

**Embassy of India
Tokyo

**Speech by Ambassador Sibi George for Hanamatsuri - a flower festival
at the temple of Tsukiji Hongwanji on the occasion of
Buddha Poornima (April 9, 2023)**

Rev Shonin Higashimori, Joint Vice Head of Religious Affairs
Rev Tomohiro Kimura, Joint Vice Head of Religious Affairs
H. E. Mr. Rodney PERERA, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Japan

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Konnichiwa/Good Afternoon !

On the auspicious occasion of Buddha Jayanti, that is celebrated as Hanamtsuri- a flower festival in Japan, I extend my best wishes from the holy ground of temple of Tsukiji Hongwanji temple, to all those present here, to all Japanese and to all the devotees in the world.

On this day three important events took place, the Birth of Lord Buddha in Lumbini, attainment of enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, India, and his mahaparinivana in Kushinagar, India.

I thank the Tsukiji Hongwanji temple authorities for giving me the honour to make the inaugural address for the pious celebrations.

I am happy to note that Tsukiji Hongwanji temple has a unique connection with India. The temple's architecture has a marked resemblance with the Indian and Asian temples. Former Hon'ble President of India, Shri

Ram Nath Kovind, during his visit to Japan in 2019 for attending the enthronement ceremony of His Majesty, The Emperor of Japan, had planted a sapling of Bodhi tree, that he carried from India, at Tsukiji Hongwanji temple as a symbol of the strong connection between India and Japan.

India and Japan share deep historical linkages and strong civilizational ties, including shared heritage of Buddhism and are guided by shared commitment to the ideals of democracy, tolerance, pluralism, and open societies.

The cultural and people to people exchanges between the two countries has created many parallels in Japanese folk lore, with references to several common deities and gods and philosophical concepts, such as the three wise monkeys known as Sanzaru in Japan.

India's earliest documented direct contact with Japan was with the Todai-ji Temple in Nara, where the consecration or eye-opening of the towering statue of Lord Buddha was performed by an Indian monk, Bodhisena- known as Bodhi-sena in Japan, in 752 AD. The oldest statue of Buddha in Japan, Amida Statue at Zenkoji temple in Nagano, is known to have originated in India.

It is the faith of both our countries towards Lord Buddha, that unites us in one thread and makes us a member of one family.

Today, India and Japan are committed to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership through bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral

mechanisms. We are working closely in geo-strategic platforms such as Quad, and have similar ideals of peace, security, prosperity, and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region and Beyond.

Friends,

Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi has said “ The Buddha is an incarnation of the collective sense of humanity”.

Lord Buddha gave us the path of attaining supreme Knowledge and his teachings of perseverance, self sacrifice and spreading joy have not only enriched the Indian Culture but have also guided the ideals of Japan and other nations as well.

Lord Buddha gave us the mantra of “Aap Deepo Bhava Bhikkhwe” Parikshay Bhikshvo, Grahyam Maddachho, Na Tu Gauravat”. *That is, be your own lamp. Don't take my words out of respect for me either. Rather test them and assimilate them.*

He taught “peace comes from within, do not seek it without.”

His sermons of “**Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina**” (*all be happy*) and “**Bhavantu sab mangalam-** (*peace and happiness for all*) are messages of peace ,happiness and prosperity for all humanity, rising above geographical boundaries, and Buddha belonging to everyone.

This message of peace and assimilation is reflected in the ancient Indian philosophy of “Vasudeve Kutumbakam”, the world is one family.

Friends,

India is celebrating the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav-75 years of Independence and entering into an Amrit Kaal- a period of great rejuvenation.

At the same time, India and Japan are celebrating 70 glorious years of their diplomatic relations and India is holding the G20 presidency & Japan is holding the G7 presidency.

During the recent visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister Kishida to India in March, our two Hon'ble Prime Ministers announced 2023 as the India-Japan Year of Tourism, under the theme of Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji.

At this landmark milestone year, the people of India and Japan, are bound together in a commitment to the principles of teachings of Lord Buddha for stronger India-Japan ties and synergize efforts for global peace and prosperity.

The Hana-matsuri is a reminder to all of us, of the eternal friendship between India & Japan!

With this, I convey the wishes of 1.4 billion Indians to all of you, on this auspicious occasion of "Buddha Poornima" and invite you all to visit the various Buddhist sites in India, and strengthen the ancient civilisational bond between our two countries and peoples.

Thank You.
