festival in their honour."

The Brahmin king of Vethadipa also learnt of the passing of the Buddha and claimed to be worthy of the lord's relics.

While Kusinara's Malla king, was loathe to the idea of sharing the corporeal relics, claiming it to be solely his kingdom's asset, the other kings were not averse to a war to get one. Apprehending that a war would defeat the very essence of Buddha's teachings, Dona, a Brahmin, advised the Malla King to be generous and equally distribute the relics. Eight corporeal relics were thus divided between the eight kings, while one from the ashes of Buddha's cremation pyre was given to the king of Pippalivana and the one from the pot used to divide the relics, to Dona. "So, it came about that there were eight stupas for the relics, a ninth for the urn, and a tenth for the ashes (MahaparinibbanaSutta)."

The Koliya king of Ramagrama, the maternal kin of the Buddha, is said to have taken the relic in a casket and joyfully paraded through the city before interring it within a large hemispherical mound, a mahastupa across River Jahari – a site which, some suggest, was the centre of the the Koliya kingdom and the birthplace of Queen Mayadevi, the Buddha’s mother.

The interesting story of Ramagrama Stupa does not end here but carries forward to the time when Emperor Asoka, who ruled over most parts of the Indian subcontinent between 268 and 232 BCE, decided to open the stupas and enshrine the relics in 84,000 stupas across the lands that he ruled. Strangely, at Ramagrama, he would witness the serpent king guarding the mahastupa and elephants offering flowers and sprinkling water, and overwhelmed by such devotion, would leave it untouched.



Monk praying at Sacred Stupa

Today, the “undisturbed original stupa” and monastic complex remains lie quiet in bucolic surroundings – 4 km. south of Parasi Bazaar and 44 km. east of Lumbini in Nawalparasi district. The most striking feature of the site is its massive stupa, which is 10 meters high and 23.5 meters in diameter built entirely of bricks and clay.

Although first discovered as a massive brick mound, hidden by grass and bushes, by archaeologist Dr. W. Hoey in 1899. Nepasese archaeologist Sukra Sagar Shrestha excavated some structure and confirmed the site’s establishment between the Mauran and Gupta periods. Geophysical surveys of subsurfaces arechaeological fetures were conducted in 1997, 1999 and 2018. These identified the presence of several quadrangular brick monasteries and water tank to the west and north of the stupa.



Devotees are paying homage to the Stupa



Devdaha Pond

DEVDAHA

Where Prince Siddhartha spent some years of his childhood and youth

Literally translating to ‘pond of god’ from the Sanskrit deva or god and daha meaning pond, Devadaha is believed to have got its name from a holy pond that today lies a few kilometres west of Devadaha in the foothills of the Siwalik range of mountains. The ancient capital of the Koliya kingdom, Devadaha, according to a Buddhist text, could also have got its name from the time the site was shown to Kapilavastu Sakyans by a deva.

Situated 57 kilometres east of Lumbini and 25 kilometres northwest from Ramagrama across River Rohini. The maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, PrajapatiGautami and

Queen Yashodhara – respectively Sakyamuni Buddha’s mother, stepmother and wife – also where Prince Siddhartha spent some years of his childhood and youth, where he showed his extraordinary shooting and riding skills and the place he visited, many a time on missionary tours, after attaining Enlightenment is a significant site of historical ruins, all of which lie within a radius of six kilometres of the East-West Highway. The sites includes Kumarvarti, Khayardanda, Bairimai-Kanyamai, Bhawanipur-Devidamar, Kothimai.

PANDITPUR

Based on the findings of the recent excavations Panditpur area of Nawalparasi district (13.5km from Ramagrama and 11.69km from Bhawanipur) has also been identified as an important archaeological site. The site is rich in terms of history and archaeology, where

archaeological remains can be found in cultivated land. During the archaeological excavations many ancient artifacts discovered from Kusana and Mauryan era. Some archaeologists have claimed it to be the possible palace site of the ancient Koliya Kingdom.





LUMBINI BIODIVERSITY

According to *Lalitavistara*, one of the most important sutras of Buddhist literature which relates the story of how the Buddha manifested in this world and attained awakening, every tree in Lumbini, “that perfect grove”, had at the time of Sakyamuni Buddha’s birth “leaves, flowers and fruits, even though it was out of season”. It was as though “even the gods had done their best to decorate the forest.”

Centuries later, this modest grove in the Terai plains, continues to exude a divine aura—with the power to inspire profound human experience. However, it is not that this grove is just an island of tranquility; even its wider periphery areas are lush with greenery and fauna and an idyllic ambience that befit its eminence as a place of Outstanding Universal Value.

Spread over 1,600 square kilometres and composed of farmlands, rivers, wetlands and forest edges in Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts, the Lumbini Area. A key biodiversity area of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Lumbini Area is predominantly composed of cultivated farmlands with scattered patches of old growth trees and concentrations of similar vegetation along the river courses of Ban Ganga, Kothi, Telar, Dano, Tinaua and Danda.

The northern rim of the farmscape – Rudrapur, Saljhandi, Ganeshpur and Ban Ganga river forest – are mostly marked by forests and shrubbery while river corridors near areas of cultivated fields, are defined by thin strips of vegetation comprising silk-cotton trees and a dense undergrowth of shrubs and herbs. Lumbini forest groves within the Lumbini Master Plan area and riverine forests adjacent to River Kothi near the Indo-Nepal border – approximately 150 ha – are the largest

patches of forests in the southern half of the Lumbini Area.

Pastoral sights and scenes abound in the Lumbini Area – calls of avifauna, the lowing of cattle, bleating of goats creating a sense of intimacy with nature. A rare Sarus Crane or Nilgai could be stalking through the fields – a reminder of an ancient culture that values preservation of life above all else. In fact, the magnificent Sarus Crane, the tallest flying bird in the world, one of which Prince Siddhartha had saved centuries ago, is the centerpiece of Lumbini– with 80 per cent of Nepal’s Sarus Cranes confined within this ‘Saruscape’. About 90-100 pairs of the species nest in Lumbini’s farmlands, especially in the wetlands that have been demarcated as a 256-acre crane sanctuary.

Let alone the iconic Sarus, Lumbini’s wetlands, river banks and lakes-ponds such as Jagadishpur, Gaidahawa, Gajedi and Sagarhawa are ideal habitats for other wetland birds such as Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Common Teal, Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Lesser Whistling Duck, Lesser Adjutant and Asian Woollyneck. The Jagdishpur Reservoir with a surface area 556 acres within the Lumbini Area, it not only the largest reservoir in Nepal but also a Ramsar Site and an Important Bird Area, with approximately 168 bird species.



Sarus Crane (Official bird of Lumbini)



Nilgai (Blue Bull)

The farmlands of Lumbini and the Kapilvastu and Devadaha forests have also been designated as Important Bird Areas. Lumbini's farmlands, especially tussocks of grass in the farmland bund areas, are significant habitats for wildlife. Lumbini is a lifeline for wildlife, a veritable treasure trove of floral and faunal varieties. While a detailed inventory is unavailable on the flora of the farmscape, 354 species has been documented in the Lumbini Sacred Garden area itself – 246 herbaceous, 54 trees, 29 shrubs and 25 climbers. The area also boasts of 39 species of recorded fauna – from Nilgai, the antelope-like blue bull, to the Bengal Fox, Asiatic Golden Jackal, Striped Hyena, Smooth-Coated Otter, Civets, Chital, Leopard in the fringe forests, Royal Bengal tiger in the northern rim forests and more. It is also famed as the dwelling of the Indian-eyed Turtle, found only here in Nepal, and the Nepalese Fan-Throated Lizard that was first described to science from here. Avifauna presence in Lumbini is spectacular, with 421 species identified till date. Other than the commonly-spotted Southern Grey Shrike, Large Grey Babbler, Common Babbler, Striated Babbler, Yellow-Eyed Babbler, Grey Francolin and Rufous-Tailed Lark, the area is a habitat for 18 globally-threatened species.

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Pair of Sarus crane



Lesser adjutant stork



Kingfisher with catch



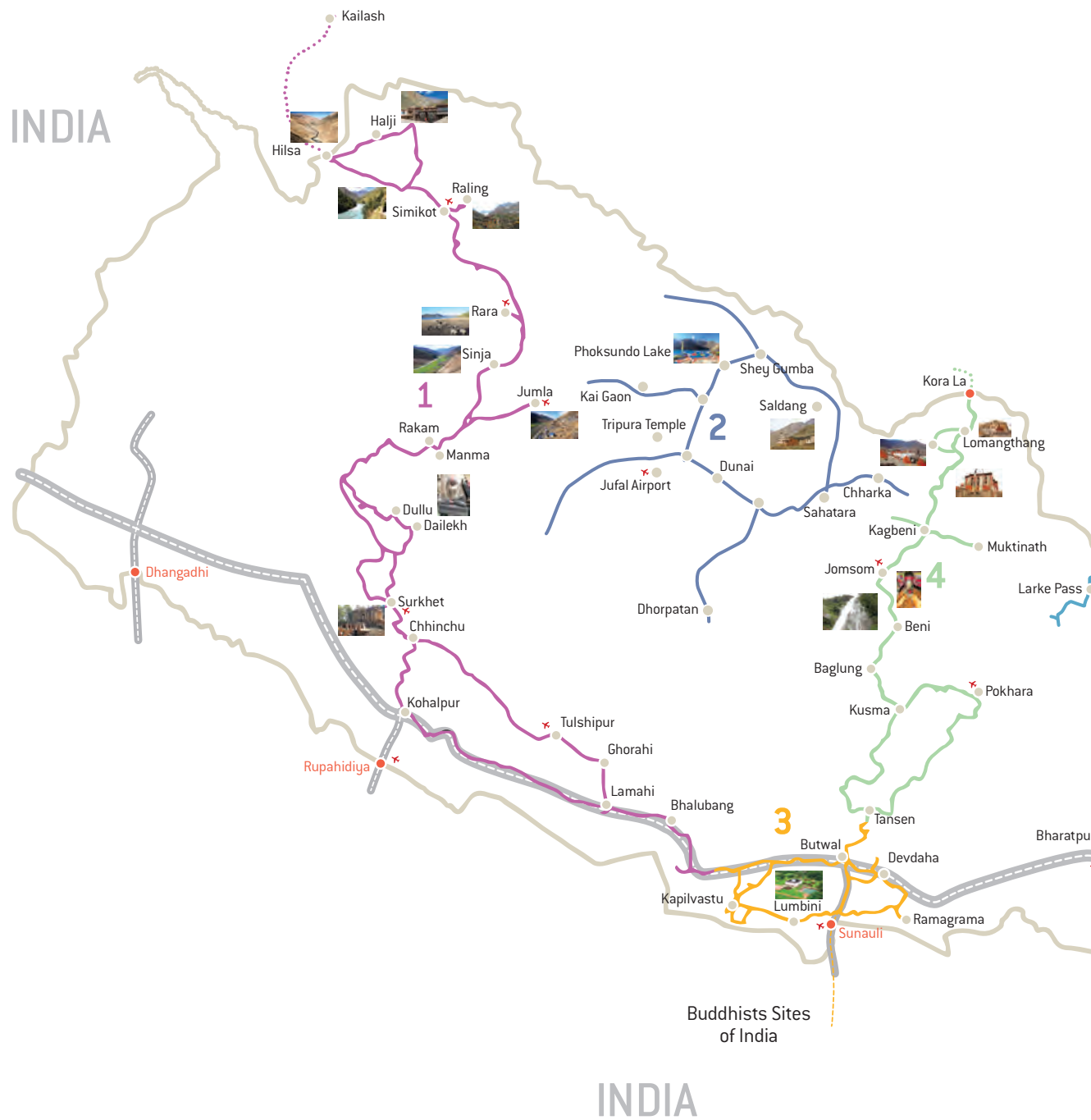
Ruddy shelduck





BUDDHIST CIRCUITS OF NEPAL

*Sacred pilgrimage and cultural trails
connecting the outstanding Buddhist sites
associated with the birth, foot-steps and
perfected meditation sites of Lord Sakyamuni
Buddha, other previous Buddhas, Buddhist
Mahasiddhas and Masters.*





MAP OF THE BUDDHIST CIRCUITS OF NEPAL





Raling Gumba, Humla



Dho Gumba, Dolpa



Lumbini



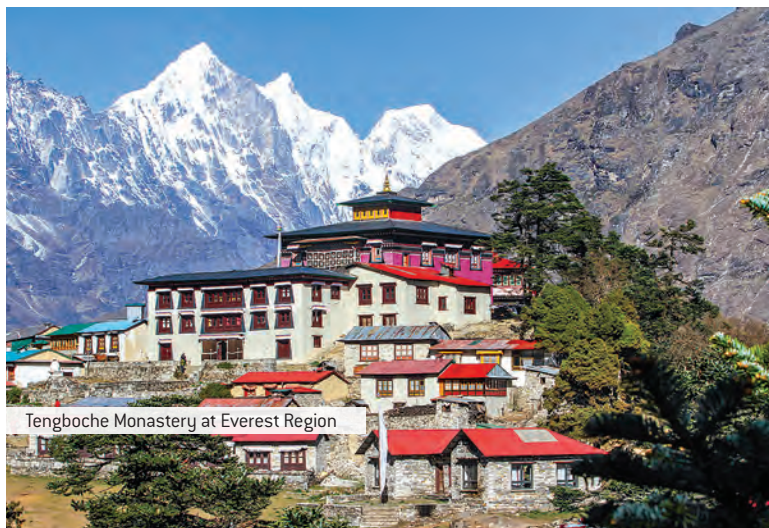
Muktinath Temple, Mustang



Praying wheel at Manaslu area



Monk chanting inside cave at Haleshi



Tengboche Monastery at Everest Region



Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu



Painted Buddhist Mantra's over stone at Kanchanjunga region

OM MANE PADME HUM CIRCUIT TO MT. KAILASH

[Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit](#) connects the world's two most sacred and revered pilgrimage and spiritual power places- Lumbini (in Nepal) and Mount Kailash (in Tibet, China) via Surkhet Kakre Vihara. The circuit overlaps with one of the ancient Silk Road Corridors in Nepal, and falls almost entirely on the ancient Khasha (Yatshe) Empire. Available inscriptions, chronicles, archaeological remains and literary evidence suggest that Buddhism was the court religion of the powerful Khasha kingdom (11th to 14th century AD), whose summer and winter capitals were Sinja and Dullu respectively.

The circuit has been named after one of the most popular Buddhist Chants (mantra) - ***Om Mane Padme Hum***, which appears in inscriptions of the stone pillars erected in Lumbini, Niglihawa, Dailekh, Dullu, Sinja and so on. The pilgrimage and spiritual journey from Lumbini to Mt. Kailash (and vice-versa) passes through some historically and spirituality significant Buddhist Viharas, Chaityas (stupas), Stone Pillars, Devals, Caves, Monasteries and Sacred Valleys including Surkhet Kakre-Vihara, Dailekh, Dullu, Manma, Sinja, Rara, Simkot (including Raling Gumba), Yalbang Monastery, Limi Valley (including Halzi Monastery), Hilsa and Mansarovar (in Tibet, China).

Almost all art and architectural works of the Khasha Kingdom were related to Buddhism and largely influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. The dominant Khasha kings who have claimed themselves as the Parama Sugata (devout follower of the Buddha) had

built several Buddhist monuments with inscription written in Tibetan, Sanskrit and Khasha languages. The most beautiful and largest Shikhara Style [Kakre Vihara](#) built by King Ashoka Challa in 1268 AD in Surkhet is fully decorated with artistically carved stones and statues of Buddha in various mudras.

[Dailekh and Dullu](#) also have many significant Devals, Pillars, Naulis, Chaityas and Buddhist images with inscriptions. [Sinja Valley](#) has significant archaeological and religious sites such as ruins of Birat palace, Devals and images of ancient Votive Buddhist Vihara in the caves of Hima River.

Located on the base of Mount Shelmogang or Mt. Crystal Peak (also considered to be the Kailash of Humla), [Raling Gumba](#) is an important pilgrimage and spiritual center for Buddhists, Khasha/Hindus and Bon believers. At the base of Mt. Shelmogang lies the Siddhi Cave of Guru Rinpoche, which was also visited by Great Yogi Milarepa.

Founded by the Great Translator Rinchen Zangpo during 11th century AD in Halji (Waltse) in Limi Valley (the previous domain of Zhang Zhung), [Thubten Rinchenling Monastery \(Halji Gumba\)](#) is one of the oldest monasteries in the Trans-Himalayan region and the last, out of 108, monasteries founded by Rinchen Zangpo throughout Guge, Purang and Ladakh of Western Tibet.

Karnali River Corridor, Rara Lake, Jumla Khalanga, Kharpunath, Chhayanth are other important sites to visit on this circuit.



**MAP OF OM MANE
PADME HUM CIRCUIT
TO MT. KAILASH**



Kakre Vihar Temple under renovation



Stone Image at Kakre Vihar, Surkhet



Stone carved Buddha at Paduka, Dailekh



Panchadewal's in Dailekh _ typical style of western Malla Architecture



Mt. Kailash (Gang Rinpoche)



Sinja Valley



Rara Lake



Indigenous Buddhist Community, Limi



Halji Gumba



DOLPO BUDDHIST AND BON HERITAGE CIRCUIT

Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit connects some of the rare areas in the Himalayas where Bon and Buddhism have long existed side by side, and where age-old practices of Bon religion can be observed while visiting some of the oldest existing Bonpo monasteries. As the descendants of the Ngari region of Tibet, the people of Dolpo are of pure Tibetan stock and the Dolpo region also has many similarities with the Zhang Zhung, the ancestral homeland of Bon, in terms of culture, religion and cultural practices. The crystal mountain in front of **Shey Gumba** is considered to be the younger brother of Mt. Kailash, revered by both, Buddhists and Bon followers.

The hidden land of Dolpo has been a sacred place for enlightenment through solitary meditation. Many tantric masters, scholars and siddhas, including Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) and Yogi Milarepa visited this sacred land and perfected their meditation. Dolpo is also home to many famous Buddhist scholar Dolpo-pa Shenrab Gyaltzen, a 14th century master who contributed to emptiness through his Shengtong philosophy, and other religious gurus including four famous Lamas of Dolpa. Dolpo, still today, is becoming one of the leading learning centers for both Himalayan Buddhism and Bon.

Significant and oldest Bonpo monasteries connected by the circuit include Rigmo monastery (Phoksundo Lake), Seteng Yungdrung Shuktsel Gumba (Barley), Deden Phuntsok Ling Gumba

(Dho Tarap) Tadzong Phuntsok Ling Gumba (Tsarkha), Yungdrung Tsomo Gumba (Pugmo) etc. **Samling Gumba**, constructed by Dzogchen Master Gyaltzen Rinchen near Bhijer in 13th century is one of the most noted Bon centers in Upper Dolpa. It comprises important Bon icons including Tonpa Shenrap Miwoche (the Bon equivalent of the Buddha), and housed important text, such as the Three Minds Sutras and Mantras.

Likewise, significant Buddhist monasteries connected by the circuit include Shey Gumba, Ribo Bhumpo Gumba, Margom Yetsher Gumba (Saldang), Jampa Gumba (Dho Tarap), Langgon Nesar Gumba (Bhijer), Drigung Gumba (Tiserong) Jovo Gumba, etc. **Ribo Bhumpa Gumba** was built in Dho Tarap by Jigme Nyima Gyaltzen and Lama Tenzin Targye around 1000 years ago. Legends have it that the great Buddhist tantric Guru Padmasambhava subdued three demonesses during the construction of Samye Monastery in Tibet.

Himalayan Amchi (Buddhist Medicines) practices, Yak Caravan and Yarsa-Gumba Expedition are other interesting activities to observe on this circuit.

This circuit can be approached from various entry points including Chhinchu/Jajarkot, Jumla (via Kaigaon), Dhorpatan, Kagbeni (via Chharka) and Mugu (Gamgadi).



MAP OF DOLPO BUDDHIST AND BON HERITAGE CIRCUIT





Juphal



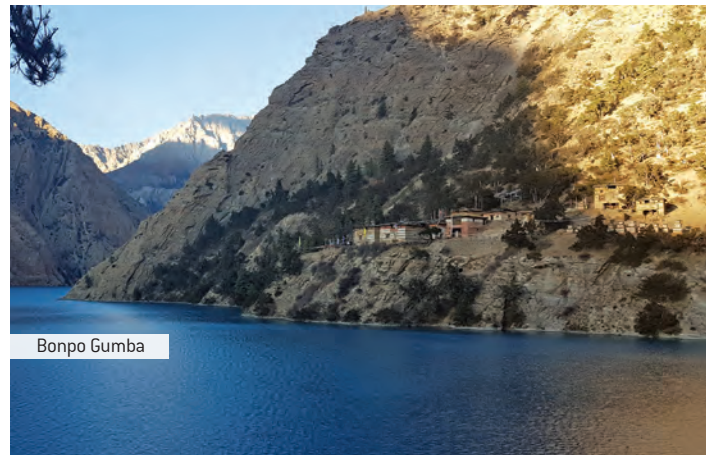
Tripurasundari



Shey Phoksundo Lake



Simikot Valley



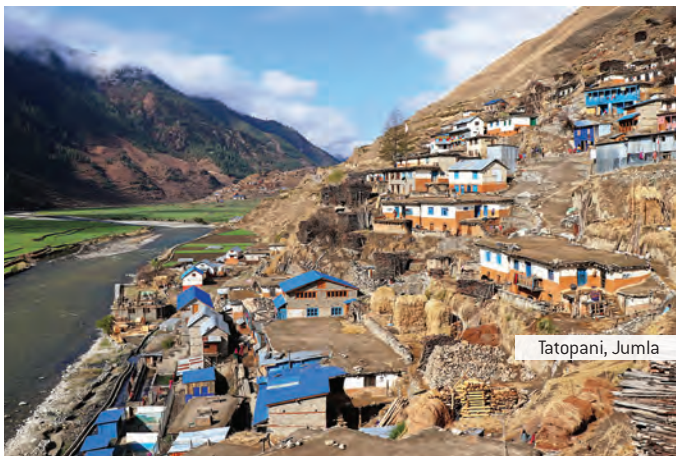
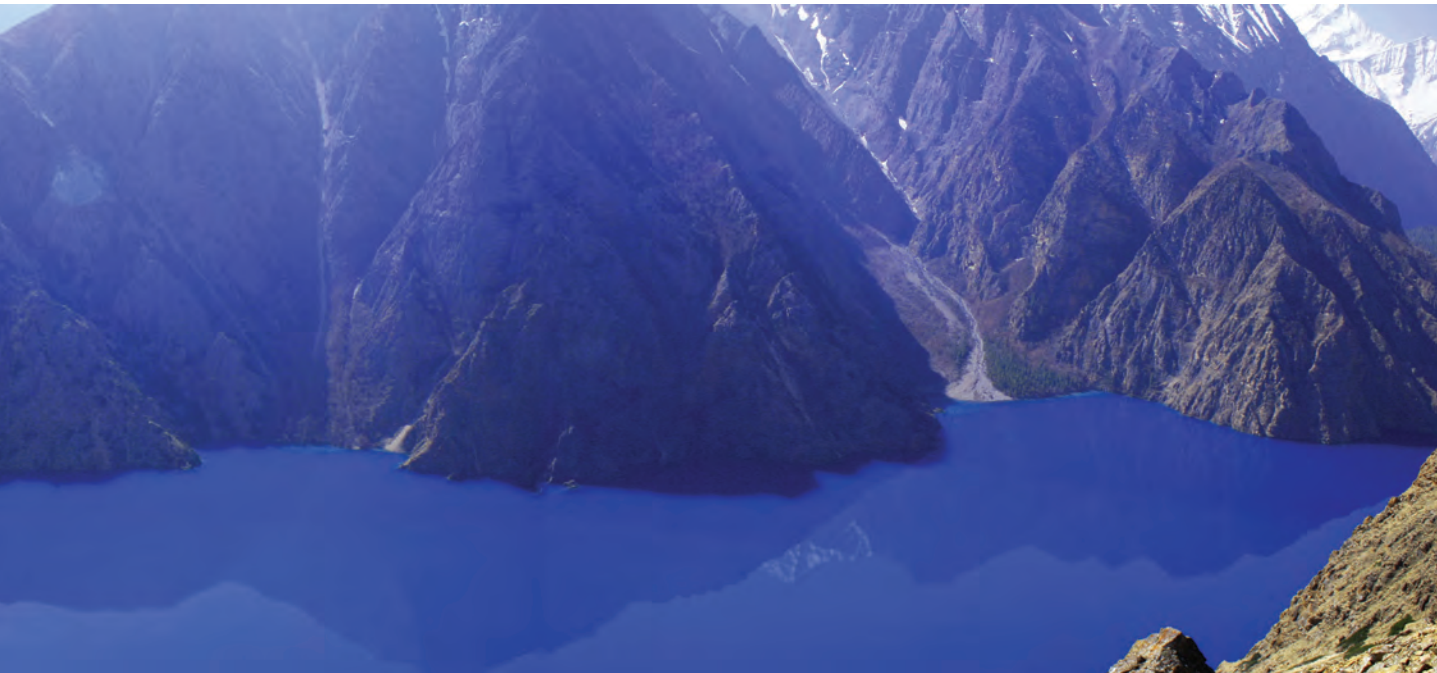
Bonpo Gumba



Saldang



Shey Gumba



Tatopani, Jumla



Dho Gumba

GREATER LUMBINI BUDDHIST CIRCUIT

Following the Birthplace and Foot-Steps of Sakyamuni Buddha and Other Previous Buddhas

Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit connects four major Buddhist sacred sites - Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Ramagrama and Devadaha in the Greater Lumbini Area, Nepal. This is one of the Sacred Buddhist pilgrimage circuits in the world.



Asoka Pillar



Marker Stone

Lumbini is the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha and fountain of Buddhism and world peace. It is the epicenter of the global Buddhist pilgrimage.

Kapilavastu (present Tilaurakot) is the capital of the ancient Sakya Kingdom (also known as Kapilavastu) and the hometown of prince Siddhartha. Here, (his naming ceremony, schooling even at the age of sixteen, married) It the age of 29, when he became a father of a son Rahula, Siddhartha renounced his princely life through the Eastern Gate which later on known as Mahaviniskramana Dwara.

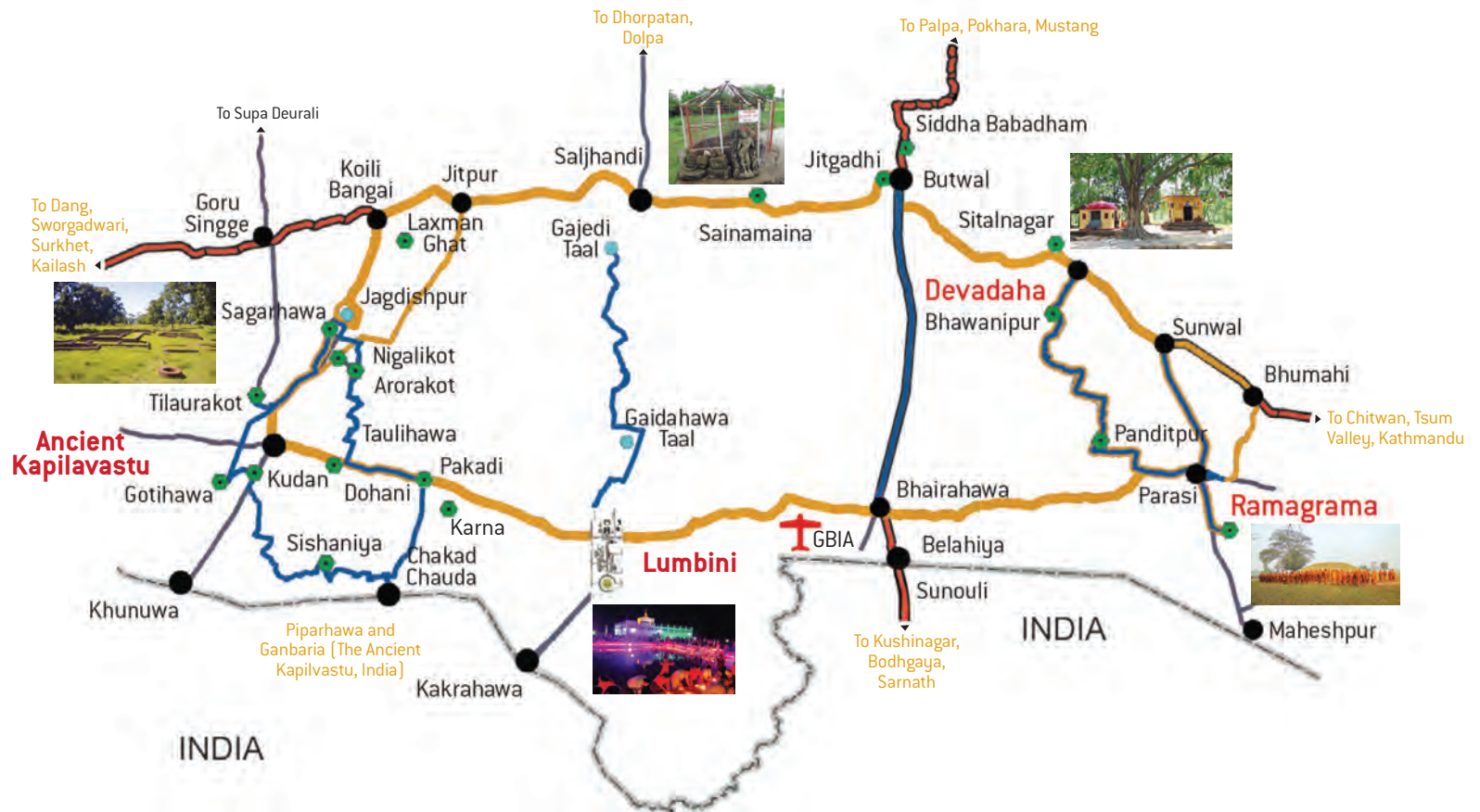
Equally significant are other sacred Buddhist sites including Niglihawa (the birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha), Gotihawa (the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha), Kudan (the ancient Nyigrodharama), Sagarhawa (the massacre site of the Sakyas), Sisahaniya etc.

Ramagrama is the only sacred stupa which contains the relics of Sakyamuni Buddha. (still unexposed)

Devadaha (including Panditpur) is the capital of the ancient Koliya Kingdom and the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi and Prajapati, the beloved mother and step-mother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

The hill station **Tansen** is the nearest Sakya settlement and the home of many Theravadin Mahasthaviras, including Amritaananda and Bimalananda.

MAP OF GREATER LUMBINI BUDDHIST CIRCUIT





Monks are praying at Asoka Pillar



Monks circumambulating at Ramagrama Stupa



Pilgrims at Mahabiniskrama Dwara at present Tilaurakot



Asoka Pillar, Gotihawa



Asoka Pillar, Niglihawa



Pilgrims at Kudan (Ancient Nyagrodharma)

LUMBINI- LO KINGDOM (MUSTANG) BUDDHIST CIRCUIT

JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF SACRED CAVES AND MONASTERIES THROUGH THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD CORRIDOR

Lumbini- Lo Kingdom Buddhist Circuit connects Lumbini, the sacred birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddhas, with one of the oldest and established Buddhist centers, the **Lo kingdom**, in the Trans-Himalayan region. The circuit overlaps with one of the prominent ancient **Silk Road Corridors** linking India, Nepal and Western Tibet. The sacred circuit was also followed by the great Buddhist Mahasiddhas and scholars including Padmasambhava, Yogi Milarepa, Atisha Dipamkara Srijnana, Lotsaba Rinchen Zangpo, Lama Sange, Tulku Lato Marpo, Sakyasribhadra (of Kashmir), Ekai Kawaguchi and so on.

Chronicles, archaeological remains and scientific expeditions reveal that Lo Kingdom used to be a popular spiritual and learning center for Buddhism with the arrival of the great Buddhist Tantric Master Padmasambhava in 8th century AD, who pacified powerful demoness and founded **Lo Ghyekar** monastery or Ghar Gumba in Lo Kingdom earlier than the foundation of Samye monastery in Tibet. Lo Kingdom used to be the strong-hold site of Nyingma and Sakya practitioners.

Thini, Muktinath, Rangchhyung Cave Chhorten (Chyungsi Cave place for meditation by Padmasambhava and also visited by Atisha), Lo Ghekar, Tetang, Ghami, Dhagmar areas are closely associated with the tantric and meditation activities of Padmasambhava. Lo Ghekar is also known as **Ter ne Ghangpo** as the first Terma (the treasures written and concealed by Padmasambhava) was revealed here in 11th century by Lama Sange (Sangs-rgyasbla-ma).

Historically significant monasteries include **Thubten Shedrup Dhargyeling Monastery** (Ngor - shakya Monastery), built in Tsarang by the 1st Lo ba King Amepal Sangpo with the support from Sakya Lama Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo (Anandabhadra) in 1427 AD; **Jhampa Lhakhang Monastery** (the temple of the Maitreya Buddha and the famous mandala monastery), built in Lo Mangthang by the second Lo

ba King Agon Zangpo in 1447 AD and the **Thubchhen Lakhang Monastery** (the temple of Sakyamuni Buddha) founded in Lo Mangthang by the third Lo ba king Tashi Gon in 1468 AD and completed in 1972 AD.

Other historic and archaeologically significant sites and monasteries include walled city of **Lo-mangthang**, Namgyal Gumba, Luri Gumba, Tashi Kabum Cave Chhorten, Tangge Chhorten (with 8 different forms of stupas), Kutsaptemga Gumba (Monastery of five treasures) in Thini, Puntsoling Gumba, Kunza Choling Gumba, Mentsi Lhakhang in Chhusang, Yungdrug Changra Shar Gumba and so on.

As the kingdom was ruled and greatly influenced by Zhang Zhung till the 7th century AD and later by Gunthang Manguel, areas such as Lubrag (near Kagbeni) used to be one of the main **Bon pilgrimage centers**, and many Bon monasteries and Bon practitioners still resides in Jaragang, Bonkhor, Nyamlen Phug near Lubrag area. Pilgrimage sites like Muktinath and Damodar Kund are equally revered by Buddhist, Hindu and Bon. **Muktinath** (Chu-mig Ghyatsa in Tibetan), which is also regarded as the younger brother of Mt. Kailash, is revered by the followers of Buddhist, Hindu and Bon. A Buddhist Nyingma Gumba (Menbal –temple) is located nearby.

A pilgrimage and spiritual visit to the Lo Kingdom also allows one to observe and/or experience the spectacular Trans-Himalayan landscape, beautiful mountain peaks, ancient architectures and age old culture, rituals, costumes, food, festival of Lo ba and Thakali people, including Tiji and Yartung. Lo Kingdom also comprises many human caves and monastery caves of Neolithic period, including the **Ngor Sakya sanctuary of Nyiphu** (Nyi-phug, the cave of the sun).

The opening immigration point at **Kora La** with China will create boundless opportunities by connecting Lumbini with Mt. Kailash via Lo Kingdom.



**MAP OF LUMBINI-
LO KINGDOM
(MUSTANG) BUDDHIST
CIRCUIT**



Garphu Monastery, Upper Mustang



Monastery within Lo-manthang



Ancient Chungsi Cave at Upper Mustang, where Guru Padmasambhava meditated in the 8th century



Row of cave dwellings carved in a cliff near Chele, Mustang



Gateway Chhorten



Yarthung festival at Mustang



Chortens within wall city, Lo-Manthang



Waterfalls at Muktinath Temple premises



Tsarang Monastery, Mustang



Row of Chorten, Mustang



Inner part of Shija Zhong Cave, Chhoser



Inner part of chungsi cave, Upper Mustang

TSUM - NUBRI VALLEY SACRED KYIMOLUNG CIRCUIT

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE SACRED BEYUL AND THE LAND OF NON-VIOLENCE

The Tsum-Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit connects significant Buddhist heritage sites associated with Padmasambhava's **beyul Kyimolung** (means stream of happiness), meditation sites of great saint Milarepa and other historical monuments. Bordered by the sacred Mountain Ganesh Himal in the east and Manaslu Himal in the west, the circuit is expanded over the Tsum, Kutang and Nubri Valley of Upper Gorkha. Beyul Kyimolung was revealed by the Tertön Go-demchen and Shringi Himala is considered to be the epicentre of this beyul.

The people of Tsum Valley have been promoting Tsum Valley as **Peace and Non Violence Zone** since the last century. By strictly adopting the six - locally approved spiritual rules of non-violence, under the broader framework of Buddha's Five Precepts.

The circuit comprises probably the **longest series of stone Chhortens** traversing through the series of Milarepa's Caves in Nubri, Kutang and Tsum Valley in Nepal and Mangyul Gungthang in Tibet.

Significant sites connected by the circuit include **Mu Gumba** (the oldest monastery), Gonghe Gumba, **Fugron Phug** (Milarepa Cave, Chhekam), **Rachhen Gumba** (the first Nunnery), Chumchet, Philim, Bhi Gumba, Serang Gumba (the epicentre of beyul), Prok, Lho, Samagoan Gobma, **Naljor Phug** (Milarepa Cave, Samdo) and so on. A total of 153 Gompas, Mani Walls, Chortens and Kanis (Gateway Chortens) have been recorded in Tsum Valley only. Rachhen Gumba, Serang Gumba and Lho Gumba have nowadays become the centre of Buddhist learning.

Mu Gumba, built in 1895 by Serab Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche (alias Ngawang Palsang), houses religious books, including Kangyur. There are images of Avalokiteshwara, Guru Padmasambhava, Tara and many stupas. Rachhen Gumba, erected in 1905 AD, houses life size statues of Avalokiteshwara, Guru Padmasambhava, Tara, Buddha Amitabha and stupas made of gold and silver alloy.

MAP OF TSUM - NUBRI VALLEY SACRED KYIMOLUNG CIRCUIT





Stone Chhorten on the way to Manaslu



Ribung Gumba and Mt. Manaslu



Celebrating Lhosar Festival at Tsum Valley

NEPAL MANDALA BUDDHIST CIRCUIT - KATHMANDU VALLEY

Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit connects significant Buddhist heritage sites contained under the geo-physical and spiritual domain of ancient Nepal Mandala, broadly demarcated by the four major sacred power places- Nagarjuna/Jamacho, Siphucho (Shivapuri), Phucho (Phulchowki) and Dhinacho (Chandragiri) and its surroundings. Four Karunamaya Temples, four small stupas of Lubhu, four temples of Yoginis, sacred route of Dipankara Yatra, sacred route of Mataya (Patan), sacred route of Upaku, sacred route of Mahapuja, sacred route of Baha-Bahis and so on areas other sites and routes of pilgrimage and cultural significance in Nepal Mandala. Nepal Mandala is a living legend for Buddhist religion/philosophy and a melting pot of all Buddhist canons and practices.

Swayambhu Mahachaitya is an ancient monument of Nepal and dedicated to Adi Buddha, the supreme manifestation of all Buddhas. The complex consists of a stupa, shrines and temples which date back to the Licchavi period. As mentioned in Swayambhu purana Vipaswa Buddha visited Jamacho (Nagarjun Hill) and planted a seed for lotus when Kathmandu valley was a lake.

Swayambhu and Jamacho area are also closely linked with Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Langtang en route to Kerung (Gunthang Mangul) in Tibet, China. Key Buddhist sites in **Nuwakot** (Bhalpo Dzong) include Chankha La (Kabilas), Nuwakot Maha- Mandala, Sispang, and Sing La. Likewise, Briddim, Langtang, Kyanjin Gumba, Langshisha, and Padmasambhava cave near base camp of Langtang Lirung are important sites located in **beyul Namgo-dagam (Langtang)**.

Jamal and Basantapur area, including Swayambhu Mahachaitya area, is considered to be the epicenter of the Nepal Mandala as it contains many significant heritage sites and rituals including **Sweta Machhindranath** (Jamadya, Jamal), **Vikramasheela Mahaviraha** (founded by Atisha Dipamkara), Itum Bahal (also visited by Marpha) Machhindranath Chariot Festival, Indra Jatra, living Goddess Kumari Chariot Festival etc.

Bouddha Mahachaitya which is believed to have contained the remains of Kassapa Buddha is the largest stupa, and the most revered Buddhist shrine for Himalayan Buddhist communities. **Charumati Stupa** (in Chabahil) which is believed to have founded by Charumati, the beloved daughter of Emperor Ashoka, also has a spiritual connection with Boudha

Mahachaitya. Meditation **caves of Tilopa and Naropa** in Pashupatinath Area is on important site for both Buddhist and Hindu tantric practitioners.

As per Jataka stories, **Manichud** in Shankhu is believed to be the previous birth site of Sakyamuni Buddha where he donated his jewels. Guh Vihara in Vajrayogini temple, Sankhu is considered to be the oldest vihara in Nepal Mandala. Sankhu is also the gateway to Beyul Hyolmo and to Tibet via Tatopani (ancient Kuti). Significant sites in **beyul Yolmo Gang-ra (Helambu)** include Jhema-thang (Bemthang), Guru Drubphuk, the cave of Padmasambhava, Milarepa Cave near Timbu, Dharmapala Ama Yang-ri, Mt. Dorje Legpa, Ama Cho Mehn (Bhairab Kund), and several monasteries in Tarkeghang, Shermathang, and Melamchighang.

Lashapa Ko in Sudal, Bhaktapur, is the sacred meditation site of Yogi Milarepa as well as the site of Manjusri. Bhaktapur itself has more than 21 viharas. The **Nala Karunamaya Temple** is one out of four most sacred Karunamaya temples in Nepala Mandala. Four small stupas can be visited in **Lubhu** as well. As per Jataka, **Namo Buddha** in Kavre is believed to be the previous birth site of Sakyamuni Buddha where he donated his body to a hungry tigress. There are old stupas in Panauti. Another important site in the eastern direction of the Nepal Mandala is **Timal area**, the sacred site of Padmasambhava.

Patan, the **city of Vahas and Vahis**, has been one of the important Buddhist centers since the time of Sakyamuni Buddha (or Ashoka). The **four Ashokan Stupas** erected in four cardinal directions (Pulchowk, Lagankhel, Gwarko, Shankhamul) are the milestone ancient monuments of great pilgrimage value. In **Hiranyavarna Mahavihara**, the gold-written text of prajnaparamita is recited every morning. The shikhara style Maha Bauddha temple (a replica of Mahabodhi temple, Bodhgaya), Rudreshwor Mahavihara and Aksheshwar Mahavihar are other significant Viharas and temples in Patan.

Red-Machhindranath (Bungadya), and **Anandadi Lokeshvara** (Chovar) are other important Buddhist power places in the southern direction of Nepal mandala. In the **Asura Cave in Pharping**, Guru Padmasambhava attained the level of a Mahamudra Vidyadhara. Other significant Buddhist sites in the area include **Asoka stupa** (in Chitlang) and Padmasambhava's meditation cave at **Rikheshwor** (Daman).

MAP OF NEPAL MANDALA BUDDHIST CIRCUIT - KATHMANDU VALLEY





Aksobhya Buddha (Kwapadyoh) Golden Temple, Patan



Lokesvara at Shree Rudra Varna Mahavihar, Patan



Sweta Machhindranath (Janmadyoh) Keltola, Kathmandu



Baidyo at Vikramshila Mahavihar, Thimbahi, Kathmandu

MARATIKA (HALESI) - SAILUNG - TIMAL PADMASAMBHAVA MEDITATION CAVE CIRCUIT

Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit connects perfected meditation caves and foot-prints of Great Buddhist Tantric Master Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). The **Rocky Cave of Maratika (Haleshi)** is the epicenter of this circuit, and other equally significant sites include Timal Area (In Kavre), Sailung Area (Dolakha, Ramechhap), Charighang, Bhimeshwor and so on. The 8th century Vajrayana Master Padmasambhava spent most of his time doing meditation in this region.

Haleshi, which is equally revered by three different communities - Buddhist, Hindu and Kirat, is one of the famous pilgrimage hubs in the eastern region. For Kirat communities, the entire **Tuwachung Hill**, including Haleshi, is a sacred place. The sacred caves of Haleshi is believed to be discovered by a Rai Hunter, Bagbansi Rai, in pursuit of a deer. For Hindu believers, Shiva is manifested there in the form of a linga. Tuwachung Hill (Haleshi), Majhuwagadhi (Diktel), Temke Everest View Point, Ghurmi, Khurkot, and Sindhuligadhi are other historical and natural sites worth to visit while making pilgrimage to Haleshi.

For the Himalayan Buddhist communities, Haleshi is widely popular as the Rocky Cave of Maratika where Padmasambhava, together with his consort

Mandharava, disclosed the mandala of Buddha Amitayus and attained the **State of Vidyadhara of Immortal Life**, upon receiving blessings from Lord Amitayus. Major sacred sites in Maratika include Maratika Cave (Padmasambhava cave), Basaha Cave, Manjushree Cave, and Mandhavarava Cave. The caves of Maratika are mentioned in Tibetan literatures from the 12th century onwards. A very holy object or long-life vase (**Tse Bum**) made of stone which Amitayus placed on the heads of Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava, while bestowing immortal life upon them. This vase is the most holy object of Maratika and it is believed that any prayer made at the tse bum will be fulfilled.

Sailung and Timal are another sacred site where Padmasambhava is believed to have spent several years in meditation doing Mahayoga and sub-dued many Yakchhas. There are sacred Padmasambhava caves, old chhortens and scenic hill-tops (about 100) suitable for meditation. **Charighyang** in Charikot is one of the oldest monasteries in the region and contains Gold-written text of *prajñāpāramitā*. Dolakha Bhimsen has one old stone stupa. The presence of Manjuśrī image at Dolakha Bhimsen indicates that Mahāmanjuśrī might have entered Kathmandu Valley using this route. Bihi Gumba, Kalinchowk and Jiri are other sacred places worth to visit in this area.

MAP OF MARATIKA (HALESI) - SAILUNG - TIMAL PADMASAMBHAVA MEDITATION CAVE CIRCUIT





Maratika Cave, Haleshi



Monk meditating



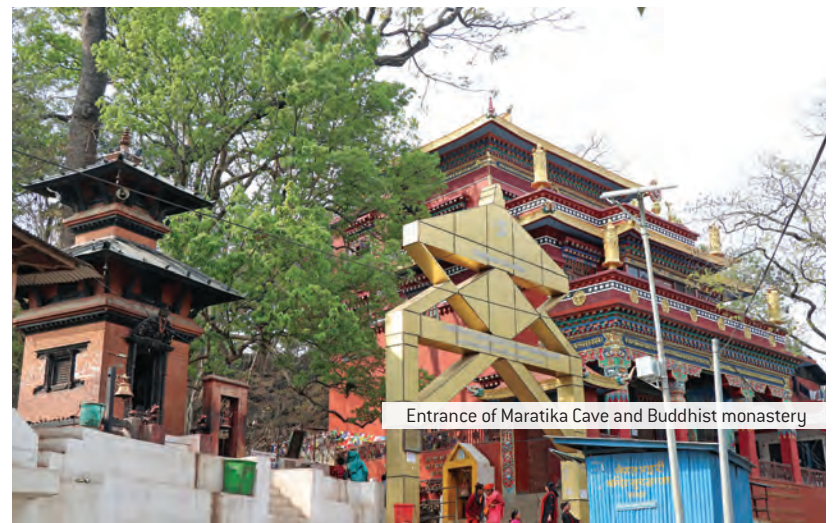
Group of Lama chanting inside Maratika cave



Celebrating Sakela festival of Rai community at Tuwachung Hill



Faces of Rai community



Entrance of Maratika Cave and Buddhist monastery

EVEREST -ROLWALING SACRED BEYUL CIRCUIT

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO THE ROOF OF THE WORLD THROUGH THE SACRED MONASTERIES AND CAVES

Everest - Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit connects some of the perfected meditation caves of the Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava and Yogi Milerepa along with some of the oldest monasteries founded in the land of Sherpas. This circuit overlaps with the world's famous trekking and mountaineering trails to the Everest region, and thus offers a rare opportunity to combine a mountain adventure and nature with spiritual journey.

Beyul - Rölpa Khandro-ling (the sanctuary of the playful Dakinis) in Rolwaling Valley is the residence of protective goddesses such as the Tseringma, the Five Long Life sisters. There are a number of meditation caves around Beding and Nimare including **Padmasambhava Cave** in **Na** area. **Beding Monastery** is one of the oldest monasteries in this place. The famous Tibetan Yogi Milarepa also attained siddhi feats in one of the most sacred caves (Du Dul Phug) in Lapchi, located on the north-west of Rolwaling Valley. During the 13th century, **Lapchi** (the gateway to Tibet) used to be one of the major Buddhist intellectual and spiritual centers attracting as many as 6,600 Buddhist monks at a time from Ladakh, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Whereas Kailash and Tsari are considered to be the body and mind, Lapchi is considered to be the speech of the Chakrasamvara Mandala.

Another sacred hidden valley (many regard

it as a separate beyul as well), **Khumbu Valley**, was opened with the arrival of the first Sherpa migrants from Amdo/Kham region of eastern Tibet to Khumbu region via Upper Tsang region crossing Nangpa Pass (5,716m) about 600 to 700 years before. Khumbu region comprises the world's highest peak **Chhomolongma/Dzo. molung.ma** (the shortened form of the name of the goddess Jomo Langsangma) or present day Mt. Everest which is also considered to be the respectable lady deity of the region. **Pangboche Monastery**, founded by Lama Sanwa Dorje in 1667 AD as a first Sherpa monastery, Thame Monastery and **Tengboche Monastery** (or Dawa Choling Monastery built by Lama Gullu) are popular Buddhist monasteries in the region. **Khumbu Yulla** (Khumbilha) is the local deity of the Sherpas.

Thupten Chholing Monastery in Junbesi (in Everest region) and **Bigu Tashi Gobma** in western part of Rolwaling are the two major pioneering nunneries with several hundred nuns teaching Buddhism. **Mani Rimdu** and **Dumji** are important popular festivals celebrated by the Sherpa people in the region.

Journey to this circuit can be made separately from Singati in Rolwaling and Jiri (or Salleri) in Everest Valley. Only the experienced adventure travelers can make a complete circuit of both valleys crossing the **Tashi Labtsa Pass** (5856m).

MAP OF EVEREST -ROLWALING SACRED BEYUL CIRCUIT

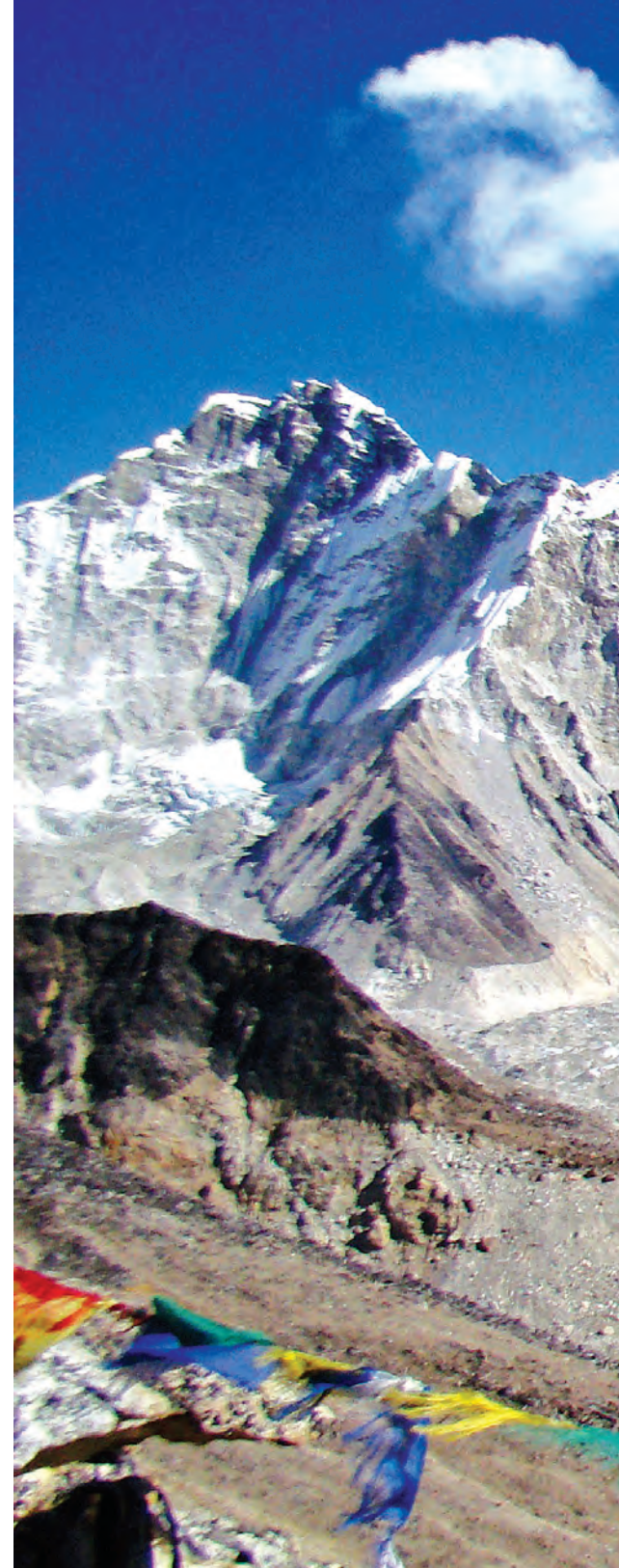




View of Amadablam Mountain at Everest Region



Namche Bazar, Solukhumbu





Mt. Everest with Khumbu Glacier

KHEMPALUNG- UPPER ARUN-UPPER TAMOR BUDDHIST CIRCUIT

The Khempalung – Upper Arun- Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit connects important Buddhist heritage sites located in Beyul Khempalung, Upper Arun and Upper Tamor Valley in Eastern Nepal. Significant Buddhist heritage sites include Saisimma, Mera Peak (Chhiringma of the Beyul Khempalung), Tashogaon, Ama Phugdung (in Yangle Kharka), Barun Pokhari, Yan-Guthi Gumba and Dikichhoeling Gumba monastery located in Ghunsa.

Located on the far side of the Amphu Labtsa (northwestern part of Sankhuwasabha district), **Beyul Khembalung** is the least explored and difficult beyul (amongst the five identified beyuls) in Nepal. **Saisimma**, near Dobatok, is the epicenter of Beyul Khempalung. There are many meditation caves of Padmasambhava. The most important Lama Tulku Dratru Rinpoche popularized this beyul. As per Tibetan Buddhist texts, Guru Rinpoche, himself, has defined beyul Khempalung similar to Dewachen (the land where Amitabha resides) and Potala (where Avalokiteshvara resides).

Buddhist villages such as Kimathanka, Hatiya-Gola, Sakshila-Gola, Chepuwa etc. in the Upper Arun area are home to many indigenous people including Lhomi, Nava, Karbothe, Shinshaw, Rai etc. and are largely influenced by the culture of ancient Mangul Gunthang region of Tibet. There are several village Mani-walls,

Chhortens and Monasteries, including **Yan-Guthi Gumba**, the oldest and widely popular monastery in the Upper Arun Valley. **Dablo** festival is one of the popular Buddhist festivals in the region in which Rai Bijuwa Dance is also performed reflecting some essence of Bon practices.

Buddhist villages such as Topkyo-Gola, Walungchung-Gola and Ghunsa in Upper Tamor are also home to many indigenous communities of Tibetan origin, including Sherpa, Lhomi, Topkyo, Walung, Lepcha and so on. Dikichholong Monastery (in Walungchung Gola) is one of the oldest and largest monasteries in the Upper Tamor Valley. Great Yogi Milarepa is said to have spent his three precious years meditating in this monastery.

About 500 years old **Dikichhoeling Gumba** houses old stupas, Buddhist texts, various statues (including statue of Milarepa), murals, paintings and leather-made colorful mane-wheels etc. **Tashichholing Gumba**, located in Ghunsa is another beautiful Gumba in this region.

Other interesting touristic features include Tinjure-Milke Jaljale –TMJ (the Capital of Rhododendron Forest), Pathivara Temple and Tea State in Ilam. **Rumtek Monastery** in Sikkim, India (the central power place of the Beyul Demojong) can also be linked with this circuit.

MAP OF KHEMPALUNG- UPPER ARUN- UPPER TAMOR BUDDHIST CIRCUIT





Wolangchung Gola Village, Taplejung



Wolangchung Gola Village



Pathibhara Devi, Taplejung



Diki Cholling Gumba



Painted Wheels inside Diki Cholling Gumba



Mandala painting inside Great Lotus Stupa, Lumbini

PHOTO CREDIT

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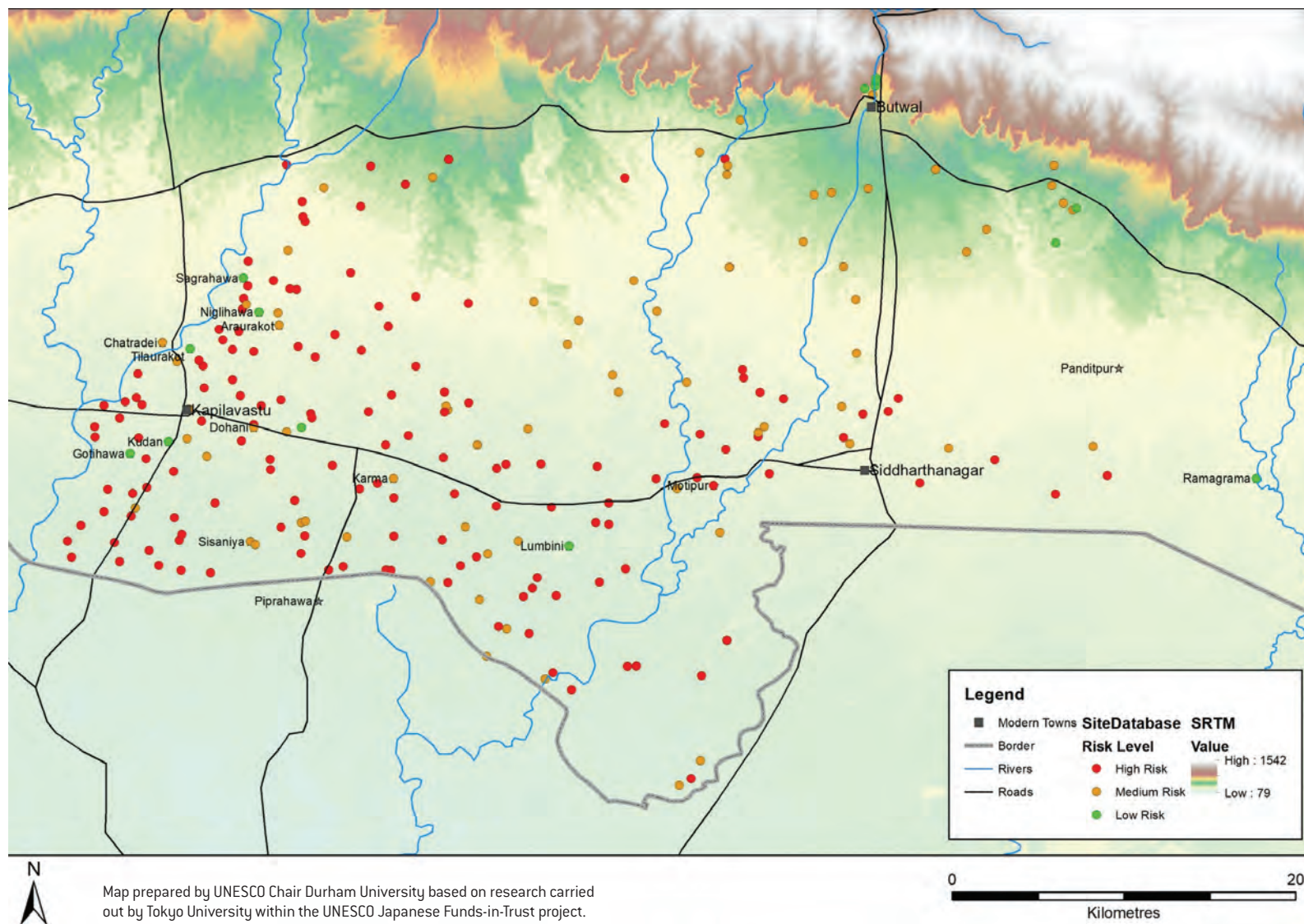
Baby Buddha,
Lumbini



Wooden carving and painting inside Great Lotus Stupa, Lumbini



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN GREATER LUMBINI AREA



Map prepared by UNESCO Chair Durham University based on research carried out by Tokyo University within the UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust project.

IN PRAISE OF LUMBINI, THE LORD BUDDHA SAID:

“Ananda, this place (Lumbini) is where the Tathagata was born, this is a place which should be (visited and) seen by a person of devotion and which will cause awareness and apprehension of the nature of impermanence.

At this place, Ananda, those who are on a pilgrimage to (this) shrine, if they should die with devotion in their hearts during the course of the pilgrimage, will after (their) death and dissolution of the body be reborn in a good destination, a fortunate celestial (deva) realm.”

(Mahaparinirvana Sutta)