

# Tony Blair Faith Foundation

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### **A message for 'Maha Parinirvana' from friend of the foundation Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana**

'Maha Pari-Nirvana' is a term used to describe in Buddhist traditions the passing away of the all awoken and enlightened Buddhas (Samma Sam Buddhas), the most recent one being the passing away of the Gotama the Buddha 2553 years ago (483 BCE). There is a lineage of 28 Buddhas which have occurred in the time span of over millions of years, the details of which came from the Gotama Buddha himself.

'Nir-vana' is the complete cessation from all defilement (greed, hatred and delusion), the supreme goal of all Buddhists. One who through the practice of meditation releases the heart from all defilements and attain the unshakable deliverance end up reaching the Nirvana which is celebrated in all traditions of Buddhism.

What is special about this attainment in the case of the Buddha himself is that the Buddha discovered this path by himself without any external aid and that uniqueness of his achievement is qualified by adding the prefix 'pari-' in the case of Buddha's passing away. This is further qualified by the adjective 'maha-' in Pali which means 'great' again denoting the uniqueness. The term 'Maha Parinirvana' thus is used in the case of passing away of the Buddhas 'all awakened ones'.

Gotama Buddha's great passing away has been historically documented in a special discourse called 'Maha prininirvana sutra' which is available in Pali canon, Chinese and Tibetan Tipitakas which run into many pages of all the details as to how this historic event took place in 'Kushinara (Kushinagar in modern day India) and its full significance.

In short, this marks one of the greatest achievements in the human history, the discovery of complete deliverance of heart from all defilements thereby ending the cyclic existence through cessation of all courses of existence, which indeed is a result of walking in the path of morality (sila), serenity (Samadhi) and wisdom (panna).

The celebration of 'Maha Parinirvana' thus signifies not only the celebration of that unique human discovery of historic Buddhas but also it signifies one's determination to undertake steps in the spiritual path which leads to liberation.

May all beings be well and happy and attain full liberation!