

PRESENTATION ON
3RD EDITION
BODH GAYA
GLOBAL DIALOGUES
2020 **REFLECTIONS
& INSIGHTS**



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insights from
plural perspectives
connecting heritage,
education and
sustainability for
building a future on
the foundations of
the Buddha's legacy
on enlightenment
and compassion.

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BODH GAYA
GLOBAL DIALOGUES
2020 **REFLECTIONS
& INSIGHTS**

19-20
DECEMBER
2020

INDIRA
GANDHI
NATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
THE ARTS
NEW DELHI

DESHKAL SOCIETY IN COLLABORATION WITH
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS [IGNCA]



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3RD EDITION

**BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES
REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS**

19–20 December 2020

IGNCA, NEW DELHI



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Co-Travelers



DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO

Chairpersons

Moderators

and

Panelists

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Editor's Note

Bodh Gaya is spelt in various ways, including Bodhgaya, Buddha Gaya, Buddh-Gaya, and Bodh Gya (Geary, 2018). For maintaining the standardization, Bodh Gaya has been used throughout this report while retaining Bodhgaya as and when that appears in the name of the institutions and the presentations.



Overview

Background

The 3rd Edition of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues (BGDs) was organised by Deshkal Society in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi in association with Indian Council of World Affairs, Jeevika, Government of Bihar, National Thermal Power Corporation and Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi with the goal of encouraging informed dialogues on multiple themes under the umbrella of 'Sustainable Development, Heritage and Enlightenment,' and held at IGNCA, New Delhi on December 19-20, 2020.

The 3rd edition of the Dialogues followed in continuation with the first and second editions held in the years of 2018 and 2019. The reports of these dialogues are available at http://www.deshkalindia.com/festival/report/Presentationon_Bodh_Gaya_Global_Dialogues_Reflections_and_Insights_2018.pdf and http://www.deshkalindia.com/festival/report/Presentation_on_2nd_edition_of_the_Bodh_Gaya_Global_Dialogues_Reflections_and_Insights.pdf

It is noteworthy that the dialogues began in difficult times of the pandemic of Covid-19 and reenergised all participants who were gracefully present at the venue and those who joined the virtual mode of the dialogues.

Goal and Objectives

The Goal of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues is to create a platform for expression of experiences, reflections and insights from plural perspectives connecting heritage, education and sustainability for building a future on the foundations of Buddha's legacy on enlightenment and compassion.

In order to move forward to attain the desired goals, following specific objectives were articulated in the consultative process with the key representatives of the multiple stakeholders of the Dialogues:

- To create dialogue, knowledge building and sustainable network with international organisations, non-government organisations, politicians, policy makers, practitioners, ordinary citizens, tourists and pilgrims for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodhgaya region.
- To develop a heritage education programme in order to facilitate the engagement of children in the promotion, protection and transmission of heritage, in a manner which makes heritage relevant and meaningful to their own development trajectories.
- To strengthen relationship and build sustainable network between Bodhgaya and South East Asian nations with the glorious recall of the historical and contemporary relationship for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development in the region.

Themes and Participants

The themes adapted for this 3rd edition of BGDs were diverse and expanded across Religion, Art, Archaeology and Heritage with respect to Bodhgaya and Buddhist sites. The dialogues manifested itself as a mosaic of parallel events such as the plenary session, panels, films show and conversation over the two days. The 3rd edition of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues had detailed deliberations on Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre on Bodhgaya, Online Course on Art, Heritage and Religion of Bodhgaya, fostering the relation between India and South East Asian countries with reference to the rising role of Buddhism in India's Soft power and Bodhgaya, Art, Heritage and Buddhism in India and Heritage Education, Teachers and Schools in Bihar

with special reference to Bodhgaya. Conversation around the Life of Buddha and Gender in the Contemporary times and film screening on White Robes Saffron Dream were integral part of the thematic framework of the dialogues. These forms of expressions deeply engaged the guests and the participants and contributed in the development of an understanding of contemporary Buddhism from a critical perspective. At the end of the Dialogues, Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir delivered a valedictory address. He shared that the timeless teachings of Lord Buddha have strong relevance even in contemporary times and are very important for thinkers and intellectuals because of the dynamic changes we are witnessing in every field in today's era.

The dialogues were attended by scholars, monks, artists, development practitioners and policy-makers. As part of the outcome, BGDs 2020 succeeded in bringing together multiple stakeholders, public and private, including international agencies. The format of the Dialogues adopted offline and online modes due to the trying times of Covid 19 pandemic. This hybrid format extended the visibility of the Dialogues to a larger audience within India and the abroad through the Google Meet and the Facebook Live.

The Brief Summary of the Deliberations

The main focus of the deliberations revolved around seeking deeper understanding and exchanges in order to build a constituency of practices that bring fresh dimensions in capturing enlightenment as the new leitmotif with special focus on heritage and sustainable development. The dialogues also generated a repository of knowledge from multidisciplinary approach on Heritage, Sustainable Development and Enlightenment. The Dialogues also generated a repository of information and knowledge resources from multidisciplinary approach on heritage, development and sustainability. Additionally, it also succeeded in connecting and sharing the key messages of the enlightenment with participants and delegates.

Recommendations: The Next Possible Steps

At the end of the two-day Dialogues, a set of recommendations were made responding to the objectives of the dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action frameworks for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development. There are two sets of recommendations. One set deals with the immediate action plans and the other set of recommendations are part of advisories to the governments both at state and central as well as the international agencies. The immediate next possible steps are the following: At first, a report (print and digital) based on the deliberations and discussions in the dialogues need to be published and session-wise short videos will be uploaded on YouTube. The report and videos will serve as an effective public platform for disseminating the key messages and outcomes of the dialogue in the public and policy domains. The center is envisaged to have a pivotal role for connecting and disseminating the knowledge output to researchers and more than a million enlightened tourists and pilgrims who visit the region annually. There is an urgent need to set up the Digital Repository on Heritage, Art and Culture in Bodhgaya and its region. The proposed repository will seek to survey, collate and digitally documentation (history, archaeology, culture etc.) of the site of Bodhgaya and its region as well as all relevant material from individuals and institutions (including archival museums in India and abroad) and provide access to wider public for awareness generation and knowledge dissemination. There is a need to initiate a pilot project to build the capacity of the teachers in understanding the concept of heritage in all its forms and introduce diverse forms of heritage and history in both classrooms and outside-the-classroom contexts.

The online certificate course on the Multifaceted Aspect of Bodhgaya and the Philosophy and Teaching of Buddhism needs to be launched as part of the immediate next possible step. The course will bring together the information from a variety of disciplines – Art and its history, religion and archaeology – to highlight their various findings and perspectives regarding the different facets of Bodhgaya past and present.

Therefore, the first and foremost task is to explore ways to institutionalise the dialogues by way of creating a strong support on its sustainability.

The delegates and participants arrived at the conclusion that the key strategy for implementing these recommendations is through a constructive and meaningful engagement with the state, market and civil society. If this could be possible, this perspective will certainly connect to the realization of the four noble truths of disease, the cause, the cure, and the medicine at the ground level through its practice that emanates from Buddhist philosophical traditions and Buddhist economics. This will serve as an exemplar in true sense for the realisation of enlightenment in Bodhgaya particularly and the world too.

DAY-1 | PLENARY SESSION

Sitar Vadan





SITAR VADAN BY

Sumita Chakravorty

Assistant Professor, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi, Delhi

Raga Lalit Set the Tone

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues 2020 began with the beautiful Sitar recital in Raga Lalit, a morning raga considered serene and devotional. The performance consisted of four sub-parts, beginning alap with Majit Khani Gats in Vilambit Laya (slow tempo), followed by Ektal composition in Madhya Laya (medium tempo), Rajakhani Gat in Drut Laya (fast tempo) and concluding with Jhala in Ati Drut Laya (extremely fast tempo), in that order.

Music marked the beginning. Before the Dialogues got into the mode of deliberations and language, music set the tone and ambience with its serenity and positivity. The recital of Sitar, representing the heritage of Hindustani classical music and its message, set the ground to make a bridge between art, culture, music and ideas from the multi-disciplinary perspectives to be presented by key speakers, panelists and moderators. The performance not only engaged the delegates and participants from India and abroad, but also gave the message of values of co-existence, peace and respect for multi-culture and multi-religion on this occasion.

Plenary Session





MODERATOR

Bodh Gaya: An Amalgamation of Multiple Identities

Dr. Pravin Sinha

Member, World Economic Association, New Delhi

WELCOME SPEECH AND CONTEXT

Bodh Gaya: An Amalgamation of Multiple Identities

Mr. Sanjay Kumar

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi

GUESTS OF HONOUR

Bodhgaya and Buddhism – Lesser-known Facts

Dr. Shakti Sinha

Director General, International Buddhist Confederation

Enlightenment and the Path of Knowledge and Unity

Dr. D. M. Mulay

Hon'ble Member, NHRC, GoI

Buddhism and Well-being for All

Mr. Ganga Kumar

Joint Secretary, GoI

Buddhism and its Ideals

Dr. Sekhar Dutt

Former Governor and Author, Chhattisgarh

PRESENTATION BY

Dr. Abhishek Amar

Associate Professor, Hamilton College, USA

Online Course on Art, Heritage and Religion of Bodhgaya

CHAIR

Five R: The Foundation of the Dialogues

Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi

Member Secretary, IGNCA, New Delhi



In the beginning, Pravin Sinha, moderator of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues set its specific context and reflected that the year of 2020 has so far been a difficult time for mankind as a whole, owing to the unprecedented crisis caused by the pandemic of Covid 19. Mankind faced up to these crises by drawing strength from its spirit of civilization and the collective conscience in the past. This spirit of the civilisation inspired the team of Deshkal Society, IGNC, ICWA, Jeevika, NTPC and Daulat Ram College to take forward the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues.

The plenary session formally began with lighting of the lamp by Shri Shakti Sinha, Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Dr. D. N. Mulay, Dr. Pravin Sinha, Shri Ganga Kumar and Shri Sanjay Kumar. Following this, the report of the Second edition of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues held in 2019 was released by the distinguished guests and the speakers on this occasion.

With this sharing on the background, Pravin Sinha invited Sanjay Kumar to formally welcome the delegates and the participants and share the objectives of the dialogues. Sanjay Kumar welcomed all with the special mention of the acceptance of the invitation by the delegates and the participants during the trying times which not only demonstrated the commitment of all from within India and abroad for the spirit of the dialogues but also endorsed its enduring relevance. He shared the objectives of the dialogues as given below:

- To create a ground for an institutional and sustainable knowledge base through the Online Course on Bodhgaya as well as the Bodhgaya Multimedia Digital heritage Centre.
- To generate meaningful and constructive deliberations on multiple themes of Buddhism and Bodhgaya like heritage, culture and religion, in public and policy domains.
- To strengthen relationship and build sustainable networks between Bodhgaya and South East Asian nations with the glorious recall of the historical and contemporary relationship for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development in the region.

Recalling E. H. Carr, the greatest historian of the 20th century and his famous saying that a decent past contributes in the creation of a formidable future, Sanjay Kumar expressed his earnest hope that the 3rd Edition of the Dialogues would create a ground for the 4th Edition of the Dialogues in order to keep up the endeavours in heritage, sustainable development and enlightenment with special reference to the Online Course on Bodhgayaa and the Digital Heritage Centre at Bodhgaya.

Post opening remarks , Pravin Sinha invited the distinguished guests and speakers to deliver their reflective remarks and observations on this occasion.



Bodhgaya and Buddhism – Lesser-known Facts

Dr. Shakti Sinha

The past of Bodhgaya has a misconception on many people's minds. It is important to understand history of Bodhgaya – where Siddharth Gautam became Buddha was known as Uruvela during earlier times. Later on when Buddhism spread across the land, people started calling the place Sambodhi in the sense that it was at this place that Gautama received total enlightenment. Decades later, emperor Ashoka built a temple there and placed a Vajrasan near the Bodhi tree. Thus with changing times, those names kept changing and by the 20th Century, it was known as Bodhgaya. There is one important thing to learn from this, from Buddha's teachings – impermanence. There is nothing in this world that remains static, everything keeps changing. One should accept these changes rather than be worried about them.

Another important point to note is that everything happens for a reason. There is always a cause and effect. During the colonial times, the king of Thailand had attempted to purchase the village of Bodhgaya. The efforts did not bear fruit. But it leaves behind a flurry of questions as to how things could have been different had the attempts by the king of Thailand succeeded. History always gives wider and interesting perspectives.

He reiterated that there are several misconceptions regarding Buddhism. For example, the belief that Buddhism leads to peace, through meditation. Meditation, according to Geshe Rinpoche, should lead to turbulence in your mind. It is a tool to face life and its realities, rather than running away from it. How to live in the moment and make the most of the opportunities that present itself, is the way.

He stressed on the fact that the next step now should be how to convert these thoughts into action. Merely having good intentions and thoughts is not enough. It should be converted into something tangible. Can the approach to Bodhgaya Gaya, involving the local communities be changed? One really has to think about how to live in the moment and how to make things better for the people.



Enlightenment and the Path of Knowledge and Unity

Dr. D.N. Mulay

In the beginning of his remarks, he shared that he had been associated with the programme for the last three years. The first time he was approached regarding the initiation of Bodhgaya Global Dialogues, he remembered suggesting that the running theme of these Dialogues should be Development and Enlightenment. It is very important to uphold both these. It is only enlightenment that will lead all to understanding why we are here in this world. There is a verse in Bhagavad Gita that explains Knowledge streams in a very simple way. It says that knowledge is better than exercising, meditation is better than knowledge, whereas sacrifice is even better than meditation and it is when one sacrifices the fruits of their efforts, one would attain peace or enlightenment. It is in search of this enlightenment that Buddha kept pursuing his journeys. He followed several teachers and then left them behind as well.

In order to understand Bodhgaya and to initiate the discussion, it is important to understand the concept of unity and that at the basic level all are one and the same. This concept of our culture is different from the western or American one which claims to accept one and all. We believe that we all originate from the same, so it is not about acceptance; rather it is about unison. The thinking is that a generous individual would consider the whole world to be his home and family. It was the westerners who divided the lands and people in the name of countries and borders, and thereby complicated it.

And in his opinion, when as a culmination of these Dialogues and deliberations, a Heritage Centre will be established; it should become a centre of knowledge. And this centre of knowledge should provide the world with novel perspectives and vision. It is important that this centre becomes a reality, especially in the current world where dialogues are becoming harsher. It is necessary therefore to take the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues forward.



Buddhism and Well-being for All

Ganga Kumar

Following the previous speaker, he shared that Bodhgaya brings some points to his mind. The first is what Buddha was. It is not just a religion, for there are plenty of religions. So, what is it that makes it unique? The answer is the two concepts of Sambodhi and Mahabodhi, i.e., enlightenment. The second point is how it can be sustained for a longer duration. This leads to two important aspects, the first of which is tangible assets, which is Bodhgaya in itself and second, its architecture which bears similarities with those of many Southeast Asian countries.

The biggest misfortune with Bihar is that we approach its art merely as tangible assets. This is actually true for the whole country. The reason is that the people have not been made to understand that until and unless we internalize the feeling of a religion, connecting with its art or heritage, neither will be possible. Have we ever thought that a religion, which was born in India and spread across to become the fourth largest religion in the world, has lost its followership here? This is because at some point there was a failure in bringing the feeling of enlightenment to the people.

The dialogues, discussions and thoughts, thus generated should therefore not be limited to intellectuals. There is a need for it to be translated and connected to the common people. This can only be made possible by converting the thoughts of Buddha and Buddhism into intangible ideas of well-being. Sites like Bodhgaya should not be limited as mere centres of tourism; rather their cultural aspect has to be given equal importance, if not more. So, in that sense if we can make people feel, see and understand Buddhism, we will succeed in bringing the right spirit – Buddhism in approach, Buddhism in lives, Buddhism in thought.



Buddhism and its Ideals

Dr. Shekhar Dutt

Buddhism, as one of the four largest religions in the world, is an empiristic and metaphysical religion. What Buddha taught was not only relevant for the 6th Century BC, but is timeless. Surely it can be practiced by the wise during the 21st century as well and for many more centuries to come. Buddhism has a very important role to play in the world today because unlike many other religions in the world, Buddhism uniquely proposes the concept of Independence which goes closely with the fundamental notions of modern science.

Tibetan spiritual leader, the His Holiness Dalai Lama has said that the 20th century was the century of war and violence. Now we all have to work to see to it that the 21st century is that of peace and dialogues. According to him, Buddhism can be thought about in terms of three important categories – philosophy, science and religion. The religious part involves principles and practices that are concerned to Buddhism alone. But the philosophy of interdependence as well as the Buddha's science of mind and human emotions, are of great benefit to everyone. Modern science has developed a highly sophisticated understanding of the physical world, including the subtle workings of human body and brain. Buddhist science on the other hand devoted itself to the first person understanding of many aspects of human emotion which are still new to modern science.

The philosophy enables four noble truths to be understood, which are: the truth of suffering, the truth of origin of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering and the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. In that sense Buddha is often compared to a physician. The first two truths are about identifying the suffering and its cause. The third truth is about the realization that there is a cure and the fourth noble truth – wherein Buddha set out the eight-fold path – is the prescription or the way to achieve relief from the suffering. Today in this scientifically and technologically developed global village, though there are many amenities for ease of living, people are physically and mentally

not satisfied and do not have a feeling of security. When the mind is satisfied, the person is free of physical danger. There is no contentment; craving, grasping, rising and perishing are the main features of modern life.

The ideals kept forward by Buddhism, therefore is more important in the modern world than ever before. It will enable human beings to ensure that they leave the earth as it was or possibly even better than it was, for the next generation.

With the intense thoughts on Buddhism and Bodhgaya, the session moved on to present the upcoming online course content and ideation.



Online Course on Art, Heritage and Religion of Bodhgaya: A World Heritage Site

Dr. Abhishek Amar

The proposed online course on Bodhgaya emerged through the ongoing programme of Bodhgaya Global Dialogues held in the years of 2018 and 2019 which weaves together the diverse resources of Bodhgaya. The course examines understanding of multi-religious and multicultural sites of Bodhgaya, like Buddhism and Sanatana Dharma; exploring heritage of Bodhgaya; its art, sculpture and history. Bodhgaya is also home to more than eighty Buddhist monasteries like Thailand, Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka, Tibet etc. which forms one of the focal areas of the course. In addition, by focusing on the interconnections of these themes the proposed course also aims to foster processes for the heritage city plan of Bodhgaya.

Educational Approach:

The course brings together the information from a variety of disciplines – art and its history, religion and archaeology – to highlight their various findings and perspectives regarding the different facets of Bodhgaya, past and present. The diverse and highly qualified programme faculty will present a variety of intellectual and historical viewpoints, creating a stimulating milieu in which genuine inquiry can occur. Participants are encouraged to examine their own cultural and intellectual assumptions as they pursue this study in a challenging and supportive environment.

The interdisciplinary, multi-instructor course provides an introduction to Bodhgaya within the context of development in India and the world, particularly South East Asia. We end with examining how to take sustainability action – as a plan for the city of Bodhgaya and its communities.

Participants in this fully online course are expected to watch video lectures, join interactive video discussions with faculty, and participate in discussion forums. Those who complete all the activities and tests and submit assignments will get a certificate of participation from Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and Deshkal Society.

The course is designed for those seeking an integrated and multi-disciplinary understanding of Bodhgaya. It is ideal for students – mainly post graduates and research scholars curious about Buddhism and Hinduism as multi-religious sites of Bodhgaya, its heritage and art history. It is noteworthy that this course will provide substantial resource materials and construct a method of teaching to the teachers and the educators of primary and upper primary schools in Bihar, who teach Bodhgaya at approximately more than 75,000 schools (primary cum upper primary) and approximately 18 million children. Students of regional universities like Nalanda University, Magadh University and Central University of South Bihar located in Bodhgaya region will also find this course interesting and useful. It would also be ideal for those who are engaged in the fields of travel guidance and hospitality, especially in regions around these and other Buddhist sites.

Structure

The course has been designed for a period of 45 days. There will be around three lectures every week, including the introductory and conclusion sessions. Each session will consist of a recorded lecture video with duration of 30 to 40 minutes. These lectures would be done by experts in the respective topics. The lecture would be followed by an interactive session that would be hosted by the course coordinator.

Content

The course consists of three units and each of these units will consist of five sub-units. In addition to this, there will be an introductory session and a conclusion as well. The three main units would be Religion, Art and Archaeology, and Heritage.

Certification

The course participants who complete all the activities and test and submit assignments will receive a certification from Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in association with Deshkal Society.



Five R: The Foundation of the Dialogues

Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi

In the beginning of the concluding remarks, he shared that it is a matter of great happiness for Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts to have been able to associate with Deshkal Society once again, for the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues. The discussions during the dialogue will be taken forward and IGNCA intends to keep associating with Deshkal Society towards this direction. He said that it is also a matter of pride that after the two editions of the Dialogues, the third has been reached and now it is time to convert the outcomes of these dialogues into action. The presentation regarding the online course shown just before detailed one such aspect of this action. Through the online course, there will be discussions about the heritage and culture of Bodhgaya and its relevance in the contemporary times. So, in that sense it is a very important attempt. It is very fortunate to have had the association and support of intellectuals and thinkers like Dr. Shekhar Dutta and Dr. D. N. Mulay, who gave the proper guidance and direction all through the way. And as the third edition is initiated; two individuals who can help and enable the team to convert it into actions have also joined – Shri Shakti Sinha and Shri Ganga Kumar.

While taking the message of Buddhism and the relevance of Bodhgaya forward, there are five 'R's that needed to be taken into consideration. The first one is Reach, which tells the importance of ensuring the reach of Buddhist thoughts and teachings. The second one is Research, whereby novel ideas in research have to be promoted. The third is Resource. Beyond governmental and private funding, resources could be found from the people whereby the people will also find a sense of belonging. Fourth point is Reference, where the need to clarify whether Bodhgaya is going to follow the reference point put forth by other religious centres or whether it was going to create a reference point of its own, for the entire world, whereas the fifth point calls for the Rejuvenation of culture, towards which institutions like IGNCA have been working.

The plenary session gave the dialogues its majestic beginning, to move on to the first session on the connected spaces of India and other nations of Southeast Asia, with reference to the Rising Role of Buddhism in India's Soft Power and Bodhgaya.

DAY-1 | SESSION-1

Fostering the Relations between India and South East Asian countries with reference to the Rising Role of Buddhism in India's Soft Power and Bodh Gaya





MODERATOR

Heritage Sites: The Site of Multi Religion and Multi Culture

Dr. Gautam Kumar Jha

Centre for Chinese & Southeast Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi

PANELIST

Rethinking Primary Cause of Magadh's Decline as Centre of Buddhist Activity – Was it Foreign Invasion or Technology Change?

Niraj Kumar

Author and Deputy Secretary, Gol

**Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar:
An Analysis of India's Soft Power Strategy**

Dr. Sneha Bhagat

Centre for Canadian, US and Latin American Studies,
School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi

**Religious Tourism as India's Soft Power - Unfolds Cultural
and Religious Connections with Thailand and Bodhgaya**

Dr. Anuja

Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, School of Social
Sciences, JNU, New Delhi

**Common Destiny and Shared Histories:
Strengthening the Diplomatic Relationship**

Dr. Vikash Ranjan

M.Phil/ PhD International Relations, JNU, New Delhi



Heritage Sites: The Site of Muli Religion and Multi Culture

Dr. Gautam Kumar Jha

When Bodhgaya and taking it forward is talked about, one need not think of it in terms of Mecca or other religious sites. Rather, the traditions that are there should be looked at – of Buddhism and Hinduism – and as to how to link these traditions.

The fact is that when it comes to understanding the tradition and heritage or even basic civilities, there is a huge gap in our society, only people of certain class have accessed and internalized it. The vast majority are yet to do so. And this is where there's a need to look at the Southeast Asian countries. The fact that they have internalized elements of Indian tradition, preserved and conserved it and continue to nourish it, there is a lot to learn from them. In addition, this is also a reminder that much use of the access to a huge potential of soft power has not been used.

With regards to the efforts towards fulfilling the intentions of the Dialogues and converting its ideas into actions, there is a lot that is needed. At the primary level, people need to be made aware of Buddhist culture and heritage. But these should not then be limited to cultural tourism, religious tourism or caste tourism; rather it should be beyond all that. There is a need to see what the tourists coming from countries like Japan are seeking beyond the monasteries and temples and cater to their demands.

A good example of the shared culture and heritage is the Indonesian society, which has nearly 250 religions. Out of those nearly 200 are closely related to the Sanatan Dharmic and Buddhist traditions, which are directly connected with our own Indian heritage and culture. The point is that these shared histories and traditions need to be researched and studied further. So, when one talks about a course in this regard, all these things have to be taken into consideration and a comprehensive plan prepared.



Rethinking Primary Cause of Magadh's Decline as Centre of Buddhist Activity – Was it Foreign Invasion or Technology Change?

Niraj Kumar

His talk began with how the Buddha came from a landlocked Kapilavastu to Lumbini and then to Gaya and attained the state of Thathagat. As the word indicates, he moved beyond worldly net of delusions. And his vision of a beautiful, peaceful world continued move outside the borders of India also. He intended to place certain historical facts to rethink the fallacies regarding the decline of Buddhism in India.

There is a point of view of Islamic invasion sacking Buddhist monasteries and beheading the Sramanas, thereby causing the decline of Buddhism. This is not however tested against historical facts. The pinnacle of Buddhist civilization was after the invasion by Mahmud of Ghazni. Similarly, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji is held responsible for sacking the Buddhist centres of learning like Nalanda, Vikram shila etc. But inscriptions and records both at Bodhgaya, Korea and China prove that Buddhist scholar continued to visit Nalanda beyond this period and that they were held at the highest respect across Asia.

The rise and decline and subsequently the rebirth of civilizations can be seen across history. The Buddhist institutions declined in the middle of Magadhan core sometime in the middle of 15th century. And this was due to several factors, of which the Islamic rule was only one factor.

Magadhan Core of Buddhism

The First Buddhist Council was held in 486 BC at Pippala Cave, Rajagriha, under the patronage of King Ajatshatru. The second council was held at Vaishali in 383

BC – Vaishali under the patronage of King Kalasoka and the third council was held in 245 BC at Pataliputra under the patronage of Ashoka. It was in the third council that it was decided to propagate Buddhism beyond Magadha and therefore emissaries were sent to Ceylon, Myanmar, Kashmir etc. The composition of Kalacakra Tantra, Vimalaprabha Tika and several Yogini Tantra corpuses was the pinnacle of Buddhism and this happened in the Magadhan core which was untouched by Mahmud Ghazni.

While it is true that Mahmud of Ghazni attacked the Somnath temple in 1025 AD, and that it was seen as a catastrophic event, one should also note that Rajendra Chola attacked the Srivijaya Empire. The Srivijaya empire was the best Buddhist-Hindu maritime outpost in Asia, and this was attacked by the Cholas. Another important thing to note is that the Ghazni stopped and retreated after attacking Kannauj. Al Baruni, who travelled with Ghazni notes that Kannauj was considered the Madhya Desh and therefore it was Kannauj and not Magadh that was attacked by Ghazni. The silver coins issued by Ghazni from Lahore, presents important information. The coin also had a Sanskrit inscription which translates to ‘Unmanifested one, Muhammed is an avatar and Mahmud is a king’. The very fact that Ghazni attempted to gain legitimacy using Sanskrit language as well as the Hindu iconography of Avatar, shows that there were Hindu priests associating with him.

Bakhtiyar Khilji & Destruction of Buddhist sites

In 1190s- Nalanda university was plundered and in 1203, Vikramashila university as well. Sakya Sribhadra (1127-1225 AD), a Kashmiri Pandit left Vikramshila and went to Nepal and further to Tibet and survived. He carried Kalacakra tradition, the pinnacle of Indian Buddhism. In 1206, Bakhtiyar Khilji was assassinated by Ali Mardan, after his defeat at the hand of Tibetans and Kamarupa armies. But even post Bakhtiyar Khilji, the Magadhan core flourished.

Causes of Decline

One of the major pull factors of Magadha for Buddhist scholars and followers was to visit the scribes to get copies of the Kalacakra Tantra. The oldest manuscripts of Kalacakra Tantra copied by scribes of Magadha from the year 1268 AD and 1446-47 AD. However, with the invention of movable types and mass production of texts, this demand collapsed. Moveable-type printing was invented by Bi Sheng (990-1051 AD) between 1041-1048 AD. During the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD), the monk Zhang Tuxin began a project to print the Tripitaka in 971 AD using woodblock printing and it was finished in 983 AD. The moveable-type printing lowered the demand for scribes. Visit to Magadha by monks and pilgrims with purpose of getting dharma texts copied and distributed, declined.

Secondly, in countries like China and Korea, Confucianism gained popularity and was adopted as official ideology, whereas in India Islamic rulers came to power. So it is the middle of the 15th century that the importance of Magadh declined. But once again, this swung back and by 1560s it started gaining importance. However, it was not the Buddhist monks who were travelling to China now, but Gosains who claimed to be Buddhist monks and were accorded high respect in China.



Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar: An Analysis of India's Soft Power Strategy

Dr. Sneha Bhagat

Myanmar is a Southeast Asian Nation, where Buddhism arrived since Siddhartha Gautam became Buddha according to an Ancient Myanmar belief. The majority of population are Theravada Buddhists. There are also ethnic minorities like Ethnic minorities i.e. Chin, Kachin, Karens, Rohingyas

The popular custom in Myanmar generally prohibits monastic political participation. The Monks supported the State. However, they also used their Moral Authority to criticize political leaders. They have also protested against the state in certain circumstances in past i.e. 1988 and 2007

Religious Nationalism in Myanmar

Buddhist Nationalism has been a reason for violence between the Buddhism majority & Muslim minority (Rohingya in Rakhine State). Early in 2014, MaBaTha (Burmese acronym) was formed, which is an organisation for the Protection of Race and Religion.

Democracy in Myanmar

According to Aung San Suu Kyi Buddhism and Democracy are compatible. Buddhism is “integrated social and ideological system based on respect for the Individuals”. Democracy “places the greatest value on man”. Theravada Buddhism continues to strengthen Moral Democracy.

Understanding “Soft Power”

The term was coined in 1990, first formulated by American Scholar Joseph S. Nye. He defined it as “When one country gets other countries to do what it wants” and as “co-optive power”. The idea then gained relevance in Foreign Policy discussions.

Buddhism gained popularity since the Second World War and almost 97% of World Buddhist population lives in the Asian Continent. Buddhism is practiced and followed as Religion in mostly five countries in Southeast Asia. And this increases the potential of Buddhism as a source of soft power.

India promotes Buddhism due to many reasons. Firstly, Buddhism originated in India; secondly, India has many sites like Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Nalanda which are important in Buddhist Faith. Thirdly, India has propagated an image of protector of persecuted i.e. the Dalai Lama and last but not the least, Indian foreign Policy highlights “Neighbourhood First Policy.”

India-Myanmar Relations under Soft Power Strategy got amplified under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Act East Policy”. The Relations between both countries have expedited, with regular visits of Prime Ministers. The joint statement regarding Motor Vehicle Agreement to provide Cross-Border movement, the MOU’s regarding Bus Service between Mandalay and Imphal and the Sittwe Port (Kaladan multi modal project lies in Rakhine) are proofs of Soft Power Strategy playing major Role in India- Myanmar ties.



Religious Tourism as India's Soft Power - Unfolds Cultural and Religious Connections with Thailand and Bodhgaya

Dr. Anuja

Tourism is known to be the world's largest industry. It is an important vehicle for economic and socio-cultural development of the country, for religious development. It also provides maximum numbers of employment, generates foreign exchange earnings and stimulates cultural exchanges.

Tourism plays an important role in enhancing a country's soft power. It connects people and places, immerses visitors in other cultures and helps communicate cultural and governance attributes. The success of inbound tourism is based on a key measurement of a nation's soft power and the international rankings based on soft power tend to use tourism as one of their measures.

India and Thailand have been historically connected since Ashoka's time and his influence in spreading message of Buddhism. There are similarities and shared traditions in the Arts, festivals, language, dance etc.

Thailand, among the most preferred destinations for Indians, with a recorded 919,130 tourist arrivals from India during January-July 2018. This also shows a rise of 13.24 per cent. Indian tourists generated total revenue of 41,771 million THB, registering a growth of 15.39 per cent. In 2017, Thailand saw record tourist arrivals from India with more than 1.2 million tourists visiting the nation, a growth of 20 per cent over 2016 arrivals.

The number of Thai tourists visiting India is also increasing with most of them visiting significant Buddhist sites in India. In order to facilitate this further India is planning to issue double entry e-tourist visas for Thai citizens. The interdependence between India and Thailand for religious tourism through the transnational Buddhist circuit is a driver for enhancing Indo-Thailand

bilateral relations. This circuit provides an opportunity for augmenting cultural and religious ties, particularly with Thailand. Visits from tourists and dignitaries from this country contribute towards building strong people-to-people and state-to-state relations. Religious tourism leads to the diffusion of Indian culture in the Thailand and creates a special place for India in the minds of foreign tourists. Through better people-to-people connectivity, India can also reach out to larger audiences within Southeast Asia, creating a consensus for better political and trade relations.



Common Destiny and Shared Histories: Strengthening the Diplomatic Relationship

Dr. Vikash Ranjan

While distinguishing between hard power and soft power, we should note that the former involves economic and military power. Any other cultural influence is called soft power. In the present context where we are talking about soft power in the Southeast Asian countries, all these countries were very much oriented towards India since times immemorial. We have had very good trade and commercial relation with most these countries. We have also had religious and ethnic ties with them. But in due course of time, these ties got withered due to various reasons.

Why Buddhism flourished in these countries is an interesting point. Buddhism is a religion which patronized trade and commerce. This is the reason why most monasteries developed on the trade routes. This is one of the major reasons behind the promotion of Buddhism in these states. The monks would travel with merchant ships and continue their work on their routes. They also aided the development of a shared culture, which once again, have become disconnected over time and have to be revived in the present times.

While the first session began with the discussions on fostering the relations between India and Southeast Asian countries, its influence and monks, the next two sessions moved on to interesting mediums of voicing several aspects of Buddhism and its influence on women practitioners through a film screening and a conversation, while charting the works of two female artists.

DAY-1 | SESSION-2

White Robes, Saffron Dreams





MODERATOR

Uday Sahay

Author, Chairman & Director, SAUV Communications, New Delhi

MOVIE SCREENING

White Robes, Saffron Dreams

Ms. Teena Amrit Gill

Director



Movie: White Robes, Saffron Dreams

Director: Teena Amrit Gill

White Robes, Saffron Dream is a film on gender discrimination and intersectionality on Theravada Buddhism in Thailand.

It is noteworthy that in India, in the early days of Buddhism, women played an important role, both as fully ordained female monastics (or *bhikkhunis*) and as active members of society. They shared the same space and opportunities as men in their spiritual practice. Over the centuries however, as monastic institutions strengthened women found themselves increasingly excluded and sidelined, not just in the running of monastic bodies, but in their own spiritual practice.

The Theravada *bhikkhuni* order survived in India and Sri Lanka till the 9th and 11th centuries CE respectively, after which women had to accept a quasi-religious status as nuns, without the right to be fully ordained. They were not accepted by the Buddhist Sangha and had no legal status to speak of.

But the revival of the *bhikkhuni* order has always been central to their dreams and struggles, and in 1996, nearly a thousand years after the *bhikkhuni* order died out, it was resurrected in Sri Lanka.

Following this, in 2001, a Thai academic and Buddhist scholar, Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (now Bhikkhuni Dhammananda), decided to take the all-male Buddhist establishment in Thailand head on and travelled to Sri Lanka to be ordained. The law in Thailand does not allow female ordination. Two years later she became a fully ordained Theravada *bhikkhuni*, and took 311 precepts, much to the consternation of the Sangha body.

Through the life of Phra Kham Phon, a young monk, and Rochana, a *Mae Chi* (Thai 'nun' who takes 8 precepts or vows) the film explores how Buddhist institutions, which provide a social security network to boys in a country where a large percent of the population are poor, do not give girls and women access to these facilities, including a free education up to the masters and PhD level.

The main reason for this is the fact that while Thai boys can be ordained, girls cannot, and therefore they are not allowed to use the facilities provided by the temples.

However, a small nun's institute in the north of Thailand, started by an older *Mae Chi*, provided girls with an opportunity to pursue their education. *Mae Chi* Rochana, came all the way from her home town in Ubon Ratchathani province, near the Cambodian border, to complete her schooling here. But such places are few and far between, and even this institute has since been shut down.

The voices of Ouyporn, an activist and trainer working with Buddhist nuns, and Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, the first Thai woman to be ordained as a bhikkhuni in the Theravada tradition, weave their way through the film.

Since Bhikkhuni Dhammananda's ordination, over 170 Thai women have been fully ordained, along with over a hundred novice nuns or *samineris*, even though the Buddhist Sangha has strongly resisted and denounced this.

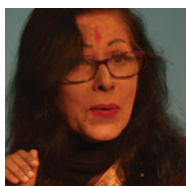
This film was made in an environment where there was very little open discussion about Buddhist institutions, and on attitudes towards women, including *Mae Chis*. It was thus very difficult to shoot the film, and to get people to speak on this subject.

The film screening set the tone for including the space and voice of women practitioners of Buddhism and their beliefs, continuing the thread in which the next session has a detailed narration on a conversation with the eminent artist Shovana Narayan, who shed light on the women characters who were influenced, impacted and who had interacted with the Buddha.

DAY-1 | SESSION-3

Conversation





Dr. Shovana Narayan

Distinguished Kathak Performer & Scholar

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Dr. Sudhir Lall

Professor and Head, Kalakosa Division, IGNCA, New Delhi

Shobhna Narayan: It would like to congratulate Sanjay ji and Deshkal Society, IGNCa, for this third edition of this global dialogues. I am really honoured to have been invited to be a part of it. It is wonderful meeting you Sudhir ji and I am looking forward to a lovely conversation with you.

Sudhir Lal: Yes, that'll be the format of our session today.

Shobhna Narayan: It is lovely to see some of my friends here. Uday ji is here. It is wonderful. And a welcome to all the virtual audience who have joined us from around the world.

Sudhir Lal: Welcome to everyone. I was hoping we could begin the session with your thoughts around Bodhgaya encompassing life and philosophy of Buddha as well his connection to Bodhgaya.

Shobhna Narayan: Well for me, I have been always fascinated with Lord Buddha. Not from today, not from yesterday, but from yesteryears. It started perhaps earlier, influenced from home. One was always reading literature and philosophy. Also, the fact that my mother's house, Nanihal, so to say is also Vaishali. So, you heard of Vaishali and you heard of the significance of Vaishali. I think since childhood, there was a whole narrative connecting Vaishali, Buddha and the enlightenment journey. How a prince born into a Rajgriha forsook everything and went out and his connection with Bodhgaya, as a dancer I find the moment of realisation very significant. When you are reading a lot of text like an old spiritual text pertaining to any -ISM, there are discussions, there are commentaries. They are supposed to be spiritual, but it is actually how the person is perceived to see and hear it and write it down. It then gets translated, further added to, subtracted from, and in the process, something is lost, something is added. So, when you started reading literature and started interacting with people, I, being a dancer and artist, saw how beautifully it gelled and resonated with what I was reading and living. For example, Bodhgaya where he was meditating for a long time, you were always with his name. You are thinking and hearing of her name, the name of Amrapali, the name of Sujata! You are from Bihar, you are reading about the Buddha, and then you translate it into dance. So here was Buddha in spite of everything, he had the inner strength to forsake everything

and here was Amrapali who was offered Queenship on the platter and she had the strength to refuse it and forsake it. They had a discussion. Talking about the discussion with the Buddha, one has to read between the lines. Sometimes you read correctly and sometimes you read incorrectly. So, let me also put it this way. When she was asking questions, her dialogue with Buddha was very interesting and fascinating and that was also at a level when he had become Buddha. But, remembering Bodhgaya, when you are thinking of that moment, Sujata is there. I have performed Amrapali many times. It is a defining moment. There I address him with the name of Siddharth. Siddharth is moving backward and forward. He is meditating and speaking about the *tapasya* of Yoga. You are going towards *Samadhi*. What is the meaning of *Samadhi*? *Samadhi* does not mean that you leave your body and go off. It is also that you become one. *Kundali jagran* becomes complete. That is also akin to *Samadhi*, to forget your inner self and become one with one you are. And so, for me, he tried his best, not eating and this and that. He heard some musician advising his student: Do not tighten the string so hard that it breaks. Do not keep it too loose that it become *besura*. Again, these are different tales and different versions. But what it essentially means is that it has to be just right. Even in science you see that two vibrations match and it suddenly picks up and then it breaks. So that moment onwards, he realised the *Madhyama* path. That for me is the most beautiful moment, the enlightenment. In other words, you will always have coexistence of opposites. You will never have the absence of opposites. *Pragna Yatra Sutra*, it is said that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. Form and emptiness are the two sides of the same thing. Of course, it is said in a better way. Emptiness also gives a form, without emptiness there cannot be form and without form there cannot be emptiness. That reminds me of the Vedic Shloka, *poorna meda, poorn mida, poornet madhasye, poornasya, poornmay vasashyate*. A circle is complete by itself. That whole is a whole and yet it is empty.

Sudhir Lal: Yes!

Shobhna Narayan: With it is everything, within it, written in it. Yet, when you are emptied out, it is still complete. So, this emptiness either way is complete. So many different philosophies have defined this particular moment. Those are the intangibles. But it is a very defining moment. He is going and coming; Sujata is going and coming. Why did he accept the *payasam* from her? She was not from a princely clan. She was not royal blood. This talk about accepting and acceptance of people. I think that was not understood by some of his friends at that time which they later realised. But I think that is also another aspect. That you have to accept people and see the goodness in them, see the devotion in them, see what makes them unique. Because, it is easy to see the other side. So I think all his philosophical thoughts and later in the months of meditation, months and months of introspection, germinated at that point of time. And therefore, for me, Bodhgaya is a very fertile ground as far as Buddhist philosophy is concerned. It's so fascinating how he could explain such a profound philosophy in simple terms as if he actually realised my state of mind or her state of mind at that point of time. You cannot make him see his reason or her reason to accept the inevitable. That's amazing, that is powerful.

Sudhir Lal: Powerful!

Shobhna Narayan: And that also comes powerfully through the acceptance of people and that starvation is not only way or that x and y is not the only way. Even when in his interaction with Amrapali about admitting women into the Sangha which had been earlier sort of appealed by Ananda and others, Buddha is not much in favour of it. But how his being able to see that if you have that inner strength, the whole thing is the question of inner strength for resisting the temptations. Temptations are all over. Temptations are within the mind. Then he is talking about the mind. Whole time, he is talking about the mind and his breath and after that he says that mind brings in the desire.

Sudhir Lal: Ooh ho!

Shobhna Narayan: Therefore, there is imbalance within yourself. Thus, you have to empty yourself from those desires and address the mind. That way you are getting straight in the sublimation of the new harmony and happiness and nothing touches it. You are there and you are not there.

Sudhir Lal: Right, interesting!

Shobhna Narayan: But it does not mean that you are not doing the duty, you are doing the duty. You are doing your duty and you are there, but you are also not there. You have to reason about it. Therefore, I think there is lot to Buddha's philosophy. He has shown you the path, shown you the door. He has ignited the way. It is up to each of us. Can we really understand?

Sudhir Lal: Yes! Yes! You are right.

Shobhna Narayan: Even one statement of his! How much are we able to understand it really? That lies in our hand. Whatever you are able to understand of it I think we will benefit. If you are unable to understand it, you can always criticise. Criticism is nothing. In other words, you have not understood it.

Sudhir Lal: That is alright.

Shobhna Narayan: So, I think you asked me as to why Bodhgaya appeals to me. Not only Bodhgaya, but Vaishali also appeals to me. Ha! Ha!

Sudhir Lal: Ha! Ha!

Sudhir Lal: Thank you for sharing your observations. So, right from the concepts of *Shoonyata* to *Poornta*, you have covered everything so beautifully.

Shobhna Narayan: Because, it is the emptiness or desires, you are talking about *shoonyata*. It was in the region of Bodhgaya and Vaishali, which is Bihar, where you had Samrat Ashok and his lust for power. For him the vision of being Chakravarty was that of having a large empire. In that whole process it was bloodshed everywhere and he could not care less about the blood spilled for him to realize his goal to get in power and establish supremacy everywhere. But somewhere that point comes for his realisation and that's also a thing of the visual representation! There are corpses, all over, surrounded by wailing women and a few surviving people. There are all those corpses with white shrouds and some of them look at him with such disdain and disgust and throw those shrouds on them.

Shobhna Narayan: In other words, you had become devoid of sensitivity. You know what the corpse is? The corpse does not have feeling.

Sudhir Lal: It is so right!

Shobhna Narayan: There is no life at all. Devoid of sensitivity, devoid of feelings, devoid of compassion, devoid of humanism, devoid of everything!

Sudhir Lal: Devoid of life itself!

Shobhna Narayan: So, we did that visual representation where the women and the few surviving members moved like living-walking corpses devoid of any feeling for life, humanity or compassion! And Ashok sort of slowly emerges and somewhere hears *Buddham Shranam Gachchami* and he realises that he really has to empty himself of the lust. This kind of lust he had for power, his ego, his pride, for what he said was right and that what he wanted had to be done. That moment, I think that was the turning point, when he turned towards Buddhism.

Sudhir Lal: From *Chanda* Ashok to *Dharma* Ashok.

Shobhna Narayan: That is what makes him *Amar*. That made him what the way we know him. Had he not undergone this transformation, we would not have remembered him.

Sudhir Lal: That's true.

Shobhna Narayan: People would have remembered him but in a different way. But not as *Dhamma* Ashok, as you remember him.

Sudhir Lal: With reverence!

Shobhna Narayan: Right, with reverence! So what is important is how much you are able to serve humanity. It is not necessary to be above everybody. Anti or in favour, but yet you need to do your duty. You are doing your *KARMA* of serving humanity. So those are some of the basic, some of the very very powerful messages of Buddha. I mean I can just go on and go on. Sometimes, from this from that you know. Things keep on fleeting.

Sudhir Lal: I think, this is the entire purpose of this gathering today. This is so enriching! Thank you so much. And the visual imagery you were talking about was so powerful. One is enshrouded by the white by those people and it is so touching!

Shobhna Narayan: Once everyone leaves there is a song. I am standing alone. I am standing alone in this battlefield. Something like, I will be the *Samrat*, but there is none standing with me. I am at the peak but I am alone. None is

here with me. Just blood and the flowing corpses! So, this means, only this flowing blood, streams of blood and the corpses and I am the *Samrat* and I am the emperor!

Sudhir Lal: This highlights the concepts as a twin concept. Should we say *Shoonyta* or *Poornta*?

Shobhna Narayan: Exactly!

Sudhir Lal: So beautiful!

Shobhna Narayan: Just highlights the two that there are and there are not.

Sudhir Lal: Wow!

Shobhna Narayan: Even the story of Kisa is beautiful. How each of us fears death! Look at the pandemic around.

Shobhna Narayan: In a way, there is fear of death and it is paramount. But death has to come. Birth is an accident, but death is a certainty. The only question is when and how. So, I think, acceptance of the inevitability of death is crucial. Irrespective of the social background, this has to be accepted by one and all. The story of Kisa is very beautiful and the whole episode is outstanding.

Sudhir Lal: It is outstanding! It should come on record.

Shobhna Narayan: Here is a lady called Kisa, and her only little child suddenly died. She is mad with grief, she's in pain and agony. She does not know what to do. She is utterly distraught and she is running hither and thither calling all to bring her child back to life. I do not know whether the child was male or female. However, somebody then directs her to Buddha saying that there is a saintly person. They asked her to go to the saint who they thought would help her in seeing the sense and help her accept the reality. She ran to Buddha and said 'I heard you can do miracles'. At that time, it was futile to try to make her understand the sense of the passing away of the child or even to console her. So, Buddha asks her to go to any house and bring a handful of mustard seed where no death has not occurred.

Sudhir Lal: Right!

Shobhna Narayan: So she went in search of the seeds and lo and behold, she understood what he wanted her to understand.

Sudhir Lal: Such a powerful message delivered so simply and experientially.

Shobhna Narayan: Exactly.

Sudhir Lal: This is going to happen as soon you happen in this world and this is written on the wall.

Shobhna Narayan: Yeah! Absolutely!

Sudhir Lal: I think there was no better way to make Kisa and all of us understand the inevitability of death.

Shobhna Narayan: Yes! The inevitability of death and that we should accept it. Yes, we do not know when it is going to happen or how it is going to happen. But that is going to happen.

Sudhir Lal: That is going to happen. It is there. So beautiful!

Shobhna Narayan: I think, there is so much depth in the little incidents in his experience and in what he said.

Sudhir Lal: That is so true. Why don't we take a step back? You have done a lot of work on his wife. Tell us something about that.

Shobhna Narayan: Yashodhra! Yes, a lot, a lot!

Shobhna Narayan: I love her.

Sudhir Lal: So why do we not talk about her?

Shobhna Narayan: This incident when seen from the perspective of a wife, he may not have been correct. But at the same time, from another perspective, he was correct. For me, this whole thing could not find a better expression of the feelings of Yashodhra than what has been penned by Maithili Sharan Gupt. It is amazing! He has gone into the inner recess of the woman's mind.

Sudhir Lal: That is true.

Shobhna Narayan: It is beautiful, even when she is trying to suppress her pain. I cry reading about her. My mother first introduced me to the book, read beta, she said. My forays into Hindi literature and all the other things are because of mother. As I told you right in the beginning that the whole inspiration and motivation to me was given by my mother. There is this page where Yashodhara says '*Sakhi Mujhe Bata Kar to Jaate*'. He could have left after informing me. '*Bas Sakhi Woh Mujh Se Kah Kar Jaate*'. Just he should have departed after confiding in me. '*Siddh Hone Gaye Yeh To Hai Gaurav Ki Baat. Chori Chori Gaye*

Yehi Sab Se Bada Ghaat'. Here I started crying. It hit me here even though I wasn't married or I didn't have a son then. Her emotion resonated with me. When she says, it is matter of pride that he went on his spiritual journey, but he went stealthily. This is the most hurtful wound. So when I see her from her perspective, here she is sleeping and the child is there and she says that she has been deserted by her husband.

Sudhir Lal: Such a shock!

Shobhna Narayan: Such a shock! I mean it is Ok, he went for meditation. She says 'After all I am a wife of a Khatriya clan. As a wife of a khatriya, it is my dharma to send the men to battlefield. We do not know whether he will return. Could be the father, the brother, or the son! So, as a Khatriya woman, I would have done my duty. Do you think I would have been an obstacle in his journey to become a Siddha? No, I would have let him go.' Her pain was that he did not confide in her. So, I could empathise with her.

Sudhir Lal: Interesting!

Shobhna Narayan: And then later on, Siddharth comes back but comes back as a 'Bhikshu'.

Shobhna Narayan and Sudhir Lal: Ha! Ha!

Shobhna Narayan: He comes back and says 'I am a *Bhikshu*. I have come for *Bhiksha*!' Again, imagine her conflicting emotions at that time. So, I think, it is powerful poetry. Very powerful. I think, it is more than poetry.

Sudhir Lal: Yeah, haha!

Shobhna Narayan: So they say, understanding the inner recesses is important, which is why it is crucial to contemplate on her experiences of the inner situations and his compulsions; his desire to devote his life in the cause of humanity and her eventual acceptance. Then being able to send her little son off into the Sangha, that I think speaks volumes on the strength of both.

Sudhir Lal: That's so true.

Shobhna Narayan: It's all about her amazing inner strength; not just as a Kshatriya woman but also in her acceptance. Imagine the strength of a mother who's willingly giving away her only child.

Sudhir Lal: Yes, it is very powerful.

Shobhna Narayan: It is very powerful. I think there are two characters, two very strong characters. At the same point of time, neither of them understood each other. Yet, they understood each other. So here again for a moment, Siddharth also did not understand that Yashodhara would be able to understand and let him go.

Sudhir Lal: Yes!

Shobhna Narayan: She did not understand on why he could not confide in her and yet they understood. He was very confident. She was confident that she will understand but not in that instance.

Sudhir Lal: That will take time.

Shobhna Narayan: Yes, it doesn't happen in that instance. That comes later. So, I think it is again a beautiful story of how two strong people had the moments of not being able to understand each other. It was nothing that they felt was against each other, but yet in a split of a second, you take a decision but later on both of them reflect on and understand why it was done. So that acceptance happens with a grace and from heart. I think this speaks volumes on the characters of both. It is amazing. I also love her when she keeps telling Rahul when he keeps asking who his father is.

Shobhna Narayan: She talks about the hunter. That is very beautiful. Her claims show how much she has accepted.

Sudhir Lal: She has imbibed it.

Shobhna Narayan: Right! She has understood and she is totally with him. She is with him in the journey even while being away.

Sudhir Lal: Yes!

Shobhna Narayan: There is support for him and his work and there is certain sense of pride in his work.

Sudhir Lal: Definitely, definitely! It shines through.

Sudhir Lal: Moving on to another important woman in Buddha's life. His mother, Maya Devi.

Shobhna Narayan: Yes, Maya Devi. Siddharth's mother died during the childbirth. Maya Devi was his foster mother, his *mausi* and she brought him up.

Sudhir Lal: And then later on she becomes a Bhikkhuni. I do not know at

what point he opened the door of Sangha for women but Maya Devi was the first to become a Bikkhuni. Talking about Amrapali, tell us more about her dialogue with him. It was akin to an argument. This dialogue with Amrapali is equally very important. It is a milestone in his journey.

Shobhna Narayan: Amrapali's argument, her reasoning, her philosophy in her life shows her knowledge. She has seen everything and she was a yogini from inside. She was offered the queenship and everything and yet she was able to rise above the rest of the mundane world which is materialistic desires of the world. That means, she had emptied herself or she had not yet emptied but she was in the process of emptying all desires.

Sudhir Lal: That's true.

Shobhna Narayan: It's a similar journey for Maya Devi and later Yashodhara as well.

Sudhir Lal: It is a fascinating journey!

Shobhna Narayan: It is a fascinating journey. Very fascinating! It is beautiful! From the psychological point of the view or even as studying the psychology of Buddha and all the associated characters around him is very interesting. Even, Ananda is a very fascinating person to study.

Uday Sahay (from among the delegates): Would you share your reflections on Sujata?

Shobhna Narayan: I was discussing with some colleagues and artists at that point of the time and we were talking about Sujata. She also had a desire which she thought the Sadhu baba could fulfil. She follows the advice and goes to meet him every day as part of *Atithi Satkar*. She sees this person meditating and harbours two thoughts: one is of course looking after the well-being of the guest, another is that of getting her wishes fulfilled. She comes and sees that the wreath that she had placed has remained untouched and one fine day, the gentleman is not there. He has moved away and left. What would be the first feeling of a person in this situation? What is it about me? That would be the normal reaction. That is the human reaction. Because he never took any of Sujata's offerings, she could also have thought where it was because she was a woman, or if it was because she came from a lower station in life, a lower caste. There could be so many things!

Sudhir Lal: Absolutely, so many factors!

Shobhna Narayan: At that point there's a powerful piece of poetry. Nobody is higher and lower station in life. It is the KARMA which makes a person high or low; it is the intentions. What Sujata has been doing was only to please him. She was serving with full devotion and heart which is the most beautiful thing. She served humanity for all these months. In the beginning, there may have been another motive but that must have lapsed after such a long time.

Uday Sahay: I was working on it. There are two different sets of literature on it. Sourcing them is not easy. Literature on Sujata is very scarce. If you go a bit deeper, you realise that there are two contradictory versions of her relationship with Buddha. One version is that Buddha actually fell in love with her. And there is a story of her having a baby and walking away with the baby and him feeling completely distraught because she had gone away. And he left with the vow and all that when she was offering *Kheer*. She was the daughter of the rich milkman of the village. At the end of the day, end of the relationship, he leaves with the bowl. He goes to the Niranjana River and places the bowl there to decide on the direction he would take since he was confused. If the bowl moved in the direction of Kapilvastu, he would return to Kapilvastu and if the same would move in opposite direction, he would return to his place of meditation. He places the bowl there in the river. After some time, the bowl starts floating diagonally. He follows the bowl and reaches a place in the village where a man gifts him a mat made of dry grass. At this point of time, Bodhgaya is behind him as the river has changed its course. And it's there that he decides that he will have the answer. So he sits there and ponders. The point this school of thought has raised is that it was the positive emotions of love which transformed him completely, finally culminating in the journey from one to all. Other conservative Buddhist literature that you get tends to gloss over this episode.

Shobhna Narayan: Indeed, conservative literature glosses over several facts when it deals with women.

Uday Sahay: This part is not quite well researched yet.

Shobhna Narayan: Thank you for introducing me to it. I would like to do more research on it. It is a fascinating story since this also opens portals to another domain of human psychology and relationships.

Uday Sahay: And after this relationship, when he sat under the tree, there is an interesting question as to what happened that night of enlightenment. What actual experiences did Buddha undergo? What were the different shades of experiences? He talks about the experiences of inter-connectedness: how leaves are connected and how they are connected to the whole. It is the concept of love getting universalised in the interconnected world which is the most important.

Shobhna Narayan: Beautiful! Beautiful! You talk about love and the concept of another path, the philosophical path of the inner journey. It is a way of life. It is the same thought that translates itself into Vaishnava thought of Krishna-Radha symbolism: *Atma* and *paramatma*. I had not heard the story. Thank you for introducing me to it. I will definitely try and read more on it and try to find more on it. Excellent!

Uday Sahay: It is interesting to note how Sujata draws a complete relationship of equality. The way she addresses him in the beginning and gradually as she realises that he is not an ordinary guy and yet she has a *sakha* kind of communication.

Shobhna Narayan: Out of the other three, the one who has a discourse with him on an equal level is Amrapali. But there too, there is a distance maintained. Yashodhara never has this kind of conversation, nor does his foster mother, but interestingly Sujata does. I was not aware of it. Beautiful story. This throws a different light even on the enlightenment process of Buddha.

Sudhir Lal: So, there are three layers now. Thank you for sharing this aspect. (A lady delegate from the audience): How do you look at Yashodhara from the lens of modernity? It is possible to look at her from the lens of modernity?

Shobhna Narayan: Yes, I would say so. Any woman, even a modern woman is a woman. However, you may call her Yashodhara or whatever, emotions do not change. The feeling of betrayal will not change. Except that among the modern woman, there are two types. One modern woman can say, go to hell. Or, there is another who might say, I am doing my work, I could not care less. There is the one who says I will teach him a lesson. And, there is the third one who says, live and let live. Forget it. Even among the modern woman, I will not

say modern in terms of mindset but living in the contemporary times, there are two different things. She would still be pining. Circumstances change, incidents might change. In a sense, while there is change, there is constancy in the change. The essence of those incidents: the sense of betrayal, the agony, the pain of giving away your child to monkhood, those remain the same. One can also ponder over whether she gave away the child from her own volition or did circumstances, family force her into this.

Uday Sahay: The story of the Niranjana river also rose during the rise of Sikkism, Bihar school of Yoga. We heard the story of Niranjana.

Shobhna Narayan: Absolutely!

Uday Sahay: Niranjana ji was in Raipur. They could foresee that a child is born who will be the successor of Swami Satyanand Saraswati. The whole team went there and the whole house was shocked and of course resisted. So, they left the address of the Ashram and said in case the boy can be parted with, they should reach out to them. Within a year, they sent for the guy as they realised that they cannot handle the child. They found out the ashram and handed over the child. There are incidences like these.

Shobhna Narayan: There are incidences. Even then, nobody knows what exactly fuelled Yashodhara's decision. We do not know. We can only speculate after a gap of 2600 years. All speculations are coming from the thoughts at that point of time. There have been commentaries from a couple of centuries ago as well as from recent past. It's based on the social position that the thoughts change.

Sudhir Lal: That's true.

Shobhna Narayan: We can only say, this is it, this is it. Truth is truth. *Satya* is *satya* and *Asatya* is *Asatya*. These are basic values, but the rest of it, they are variable commodities and there are variable entities. Then there are permutations and combinations and how it affects the communications, actions and decisions.

Sudhir Lal: Would you like to share some concluding remarks?

Shobhna Narayan: Sure! Buddha and his life have so many incidences. I think, we all need to understand the incidents and draw our own thing and see how

we react to it and not what has been written. And personally, I feel there are nuggets, beautiful gold nuggets of philosophical thoughts out there. But what I have said is that basic things are unchangeable is the path of righteousness of honesty etc. Those values never change. External conditions change, and followed by that, reactions to certain situations change too. The essence is that more the 'Maya' we are gripped with, the desires we are gripped with, the attachment is there, the more we work ourselves in misery and agony. The more we free ourselves, the lighter we are: mentally and emotionally. But it does not mean that we do not love people. Everybody is there but still we are still doing our duty and need to not allow negativity to overwhelm ourselves. I think all the great saints have talked about the same thing in different ways in different manners.

Sudhir Lal: That is true. It has been lovely and very enriching talking to you.

Shobhna Narayan: Thank you so much. Thank you for your inputs.

DAY-1 | SESSION-4

Heritage Centre on Art, Architecture and Religion: Relevance and Possibilities in Bodh Gaya



MODERATOR

Dr. Bijoy Kumar Choudhary

Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna

PANELIST

Some Preliminary Thoughts around the Idea of a Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre (MMHC) on Bodhgaya

Dr. Max Deeg

Professor in Buddhist Studies, School of History, Archaeology and Religion
Cardiffe University, UK

Heritage Centre: Art of Buddha in Bodhgaya

Dr. Janice Leoshko

Associate Professor and Associate Director, Center for Asian Studies,
University of Texas at Austin, USA

Heritage Centre: Study of The Culural Map of Bodhgaya in the Contemporary Times

Dr. Manish Sinha

Professor and Head, Dept. of History, Magadh University, Bodhgaya

The Meaning of Heritage Centre

Dr. Priyanka Jha

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science,
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi



Some Preliminary Thoughts around the Idea of a Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre (MMHC) on Bodhgaya

Dr. Max Deeg

I would like to begin with some thoughts about the ideas and concepts of heritage and education which are, I think, crucial for potentially making this Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre on Bodhgaya successful. Although education is not a direct part of the proposed title of the Centre, it is clear from a reading of the “Concept Note” that it is an important, maybe even overarching agenda of the whole project. I will then use two examples from my area of expertise as a textual scholar and historian to illustrate what I mean by the suggestions I have made in the first part.

I have to admit that as a trained philologist I have a tendency to be quite pedantic about words and terms, and as someone who has written his PhD thesis about Old Indian semantic analysis – called etymology in the West and nirvacana in Sanskrit – I cherish the origins of words, not because I think that they should determine what the real meaning of a word is but because they sometimes provide insights into aspects of words and concepts which might have become invisible over time.

Heritage comes from the Latin word *heres*, “heir”, which may go back to an Indo-European combination of verbal roots meaning “eating what has been abandoned” (de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin*, 2008: 283, s.v.: *gheh1ro, “derelict” + *h1ed, “to eat”). Now replace “to eat” by “to digest, to peruse” and you will come close to the modern meaning of heritage in the sense of “to take on what is left from the past” – but the implication is also, and this is my point here, that you are supposed to be doing something with what is left behind. The term is a legal one and implies responsibility for what is inherited – and this, by the way, is also the case with the Skt. words *dāya*, lit. “what has been given”, *riktha* (from *ric* / *riṇakti*, “to leave behind”), *adhikāra*, “administration, duty, claim”. In that sense, heritage is not a “given” but has to

be processed and made available. And it is this process, in a feasible and appropriate form, which should be dynamic and multifaceted – I hope that it becomes clearer in due course what I mean by this in our concrete case of establishing a Heritage Centre on Bodhgaya.

The other term is education which is again derived from a Latin verb, *e(x)ducare*, “to lead out of, to guide someone from one place to another”. Once more, we see the aspects of formation and change: the goal of education is transformation through knowledge. And again, we can have a look at possible Skt. equivalences – and be it only for the sake of not being accused of an orientalist or Eurocentric approach –: while *śikṣā* emphasizes the aspects of learning and teaching, another term, *vinaya*, has almost the same meaning as the Latin verb *educare*.

What I would like to take from these quite superficial observations about the two terms heritage and education is the need of transformation and change and I would like to apply this on two levels in the case of Bodhgaya.

The first is a historical one: I think that we cannot do justice to heritage and a heritage site like Bodhgaya by looking as if it is a piece of deep-frozen food that just has to be taken out of the refrigerator and then unfrozen – and there it is as it was at the time of freezing it. The site has its history, changes and transformation which are not only reflected in the remains of material culture but also in the textual documents which are normally used for an understanding and reconstruction of the site. And this is where I as a textual scholar and historian may step in: alone the comparison of the sources I am normally working with reflect this change – if we, for instance, compare the record of the Chinese travelers, often called pilgrims, Faxian and Xuanzang which were written more than two hundred years apart from each other with the writings of the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin, again written several centuries later. Just cherry-picking from these sources in form of old and outdated translations will not help to appreciate the complexity of historical development which the site has undergone.

The second level is what I would call a critical engagement with the process of creation of knowledge of a site like Bodhgaya. And again, I would call on the previous metaphor of the frozen vegetable: knowledge is, hopefully, growing over time and the understanding derived from this knowledge has to be incorporated

in the presentation of the object studied – in this case Bodhgaya as a heritage site. Only the creation of the suggested database or bibliography will demonstrate that our knowledge about the site since the second half of the 19th century has grown considerably – but yet, the standard narrative of the site still seems to be frozen in time: the time of Alexander Cunningham.

So, what I am calling for – you can probably already “smell” it – is a rethinking of the standard narrative of the site which is, as it were and again using the previously applied metaphor, frozen in, let us say, the second half of the 19th century, pretty much repeating what is found in Alexander Cunningham’s groundbreaking book on Bodhgaya and making it an unquestioned and accepted authority. At the same time, this approach also “freezes” the dynamic and critical understanding of the relevant textual sources which Cunningham used for the interpretation of the site, particularly the travelogue of the Chinese Buddhist traveler Xuanzang to the status quo of Samuel Beal’s translation of the text from 1884. What I am asking for is to “defrost” this situation in the context and framework of the planned Centre and to critically challenge the old narrative or narratives about the site in the light of more recent and ongoing research. To illustrate what I mean by this, I now want to turn to my two selected examples. I have to apologize in advance that, due to the restricted time, I will not be able to go into a full-fledged discussion of the material.

From my own work on the sources related to Bodhgaya, I would suggest the following programmatic points for the establishment of the Centre:

- Take account of all the evidence and sources and combine and contextualize them critically (e.g. archaeological, art historical, textual)
- Not necessarily “dismantle” the narratives – both primary (Buddhist “canonical texts” – which ones?) and secondary (Cunningham, Barua, etc.) – but present them as what they are: as “narratives” and not as history
- Think about and present the site of Bodhgaya in a proper diachronic-historical way
- Collaborate with specialists from different areas of expertise (art historians, archaeologists, epigraphists, Buddhologists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, specialists in modern museology and collections studies)



Heritage Centre: Art of Buddha in Bodhgaya

Dr. Janice Leoshko

She began the session with a description and understanding of the visual art forms and sculptures of Buddha in Bodhgaya.. She presented two images showcasing a pavement before and after it was covered with marble and was of the opinion that in spite of putting together the old historical photographs, a sense of its ongoing history needs to blossom. She emphasised that it was important to look at images and be sceptic about them. The Buddha images where he was touching the ground are not just images in reference to the narrative of the attack of Mara but were also the images of the site. Their popularity after the 8th century depicts the changing pattern in devotion and certain practices of the people. These images provide a gateway to interpretation and continuous study. A well-constructed centre can help the audience coming from every walk of life to reflect on what they see at Bodhgaya.



Heritage Centre: Study of The Culural Map of Bodhgaya in the Contemporary Times

Dr. Manish Sinha

Teaching at Magadha University, Bihar for the past twenty-four years had given him the opportunity to witness the transformation of Bodhgaya closely. He had his childhood memories associated with Bodhgaya. He threw light on the changes that had taken place at Bodhgaya where the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was declared a world heritage site in the year 2002. This draws both the followers of the Buddha Dharma and tourists from all over the world.

He appreciated the initiative taken by Deshkal Society and focused on the shared religious heritage aspect of the place. The focus was not only from the Buddhist aspect, but also from the perspective of the Hindus. The basic role of Bodhgaya as a heritage centre is that it attracts a lot of Buddhist pilgrims from the trans-Himalayan region and Europe. But what is observed is that the real heritage of Bodhgaya is ignored. The people should be made aware of who they are and the shared religious heritage should be established. The architectural part should also be taken into consideration and studied.

The speaker then shifted his focus to the ritualistic aspect of Bodhgaya which has been an instrument in the internalisation of the sacred space of Bodhgaya. The arrival of his Holiness in 1956 as a part of the Buddha Jayanti ceremony gave impetus to the ritualistic aspect at Bodhgaya. In 2017 the Kaal Chakra puja was held and in 2019 December from 1st to 6th June 2020, he was preaching at Bodhgaya. In 1960 the democratisation of the Tibetan policy had started. The Tibetan rituals transformed the spiritual aspect of Bodhgaya. The speaker raised the Tibetan national question and how the social and spiritual platforms are used for espousing the nationalistic cause. Buddhism is the most important marker of the Tibetan identity and it revolves around his Holiness, the Dalai Lama. His role was instrumental in transforming Bodhgaya as a heritage site in 2013. The four major rituals schools namely Kagyu, Nyingma, Gelugpa and

Sakya were then thrown light upon. The one common thing about the Tibetan rituals is the practice of non-violence. But these rituals are distinct from one another in the many ways of interpreting Buddhism.

For instance, their protest and self-immolation are justified, there are marches, sit-outs that need to be studied. He talked about the Tibetan activist, Tenzin Tsundue, in particular, who is a firebrand Tibetan activist and a writer who writes about immigration poetry and his most famous book is Kora. He has vowed to wear a red bandana until the Tibetan national question is resolved and holds the non-violent method of the Dalai Lama in high esteem. Along with the writings, their literature needed to be documented and transformed into a digital movement. Bodhgaya should not only be considered for its Tibetan rituals but also as a religious centre for the Hindus. The speaker cited an example of the Mahabodhi temple and explained the importance of studying shrines. The ways of worshipping Buddha and how he encompassed the Hindu religious domain is commendable. The discussion established that the ritualistic aspect as well as the living heritage should be taken into consideration.

He then went on to speak about the Jajmani Records of the Gayawal Pandas available at Gaya. These records have been preserved since 16th or 17th century and the Gayawal Pandas are discreet about it. These records have been digitalised by the University of California. Delving into these records gives a valuable insight about the tourists, particularly the Indian tourists who were coming to Bodhgaya, how they were visualizing, worshipping Buddha, and including Buddha in their larger domain of worship.



The Meaning of Heritage Centre

Dr. Priyanka Jha

The discussion moved around the existence and meaning of a Heritage Centre. She began her presentation by thanking the Deshkal society for playing an integral part in the Dialogue and Anagarika Dharmapala, in particular, for being a custodian of Buddhism, who also revised it on a universal scale. Being a political scientist, she also introduced a similar thinker, Ananda Kumaraswamy. She emphasised on the tussle between the views of thinkers and art historians related to Kumaraswamy and how on international basis one should think of the Multimedia Heritage Centre.

She went on to describe Kumaraswamy's work over the years, where he wrote texts namely, Message of the East, Essays in National Idealism, Meaning of Art in Art and Craft. She added that he made everyone question about art form and what role it played in everyone's life relating to the civilization matrix. Thus, he drew an inference that art form is significant. The argument was made during the time of national movement when there was a kind of urgency of political social and economic quest. But the cultural quest did not gain significance. In 1910 with his first exhibition in Benaras, he made a strong argument for the museum. According to him museums are the link to the past as well as the storehouse of various artefacts taking one to their past. Museums are a great way of connecting people to the kind of cells that they were once. She shared that another argument that was presented by him was in the context of British colonialism. He spoke about the justification of Pax Britannica which talks about the White Man's burden to civilise the barbaric people. He cited example of books named Mother India written by Katherine Mayo and Mill's History of British India which were full of stereotypical prejudices. With all these arguments Kumaraswamy challenged the western interpretations.

She then spoke about the multimedia centre and the shift that had taken place in the way of writing history. She cited an example of Zinn's People's History of the United States of America. In her opinion, the common masses

who had been living in those sites are the real custodians of the heritage and should be included in the heritage centre and their accounts should be heard and recorded. Building a community partnership is the need of the hour. She opined that the involvement of people will lead the longevity of the heritage. She drew attention to the works of Bijoy Sir who found out a lot of artefacts around the region. Due to his efforts, these cultural resources that had been lying were now being documented. The local people should be trained and taught the preservation of cultural resources. An example of Ahmedabad city was given by her in this regard. For the preservation of heritage, Ahmedabad involves the common masses. They conduct heritage walks from the temple to the mosque, to people's houses and to common houses. This throws light on the lifestyle of the people living there. She gave another example of Rajasthan where the local communities take care of the important heritage sites. In Jaisalmer, the responsibility of the Garden Fort had been taken by the common people. Its custodianship is not for namesake, but it involves real participation. She then shifted her focus to Bodhgaya and emphasised on the importance of local knowledge for the preservation of heritage. She spoke about the approach that was coming from the people and referred to Kumaraswamy for whom art forms were central to common masses. The artefacts for the common masses were not merely fancy items but were a means of livelihood.

She spoke about the decentralisation method of the institutions and how UNESCO had been working very hard trying to talk about the tangibles and intangibles. She was of the opinion that one should move beyond decentralisation and work with the local communities in close partnership. A successful heritage centre would emerge from listening to them and taking into consideration their opinions concerning the heritage. The monks should be approached to discuss about the local and everyday/common problems faced by them. This will help bring to light the local realities.

She also gave an example of her personal account when she was in Ambedkar university. She spoke about her efforts in putting up the neighbourhood museum in Mehrauli with the involvement of the Delhi government. In this museum, people brought in their old heirlooms and placed them. On any

tourists visit, these local people would give details of the artefacts present at the museum. This practise was a commendable one as the heritage centre involved with the active participation of the local masses. This was important as she said building any Heritage Centre would essentially be one driven by a connection to the masses. She ended this discussion with a wish to be able to connect with her roots better through the Heritage Centre and also be able to give back to Bihar.

After an interesting and detailed exchange of questions and observation among the presenters and participants, Abhishek Amar, the moderator for the session summed up the context of Bodhgaya and the knowledge production around this site, which framed the outline of the Digital Heritage Centre. The centre will have a three-tiered plan of action: short-term, mid-term and long-term, which are listed below.

The short-term goals would include: (i) Establish the ‘Living Archive’ that would document daily developments in Bodhgaya, which can be a knowledge based resource Centre; (ii) Immediate survey of all monasteries, their infrastructure and role in religious/ touristic activities; (iii) Document rituals during the season and note negotiation details; (iv) Special events such as Bodhgaya Mahotsava and its impact on tourism and in generating awareness; and (v) Engage with existing stakeholders critically and advocacy with new institutions.

The mid-term goals: (i) Develop digital records and publish them digitally for research, policymaking and advocacy (ii) Create digital platforms for facilitating multi-religious and multicultural dialogues; (iii) Develop a digital museum of smaller but important Buddhist sites in the Gaya district (Kurkihar, Hasra Kol etc.) to generate awareness and better access; and (iv) Develop a coherent vision for Bodhgaya’s development that can act as a developmental model for other sites.

The long-term goals would be a wider engagement with government bodies and other policy related institutions and to generate funds through national and international collaborations and publications.



DAY-2 | SESSION-1

Art, Heritage and Buddhism in India



MODERATOR

Mr. Sanjay Kumar

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi

PANELIST

How and Why does the Afterlife of a Heritage Site Matter?

The Making of Bodh Gaya

Dr. Shashank Sinha

Independent Scholar and Author who works as Publishing Director,
Routledge, South Asia

The Paintings of Ajanta and Echoes in Other Buddhist Sites

Dr. Shushmita Dutt

Educationist & Research Consultant, New Delhi



How and Why Does the Afterlife of a Heritage Site Matter? The Making of Bodh Gaya

Dr. Shashank Sinha

In the beginning, he shared a presentation which comprised an interesting analysis of the meanings of the heritage site of Bodh Gaya, its archaeological, historical and multi-pronged dimensions. He began by outlining his approach in the last few years, which has been about addressing the gap between academic and popular understandings of history, how knowledge is produced in academic settings, and how it is eventually received in public, which may or may not have the historical knowledge or a background in history. Within this larger approach, he has been working on monuments, heritage sites as well as museums as tangible sites for day-to-day interactions with history for a large section of the population.

Explaining the meaning of afterlife of heritage sites, he underscored how events or episodes connected to a heritage site, and the writings or constructions around it sometimes ends up giving new meanings to the site over a period of time. Often, these meanings are based on very thin or ambiguous body of evidence and may involve intellectual and cultural discourses emanating in different or distant geographies. However, over a period of time, these meanings become the dominant framework for our analysis or understanding of these heritage sites. In the process, they prominently showcase the evolution of popular history or predominant stereotypes.

As far as Bodh Gaya is concerned, a couple of more factors further complicate the study of this site. One is that the after layer is multi-layered and multi-dimensional, because of the site's multi-religious and multi-vocal past. Add to it the fact that the site has gone through several renovations. The second factor is that there are many agents and actors with different interests and motivations that further add a layer of complication to the history of Bodh Gaya. And now, it is this afterlife or events and episodes in the afterlife, that mediate, frame,

or inform our understanding of the physical, cultural and discursive landscape of Bodh Gaya.

Dr. Sinha talked about the events in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries which inform our understanding or mediate our understanding of the site today, long after Bodh Gaya had ceased to be the primary Buddhist or pilgrimage destination.

In terms of the artifacts, Bodh Gaya boasts of the famous Bodhi tree, with a spot under the tree where Buddha sat, now known as the Diamond Throne or the Vajrasana, and a railing around it. Located nearby are the Mahabodhi temple and the monuments connected to the first seven weeks after Buddha attained enlightenment. On the outskirts of this complex, there also exist more than 40 international temples and monastic establishments within a two-kilometre radius.

What contributed to the afterlife around this complex? Dr Shashank Sinha explained the process through five interesting stories. The first story pertains to the 19th century, when a Burmese delegation sent by the King of Burma sought permission to repair the site. This set into motion a set of contestations with Mahants with claims over the village of Taradih which actually gave a new shape or meaning to the site. On the other hand, the British colonial administration, influenced by the ideology of Orientalism, also wanted to bolster their claims of presenting a scientific history of India's Buddhist monuments, Buddhist sites and Buddha himself.

The development of archaeology as a discipline further aided the restoration of the site between 1879 and 1884. However, this restoration was based on more of a historical and archaeological viewpoint, as opposed to viewing it as a religious or sacred monument. A lot of structures that had earlier adorned the complex were swept away in the process and barely some of the original structures survived this phase of renovation.

Later, Sri Lankan monk Dharmapala Anagarika formed the Mahabodhi Society, not just with the idea of restoring the site but rather using it to revive Buddhism as a pan India force. Sir Edwin Arnold's famous poem, *The Light of Asia* and other writings also created the discourse for Bodh Gaya to serve as or to become the natural site of Buddhist Asia.

The Buddhification of the surroundings of Bodh Gaya picked up pace after India's independence, when India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to leverage the Buddhist heritage to build diplomatic relations with other newly independent Asian nations, and utilise Bodh Gaya as an icon for building up India's cultural superpower. The draft Bodh Gaya Temple Management Act was eventually passed in 1949, and the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee subsequently took over the temple management in 1953. Since a Mahant or Math is equated with *Zamindari*, this step also tied in with Nehru's anti-*Zamindari* programme. The *Return of Buddha*, a brilliant work by Professor Himanshu Ray, talks about this phase, as to how Buddhism staged a comeback at this time.

In 1956, India decided to celebrate Buddha Jayanti as the 2500th anniversary of the Buddhist Mahaparinirvana. A temple advisory board was formed, which facilitated land allotments to foreign monasteries and foreign temples. In the last part of 1970s and 80s, a large number of transnational temples, monastic establishments, rest houses and organisations connected with various Buddhist leaders from Asia, including Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan, Korea, Nepal and Tibet, were constructed, leading to a proliferation of temples and monastic establishments in different architectural styles, giving an idea of a mini-Asia. More than 40 establishments in an area around a two-kilometre radius also contributed to the globalization of the space, and this is when Bodh Gaya started emerging as a global Buddhist destination.

In 1989, a conflict broke out over the positioning of the signboards of the monuments of seven weeks within the Mahabodhi complex, which eventually led to the temple management installing marble and stone signages based on the identification provided by a text called *Jinattha Pakasani* - which means “Exposition of the Story of the Victor”, written in 1920 by Kiythe Layhtap Sayadaw. Incidentally, except for the Bodhi tree and the Chalakamna which is the Lotus walk, all the other sites were different from those identified earlier by Alexander Cunningham, the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, who had based his verification on the accounts of Chinese scholar Xuanzang who visited the site in the 7th century BC. In this way, a multiplicity of narratives was replaced by a hegemonizing master narrative that presented an official and institutionalized history of the monuments of the first seven weeks in Bodh Gaya, based on a very thin body of evidence.

Thereafter, in 2002, the status of World Heritage Site accorded by UNESCO to Bodh Gaya for its outstanding universal value put a stamp on it as primarily a Buddhist site, bypassing its multiple local and multi-religious past. Creation of a website, mushrooming of small businesses, opening of the Bodh Gaya International Airport in 2002, and 2550th anniversary celebrations of the Mahaparinirvana in 2006, gave further boost to tourism in Bodh Gaya. New plans are afoot for urban redevelopment of the Gaya region, which may lead to further forms of difference and exclusion.



The Paintings of Ajanta and Echoes in Other Buddhist Sites

Dr. Shushmita Dutt

She began the session by introducing the concept of in-situ museums, which finds an echo in the caves at Ajanta and the entire Western Ghats in the time period corresponding to the few centuries after Lord Buddha attained his enlightenment. At that time, there emerged the tradition of *Varsha Vaas*, when *Bhikshus* were allowed to take residence at one place during the months of *Varsha* or monsoon, as against the practice of constant movement at other times. *Varsha Vaas* was to be utilised for meeting the local population and preaching the message of the Buddha.

Even today, on the hilltops all along the Western Ghats, we can find signs of excavation where caves have been carved into the hills. These caves are presumed to have been used by the *Bhikshus* as *Varsha Vaas* and include the caves at Ajanta, which is supposed to have been a monastery with its own Chaityas, Vihars and the gold carving.

There are many things remarkable about these caves. First of all, it is probable that the artisans started carving from the top of the hill and worked their way downwards, which is a very interesting way to work, because no strong evidence of scaffolding has been discovered.

The main complex of the tourist attraction consists of about 30 caves that have been planned along the scalp of the hill, along a curve following the river Wangorah flowing down below. Beyond these caves, there is a whole city and township on the hilltop which must have been a living township with normal huts, earthenware, or even thatched roof huts, back then. It is remarkable that whatever objects we see in the rural areas today were available along the hilltop so many centuries ago.

There is general agreement that Ajanta was probably excavated in two phases. The first phase began sometime around the 2nd century BCE, Before Common Era. And it coincided with the rule of the Satvahana dynasty which

is supposed to have sponsored and provided monetary help for making those caves in the hills.

With the decline of the Satvahanas, there was warfare in the area and perhaps the caves fell into somewhat of a disarray. The fortunes of Ajanta turned around again when the Vakataka dynasty came to power, which was around 4th – 5th century AD. And it was the Vakataka Emperor Harisen who took over and then sponsored the entire building, rebuilding and a bit of repainting of the earlier caves.

These two phases actually follow the history of the struggle within Buddhism, when the theologists and scholars of Buddhism hotly debated the methods of representing the Buddha. As per Huntington and many other scholars, the initial phase really looked at the Chaitya or the Stupa as the point of veneration and the Buddha was not represented in the human form, but rather symbolically. For example, his enlightenment is represented by the Bodhi tree. And the other things like the Lotus represent some other part of his life history.

By the time the second phase came around, Buddhism itself seems to have progressed and taken over an entire new tangent in its philosophy. There was a whole host of representation of the Buddha in the human form, as evidenced by the explicit carvings all over those 30 caves. Besides the new caves, some amount of work was also done on the older caves, including painting or repainting of their interiors.

These paintings, as they exist today, are thought to be some of the earliest painted representations of the Buddhist genre. Buddhist paintings are known to be multidimensional and come in very many forms. There was a time when the scholars and artisans used only herb and mineral colours to impart vibrancy to the paintings. Today, we not only have cloth being stitched but also have synthetic paints being used. This covers the entire journey of painting, beginning

with the use of earthen and herbal colours till we come to the end of the cycle, when we witness the use of synthetic paint.

But the most interesting part about Ajanta is that the walls within the caves were rough and not fit for painting upon. So, the artists and artisans had to first make the walls into a smooth platform resembling a canvas. The pulp of the *Bel* fruit, cow dung, and local herbs were ground together with earth and plastered on the walls of the caves to create a canvas.

While the paintings themselves are extremely beautiful, the way the *Bhikshus* developed the art of painting is also magnificent. They used master strokes, as evidenced by the presence of masterful outlines, to draw figures or even plants and flowers to decorate the ceilings. These were then filled with colour. The artists used shading technique, forming a dark line outline followed by gradual shading, in order to show the three-dimensional effect of a human body, flower, or animal that they had painted.

While nearby Bagh Caves have today fallen into complete destruction, even Ajanta suffered much vandalism initially after it was discovered. The first act of vandalism was inflicted in 1819 by a British captain who scribbled his name on a painting. And that was really the beginning, with later reports of people walking away with entire figures plucked off the walls.

The efforts at conservation started when the Nizam of Hyderabad sent experts to preserve the paintings. They used shellac, which shrunk within a few years, collected dust, and turned brown due to the presence of bats in those caves. Much later, when the Indian experts began restoration work, they had to first peel away that dark brown layer in order to expose the much brighter and much more beautiful colours of the paintings that were hidden underneath.

This whole genre of painting that developed in India, which was probably one of the first ones to represent the Buddha, seems to have been a common thread along the entire Western Ghats. There are many other caves where the carvings follow a similar trend. It is surmised that even at the time when Ajanta was being built, there was already a culture, an entire tradition in place about carving and painting and a fairly strictly followed tradition. And perhaps there was a lot of movement between the painters and the artists of different sites.

Just as looking upon a painting of a god or goddess or holy person is considered an act of worship in itself as per Indian tradition, so it is surmised that the *Bhikshus* who were perhaps taking shelter during those four months in the caves were the actual painters, because that was an act of worship for them. The Vajrapani and the other paintings of Ajanta are world famous icons. And some of the women figures that have been drawn there have varying skin tones, from the darkest of the dark to the lightest of the light schools and hair and eyes.

Lending further support to her theory that at the time when Ajanta was painted, there was already a template for painting and carving, though not in a written form, Dr. Dutt pointed out how the artistes even at that time followed strict guidelines to standardise the depiction of the Buddha across different sites. Interestingly, over a period of time, it was discovered that a few chapters of Vishnudharmottara Purana give detailed instructions and guidelines about how to paint. They are called the Chitrasutra. That means the actual works of art at Ajanta, when they were painted, followed what was written in the Chitrasutra, though it was not then codified and written. The written textual guidance came many centuries later. The Dharma Sutra and the Vishnudharmottara were translated by Abanindranath Tagore with help from Stella Kramrisch. That translation explains exactly how the painting was actually done in the case of Ajanta. Moreover, the caves of Ajanta lie along a curve, which means that with the changing position of the sun and the depth of caves, as they burrow into the hills, there is very little natural light that goes into these caves. Despite this, every ceiling and every wall in Ajanta is painted in fantastic and exquisite detail.

Following the Indian tradition, no artist leaves her or his name on a work of art. They work as a group and consider work as an act of worship. That is our tradition. And it is this tradition that has left behind this fantastic, in-situ museum.

The paintings at Ajanta were actually falling apart and being destroyed. As per Dr. Dutt, much is being done now to preserve them, in the hope that we can leave something valuable behind for the next generation.



DAY-2 | SESSION-2

Heritage Education, Teachers and Schools in Bihar with Special Reference to Bodhgaya



MODERATOR

Heritage Education, Children and Bodhgaya

Dr. Binodanand Jha

Director, Research and Training, Department of Education,
Government of Bihar

PANELIST

Relevance of Buddhism for the School Going Children

Dr. Gyan Deo Mani Tripathi

The Dean, School of Educational Training and Research,
Aryabhattach Knowledge University

Heritage Education, Teachers and Schools

Shri. Kishore Darak

Educationist and Manager, Education at Tata Trusts

Relevance of Buddhism for the School Going Children

Dr. Gyan Deo Mani Tripathy

There's a delight in learning one's golden past sitting in the nest of history. As mentioned by Sanjay, history gives us the vision to look at the present and envision the future. It enables us to understand the present and create a future.

Bihar has a rich heritage and this remains the enduring fact. When Buddha left his place to seek knowledge, he asked his friend to leave his company at Rampurva (now a part of West Champaran) in order to let him travel alone further in his journey, and then he traveled to Bodhgaya, where near the Bodhi Tree where he received the widely acclaimed enlightenment and realization of the Madhya Marga with the key counsel and care of Sujata.

I show all such places to the students where one can understand the heritage of truth and nonviolence. Students sit near the Bodhi Tree and ponder upon the living conditions of people 2500 years ago. One of my students once asked me, why did Buddha go to Bodhgaya for penance when there were forests present near Rampurva. As per the conventional knowledge, forests were mandatory for penance. His repeated questions pushed me to contemplate on the relevance of the Gaya at that time. Why did Buddha go to Bodhgaya? Did heritage exist before Buddha which he carried forward? It may also be noted that this is the place where a woman taught him how the strings of Veena should neither be pulled too strongly or else it'd break, nor should they be pulled too gently or else there'd be no music generated. Note the discourse during that time. Everyone is aware of Isaac Newton's discoveries and the nature of discourse back then. In what social discourse did Buddha reach Bodhgaya and what could've been the center of this discourse?

In order to advance his learning, Buddha learned the folk language Pali. Our languages often have a tendency to lose its significance over time. Heritage cannot be imagined without language. The knowledge of the time is written, recorded and preserved in Pali.



I don't treat heritage as facts and information. I believe in living in heritage with heritage. The students visiting heritage sites must share the same approach. Ajanta and Ellora need to be felt.

Younger generations need to visit the places where Buddha, Mahavira, and Ananda lived. Bodhi Mandir, Ajanta, Ellora and Ashokan pillars are all heritage sites.

In earlier days, *maths* and *vihars* became the primary centers of learning, where they imparted Baudh Shiksha. Buddha gave us an alternative curriculum in which language was a major issue. He argued that message should reach the masses in the language they'd understand. An effective way to make the younger generation aware of their rich heritage is to include such subjects in their curriculum.

During my school education in Bihar, we read a book called *Hamara Bihar*. Its cover with Buddha's image sitting under the Bodhi tree stirred curiosity amongst us and that can be traced as a trigger to our ever-growing quest to know. We learned more about Bodhgaya, Ajanta and Ellora as we grew. Later, anecdotes about Huen Sang were also included in our textbooks in Bihar. These were modes of enriching our knowledge about heritage wherein Bodhgaya served as an image as well as representation.

Bodhgaya is not just a site but a valuable heritage that enables us to understand all the associated heritages better. Bodhgaya's existence doesn't depreciate other heritage sites like Rampurva, Vaishali, Lumbini, Kushi Nagar, Sarnath, and Bamiyan, where the Buddha's teachings are still recalled. However, Bodhgaya emerged as the center of heritage associated with Gautam Buddha.

In the formative days, people struggled with the medium of imparting heritage education to the younger generation. One effective strategy was to take them to the heritage sites, and let them look around and reflect. Many students waited for the leaves to fall from the Bodhi tree so they may keep it in their respective books. Some students also believed that such practices would enable them qualify their examination. Of course, they couldn't do it without actually making the effort of reading those books, too.

Reading through Sujata's personality and existence, one may conclude that the arcane stories of the Buddhist emerged from the discourse of the time. These arcane stories give us a unique perspective in the context of women empowerment. Such observations cannot be taken forward unless the teachers are well-trained about the same. By depriving them of heritage information, we discourage their curiosity.

When one questions the relevance of learning Pali in the current times, they must be informed that Pali is one of the languages of the Union Public Service Commission. Many Indians have now started learning Pali.

But, when a person writing a poetry text book on Magahi appeals for inclusion of 10 marks for the Pali language so that the language and script of Pali stays preserved, then there are some from other languages who feel that their share of poems would be chopped off. Instead, they think two or four poems of their preferred language should be taught to children. Bhojpuri and Maithili met a similar fate in the form of debate on the adoption of the scripts of Kaithi and Mithilakshar respectively.

Since textbooks have a limited role to play in imparting heritage education, digital tours can be a very effective medium to enrich and energize the students with the splendor of Bodhgaya. If the heritage does not energize and empower you, then what is the use of such a heritage?

There is a dire need to conduct serious research on preserving the heritage of Bodhgaya as the center of knowledge, studying the parameters of related issues, and analyzing other places and knowledge traditions which were influenced by Bodhgaya.

Bodhgaya of our times is not the same as the Bodhgaya of Buddha's time. But a lot of similarities still exist. *Maths* and *Vihars* have taken the form of schools. The *Bhantes* and *acharyas* in the bygone era are now known as teachers in our age. Instead of *Sheeghra Mastishk* and *Manohar Pothi*, we have textbooks as the source of learning.

Access to knowledge is easier in the age of digital information and rapid transport but nothing surpasses a lesson well taught by a teacher. Teachers can find out the signs of Buddhist heritage in their schools are in the surrounding

area with their active initiative and participation. Unique stories about Buddha can be explored. If the schools and institutions in and around Bodhgaya try to dig their histories, a lot of information may come up. We once implemented the same in our schools and institutions. When students went for internship, we asked them to first find out the history of the institution. This was a collective effort at learning about our shared heritage.

The teachers can cooperate in collection of stories and signs about heritage of schools and neighboring villages. DIET has made considerable efforts in this regard in Gaya and Bhagalpur. They have done the needful as and when they received grants.

The educational trips for students can be expanded more. At times, many students opt out of such trips due to time constraints and other difficulties such as traffic jam at the Gandhi Setu. With some additional time in hand, they may explore the sites better. An online training module can be designed for the teachers. The interested teachers can be made aware of the facts and related thought-provoking information and be engaged in continuous dialogues with other trainers. This can later be taken up at the district level. School textbooks may be modified accordingly.

Further, there is a need to work on Pali which is on the verge of getting extinct. The Pali literature needs more readers. In the endeavor to keep up with what is important in national and international context, one often ignores what lies in the periphery of the local.

Development of an understanding of the subject is important for teaching the subject. History is not only about the book but the development of a consciousness which gives us a vision.

In this situation, varied strategies need to be adopted. Firstly, the teachers should be engaged in large numbers. Secondly, there is a need for the textbooks in Bihar to be modified with suitable descriptions of the heritage. Thirdly, small programs may be conducted to connect more people. If we wish to keep ourselves connected to heritage then we must protect the language which is an outcome of that heritage.

Heritage Education, Teachers and Schools

Kishore Darak

I first visited Bihar in 2011 to attend a meeting with SCERT. We stayed at Rajgir and planned a visit to Nalanda. The university had a main gate back then. We purchased our tickets and our guide started narrating a series of stories associated with the place. He told us how Dev Anand had visited the spot and Hema Mailni had shot multiple songs there. This was not the information I had anticipated but realized that the guide perhaps caters to what interests most Asian visitors i.e., Bollywood.

When we speak of heritage and heritage education, we struggle with some challenges. The issue of bridging classroom education with outside knowledge was raised when National Curriculum Framework was formed in 2005. It emphasized the need to create a link between the classroom knowledge transaction practices and learning history and heritage outside the classroom. If the teachers are expected to take charge of such processes, then the standards in heritage education in teacher education programmes such B.Ed , BL Ed, M.Ed, Pre-Service Teacher Education programmes or In-Service Trainings must be checked. If the said standards are not met, one needs to ponder upon different ways for addressing them.

The comparison between the 1986 policy, the 2005 National Curriculum Framework and the 2020 New Education Policy compels one to question if one views heritage as history or history as heritage. Is there a link between heritage and history? It is to be noted that whenever there has been a new commission, be it 1952, 1966, or 1986, they have emphasized the need to preserve and celebrate our cultural heritage and value system by schools.

With time, the definition of 'heritage' has evolved. The concept of heritage is not limited to the cultural and historical sites but has also expanded to the crafts and practices that have been passed on from generations. Heritage is deeply associated with economy as well as aesthetics, and hence, is now a part of the National Curriculum Framework. Handicrafts have also been added as part of the collective heritage. Thus, heritage must be viewed in terms of sites, crafts as well as lifestyles.



India is treasure trove of cultures. It is known worldwide as a mix of commonly shared yet diverse beliefs, customs and traditions, which give it a plural nature. We can't speak of culture as a singular entity. India has a rich accumulation of heritage sites, artifacts, and cultures, all of them being plural in numbers. This has been referred in the document of 2020 by NCF. Of course, there is not much importance given to plurality, but there is underlying theme of sharing the cultural wealth with the entire world.

When a teacher teaches heritage and history in context of one another, they must know how the heritage needs to be seen as a composite and plural entity and take in account the pedagogical considerations. According to Prof Anil Sethi, heritage is not unidimensional and should be seen beyond the ancestors' inheritance. Quoting Helen Keller's reference from Dr Jha's lecture, people with eyes must not just look at the heritage but also try to see what lies beyond. We must question whether we should accept the heritage just because this has been handed down to us or explore more reasons, too.

One must ponder upon whether the students should be taught history or be prepared to construct history. Students must learn how historians construct histories. I believe that the students are capable of doing the needful at their respective level. As mentioned by Gyandeo, students have unique perceptions of their surroundings, which determines how they create history.

In history education, historical thinking can have multiple dimensions.

When heritage education is seen in context of history, the use of new scientific processes and technologies becomes essential. For example, given the restricted fundings, it is difficult for the students from Purulia or Mughal Sarai to be taken to Bodhgaya, Vaishali or the surrounding areas of Patna. Online modes of visiting the heritage sites can be an effective tool and hence, there must be some guidelines around the same as well. During the COVID, a lot of museums announced virtual tours, which was a great initiative.

When one discusses heritage, do we include children who come from backward communities? Do Musahar community's students have a heritage of their own or will they settle with the heritage of the others? Students from diverse communities have their own heritage. They have their local reality and heritage. We need to find ways of connecting them to the global heritage.

Since, we are speaking about Bodhgaya, we receive a great heritage from Buddha. Since I come from Maharashtra, arranging a virtual tour to Rajgir and Nalanda would be a more feasible choice for me than taking them there in person. Buddha has left behind a significant heritage, which may be carried forward by the teachers.

One mustn't blindly believe whatever has been handed down through generations. Do not accept anything just because it has been told, heard or shared by some elderly or an authoritative figure, or just because some practice has been adapted as a habit or a tradition. Buddha said, "Have deliberations and analyze and when the result accords with the reason and conduces to the good of one and all, accept it and live up to it". This is the greatest part of the heritage which needs to be shared with Indian students.

The society, in which we live, is now full of with people raging over petty issues. At such times, we must highlight our heritage since all places have the heritage of Buddha. These sites need to be visited—either personally or in form of tours for students. The heritage of Buddha's thoughts must be spoken about in these times.

Heritage Education, Children and Bodhgaya

Dr. Binodanand Jha

I was a part of the planning committee for an initiative undertaken in 2005 for Bihar's school students to visit heritage sites. The guidelines constituted of different sections: the first dealt with the students' protection and the facilities to be provided to them and the second formulated the advisory about the places to be visited. The intention was to let the students learn about the rich cultural heritage of their home-state.

In one of his articles, Gyandeo ji has personified his school to narrate its history. There are two aspects in one's development of understanding history. It is important for the people blessed with eyes to be able to see and not just look. Celebrated author Helen Keller mentions how her friends would look at the trees and mountains in the forests but tell her that was 'not much'. Without eyes Keller could not look at any of that yet she'd feel the minutest sensations of everything around her. Similarly, a lot of people who visit the heritage sites are usually unable to see beyond what is visible to the physical eye. Learning history demands a sense of vision. Incidentally, the students can be educated about the history of their school—land ownership, growth, alumni and their achievements.

People associated with Bihar would perhaps be familiar with Vikram Shila, Nalanda and Bodhgaya. Such heritage sites not only help to witness history but also fills one with pride. Heritage tours are a medium of joyful learning. Young students play around and engage in multiple activities.

Like a lot of people in Munerika are unaware of the humongous center of knowledge, JNU, in their periphery, many residents of Bodhgaya remain oblivious to the existence of Magadh University and other institutions including a UNESCO-declared world heritage site.

In the ancient times, the learning centers were viewed as symbols of progress of the place where they were located as well as the neighboring villages.



This has changed in the recent times. Most temples and shrines have higher boundaries these days, which acts as a barrier for many and knowledge itself became quarantined.

I appreciate Deshkal Society's inclusivity and request to arrange visits to different heritage sites and engage the teachers in the heritage education.

Teachers must possess a sense of history and teach the students alike. Traditional knowledge is like stagnant water in the pond. Knowledge from institutions must flow like the river Ganga that starts at narrow point Gaumukh but widens in its path as it spreads in Haridwar with wider widths on the way to its flow to Bay of Bengal.

To be rich in knowledge is to keep learning and sharing. As civilizations advance, it becomes our duty to preserve heritage. Sustainable efforts like organizing academic discussions can be of huge advantage to adult scholars as well as young students.

Children may be tasked to write their family histories and gradually learn histories of places like Bodhgaya in order to be illuminated by the brilliance of Buddhatva.

Bihar government has been sanctioning Rs 20000 per annum to catalyze the heritage visits for middle and high school students. Due to lesser funds, students, too, are expected to contribute.

Using artefacts like idols, coins and earthen pots can also enable a fun learning experience. Let's aspire to learn from Helen Keller, who despite her speech, sound and vision disabilities had the rigor to experience the things around her.

Bihar has a rich cultural heritage. Great minds like Chanakya, Ashok and Chandragupta were born on this land and every village has a hidden history of its own. One must explore and expand.

DAY-2 | SESSION-3

Valedictory Address



CHAIR
Shri Rambahadur Rai
Hon'ble President of IGNCA

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS
**The Timeless Teachings of Lord Buddha:
Relevance in Contemporary Times**
Shri Manoj Sinha
Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Jammu & Kashmir



The Timeless Teachings of Lord Buddha: Relevance in Contemporary Times

Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Jammu and Kashmir

I understand that the audience for this are both national and international, so I will speak in Hindi and English alternatively.

Respected Chairman, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Shri Rambahadur Rai, Member Secretary Sachchidanand Joshi ji, Secretary, Deshkal Society, Shri Sanjay Kumar ji, scholars, policymakers, monks, development practitioners joining this programme from India and abroad, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be part of this unique deliberation and due to circumstances, we are unable to meet face to face. But I am certain that this meeting on virtual platform will be very useful.

I will start with a message from Buddha, "The wisdom of Buddha, in essence, is a seed with the potential to grow and awaken the whole of humanity. Let us imbibe the wisdom of Mahatma Buddha and conserve and preserve our tangible and intangible heritage and society woven around it."

The timeless teachings of Lord Buddha have strong relevance even in contemporary times and are very important for thinkers and intellectuals because of the dynamic changes we are seeing in every field in today's era.

I'm very pleased to see the topic Sustainable Development, Heritage and Enlightenment. I believe that sustainable development caters to both material development of individual, region, place as well as nourishment of the soul. In this context, our focus has to be on conservation, restoration of tangible heritage as well as dissemination of intangible legacy to kindle the centre of humanity.

Bodhgaya Global Dialogues is in fact a rare opportunity where people from different walks of life comes together in a communion with a spirit of oneness with a very clear objective to promote Bodhgaya as a world heritage site and also strengthen the relationship between Buddhist pilgrimage in India and the South East Asian nations.

When we talk of religious places, it is necessary to understand and explain that it is not just a matter of buildings, archaeology and architecture but the religious places depict our beliefs, moral values, and cultural heritage and it is the responsibility of one and all to contribute their bit to preserve and redevelop them.

In this connection, Dhammapada's first shloka, *Mano-pubbangama dhamma, mano-settha, mano-maya*: The mind precedes all senses, mind matters most, everything is mind made. Buddha studied us people, and tried and tested and analysed people like a scientist. And that is why he said that if we say something with an impure mind, then unhappiness will follow us. And if we perform an action with a pure mind, then happiness will follow.

Bodhgaya is important because it is a source of spirituality, meditation, human welfare, compassion. Bodhgaya teaches the whole world the values of thought, analysis, faith, respect, devotion, renunciation and of salvation. In this path of spirituality, we should understand the path as well as the thought of moving our legacy forward.

Bodhgaya as a place also represents this. It is a place where lessons on the art of living are learnt and where one can come across the combined formula of compassion and spirituality.

I would like to share some lines by Kabir for all the participants in this virtual medium in which he talks and explains about Buddha's compassion in his own words, "Jahan Daya Tahan Dharm hai, Jahan lobh wahan paap, Jahan krodh tahan Kaal hai, Jahan Kshama Aap." (Where there is compassion there is spirituality, where there is greed there is sin, Where there is anger there is death and where there is forgiveness, there is God.)

Compassion in my opinion is the seed that is born out of deep meditation and its flowering is important to attain the state of Bodhisattva.

Bodhgaya is a symbol of art overflowing with kindness and compassion for all living beings. Bodhgaya is a cradle of Buddhist culture, Buddha's teaching and the heritage, and a unique location for seekers of India and abroad. It is indeed heartening to see the efforts of IGNCA and Deshkal Society on various fronts for multi-dimensional development of Bodhgaya to strengthen the

relationship and build a strong and sustainable network between Bodhgaya and South East Asian nations. I am witnessing a great miracle happening for the mankind through this initiative. The worshippers from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan and also eminent monks and scholars have been coming regularly to Bodhgaya and are taking a lead in reviving and developing South East Asia's rich ancient legacy.

I have a small suggestion that in 2021 we can also link Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Sarnath with eminent places in East Asia for sustainable development of our collective heritage.

Due to the corona pandemic, international travel is closed. Otherwise, lakhs of devotees, Buddhists, writers come to Bodhgaya every year. It is a unique destination where even though people come in groups, each individual's journey is his own which he has to do alone. Travel to Bodhgaya is a pilgrimage and people come in groups so that the group gives courage to take the first step. Somebody had asked Mahatma Buddha that if the journey for truth and spirituality is an individual one, then why he had made a Sangha. Mahatma Buddha had understood that the inner journey has to be traversed alone but if it is undertaken as a group, then one will get strength to take the first step towards inner awakening. One would have noticed that when one sits in a group and discusses, there is a kind of excitement. That is why, friends, I believe that along with the goal towards which one are working, it is necessary to strengthen the national and international institutions and the communities and their heritage as well so that Bodhgaya's importance and Buddha's messages are not only understood but are also spread through the medium of schools and colleges for reaching the younger generations.

The UNESCO document mentions that Bodhgaya is of supreme value to the world. And to this end efforts have to be put by various stakeholders for infrastructure – Municipal Local Governance institutions, and also the nearby area needs to be developed in a sustainable manner.

The dialogue that was started in the last few years, the work that has been done in coordination with all the stakeholders has led to the promotion of tourism in Bodhgaya along with ecological sustainability, livelihood generation

besides massive transformation that has been seen in the civil society group regarding Urban Heritage Planning.

It is not only the place or the Bodhi tree under which Buddha found enlightenment that is important but it is the teachings of Lord Buddha which tells us that the day the feeling of sacrifice and compassion fills our heart, we feel the existence of our soul.

It is with a lot of responsibility that the vibrant heritage needs to be kept safe and the same teachings also lived by.

I would like to especially address the youth that the moment pride inside us is removed, it is at that time we become aware of ourself, we erase ourself to become one with our existence.

The starting of the Bodhgaya dialogues brought us face to face with our heritage and the important work of threading it together has to be done with reverence and devotion.

Once a Buddhist monk was sitting calmly on the riverbank. One watchman was watching him carefully and thinking: he is sitting quietly without any movement. He was sitting as calm as the river. The monk left before dawn. The monk again came back in the night and again was sitting in the same manner, calm and quiet near the river. The watchman was again perplexed looking at the monk. Since the mind is fickle, several questions started racing through the watchman's mind. Finally, the watchman's patience gave way. He reached the monk in the middle of the night. He told him, "I am the watchman of the nearby palace and I see you every day, sitting quietly near the river without paying attention to anybody or talking to anybody. Because I am the watchman, I would like to know, who are you?" The monk then replied, "Brother, I also am a watchman. The way you are guarding the palace, in the same way, I am looking after my mind. Both our jobs are the same, the only difference is what we are looking at."

The enlightenment that is being referred to in the Bodhgaya Dialogues is like that Buddhist monk: a compassionate heart and a compassionate aware mind. The total awareness comes with an empty mind and that is the state of Buddhahood. We all have that potential of Buddhahood in us and all we need

is a little more awareness in our lives, in our work. And we all know Buddha did not become enlightened despite years of penance because he was trying too hard. He was making efforts by adopting various methods including observing fast before Buddha realised that he was following the pattern where 'I' and its effort were the real obstacles to reach to the innermost core. It took Buddha many years to reach that moment when he finally sat down under the Bodhi tree and dropped the efforts that were only fuelling the feeling of 'I'. That moment of silence, he was not even thinking of enlightenment. Enlightenment happens, it cannot be achieved. And when it happens, the person is awake, conscious and radiant just like a full moon.

Friends, I see this occasion as an opportunity to be more spontaneous, be ourselves and live and work compassionately for others too in order to eradicate inequality in the society. The message of Mahatma Buddha was to awaken people and show them how to live as a pure consciousness and this is what IGNCA and Deshkal Society is doing through Bodhgaya Dialogues. Be aware, be more loving, and be more compassionate. Let us imbibe the wisdom of Mahatma Buddha and let us conserve and preserve our tangible and intangible heritage and society woven around it. Let us share the joy, the bliss with the humanity in these trying times.

I have put forward my views in front of you in brief. I would like to give my regards to Rambahadur ji and stop here. Thank you. Jai Hind.

Shri Rambahadur Rai

I remember that earlier too there was a Bodhgaya Dialogue and a very good book was published on it by Sanjay ji and Deshkal Society. When you read that, you will understand and see the curve of progress in the dialogues on Bodhgaya with Bodhgaya as the centre of focus. And the efforts are on, as the Honourable Governor mentioned just now, to bring together all the suggestions and underline it.

Bodhgaya is not just related to Mahatma Buddha. Bodhgaya is not just the birthplace of Buddhism, the place from where Mahatma Buddha's teachings flow, Bodhgaya is also an important historical and ancient centre for the Sanatan Dharma. And that is why sometimes the tradition of Gautam Buddha is another phase or chapter of the Sanatan Dharma.

Gautam Buddha gave the system of meditation. And Sanatan Dharma gave us the system of prayer. If I try to explain the difference between the two, then you will understand how Buddhism is also another phase of Sanatan Dharm.

When somebody does prayer, they sit on the floor, they sit in a temple or sit in their home or even when they are walking about, they pray to God. And when somebody sits in meditation, then God himself talks to him. Prayer is in the Sanatan Dharma tradition and meditation is in the Buddhism tradition. This same tradition has spread around the world. And that is why in this edition of Bodhgaya Dialogues, when India is being talked about in various ways all over the world in a good way, I would like to say that we are going to reach 2021 and 2022 is going to be the Year of India. India will be in the number one spot at that time. When India will be number one, that will happen if we create awareness about our cultural heritage, our human life values all over the world.

The Honourable Governor addressed the youth in his address because if the youth understand this well as in this day and age, the youth of India will have an important role to play. And if the youth of India understand and play their part in creating awareness about cultural heritage and human life values, then 2022 will be the Year of India. Bodhgaya Dialogues will play an important role in attaining this.

The Government of India has also given importance to the International Buddhist Confederation.. That means we are moving in a direction where the Sanatan world and Buddhist world come together and with the fusion of these two worlds, there will be a metamorphosis in the global world with an effect in its political, cultural, financial and industrial domains of engagement at multiple levels. It is noteworthy that Deshkal Society is slowly progressing on a right path and there are number of scholars, policy makers, young researchers associated with its efforts in Bodhgaya and Delhi. This engagement with them will create a strong ground for taking the work forward on the multifaceted aspects of Bodhgaya in the future.

The moderator for the session, Sanjay Kumar took the opportunity to briefly present the immediate action plan before the chief guest, chairperson and the participants which are as follows:

There is an urgent need to set up the Digital Repository on Heritage, Art and Culture in Bodhgaya and its region. The proposed repository will seek to survey, collate and digitally document (history, archaeology, culture etc.) of the site of Bodhgaya and its region as well as all relevant material from individuals and institutions (including archival museums in India and abroad) and provide access to wider public for awareness generation and knowledge dissemination.

There is a need to initiate a pilot project to build the capacity of the teachers in understanding the concept of heritage in all its forms and introduce diverse forms of heritage and history in both classrooms and outside-the-classroom contexts.

The online certificate course on the Multifaceted Aspect of Bodhgaya and the Philosophy and Teaching of Buddhism needs to be launched as part of the immediate next possible step. The course will bring together the information from a variety of disciplines – Art and its history, religion and archaeology – to highlight their various findings and perspectives regarding the different facets of Bodhgaya past and present.

Therefore, the first and foremost task is to explore ways to institutionalise the dialogues by way of creating a strong support on its sustainability.

The chair of the session, Shri Ram Bahadur Rai closed the valedictory session and requested Jay Prakash for giving vote of thanks. Shri Jay Prakash shared that dialogues like this could not happen overnight as the wheels started rolling a year ago despite the trying times of pandemic. It required planning and bird's eye vision for the finer aspects of the programme in order to attain excellence in all the details. He informed that the organising committee was fortunate enough to have the support of the team of motivated and dedicated colleagues, various institutions and organisation who had the vision for the project, knew the path, knew the jobs and were extremely result oriented.

He expressed deepest gratitude to Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lt. Governor and Shri Ram Bahadur Rai for their luminous presence, insightful thoughts and reflective remarks in the valedictory session at the end of the 3rd edition of the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues. He extended a graceful thanks for all the delegates and participants who contributed to the deliberations of the dialogues through their reflection questions, comments and observations in both the offline and online modes of the dialogues.

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Deshkal Society aims to provide dignity, equity, and justice through improving access to quality elementary education, entitlements for habitats and heritage, secure livelihoods and dignified existence. Since 1995 it has been working towards this aim by bringing together knowledge and practice in Bodh Gaya region in particular and at national level in general.



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