

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj at Virtual Handing Over Ceremony of the Statue of Lord Buddha- 19 June 2021

- His Majesty The King;
- Dr. Tandi Dorji, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bhutan;
- Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe Ji, President, ICCR;
- Shri Dinesh Patnaik, Director General, ICCR;
- Directors of Cultural Centres in Indian Missions abroad, as well as all members of this wonderful audience who have joined us today on this digital platform.

Today we are here to honour an old friendship - one that links our two countries. Of course, we've all heard the story, of course we're all familiar but it is Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, the Enlightened One, who connects us. Many centuries ago, this exceptional Prince told us of the balance within life. He spoke of the inevitable suffering as well as the antidote, that which lies within the pursuit and beauty rooted within everyday life.

And what makes today an occasion for even greater celebration is that it marks the eve of Guru Rinpoche's Thrugkar Duechen or his birth anniversary. Guru Rinpoche, believed to be the Second Buddha, travelled from India to Bhutan in the 8th century where he spread the message of enlightenment. Atop a tigress and landing at the sacred Paro Taktsang or Tiger's Nest here, Guru Rinpoche's philosophy lies at the heart of Bhutan.

What Gautama Buddha and Guru Rinpoche preach is also the notion of karma and compassion. And in the context of the world today, it is essential that we remind ourselves of these truths. Compassion should not merely be a facile word, a cliché whose meaning has dulled from overuse - for compassion is the root of existence. It is what gives life meaning - to feel and be kind. For the fleeting things of life which we so desperately chase are only fleeting. You may think that this sounds outrageously obvious but I have noticed that what we chase and what actually feeds the soul are usually two different things for many people. We chase the fleeting, the superficial, the shiny cold plastic which burns as in the end. We forget to give ourselves to others, we forget to help, to have empathy devoid of conditions, to give so freely, just as nature has given to us. And since today is such a special day I didn't want to forget to mention this - that at the heart of Buddhism lies the importance of service and kindness. It is so incredibly relevant today.

So of course our Embassy feels it to be a great honour - to hand over a statue of Lord Buddha on behalf of India to Bhutan, especially on this auspicious occasion.

May I extend my profound gratitude to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in finishing this unique bronze-cast statue in record time, as a gift to the Government and to the people of Bhutan. And of course, this would be exceedingly incomplete if I did not pay my deep respects to The Fifth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi whose wisdom continue to guide India-Bhutan relations.

We are deeply honoured that tomorrow, 20 June, the statue will be placed at the Kuenray Temple of the TashichhoDzong by the revered Lopen and monks of Bhutan's Central Monastic Body.

And by bringing this statue on a day as sacred as this one, India sends her blessings to Bhutan.

May I wish His Majesty, members of the Royal Family and all my Bhutanese and Indian friends a blessed Thrugkar Duechen.

Thank you!

Tashi Delek!