In answer to his attendant Venerable Ananda’s concern that the monks would no longer be able to see their Master after his demise, to pay their respects and seek inspiration (to practice his Teachings), the Buddha advised pious disciples to visit Four Places, the sight of which will inspire saddha (faith with mental purity) and samvega (religious urgency) after he was gone. This is because they arouse the awareness and apprehension of impermanence.

What are the Four Places? They are the places of Birth in Lumbini, Enlightenment in Buddhagaya, First Sermon in Sarnath, and Decease in Kusinara. Thus, the idea of a Buddhist Pilgrimage was proposed 2500 years ago by the Buddha before he passed away. Thereafter, millions of pious disciples have heeded his advice and gone on this journey of faith and piety. In this lecture, the main shrines in the Four Holy Places are presented in a series of 50 slides. This is to allow the audience to understand and appreciate the religious significance of the objects of veneration.

All the main shrines have a long history dating back to the 3rd century BC, due to the religious zeal of Emperor Asoka of the Mauryan Empire. This was because at every Holy Place that Asoka visited, he would erect a monument or shrine to commemorate each particular event connected with the Buddha’s life, leaving a legacy for future generations of pilgrims.

About the Speaker

Bro. Chan Khoon San was born on 8 August 1941 in Penang. Prior to retirement, he worked as a Senior Research Chemist in a large plantation company in Selangor.

Upon retirement in 1996, Bro. Chan went to Myanmar to pursue the intensive practice of Vipassana meditation under the guidance of the Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw of Chanmyay Meditation Centre in Yangon. Until today, he still continues the intensive practice of Vipassana meditation in Myanmar every year in January.

For the rest of the year, he conducts Sutta classes at various Buddhist societies in the Klang Valley. Since 1991, Bro. Chan has organized 18 Buddhist pilgrimages to India. He is the author of several English books on Buddhism, some of which have been translated into other languages.