



PRESENTATION ON  
**BODH GAYA**  
**GLOBAL DIALOGUES**  
REFLECTIONS & INSIGHTS

2018

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# BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, HERITAGE AND ENLIGHTENMENT REFLECTIONS & INSIGHTS

9-12 March 2018  
World Heritage Site, Bodh Gaya

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**BODHAGYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, HERITAGE AND ENLIGHTENMENT  
REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS  
9–12 March 2018  
World Heritage Site, Bodh Gaya**



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## CONTENTS

06	Co-Travelers
11	Overview
17	Inaugural Session
29	Plenary Session
	<b>THEME 1</b>
41	Understanding Multiple Buddhism(s): Experiences and Practices
	<b>THEME 2</b>
61	Dialogues on Archeology History of Bodhgaya and Buddhism
	<b>THEME 3</b>
69	Water in the Buddhist Philosophy
	<b>THEME 4</b>
89	History, 'Heritage' and School Education
	<b>THEME 5</b>
99	State, Civil Society and the City
	<b>SPECIAL SESSION</b>
117	Shared Histories and Common Destiny
	<b>EXHIBITION</b>
130	Avalokitesvara/Guanyin: Feminine Symbolism in Buddhist Art
	<b>CULTURAL EVENING</b>
132	Chaar Yaar
	<b>CHILDREN'S FEST</b>
134	Engaging Children with the Life of Buddha
136	Heritage Walk
139	Recommendations
147	Connect with the Chairpersons, Moderators and the Panelists



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Moderators  
and  
Panelists

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Niraj Gupta, Principal, Takshila School, Bodh Gaya

Rajan Sirjuar, Classical Singer, Gaya

Shailesh Mishra, School ERP, New Delhi

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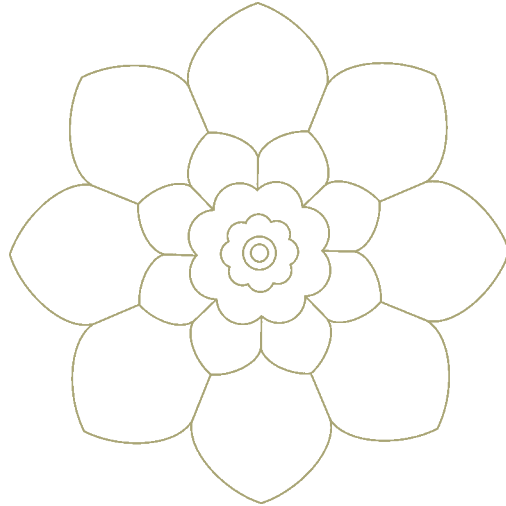
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**A platform for expression of experiences, reflections and insights from plural perspectives connecting heritage, education and sustainability for building a future on the foundation of the Buddha's legacy of enlightenment and compassion.**



### **Editors' 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

**Bodh Gaya is an ancient pilgrimage complex and a guiding light of interconnectedness. In the shared heritage of Bodh Gaya, multiple religious traditions are present with visitors and pilgrims from India and around the world.**

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues was organised by Deshkal Society with the goal of encouraging informed dialogue on multiple themes under the umbrella of 'Sustainable Development, Heritage and Enlightenment,' held at the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Bodh Gaya from March 9-12, 2018. The multi stakeholder dialogues brought together reputed institutions of the government and non-government including public and private sectors in India. An earlier consultative workshop was organised by Deshkal Society in association with Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts for discussing planning, strategy and exploring the possibility of partnership for Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues at IGNCA on 15 September 2017. The report of this workshop may be visited at <http://deshkalindia.com/images/Consultative-Workshop.pdf>

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues manifested itself through a plenary session, panel discussions, children's fest, cultural evening, film show, award function, exhibition and heritage walk.

The significance of Bodh Gaya and its region was presented in the opening remarks of the inaugural session. Bodh Gaya is an ancient pilgrimage complex and a guiding light of interconnectedness. In the shared heritage of Bodh Gaya, multiple religious traditions are present with visitors and pilgrims from India and around the world.

The rich traditions of cultural practices, knowledge and wisdom embedded in the region are of immense value to the world, and can germinate new pathways for sustainable living. In a world increasingly torn by intolerant conflict, widening economic disparities, unbridled consumerism, and amplified social stress that has led to an erosion of compassionate engagement with our fellow human beings, the kernel of Buddhist traditions reinstates with equanimity the intrinsic interconnectedness of all sentient beings and the quest for enlightenment through a deep realization of inclusive and sustainable development.

With the recent designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex in Bodh Gaya as a World Heritage site, the places have the potential to trigger and sustain broader economic growth in the region. Some of the key challenges that are impediments to unlocking this potential relate to gaps in coordination and collective initiative among state institutions and private agencies, and inadequate governance and participation by local civil society for heritage development in the region.

Invoking the age-old Buddhist tradition of dialogues as a way of comprehending and engaging with the practices, the dialogues represent a quest for perspectives and processes of sustainable development that are inclusive and ecologically sustainable. This pursuit for exploring interconnections in a dialogical manner was central to the deliberations especially with reference to the following objectives:

- Facilitate knowledge and develop an action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region.
- Promote ethical heritage tourism and create community based livelihoods and enterprises through engaging with institutions, initiatives, tourists and pilgrims in the Bodh Gaya region.

**Invoking the age-old Buddhist tradition of dialogues as a way of comprehending and engaging with the practices, the dialogues represent a quest for perspectives and processes of sustainable development that are inclusive and ecologically sustainable.**

- To develop modules and content for the school children in order to build an understanding of the teaching and learning of Buddha and Buddhism, including archeology, and history of the Buddhist circuits in Bihar.
- Strengthen relationship and build sustainable networks between Bodh Gaya 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.

The broad themes emerging from the dialogues included: Understanding Multiple Buddhism(s): Experience and Practices; Dialogues on Archeological History of Bodh Gaya and Buddhism; Water in Buddhist Philosophy; History, Heritage and School Education; State Civil Society and the City.

The selection of the themes and topics was conceptualised by an interdisciplinary approach through multiple and diverse facets of the key themes of the dialogues. Equally important was the key concern to develop linkages between the theory and practice.

The main focus of the deliberations revolved around seeking deeper understanding and advice from panelists, moderators and stakeholders in the first of the series of multi-country dialogues and exchanges in order to build a constituency that brings fresh dimensions in capturing enlightenment as the new leitmotif for human development with special focus on heritage and sustainable development.

The Bodh Gaya global dialogues hosted distinguished delegates from USA, UK, Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Bangladesh, and Thailand, in addition to delegates from different states in India. The dialogues were also attended by children, school teachers, scholars, monks, artists, development practitioners, policy makers, tourists, political party representatives and civil society.

**The selection of the themes and topics was conceptualised by an interdisciplinary approach through multiple and diverse facets of the key themes of the dialogues.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two broad sets of recommendations which emerged from the deliberations and discussions during the dialogues. The first set of recommendations deals with the questions on how the Dialogues should be structured and organised in the future in order to capture multiple voices and divergent views for creating a synergy of collective action, participation and celebration among the delegates, participants, presenters, moderators, etc.

The second set of the recommendations responds to the objective of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region. In this regard, there is an urgent need to develop a framework for developing a Master Plan and strategic direction for development of Bodh Gaya and its region; promote ethical heritage tourism and create community based livelihoods and enterprises; develop content and modules for the teachers, educators and children; create destination branding of Bodh Gaya and generate a knowledge base about Bodh Gaya through research, documentation and case studies.

## WAY FORWARD

As part of the immediate outcomes, members of the dialogues were informed that Deshkal Society would publish a report (print and digital) on the basis of the deliberations and discussions in the dialogues and produce session-wide episodes for uploading on YouTube.

The report and episodes on YouTube would be an effective public platform tool for disseminating the key messages and outcomes of the dialogue

**There is an urgent need to develop a framework for developing a Master Plan and strategic direction for development of Bodh Gaya and its region.**



**There is an urgent need to build a sustainable knowledge centre on the basis of the action and research resources created by Deshkal Society.**

in the public and policy domains, as well as creating a ground for future dialogues. It is noteworthy that session wide video episodes has been uploaded on YouTube and these may be visited at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXcewNeg8N7pb7PZKONADEyWEoKcWCjSP>

There is an urgent need to build a sustainable knowledge centre on the basis of the action and research resources created by Deshkal Society through their work in culture, education and land rights for strengthening the voice of the marginal and oppressed communities in the region and bringing in substantial change in their quality of lives through knowledge and practice.

Finally, the delegates and participants arrived at the conclusion that the key strategy for achieving these recommendations should be conceived through a constructive and meaningful engagement with the state, market and civil society.



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# OH GAYA DIALOGUES

March, 2018

## INAUGURAL SESSION

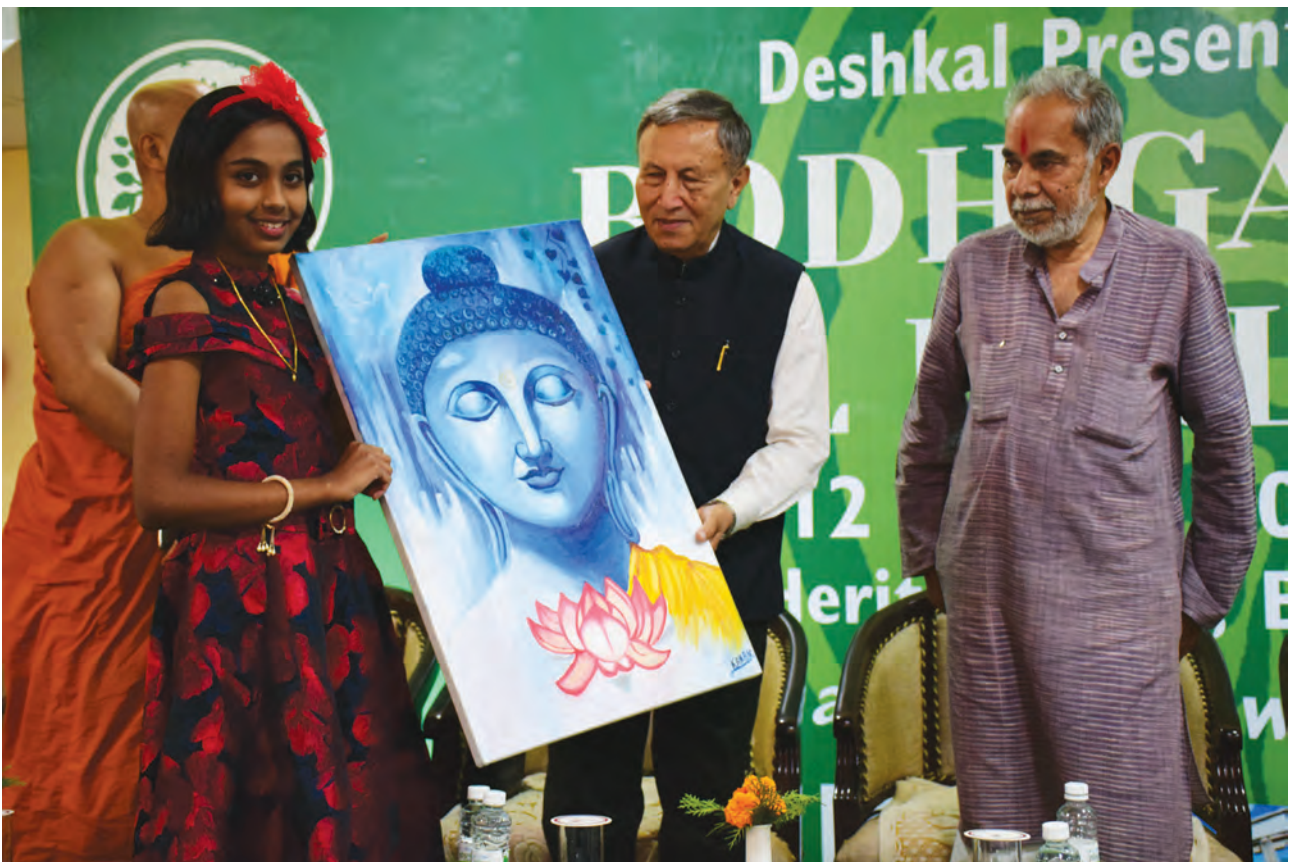
9 MARCH 2018

Sh. Rambahadur Rai

Prof. Frederick M. Asher

Dr. Shushmita Dutt

# INAUGURAL SESSION





### CHAIR

#### SHRI RAM BAHADUR RAI

President, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India

### BUDDHIST CHANTING

#### VEN. BHIKKU CHALINDA

Chief Monk, Mahabodhi Mahavihara, Bodh Gaya, India

### MODERATOR

#### DR. SUSHMITA DUTT

Educationist and Research Consultant, New Delhi, India

### Welcome Speech and Opening Remarks

#### MR. SANJAY KUMAR

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi, India

### KEY NOTE SPEAKER

#### The Mahabodhi Temple in Historical Context

#### DR. FREDERICK M ASHER

Professor, University of Minnesota, USA

### INAUGURAL ADDRESS

#### The Chief Guest

#### DR. SHEKHAR DUTT

Author and Former Governor, Chhattisgarh, India

### VOTE OF THANKS

#### MR. RAJESHWAR SINGH

National Coordinator, Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues, Bodh Gaya, India

*IMAGES ABOVE | FIRST ROW (L to R):  
Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Ven. Bhikku Chalinda,  
Dr. Sushmita Dutt & Mr. Sanjay Kumar  
IMAGES ABOVE | SECOND ROW (L to R):  
Dr. Frederick M Asher, Dr. Shekhar Dutt &  
Mr. Rajeshwar Singh*

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT (FIRST ROW): Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Ven. Bhikku Chalinda, Dr. Sushmita Dutt, Mr. Sanjay Kumar  
IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT (SECOND ROW): Dr. Frederick M Asher, Dr. Shekhar Dutt, Mr. Rajeshwar Singh

The inaugural session began with the **auspicious chanting** of **Ven. Bhikku Chalinda**, Chief Monk, Mahabodhi Mahavihara, Bodh Gaya. Following the soulful and meditative effects generated by the chanting, Sushmita Dutt informed the participants on the background and collective aims of the dialogues following the consultative workshop held on September 15, 2017 at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and building on multiple stakeholder meetings held in Patna, Bodh Gaya and Mumbai. She emphasised that it was these collective processes of consultation which has contributed to the participation of thirteen organizations in dialogues either as host and co-hosts with delegates from 10 countries, in addition to 250 delegates with participants from Bodh Gaya, Bihar and India representing monasteries, academic institutions, government bodies and civil society organizations.

With this sharing on the background consultations, Sushmita Dutt invited **Sanjay Kumar** to formally **welcome** the delegates and the participants and share his opening remarks. Sanjay Kumar welcomed all with the special mention of the acceptance of the invitation by the delegates and participants at a short notice 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. In his opening remarks, he highlighted his aspirations and wishes that the dialogue would create a formidable ground to move forward in achieving the aim of the concept note that could contribute to a platform for expression of experiences, reflections and insights from a plurality of perspectives connecting heritage, education and sustainability for building a future on the foundations of the Buddha's legacy on enlightenment and compassion.

Post opening remarks, Sushmita Dutt invited **Frederick M. Asher** to deliver the **Keynote Address on Mahabodhi Temple in Historical Context**. He began with explaining that heritage is so diverse and complex a thing, that viewing the past, even the material past, without recognizing the ways in which the past is currently used or might effectively be used in the present, is impossible. Prof. Asher talked about the days before the television, when there used to be an American Radio Programme called 'You are There' – one depicting the historic events as if connecting the

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modern listener to a distant past through the medium of the radio, which used to share the very important message, “all things are as they were, except that you are there”. The same feeling is incited by the physical remains of antiquity as well, just visually. Similarly, it is hard to believe that any visitor to Bodh Gaya is not seeking a connection, whether spiritual or intellectual with a very specific past which the heritage site entails. It is a past constructed – one that is fabricated by material objects and modern signage, each time.

Bodh Gaya, the spot where Siddhartha achieved enlightenment and became the Buddha, is idyllic. The Bodhi tree which is considered to be the direct descendant of the tree beneath which the Buddha sat in the course of his meditation, leading to his enlightenment, was the initial object of veneration at this historic place, for it is represented in reliefs in the 1st and 2nd centuries BCE. There are however two truths to contend. The truth of the devout; and the truth of the historian who tries to recover the past, but, has to acknowledge a great deal of ambiguity in the existing record and its interpretation.

Is that tree on the west side of the temple today really a descendant of the tree beneath which the Buddha sat in the course of his meditation leading to enlightenment? Nobody knows if the tree depicted in the reliefs produced some 300 years after the Buddhist enlightenment, was the very tree beneath which he sat, but does it matter?

The many sculptural images at Bodh Gaya suggest that there are figures of Buddha – Buddha Pratima, as the inscriptions describe them. It shows how at some point of time the figures took precedence over the veneration of the tree. Though both should probably be understood as representing the Buddhist presence – a link between the pilgrim to Bodh Gaya and the transformation of Siddhartha to the Buddha; noticing the change in concepts over time is inevitable.

That change of focus from the Bodhi tree to the throne of the Buddha, as the temple’s primary focus of veneration may have resulted from another ideological shift. Things kept changing through the course of history, not because the site changed, but because the people changed; newer generations came. Dr Asher went on to talk about the shifting histories of time,

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mentioning Ashoka, and the Pala dynasty. With the royalties came newer forms of worship. Stone statues and later, metal ones came into being.

With the stable ruling house such as the Pala dynasty extending its authority over a huge area, quarrying the raw materials and shipping them along the river routes of their empire would have been a great deal easier than it had been in previous times. Copper too, the primary component of bronze would have been much more readily available and safely transported from the quarries in the area around Ghatshila. These quarries fell within the Pala region, although no bronze images have been found at Bodh Gaya or other sites associated with the Buddha's life even though they were found as close to Bodh Gaya as Kurkihar.

Buddhism entered a period of significant decline across north India, including in Bodh Gaya, after the Pala dynasty. Indeed, at this point, Buddhism had virtually disappeared from India.

The customary explanation for the demise of Bodh Gaya is the site being pillaged by Bakhtiar Khilji, a military commander of Delhi's ruler, Qutubuddin Aibak. That is however by no means certain. Generally, writers assert that the passage refers to Bakhtiar's attack of the monastery at Odandapura, a monastery founded by the Pala dynasty monarch Dharmapala.

Through his chronicles, the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin who visited Bodh Gaya in 1234 gives a sense of the dismal state of the site at that time. Some six centuries earlier when Xuanzang came to Bodh Gaya, he reported 1000 monks at the site. By the time of Dharmasvamin's visit, however, only four monks remained. The others he says had fled for fear of Turushka soldiery. Desecration of religious monuments is not the least uncommon. It is not very likely that an invasion alone could end Buddhism in India. Other factors, some of them resulting from the invasion must have contributed to its decline. The invasion certainly did unseat royal houses. The process would have been gradual, not an immediate result of large scale desecration and a resulting exodus from India of every Buddhist there. Nevertheless, the Mahabodhi temple certainly was damaged at some point during or following Bakhtiar Khilji's incursion into the region. That is known because repairs to the temple were necessary by the end of the 13th century.

**Through his chronicles, the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin who visited Bodh Gaya in 1234 gives a sense of the dismal state of the site at that time.**



Replicas of the Mahabodhi temple can be seen about the 10th or 11th century. At first miniature ones such as two in the British Museum in London, and subsequently large-scale ones such as the one at Bagan in Myanmar can be seen. One writer has proposed that the small replicas were souvenirs of pilgrims.

Dr Asher suggested instead, that as pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya became increasingly difficult, even the need to go to Bodh Gaya remained unabated, there developed a need for surrogacy. Thus viewing the miniature model or visiting one of the large-scale replicas such as this one became mandatory, as they were treated as a tantamount to a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya itself.

Why the need for pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya? Probably funerary rights were significant part of the reason. Something that Bodh Gaya shared in common with Gaya where Shraadh rights were being performed.

About the visual serving as a link between the present and past; it is important to note that the Mahabodhi temple inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage list is not the temple of antiquity but a 19th century restoration, largely a fabrication of a British archaeologist based on models. Yet to the faithful, the history of the temple probably matters very little.

Of all of India's monuments bearing a UNESCO World Heritage designation, Bodh Gaya is, the only one not managed by the Archaeological Survey of India. The world heritage designation applies only to the Mahabodhi temple, and not the entire site. The archaeological Survey of India does manage the site museum as well as a few other sites within greater Bodh Gaya, for example, Sujata Gohar and a few other places. However, the Archeological Survey do not have power over the management of the Mahabodhi temple. The Bodh Gaya temple management committee created in 1949 was intended to balance the conflicting claims of the temple, those of the Shaiva Mahanta and those of the Buddhists represented by the Mahabodhi Society. It created a committee of 8 members, four Buddhists and four Hindus but only a Hindu would be appointed as District Magistrate.

Only in 2013, the Government of Bihar amended the Bill to permit a non-Hindu to chair the committee, again showing a shift in dynamics due to human influence.

**It is important to note that the Mahabodhi temple inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage list is not the temple of antiquity but a 19th century restoration, largely a fabrication of a British archaeologist based on models.**

The discussion moved on to the buffer zone around the Mahabodhi temple, and how the heritage site can only sustain itself as a structural building because of the devotion and imagination of the people treating it as a living space. Dr Asher concluded by mentioning that UNESCO does not seem to mandate a buffer zone for European monuments – that he can have his Café Ole just a moment away from Chartres Cathedral in France or his lovely pommes frites within a few feet of St. Bavo Cathedral in Ghent in Belgium. This personal interaction with the heritage space is important, for one to feel connected to the legacy of one’s country. The inequity across nations, in the treatment of heritage, bothers him immensely.

**Shekhar Dutt** took the discussion forward with his message in the **Inaugural Address**, beginning with the story of a soldier in Siachen who thinks of the original place from where he came, he thinks of the language, the dialect, he thinks of the seasons and the fruits, the flowers, he thinks of the manmade heritage, the temples, the gurdwaras, everything which has been there – he thinks of his heritage, which in his thoughts, looms very large.

Dr Dutt said that our aim is to see everything, whatever our ancestors have left for us – but we cannot do that unless and until we have a right, a sense of ownership, unless we have a feeling that we are a part of that heritage.

He argued that the dialogues are important to channel people’s minds towards their heritage, and evoke a feeling of ownership, so the need for preservation and the need for its sustainability is inculcated in them. Spiritualism since time immemorial has been the centre stage of the Indian heritage and learning. The learned seekers of truth, the rishis and munis of this ancient land have meditated long in the forests and caves, in order to attain wisdom. These wise men have then enriched the culture and humanity by generously sharing their learning and wisdom. Although the scriptures and written records of the philosophy and learning have been retained, yet it may be that much of the pristine and complex higher meanings have been lost over these years. Our ancient cultures explain that reality is more complex, subtle and mysterious than conventional science may hold. Perhaps a deeper understanding of consciousness will

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lead to a new and expanded understanding of reality in which objective and subjective outer and inner worlds are understood as co-equal aspects of the same entity.

Our heritage has always underlined the significance of the mind over matter, and taught us to concentrate, empower, control and enlighten our minds to purify our souls. Only very recently the world has, after so many years come to acknowledge the ancient wisdom of our land that places the power of the mind at the highest.

In the past few years this realisation has started a new branch of study called noetic science, to study the power of human mind over matter. There is now a more popular realisation than the mind has the power to affect matter, the physical world, even the events. Noetic science is a multidisciplinary field that calls use of objective scientific tools and techniques along with subjective inner knowledge. This gained acceptance after Edward Mitchell, the Apollo 14 Astronaut, founded the Institute of Noetic Science. It also gives the validation of the samadhi experience in the scriptures and the way the rishis went into solitary confinement. Religion and culture have been the repository and source of our values, while science and technology have the capacity to improve human life and living conditions.

Today the world is in turmoil. Violence is affecting the lives of people. They are under constant threat and pressure. Countries are trying to dominate and influence other countries. We say that the world has shrunk and become a global village. However, this global village is not living like one; it is being torn apart by violence, racial, national, differences in the attempts to dominate others. In this scenario, our ancient wisdom of 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam', 'all the world is one family' can inspire and teach the world that we can only progress if the world lives as a family, as equals. The most striking distinction of Indian or oriental wisdom as compared to many other civilisations lies in its humanistic approach, universality and keen desire to have peace and harmony in human relations beyond all frontiers that divide people and nations.

The ultimate aim is to ensure an elevated relationship between an individual and the Supreme Being. Ancient cultures have revered and worshipped mother Earth. Our Vedic scriptures and rituals are replete with the glory of Earth. The entire universe has been regarded as a product of

**Our heritage has always underlined the significance of the mind over matter, and taught us to concentrate, empower, control and enlighten our minds to purify our souls.**

five primary elements, earth, water, fire, air and space. The theory mentions how the biosphere and the evolution of life affects the stability of global temperature, ocean salinity, oxygen in the atmosphere and other environmental variables that affect the habitability of earth. This system of science, biochemistry, system ecology and climate science, were evolved by the observation of nature, which was the strength of our ancestors. The inventions in the areas of science and technology led to an unimaginable material development and progress. The colossal erosion of all human values had made life highly mechanical. Therefore, there is an enormous interest from all over the world to go deeper into the oriental learning and the heritage.

Continuing with the discussion into philosophy, **Ram Bahadur Rai** took the flow to a different height by turning it to the world of the Buddha. For him, the Buddha was not a philosopher, but a visionary. A philosopher only thinks while a visionary is one who sees beyond. Thinking is like wallowing in the existing knowledge. Gautam Buddha was a visionary, and he did not want people to get confused with the philosophy. Gautam Buddha was not conventional, he was original. He did not give comparisons of conventions or examples of any deviations. He did not seek acceptance of words because those were uttered by some saints. He did not say that something had been written in the Vedas, and so it has to be accepted. He said that “till one does not know it oneself, it should not be accepted. Borrowed devotion was worth nothing. Spend your life searching for the knowledge and don’t hesitate to believe in it,” that is what Buddha said. Thoughts are conventional but vision has originality. Thoughts are of the past; vision is of the future. Thoughts are usually of others; vision is one’s own.

Buddha said that everything was inside, one need not look at the heavens in search of it. One only has to look within, and this was Buddha’s own revolutionary preaching. Nothing of this sort had happened before. Buddha himself was a milestone in the history of mankind. There have been many saints; there have been very few milestones. With Buddha, faith did not remain a superstition, it became a self-realisation. With Buddha, faith took a deep leap. Not just the believer but the non-believer could also enjoy the benefits.

There is an indestructible relevance and context between the Buddha of 2500 years back and the present. It is not that whatever happened 2500

**Buddha himself was a milestone in the history of mankind. There have been many saints; there have been very few milestones. With Buddha, faith did not remain a superstition, it became a self-realisation.**

**There is an indestructible relevance and context between the Buddha of 2500 years back and the present. It is not that whatever happened 2500 years back is not relevant today, indeed the relevance is unbreakable.**

years back is not relevant today, indeed the relevance is unbreakable. That is why the origin of the Buddha has to be understood. That is because when a river is trying to reach back to its origins, that place becomes a pilgrimage, it doesn't remain just a place. When Ganga becomes Uttarvahini in Kashi or becomes Uttarvahini in Munger, at that time Munger becomes a place of pilgrimage as Ganga is trying to go back to its place of origin. And in the same way when we try to understand Buddha from his original roots, then we will know not the Buddha of 2500 years back but we will understand what Buddha can be in 2018, and only then there will be meaning to these dialogues.

After the session, the **Chair** of the session, **Sushmita Dutt** called **Kanan Kusum** who presented the Chief Guest with her painting of the Buddha. Dutt then invited the Deshkal team to come and present the mementoes to the dignitaries on stage.

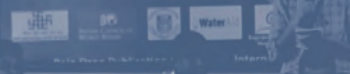
She informed that the memento was a framed original leaf from the Bodhi tree, dried and preserved – very precious and a wonderful idea. This blessed cloth was presented to the guests on the dais as part of the courtesy of Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee.

She closed the inaugural session and requested **Rajeshwar Singh** for giving the **vote of thanks**. He shared that a programme like this could not happen overnight as the wheels started rolling a year ago. It required planning and bird's eye vision for finer aspects of the programme in order to attend to all the details. He informed that the organizing committee was fortunate enough to have the support of the team of motivated and dedicated colleagues of various institutions and organizations who had a vision for the project, knew the path, knew the jobs, and were extremely result-oriented. He extended a very graceful thanks for all the delegates and participants, with special thanks for the dignitaries on the dais namely Dr. Shekhar Dutt, Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Ve. Bhikku Chalinda and Prof. Frederick M. Asher.





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# PLENARY SESSION

10 MARCH 2018



# PLENARY SESSION



## CHAIR

### **DR. SHEKHAR DUTT**

Former Governor, Chhattisgarh, India

## DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

**Bodhgaya: Glory of the Past and Challenges of the Present**

### **DR. BIJOY KUMAR CHOUDHARY**

Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna, India

**Buddha's Fire Sermon; Monuments, Metaphors and Memories**

### **DR. ASHWINI KUMAR**

Professor, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India

**Academics and the Spiritual Ethos**

### **DR. MONICA GUPTA**

Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, Gargi College, Delhi University, Delhi, India

**The Important Place of Bodhgaya and Buddhist Ideals in the Construction of the Modern World**

### **DR. JANICE LEOSHKO**

Associate Professor, University of Texas, USA

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT:

*Dr. Shekhar Dutt, Dr. Bijoy Kumar Choudhary, Dr. Ashwini Kumar, Dr. Monica Gupta & Dr. Janice Leoshko*





**B**ijoy Kumar Choudhury began the Plenary Session with a description and understanding of **Bodh Gaya, as an entity in connection with its history, its present associations and its future.**

The sacred Pali literature talks about the land of Bodh Gaya as the navel of the earth, the middlemost point of the earth. Bodh Gaya appears to have been a very vibrant Buddhist site for a long span of time, say from 6th century BCE to 13th century CE. After a medieval interlude of about five centuries, Bodh Gaya has again been resurrected.

There is evidence for the establishment of a few Buddhist monasteries and temples by the trans-regional powers even in ancient times. Presently, however, there are more than a hundred foreign monasteries and temples at Bodh Gaya, each constructed in a distinct architectural style. Walking on the streets of Bodh Gaya, one would have the feeling of walking in the capital of a Buddhist world.

There is a basic difference between the scenarios of the ancient and the modern Bodh Gaya. During the first innings of Bodh Gaya, it was a part of a landscape which was dotted with Buddhist settlements. So the support system of the Maha Bodhi establishment was very much strong during ancient times. Presently, however, Mahabodhi is an isolated Buddhist temple in a large arena. In fact, it must be one of the very few living temples in the world which mainly caters to trans-regional or international worshippers. So behind the seemingly bustling Buddhist activities at the site, we also must examine the question of the vitality of Bodh Gaya. Who are the stakeholders? Which are the neighbouring communities that have stakes in Bodh Gaya? The Indian state, both at the central and the provincial levels, has huge stakes in maintaining the Buddhist identity of Bodh Gaya. First, it provides legitimacy to the state as a dispenser of authority. Secondly, such a stance on the part of the state is also important for maintaining good relations with several Asian countries which have a significant Buddhist population. And thirdly, the provincial government looks to Bodh Gaya for revenue in terms of tourism.

**Mahabodhi is an isolated Buddhist temple in a large arena. In fact, it must be one of the very few living temples in the world which mainly caters to trans-regional or international worshippers.**

But these points of vitality come from the top. Any institution cannot survive without the strength from below. Let us have a look at the composition of the neighbouring communities of this temple town. The predominant population around Bodh Gaya is of Dalit communities primarily the Musahar community who are not too unhappy about the temple town because they get employment as construction workers and manual workers with different monasteries. They are also beneficiaries of certain welfare activities on the part of monasteries such as hospitals and schools, though these are small interventions, given the abysmal conditions of the depressed communities here. Both the state and the monasteries must intervene substantively, if we hope to have a symbiotic relationship between the neighbouring communities and the Buddhist order at Bodh Gaya. We also must have a close look at the land sales that are going up around this temple town. Big hotels and more and more monasteries are coming up. It may be good for the short-term gains for this temple town but the long-term development and even the ambience of Bodh Gaya is going to be seriously compromised by this.

I would really like to argue that the essential value of the site has to be protected. Our best bet would be these neighbouring communities. The neighbouring communities look up at Bodh Gaya as something they can take advantage of in terms of small economic gains. They somehow must grow awareness not only of the monumental heritage of Bodh Gaya but the essential value of Bodh Gaya. Here, one is talking about the essential values of Buddhism such as compassion and connectedness, rather than the ritualistic aspects of the creed. If the neighbouring communities have the sense that there is an attempt to impact their religion, it will have a negative impact. On the other hand, if they develop positive mindset regarding the humanistic and universal values of Buddhism, and the great role that their neighbouring temple site played in the evolution these values, it would really serve as a protective wall through which we can hope to conserve and preserve this site.

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**To explore heritage memories and also spiritual politics, Buddha's fire sermon, like the Buddha's discourses on the last days are the two most celebrated historical events in the Buddhist literature and history, anthologised in the great traditions of Buddhism.**

**Ashwini Kumar** continued with his presentation on **Buddha's Fire Sermon; Monuments, Metaphors and Memories** and shared about the legacy and mentioned how he would be speaking in his presentation more than as a standard historian or social scientist.

Truth is one; the wise speak of it in many ways. Thus speaks almost in a Nietzschean tone, Gautam Buddha, arguably India's first public intellectual. Characterised by his vent as scholarly, conversational and hypnotic quality of his discourses, fire sermon is Gautam Buddha's most daring, most insightful and perhaps most provocative trail blazing hymn on human existence (in particular) and the future of spiritual politics. Though monuments and memories often carry traces of the past, they are entangled in the concepts of modernity, the nation and history. To explore heritage memories and also spiritual politics, Buddha's fire sermon, like the Buddha's discourses on the last days are the two most celebrated historical events in the Buddhist literature and history, anthologised in the great traditions of Buddhism. The story of the fire sermon has largely been limited to Buddhist studies, religious studies, philosophical studies and a bit of poetry here and there, especially in the western traditions. The modernist poets in Europe and especially those influenced by the Nietzschean traditions of poetry started reflecting on the decay of modernity and the rise of the superhero.

Not only Bihar but the world at large today faces challenges of religious bigotry, violence and inequality as Buddha encountered in the first millennium.

Therefore the fire sermon is like a living monument rather than the "infrastructural historical monument" of collective memory – a living monument of collective memory.

Bihar has surplus of history. There is no surprise as Bihar also has an abundance of memories, personal and collective. In Bihar, the present memory boom, is largely guided by recovery of fragments of history that speaks of a shared past. Among historians, the recognition is missing and the gradual democratization of the plebeian order of the Bihari society is pushing the frontiers of collective political imaginary in the present.

Collective memory theorists emphasize the necessity of a social context in which individuals and communities remember and counter the objective claims of traditional historiography and critique a strict reading of what they call social reproduction – as unconscious, automatic and false history.

The presentation focused on Buddha's own hypnotic; the Fire Sermon. History often comes across as a mode of remembering and forgetting in terms of pneumatic presence. Prof. Kumar briefly described next the material memory, mimetic memory, communicative memory and cultural memory.

According to the Buddhist tales, Buddha visited Bodh Gaya after having finished his preaching in Varanasi. Buddha returned to Bodh Gaya, the place of his enlightenment to confront and convert the old ascetic, Uruvela-Kassapa. Buddha went to Kassapa and said, "Let me stay a night in the room where you keep your sacred fire, the Vedic fire". He said, "I do not object to your staying overnight in the room where the sacred fire is kept but the serpent lives there, he will kill you and I should be sorry to see you perish". But the Buddha insisted and Kassapa admitted him to the room where the sacred fire was kept, and the Buddha sat down with his body erect, surrounding himself with watchfulness. At night, the dragon came; belching forth in rage, his fiery poison and filling the air with burning vapour but could do no harm. The fire consumed it, while the blessed one remained composed.

It is said that after this incident, Kassapa decided to embrace the path of Buddha, the blessed one. Seeing that the Jatilas including his brothers, Nadi and Gaya who had practiced severe austerities and worshipped fire, then he went along with them and with all his 1000 disciples on the Brahmini Shilas and preached this fire sermon.

The fire sermon is not a passive depository but a continual process of creation. The problem with the infrastructural objective view of the history or the monumental view of the history is that we try to make it a very passive depository. A cultural memory of the fire sermon focuses on the multiple ways in which the past, both historical and the mythical past, is

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recreated and shared among the members of a community or communities, highlighting the significance of the duality of remembering and forgetting certain parts of the past.

Buddha's fire sermon also reminds us to place the heritage of the past into the lived sociological imagination of the people of the region and in a larger global setting of vernacular cosmopolitanism. It is important to embrace a more therapeutic and liberating form of spiritual politics. Spiritual politics is not religious politics but a more honest, non-power mongering, clean and accountable politics. This is what Gandhi's version of Vaclav Havel called anti-political politics. Fire sermon too is perhaps the most revelatory text of the Buddha. It all helps reflect upon Bihar as a place of great spiritual significance.

The citizens of Bodh Gaya, deeply rooted in their own culture are also citizens of the world in the true sense of what Homi Bhabha called vernacular cosmopolitanism. They continuously forge cultural dialogues and conversations with others with their unique historical and political imagination and presence.



**M**onica Gupta went onto impress upon the far reaching effects of the Buddha and Buddhism through her presentation on **Academics and the Spiritual Ethos** and spoke about learning and education, and the changing ways in the world of academicians – linking it all with personal experience.

She insisted that in academicians there is a kind of unease, the whole issue of modernity and engagement with rationalism and the rise of nationalism being at the root of it all. It is a legitimate concern in a world that is looking for sanity and sensibility, and religion often has

been looked at as a source of perversion – a source of perversion because it brings with it prejudices, it brings with it a totalistic tendency in the garb of faith. To be able to liberate oneself from that, one needs to be able to trust one’s own mind and being, which is found in the academicians.

Two dominant strands in the consciousness of academicians happen to be the Buddha and the Sufi. To focus on Buddhism today, and see what it is about the way of the Buddha that makes it acceptable to academicians, it is found that the first idea is the idea of compassion. In a world that is deeply iniquitous amidst terribly fractured societies, the power of a discourse that is not too complex and is based on a very simple central idea like compassion resonates with people. The whole idea that if an arrow pierces a being, the focus should be on healing the being rather than understanding the why and wherefore of it is also another powerful idea. Over a period of time Buddhism has become a refuge for people.

The second is the idea of mindfulness. Mindfulness is something that has entered into the domain of empiricism. Traditionally there has only been space for evolution of thought in the empirical domain, and the power of intellectual dialogue as a way of moving ahead. Now the alternative idea that one can also learn through contemplation, through silence, through silencing the mind is another way to learn and engage with this world, making way for deeper knowledge.

Spaces in schools have become hurried spaces. People are no longer allowed to contemplate, no longer allowed to complete a thought and leave some kind of dissatisfaction in the mind, which doesn’t engage with anything.

We are also deeply divorced from reality. The public education in India for example has largely been abandoned by the people who control power. And the private education is deeply divided from reality. We live in gated communities which are sanitized communities with no contact with what is happening in critical communities around us, and over a period of time,

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over 20 years, 30 years of this kind of a development, we have a generation which does not know the reality, the ground reality of India today.

The third idea would be the politics of desire. Desire is a very important idea. And if one looks at the world around, the world is geared towards consumption. The whole market is geared towards exploiting the desires of children. How to create artificial desires where there are none. Education itself has become a consumer item. Even our bodies are controlled by desire. Our bodies have forgotten to heal themselves. Desire has to be trained. Spirituality is essentially about freedom. It is about the capacity to know one's being, to engage with it, to find answers to problems of one's own struggles, challenges as well as the struggles of society outside in ways that are unique to each. The Education system needs to consider this as well, following the way of the Buddha – with lightness of being, cheer, and laughter.



**J**anice Leoshko took forward the session with her presentation on **The Important Place of Bodhgaya and Buddhist Ideals in the Construction of the Modern World** and shared about Buddhism beyond the boundaries of Bodh Gaya, into a world of connectedness. Buddhism is important for many people and many reasons throughout the world, both today and in the past. People are interested in it not only as religious practice but as for what an individual has inspired to in terms of thinking about what it is to be human. Looking at past Buddhist traditions has been important for various reasons, and at the beginning of the twentieth century with the emergence of Modernism, it offered to many such as the French artist Paul Gauguin an aid in their search for a fuller perspective of understanding. What Leoshko emphasized as an art historian was how looking at visual remains helps us understand that such inquiry is not just about finding facts

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or detecting influence. We must also consider why people have looked in particular ways, or not, to understand the past.

We can thus study how Bodh Gaya is much more than the Mahabodhi temple compound that has so recently acquired UNESCO World Heritage status. Its significance is literally more than just the place where Shakyamuni realized enlightenment more than two thousand years ago. What has occurred there since then is also significant. Before the site was renovated by the British in the late 19th century its many ruins were the tangible evidence of enduring devotion, merit-making and other practices. This sense of varied activity is lost if sites like Bodh Gaya are overly managed and made neat and seemingly unified, sometimes an unfortunate consequence of gaining new significance. Endangered by the loss of a site's complicated past and its continually changing appearance is an understanding of why such sites were perceived as powerful.

Two books on Bodh Gaya written before the end of the 19th century by Alexander Cunningham and Rajendralal Mitra as well as an astonishing number of early articles need to be looked at and thought about along with more recent studies, not just as to whether they are right or wrong but as to what they reflect about the various authors' own engagement with understanding the past. We can learn how ideas circulated and changed, how collections developed with things once at Bodh Gaya as well as the consequences when individuals like Cunningham and Mitra looked at sculptures in a narrow way and chose only to write about their accompanying inscriptions. When we study and look for information, old records from the 19th century are incredibly useful for understanding that which has been lost, but we need to give this sense of discovery back to people who are looking at the site today so that they too can consider the ways of reconstruction that has been involved in presenting the site as we now know it. They too need to be able to consider the construction of knowledge. When we begin to put sites such as Bodh Gaya into larger perspectives that include discussions about Western ruins, we are also thinking about how the past is a crucial human issue.

**Its significance is literally more than just the place where Shakyamuni realized enlightenment more than two thousand years ago.**



**Understanding the ruins of Bodh Gaya thus embraces seeing what is crucial for understanding the importance placed by many over the centuries upon the Buddha's long practice of compassion**

Understanding Bodh Gaya might be seen as a story of understanding the nature of the connectedness of all things. The realisation that resulted in Shakyamuni's enlightenment should include an accounting of how he achieved this, and Leoshko highlighted how it involves not only details of his last life but also his many previous ones as recounted in the Jataka stories. These especially emphasise repeated efforts to enact his own ideas about living in the world in a compassionate and connected way. Understanding the ruins of Bodh Gaya thus embraces seeing what is crucial for understanding the importance placed by many over the centuries upon the Buddha's long practice of compassion.

After Janice Leoshko's presentation, the **Chair** for the session, **Shekhar Dutt**, commented that she had very succinctly dwelt upon the linkage between heritages, the pieces through the museums at different places connected with art, art history and philosophy. It will be of great use to contemporary people, especially the children would need to be educated with the life at the time when those artifices or the sculptures were made. There is a place called Sripur or Sirpur in Chhattisgarh where in the mid-1980s, was a Lakshman temple and a temple which was created by a Mauryan queen who belonged to that area, some archaeologists had gone in deep and excavated 1500 years before. Bijoy Kumar Choudhary had referred to excavations which are going on in Bodh Gaya and around for finding evidences of the existence of a society. All need to put together how this was a living tradition till perhaps some time when for various reasons all this was not wiped out but was dormant and again now it is getting to be known. Not to forget, Bamiyan and the civilization around too has to be studied. And perhaps that would be a great education for people. Even people of Afghanistan, they must know their past.





**THEME 1**

**UNDERSTANDING  
MULTIPLE BUDDHISM(S):  
EXPERIENCES  
& PRACTICES**

**SESSIONS | 1A & 2A**

**10 MARCH 2018**

# THEMATIC CONCEPT

## DR. MAX DEEG

Professor, School of History, Archaeology and Religion,  
Cardiff University, UK

The panel “Understanding Multiple Buddhism: Experiences and Practices” is situated, in a way, at the intersection of the other panels on archaeology and multicultural sites, and on art, heritage and pedagogy insofar as it overlaps with their thematic fields, informs them and is informed by them and allows for a wider contextualization and a meaningful understanding of Bodhgayā as a historical place of religious, cultural and spiritual importance at present and in the future. The panel therefore combines and brings together the disciplinary areas of history, philosophy and religious studies, but also clearly reaches out beyond these.

As arguably the holiest sites linked to the life of the Buddha Bodhgayā, the place of Enlightenment (bodhi), has, since its “re-discovery” in the 19th century, not only attracted pilgrims from all places of the Buddhists oikumene but also has become a centre of spiritual search for people outside of the traditional Asian Buddhist cultures. While the presence of Buddhist monasteries and pilgrims from various denominational backgrounds underlines the continuity of Bodhgayā as a place of worship, practice and spiritual achievement(s), the aspect of tourism – although probably not completely absent in the past – has wrought changes which may be felt as a threat by various stakeholders or seen as chances by others. Investigation into the history of the site may help us to prevent glorifying and essentializing the “pure” Bodhgayā of the past against a not-so-ideal present and an endangered future. This may be the place to remind of an essential part of the Buddha’s teaching which is to point out the necessity of distinguishing between the mundane and impermanent reality (laukika) and a higher and transcendent goal (paramārthaorlokottara): both of them are part of the reality and have to be renegotiated constantly against each other. And it is history with its ups and downs which may remind us of this very fact.

This panel attempted at linking the more recent activities at Bodhgayā back to their historical precedents. The panelists in this panel demonstrated the complexity of Buddhist institutions, experiences and practices that are already clearly reflected in Bodhgayā’s past. The panel discussed the

**This panel attempted at linking the more recent activities at Bodhgayā back to their historical precedents. The panelists in this panel demonstrated the complexity of Buddhist institutions, experiences and practices that are already clearly reflected in Bodhgayā’s past.**

**History in general and the history of Bodhgayā may show that the ongoing struggle between change and continuity, accessibility and preservation, education and search for a deeper meaning of human existence is not only a modern problem but has been around probably from the very beginning of the site.**

questions of what will and should be addressed in the multidimensionality of Buddhism as a pan-Asian religion which renders, in a way, Bodhgayā and its wider environment into a microcosmic mirror of different denominational, cultural, conceptional-philosophical, ritual, “modal” and potential more recent strands of meanings.

Not only does the historical art and archaeological variety of Bodhgayā and its encompassing areas express this complexity of the religious tradition linked with it, Buddhist sources in general and the records of the Chinese pilgrims in particular clearly reflect an entangled system of sacred sites and linked ritual and spiritual activities which had at its centre from an early period onwards the Seat of Enlightenment (vajrāsana) and the Bodhi Tree (bodhidruma). Although, as Dr. Abhishek Kumar rightfully points out in his concept paper, this centre has been overemphasised to the degree of neglecting other important places of other religious traditions, it certainly has to be the starting point of investigations into the broader historical function and meaning of entangled places in the region.

The dialogue following the presentations demonstrated the link between the manifold and multiple pasts of Bodhgayā and its modern multiple meanings and interpretations being situated between a national and denominational approach and the transcendent and transnational character ascribed to it. History in general and the history of Bodhgayā may show that the ongoing struggle between change and continuity, accessibility and preservation, education and search for a deeper meaning of human existence is not only a modern problem but has been around probably from the very beginning of the site. The panel addressed the questions which stood in the foreground of the discussion and which linked this panel with others: if and what we can learn from the past in order to make the world a place that comes close to the vision which is reflected in the Buddha’s enlightenment.

# SESSION-1A



## MODERATOR

**DR. FREDRICK M ASHER**

Professor, University of Minnesota, USA

## PANELIST

**Mediating the Spiritual Empire: Revisiting the Chinese Inscriptions from  
DR. MAX DEEG**

Professor, School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University, U K

**Kalacakra Tantra & Coming Post-Work Age of Man-Machine Integration  
MR. NEERAJ KUMAR**

Author and Deputy Secretary, GOI, India

**Connectivity of Buddhist Sites on Uttarapath  
MS. SUNITA DWEVEDI**

Silk Road Traveller and Author, New Delhi, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Fredrick M Asher, Dr. Max Deeg, Mr. Neeraj Kumar & Ms. Sunita Dwevedi



In the beginning of the deliberations, **Max Deeg** shared on the historical network around Bodh Gaya which was quite multicultural, with Buddhists from all directions in the Buddhist understanding of the historical time.

The presence of Chinese visitors in Bodh Gaya goes back to an early period. The earliest visitor known goes back to the early 5th century when the well-known Chinese traveller Faxian visited the place and gave a dense and brief description of the different sacred places at and around Bodh Gaya, without really describing the devotional practices here. What facilitated the journey was the so-called silk route or silk routes through central Asia from China. The pilgrims at least in the first period mostly travelled the land routes and went to India to visit the sacred Buddhist places.

The great numbers of Chinese monks during the Song period (960-1279) travelling to India dovetails with the increase of imperial support of Buddhist text translation projects in China. The movement to India culminated in what could be called a mass movement of Chinese monks to India to pick up Buddhist scriptures.

This strong Sino Indic or Sino Indian is clearly reflected in Chinese epigraphical sources from exactly the same period found in India and these are the only Chinese inscriptions that have been found so far in the South Asian subcontinent. In the second half of the 19th century, a number of stone steles with Chinese inscriptions between the mid-9th century and 1033 were discovered in Bodh Gaya.

What is peculiar in the case of these Chinese inscriptions is the fact that some of them clearly refer to imperial agency in connection with the respective monks' missions. The monks obviously performed what is known in the Buddhist context as *punya pariṇāma*, the transfer of merit. So the emperor sent them to Bodh Gaya and the merit that was gained actually fell back on the emperor. Inscribing the purpose of their coming to Bodh Gaya on behalf of the Chinese imperial court is therefore not very surprising.

Further there is a eulogy on the extraordinary remains and the spirit traces of which a travel account is fully recorded – a travel record that had

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been written but is now lost. Together with Yinshu, the two monks Yiqing and Yilin of the Guangzhou Zhang Monastery on the right street in the eastern capital, venerated the home of the Buddha and when they together had finished spreading a golden *kāṣāya* on the seat of the Buddha at the Mahābodhi temple, they wanted to place a mark at this place and therefore recorded this.

So this is quite a dense description of what Chinese pilgrims obviously were doing. They were commissioned by the emperor. They brought presents, offerings to the *vajrāsana* which is mentioned and then gave the reason for actually establishing the stele. They wanted this event to be remembered. Often the monks brought imperial offerings to the diamond throne and constructed commemorative stupas near the sites as stated in the short inscription by Yinshu's two companions mentioned in inscriptions read out in the presentation, Yiqing and Yilin, or in another inscription by the monk Zhaopin.

Of particular interest is another inscription found by Alexander Cunningham in the Bodh Gaya's Shaiva Mahants' quarter. There is a plan to go there and find the inscription because it has been lost. It refers to the erection and the next one actually is of that inscription, which refers to the erection of a memorial *stūpa* in the vicinity of the Bodhi Manda or the *vajrāsana* on behalf of the deceased Song Emperor Taizong, the grandfather of the ruling emperor of that time, Renzong, by the monk Huaiwen dated to the year 1033. It gives some insight into the network of official monastic envoys to Bodh Gaya and other sacred places.

A total of four Chinese inscriptions were found at Bodh Gaya. Three of them are in the catacombs of the Indian Museum in Calcutta. So they are not on display. In the context of heritage and Bodh Gaya, there might be a possibility to bring these non-disposed, not shown inscriptions, and important documents actually belonging to Bodh Gaya heritage, back to Bodh Gaya.

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**Neeraj Kumar** delineated next on **Kalacakra Tantra & Coming Post-Work Age of Man- Machine Integration** and shared that the most touching way of communicating in the land of the Buddha's enlightenment is by way of dynamic silence, *Shanti spharan* (शान्तिस्फारण). But only Siddharth could engage in dialogue through silence. Buddha dived into *anusmriti* (अनुस्मृति) i.e. memorization when he sat to attain enlightenment. He was memorizing just his own past, past of other people deducting the concept of *Pratitya-samuttapada* (प्रतीत्यसमुत्पाद).

“Let us summarize the major faith transitions in our universe. Let us re-memorize our own history, not as biological being, as human, but the history of the whole universe.”

Now is the age of artificial intelligence. Every day computational power is increasing and new discoveries are being made. Vladimir Putin predicted last year that whosoever wins the race for artificial intelligence will become the ruler of the world. During the 19th congress of the Chinese Communist Party, they decided that they should put more focus on AI and the Chinese want to become the leader of the world by 2030. Machines have already come up to the level of human intelligence in learning things. Autonomous technologies have evolved as drones, robots, smart bombs.

Machines can recognize faces and machines are able to recognize voices. And once these smart machines become cheaper and cheaper, they will substitute for more human labour. Human beings will enter the phase of post-work age.

By 2024-25, machines will be smarter than the human brain and available at a cheaper cost. Though there are some other thinkers who disagree and they say that it might take a decade more. Mankind already has the machines which can outperform humans. Some machines are going to cross all human brains before 2060 and then it is going to be exponential trajectory. And in the world of thinking and consciousness, we may be the last natural beings.

**Let us summarise the major faith transitions in our universe. Let us memorize our own history, not as biological being, as human, but the history of the whole universe.**

The impact of ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution is immense. First, humans were de-centered by the Copernican Revolution when they learned that they are not at the centre of the universe. Then came Darwinian Revolution, that declared that humans are not the centre of the biological world. Freudian Revolution de-centered human ego as mere construct of social self and the collective unconscious. The Artificial Intelligence Revolution is de-centering human beings from their consciousness. Consciousness is manifesting as inherent in physical universe itself. The speaker elaborated on how AI is going to supersede mankind in intelligence. He raised the issue of happiness which could be the defining borderline between machines and mankind. From being mere *Homo sapiens*, it is necessary to retain ability to become happy. The speaker raised the specter of the end of era of *Homo sapiens*. But he also raised hope by transforming mankind unto *Homo felicitas*.

At this moment of gigantic change, thinkers ought to think beyond the architecture of Bodh Gaya and look afresh at the architecture of the whole universe that is dynamic and evolving. In this context, the speaker elaborated upon the philosophy of integration and attaining innate happiness contained in the last major Tantra, Kalachakra Tantra, that was spread through Nalanda in the vicinity a millennium ago. While most of the religions that we follow are very exclusive, the Kalachakra template is based upon fusion. After a long discussion about the Kalachakra Tantra, the speaker showed his 'Happiness Model' replicating the structure of the Bodh Gaya Temple, and explained the incorporation of human beings into the model. He tried to explain how digital economy, human ethics, sustainable development and happiness can be integrated.



**Sunita Dwivedi** continued as the next speaker sharing about the **Connectivity of Buddhist Sites of Uttarapath** and pointed out that the Indian Buddhist monasteries and antiquities dug out during archaeological excavations at the ancient Buddhist cities and preserved in various museums

**Thinkers ought to think beyond the architecture of Bodh Gaya and look afresh at the architecture of the whole universe that is dynamic and evolving.**

**Buddhist cities and preserved in various museums in India and South Asia are still the most potent attraction for world tourism. Many of them are icons of Asian tourism like Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Lumbini, Kushinagar, Sanchi, Kapilvastu, Kausambi.**

in India and South Asia are still the most potent attraction for world tourism. Many of them are icons of Asian tourism like Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Lumbini, Kushinagar, Sanchi, Kapilvastu and Kausambi. However, the problem of connectivity and condition of the sites on the National and Asian Highways is one which calls the attention of the government and tourism departments.

The author travelled to Buddhist heritage sites in various States of India and found that many of the beautiful sites are not easily accessible to the common Buddhist tourists.

In the absence of a well planned tourist itinerary by state departments in India several sites are out of bound for travellers. For example some sites in Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh are difficult to reach for a common traveller. Sites on the Indo-Tibet Highway may be inaccessible as the road going towards the important Tabo Monastery has been wiped out at several places. Especially at Yangthang and at Maling, from where travellers have to sometimes crawl to escape falling boulders and to manoeuvre the broken pebbled road. Even the buses fear to cross the Maling Nala.

The road to the Kadia Dungar and Khambalida caves in Gujarat too is not clearly marked out as they lie in remote villages of Gujarat. Jogida ni Gufa in Taranga Hills involves a difficult trek through hills. Common pilgrims and tourists may also find it difficult to reach the West Bengal sites of Raktamrittika and Jagjivanpur as they lie in remote villages. Some Buddhist caves lie completely deserted with not even a history board of the ASI at the site to guide visitors.

Many Buddhist shrines in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat are turned into Hindu shrines. According to researcher some of the major temples and viharas of Kerala were once Buddhist shrines. Sadly these viharas were usurped and adapted by the rising tide of Hinduism and the anti-Buddhist campaign.

Many viharas comprising Buddha shrines were demolished, and idols thrown away or buried. The debris was then used to construct Hindu temples. Many temples dating back to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE. have carvings on stones that show they were Buddhist shrines. Their walls have niches that still carry Buddhist images in low relief.

At Bharhut the giant stupa became the victim of people's greed. The

monument which was built brick by brick as an offering to the Buddha was pulled down to build other structures. At Sannati an important Pillar inscription of Asoka was carried away to be used in the construction of a nearby temple and was found after the temple crumbled. At Anirudhuwa near Kushinagar many villagers have built their homes on the ruins of Buddhist viharas Just as in Mogolmari where the entire village has come up on the ruins of the Buddhist site.

Many sites are knee deep in water after the monsoon rains. At Mathakuar the gilded image of Buddha is almost covered in green algae. There is over-construction around the important sites as new hotels and lodges and cafes come up for travelers. Several hotels and guest houses have come up at Kushinagar which was once a very peaceful site. Many sites like the Rajbadidanga and Kausambi are being lost to cattle grazers. In the absence of local museums many sites are losing their precious antiquities.

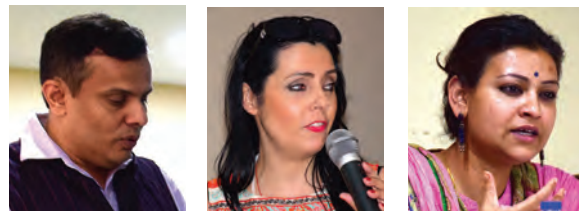
With the world's growing interest in Buddhist tourism, we must give thought to protecting sites and 'ways of tourism collaboration' in countries of South Asia in order to draw upon the heavy Buddhist tourist traffic in the region.

This entire session was also a very interactive one, with the participants showing enthusiasm in discussions and observations. The **moderator** for the session, **Frederick Asher**, concluded the session by saying that he knows there are lots of other questions from the floor and though excluding too many others, the discussions should continue informally. The speakers are willing to commit a few minutes of their lunch time and talk about the same, so participants can come on up front and ask their questions. He especially thanked not just the group of speakers but the engagement of the audience.

Continued discussions have anyway probably been one of the most important aims of the Dialogues, and the more questions come up, it can be said the more ripples have been created.

**With the world's growing interest in Buddhist tourism, we must give thought to 'ways of tourism collaboration' in countries of South Asia in order to draw upon the heavy Buddhist tourist traffic in the region.**

## SESSION-2A



### MODERATOR

**DR. ABHISHEK AMAR**

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Hamilton College, New York, USA

### PANELIST

**Female in Tantric Buddhism**

**MS. SONIA GOMES**

Marketing and Communication Graduate, CEO & Owner of Spaso Zen, Porto, Portugal

**Buddhism and the Idea of India**

**DR. PRIYANKA JHA**

Assistant Professor, School of Undergraduate Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Abhishek Amar, Ms. Sonia Gomes & Dr. Priyanka Jha



In the beginning of the deliberations, **Sonia Gomes** traced the importance of **tantric Buddhism in feminine** wisdom development in modern societies. Tantra arose at the time when Buddhism was expanding the social inclusiveness of its constituency, teachings, path formation and initiative. Many people see Vajrayana as a very monastic issue but that is not true. As one of the most spectacular systems that have been transmitted to us from ancient times, Tantra guides the aspirant towards a spiritual state making him or her overcome their own limitations that have been self-imposed – it shows the process of the development of the personality. What is the meaning of this?

It means that Tantra is a system that embodies both aspects, the feminine and the masculine. While talking about the feminine in Buddhism and specially in Tantra, male or female are not talked about. It is not possible that one without another is talked about – and it means that no male or female, but both can reach enlightenment, complemented. Women in Tantric Buddhism and divine counterparts are often called Dakinis or Khandro, Khandroma or Khandrola – female embodiment of enlightenment, energy translatable as women who dance in space or women who revel in the freedom of emptiness. Princess Mandarava was considered a Dakini. She was consort of Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche.

What is the meaning of consort?

This is another problem and specially in the modern times because the way it is understood is that many lamas and high masters use females as consorts just to have a sexual life. The meaning of a consort or a Dakini has nothing to do with that.

The Tantras are gynocentric texts in which women are often the subject of the discussion. It does not follow that women were the passive objects of male observation or subjugation. This is another issue. In Tantra, females are venerated. Even they are considered just like Goddesses. Without their wisdom it is not possible to achieve enlightenment. Women must discover the divine female essence within themselves. This should inspire self-respect, confidence and a divine pride. That is necessary to transverse the tantric pride. Divine pride or remembering one's ultimate identity or as a

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deity is qualitatively different from arrogance, for it is not motivated by a sense of deficiency or compensatory self-aggrandizement.

This talk is to explain why we need to apply Buddhist teachings in the modern and daily life and specially Vajrayana teachings. It is the highest vehicle in Buddhism because if one knows and goes deep in the study of the archetypes and of the deities, one will realize that they are all embodied feminine qualities. Women have to be self-secure and have this divine pride that has nothing to do with arrogance. Being proud of what they are, of their own bodies and realize that they can give birth. They create life and this is really amazing. A woman's body can generate human birth. And in Buddhism we study that we need this precious human body that is our vehicle to practice.

One needs to understand epitomizing women's identity. Perhaps the foremost female Buddha is Vajrayogini. In Vajrayana, she is represented in red. She has a skull with blood. It is needed to bring this awareness to females to not be ashamed of menstruation because without menstruation, there is no life. And blood in Vajrayana has a very deep meaning... It means life. It is also related to the channels of our subtle body.

So Vajrayogini is considered the foremost Buddha, the representation of the true feminine archetype. So for women the relationship with Vajrayogini is one of identity.

She is the embodiment of wisdom, she has got a very strong presence, very strong impact in men's mind as an archetype. She is surrounded by fire which means that she burns all the ignorance that is in our minds. She also has got wrathful aspect.

Dakini lore provides genuine support for women practitioners. Usually female have lots of fear. So it is a pity because if they have more self-confidence and they were more fearless, they could affirm themselves and impose their role without being aggressive. This is the peak point of Tantra.

But this lore also provides support to the spiritual journeys of man showing the focus of wisdom in realms that male practitioners often ignore. Many times men repress their feminine side, their feminine aspects because it is a question of culture and education. This is wrong because they are also repressing their ability to express love and develop strong compassion. In Tantra, female represents wisdom and man represents compassion.

**The Tantras are gynocentric texts in which women are often the subject of the discussion. It does not follow that women were the passive objects of male observation or subjugation. This is another issue. In Tantra, females are venerated.**

A common term in vajratantric lore is the spiritual potentialities of women. There are many scriptures of Guru Rinpoche when he said that women are very good practitioners. Their body is much more prepared to reach enlightenment than men. And many people don't talk about this. And this also leads to Tibetan medicine and the Kalachakra Tantra, that was already mentioned this morning. But the big point here is that women should realize that Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhava said that they are more ready to reach enlightenment than men. So women are by virtue of their female bodies sacred incarnations of wisdom to be respected by all tantric practitioners.

Padmasambhava spoke of man and women as equal strictly for enlightenment, noting that if women have strong aspiration, they have higher spiritual potential. In Tibetan Buddhist nunneries, nuns are usually much more devoted than monks. They are not just reading sutras. They embody the teachings. Women have strong devotion. Women have superior spiritual stamina and momentum.

Embodying wisdom, they have greater potential for openness and intuitive qualities. So this means that if women begin to practice in Vajrayana, their potential to be more intuitive and open is really very important for the development of wisdom qualities. And when women develop wisdom qualities, they usually are very strong and very determined.

Most women don't know their bodies, especially in the South Asian countries. They are not connected to their bodies properly, because of cultural conditions and they are very afraid to talk about these subjects.

Vajrayogini is the inspiration model for modern times. Beauty, harmony, health, self-confidence, wisdom, personal development, complete happiness, overwhelming fulfilment, great success in all aspects of life, wonderful couple relationships etc. are all coming naturally on the way of becoming a perfect woman or in tantric words, a genuine manifestation of Shakti or Dakini.

Awareness of the sacred feminine can add to appreciating the feminine nature in women and men, and an awareness of a universal motherhood to respect the earth and the mother nature.

In a social sense, it means recreating the role of priestess and respecting the contribution of women in business, science, arts and politics as well as

**Most women don't know their bodies, especially in the South Asian countries. They are not connected to their bodies properly, because of cultural conditions and they are very afraid to talk about these subjects.**



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the home and community. In a religious view it means offering ceremony and services that reaffirm the connection to the divine, to the goddess earth and each other. In the human sense, honouring the sacred feminine means the immense worth of the women’s mind, body and soul as well as appreciating the feminine qualities in the male character.

Feminine is awakening in the hearts of women all around the world.

Women are coming together in groups and in circles to heal their wombs and to release their sacred power that has remained hidden for that long.

Women need to ask themselves some big questions: what is my purpose? Why am I here? What is this life all about? In order to deeply touch the heart of the sacred feminine, women have to embody it.

Much praise and gratitude to all the great masters, past, present and future who have kept the dharma accessible – may it continue to flourish. May the merits generated by this presentation bring benefits to all.



**Priyanka Jha** continued with her next presentation on the **Idea of India and Buddhism**. She presented on the role of religion in the creation and shaping of the nation and the self. She did so by invoking Buddhism and its articulators in terms of the Buddhist voices. Religion has been deployed as a key tool in the making of the self and the nation in the context of post-colonial societies which underwent the experience very distinctly from its counterparts, the west and that of the colonizers. In the attempt to bring out the distinctiveness of the self, variety of sources were drawn upon. A closer look at the nationalist struggles for independence across South Asia would reveal that religion was deployed to challenge and critique the unrighteous nature of the colonizers impinging the immoral and unethical nature of these forces. The post-colonial literature has succeeded in bringing to the fore the political, social and economic standpoints. The cultural turn in the same also succeeded in the bringing of agency and subjectivity. However, it suffered from other certain lacunas

and gaps which stems from the fixation of elaborating the experiences of the dominant and the hegemonic cultures and religions. The experiences of the great traditions were constantly invoked which led to twin processes, marginalisation of the little and small tradition as well as erasing them from the discourse.

In the context of South Asian religions ,Buddhism emerged as a key religion in the articulation of the self in nations like India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan along with other religions. Hinduism played a similar role in India and, and eventually in Bangladesh. Islam was invoked in case of Pakistan and Afghanistan drawn together in a cultural matrix of a kind where one can witness that religion was central. Marked by solidarities of kind, the South Asian experience of nation building was the cultural and religious experiences. Over a period of time these markers became astutely strong which not only had political ramifications but also led to the rise in the demands of the marginalized for greater political participation and representation. In a very interesting manner, the fractures that were being marked because of the invocation of the hegemonic cultures led to strife and breakdowns in the pursuit of establishing certain religions as the marker of one's identity.

In case of India, Buddhism was not treated as a separate religion. In this very context this presentation attempts to bring to fore Buddhism's contribution and its role in the discourse of nation building and nationalism. Drawing Buddhism out from the canons and texts and translating it as a way of life, communicating it to the common masses, democratizing Buddhism, making Buddha an exemplar; the scholars who did this were tall thinkers within their community of interaction but could not succeed in attracting mass or nationalist attention in the manner Hindu thinkers or the mainstream thinkers did. Nevertheless these were important vantage points in the invocation of Buddhism.

History and its narration limits itself to largely all male thinkers like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, V D Savarkar,. However there are other thinkers also who have been extremely important. Thinkers like Anada K Coomarswamy, Dharmanand Kosmabi, Rahul Sankrityayan, Anagarika Dharmapala, Pt Iyothee Thass, Kamladevi

**In case of India, Buddhism was not treated as a separate religion. In this very context this presentation attempts to bring to fore Buddhism's contribution and its role in the discourse of nation building and nationalism.**

Chattopadhyay who revitalised the idea of culture in the nation. There are many more as the list is endless. Thinkers like Mahashweta Devi who spoke from the perspective of larger masses and their vulnerabilities and marginalization. This is a severe lacuna that needs to be addressed as the narratives and narrations of this nation emerges from dominant voices. And this paper wants to address the lacuna with regard to the non-recognition of thinkers who were invoking Buddhism in the shaping of the normative of India.

There were scholars in Bengal like Rajendralal Mitra, Hariparasad Shastri, Saratchandra Das who were working towards revivalism of Buddhism but it was **Dharmanand Kosambi's (1876-1947)** serious endeavour that succeeded in establishing the claims of Buddhism as a separate and unique identity by constantly taking large number of tours, lectures and writing on it. He also attempted to establish large numbers of Buddhist spaces like viharas, one that was established in Bombay, the Bahujan Vihar. Gail Omvedt would say that it was Kosambi's Bhagwan Buddha which influenced Ambedkar's rational interpretation of the Life of Buddha which makes him as one of the first thinkers of modern India, Buddhist thinkers of modern India.

The progenitor of the Sakhya Buddhism in India, **Ptlyothee Thass (1845-1914)** is also referred to as the ideologue of the Dravidian movement. His writings had a huge impact on Periyar who articulated his claims with the right of the self-respect within the trope of emancipation. Carrying forward Jyotiba Phule's emancipatory reading of Buddhism as argued by G. Aloysius, Thass's arguments became central that Dalits were not Hindus but were original Buddhists. And the sub caste of pariahs were the descendants of Buddha's own Sakya clan. This led him to name his society the Sakya Buddhists Society.

Talking about the founder of the Mahabodhi Society, **Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933)** Invoked as the father of modern Lanka, progenitor of the Sinhala, Dharmapala has a stature of great kind in the Lankan history and memory. He spent his life reviving Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka at a time when Buddhism had vanished as an important religion. The blueprint that he had created for the Sri Lankan society did not have place for others

**Kosambi's Bhagwan Buddha which influenced Ambedkar's rational interpretation of the Life of Buddha which makes him as one of the first thinkers of modern India, Buddhist thinkers of modern India.**

whether it was the colonial masters or it was the Damilas. By creating a code for the laity women and children, most importantly Bhikkus, he constructed the identity of the activist monk. Gananath Obeyesekere refers to this transformatory Buddhism that Dharmapala ensued as Protestant Buddhism which not only provided the agency to the common man and revolutionised Buddhism in a democratic way but also led to opening of the Pandora's box that made people see how an interpretation of exclusive kinds of Buddhism can also be done.

**Ananda K Coomaraswamy (1877-1947)** is celebrated as the first art historian of this country. There is a need to understand him as a thinker of modern India who wrote extensively on culture, civilization, art, representation, nation, nationalism, and philosophy. Buddhism is important in his scheme of things for reinventing and creating a certain kind of inventory. His inventory is very distinct from the other thinkers who are invoking Buddhism, because for him Buddhism becomes a part of a larger civilizational matrix that East has to offer to the West. Civilizational project is a philosophical one for him with Buddhism as being an authentic foundation and Buddha as an exemplar because Buddha is somebody who reaches out extensively. He reaches different races. Buddha reaches out to different communities because he is talking about something very, very basic; he is talking about the human and the human condition. There have been large number of interpretations of what Buddha means to people.

The society is divided, there are inequalities and it was Buddhism that **Dr B R Ambedkar (1891-1956)** felt was capable of providing emancipatory trope to the many. It was Buddhism as lived experience that could actually invoke dignity for the undignified and the religion that could give the capacity to emancipate.

There is politics of religion. It is not just a way of life. It is also a way of sociality. It is also a way of how communities interact. It is the interpretation of the doctrines; it is the interpretation of the religion for certain specific purposes which has consequences. And one needs to map that trajectory very seriously. Buddhism emerges as not only a religion but the very foundation that shaped values that the nation called Bharat needed for it to be

**Civilizational project is a philosophical one for him with Buddhism as being an authentic foundation and Buddha as an exemplar because Buddha is somebody who reaches out extensively.**

**There is politics of religion. It is not just a way of life. It is also a way of sociality. It is also a way of how communities interact. It is the interpretation of the doctrines; it is the interpretation of the religion for certain specific purposes which has consequences.**

truly egalitarian. The ‘idea of India’ finds it self enmeshed in Buddhism and thus cannot be made invisible, or sidelined.

After an interesting and detailed exchange of questions and observations among the presenters and the participants, **Abhishek Amar**, the **moderator** for the session concluded the session by answering one of the questions and saying that it is all probably about multiple Buddhisms, which is what the title was and the concept note clearly articulated. There is no one way and one doesn’t necessarily have to agree. So, probably there is a way to define what Buddhism means by linking it to what we do, how we do it, how we engage with it, and whichever or whatever way it is – is a good place to stop.





**THEME 2**

**DIALOGUES ON  
ARCHEOLOGY HISTORY  
OF BODHGAYA AND  
BUDDHISM**

**SESSIONS | 1A & 2A**

**11 MARCH 2018**

# THEMATIC CONCEPT

**DR. ABHISHEK AMAR**

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies,  
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The Bodhgaya Dialogues aim to create a platform to develop and promote a historical understanding of the multidimensional Buddhist past of Bodhgaya and the larger Bihar (/ or) India region. In order to accomplish this goal, the Deshkal society has invited scholars from various parts of the world, who shared their scholarly works on the archaeological history of Bodhgaya and the larger Buddhist world (Bihar). Bodhgaya's preeminent position as the paradigmatic center of the Buddhist world and its continued importance as a major religious and tourist attraction offers a possibility to foster new knowledge about its multilayered past and disseminate that for the study of Buddhist sites in Bihar and other parts of India.

Bodhgaya's designation as the world heritage site in 2002 reaffirmed its preeminent position and created a new model that could be replicated for other Buddhist sites in Bihar. Nalanda is an excellent example, which was inscribed as a world heritage site in 2016. Several other Buddhist sites exist in the state of Bihar, and many of them are currently being excavated. All these sites require a careful and critical examination to provide an understanding of the multilayered history of Buddhist practices and institutions in this region. The Bodhgaya Dialogues fostered cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas and different approaches to benefit the study of Bodhgaya and other Buddhist sites of the region.

Even though Bodhgaya has been studied since the early nineteenth century, a holistic and contextual study of this important site is yet to be done. Most studies of the site have focused exclusively on the Mahabodhi temple complex, and ignored the surrounding areas and its broader context. This approach, based on the colonial framework of site-based studies, has led to lacunae in the study of Buddhist sites broadly. What compounds this further is the problematic excavations and restorations that were carried out in the second half of the nineteenth century. More recently, the sites of Taradeeh and Bakraur have been excavated in last three decades but they are yet to be studied in tandem with the Mahabodhi complex. An integrated study of these surrounding sites and the larger social context

**Bodhgaya's preeminent position as the paradigmatic center of the Buddhist world and its continued importance as a major religious and tourist attraction offers a possibility to foster new knowledge about its multilayered past and disseminate that for the study of Buddhist sites in Bihar and other parts of India.**



**This issue is also linked to the decline of Buddhism, which is often blamed on the Islamic incursions as a result of the colonial formulations of Indian history. Perhaps an archaeological study of medieval Bodhgaya will explain the religio-political dynamics and its role in the transition of this site into a Saiva center.**

will unravel the emergence and sustenance of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions at Bodhgaya.

Another area that has received much attention is the dispute over the site between the Saiva monastics and other stakeholders, specifically the Sri Lankan Buddhists, in the colonial India. However, what remains unexamined is the transition of this Buddhist monastic center into a Saiva monastic center, which is distinctly linked to the medieval history of this site and the larger region. This issue is also linked to the decline of Buddhism, which is often blamed on the Islamic incursions as a result of the colonial formulations of Indian history. Perhaps an archaeological study of medieval Bodhgaya will explain the religio-political dynamics and its role in the transition of this site into a Saiva center.

The Mahabodhi temple, and the shrines, images, stupas, and monastic remains within the temple precincts and the surrounding areas indicate a complex and multi-layered past of Buddhism at Bodhgaya. Additionally, several other Buddhist monastic and temple sites were part of the elaborate Buddhist network that flourished in the early medieval Bihar. The invited scholars will present their research on the archaeological history of Bodhgaya, its broader socio-political and religious context, and links with other Buddhist sites. These scholars will enrich our understanding of how Buddhism emerged and sustained itself as a predominant religious tradition at this site and in the broader region.

The Dialogues generated awareness about the distinctive past of Bodhgaya and identified challenges/ potential areas (gaps) that require a more sustained investigation for the study of Buddhist history (practices and institutions).

## SESSION-1A



### MODERATOR

#### **DR. BIJOY KUMAR CHOUDHARY**

Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna, India

### PANELLIST

**Between Religion and History: Rebuilding the Maha Bodhi Temple  
in the late nineteenth century**

#### **DR. SRAMAN MUKHERJEE**

Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Ashoka University, Sonapat, India

**Contextualizing Bodhgaya: Saṅgha, Settlements, and Others**

#### **DR. ABHISHEK AMAR**

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**Visual elements of temples at Bodhgaya as a reflection of transnational Buddhist culture**

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**Bodhgaya Archives**

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Director, Centre for Art & Archaeology, American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurugram, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT:

Dr. Bijoy Kumar Choudhary, Dr. Sraman Mukherjee, Dr. Abhishek Amar, Dr. Shita Bakker & Dr. Vandana Sinha



**This study would also explore how situational realities in colonial South Asia, specifically the state's hesitation in intruding upon the domain of religious sensibilities of the colonised population, and how the aesthetic parameters of heritage preservation in the colony happened.**

In the beginning of the deliberations, **Sraman Mukherjee** read portions of a long letter from Beglar, placing it in the context of his presentation. The letter dates to a slightly later time, 1895, when Beglar is asked to reflect on his years in Bodh Gaya in the context of the Mahabodhi temple.

What had to be done by taking up Beglar's letter of 1895 at any point, was to locate the complex configurations of Mahabodhi temple at the intersection of religion and history.

The focus lay on a very small phase in the site's colonial past, namely the contentious restoration of the temple during the 1880s, in order to situate this architectural intervention within the larger transnational debates that inform the aesthetics and politics of heritage conservation across Britain, continental Europe and colonial South Asia.

The other things to be looked into are the comparative merits of conservation, restoration and rebuilding. This study would also explore how situational realities in colonial South Asia, specifically the state's hesitation in intruding upon the domain of religious sensibilities of the colonised population, and how the aesthetic parameters of heritage preservation in the colony happened. Archaeological engagements with practicing shrines like the Mahabodhi temple cannot be written off as monolithic narratives of colonial intrusion on a seamlessly continuous phase of pre-colonial, or pre-modern religious traditions.

At the level of religious practice, the temple and the tree, the Bodhi tree itself continued to be sites of religious practice. It would be encompassed within the complex ritual of the Gaya Shradh. There were however records of occasional Buddhist pilgrimage missions till the 19th century and most importantly ones that came from various Buddhist courts in Burma. The Burmese mission to Bodh Gaya became the point of major colonial intervention, one that would be seen to directly encroach upon the sensibilities of colonial archaeology and architectural restoration at the site.

Citing instances from history, this presentation brought to the fore the living identity of a shrine and temple, beyond the colonial upgrades or parameters of conservation.

In the next presentation, **Abhishek Amar** tried to **situate Bodh Gaya within its broader, socio-political and larger regional context**. The term Bodh Gaya synonymously brings up words like spiritualism, heritage, philosophy etc. The usage of these terms show the internalization of colonial construction of Buddhism and how the study of archaeology, especially the archaeological history of Buddhism is still stuck within those frames. Is there a way to move away from these colonial frameworks? A careful study of Bodhgaya demonstrates that Buddhism is grounded in the materiality of religion, which needs to be explored further.

The history of Bodh Gaya is constructed primarily from “pilgrim” accounts, epigraphical and art historical data and partial archaeological excavations of the Mahabodhi temple complex. Contemporary scholarship on Bodh Gaya has continued to focus on the architecture, sculpture and other archaeological residues in the temple complex. Scholars have also attempted to selectively mine the Buddhist textual sources to study growth of the Mahabodhi complex and its sacred features. All of this has contributed to a much better understanding of the historical development of this site. However, there still exists several gaps in our understanding of the site and its broader context.

Bodh Gaya needs to be situated within its broader geographical, regional, social, historical and political context to address these gaps. The connection between the temple complex and surrounding spaces, historical monuments and objects has to be examined, while simultaneously disregarding the arbitrary boundary of the temple complex that has limited the scholarship of this site. In fact, sites around the temple complex have been excavated but the publication of material from those excavations is fairly limited. Till date, there has been no attempts to study these sites and excavated objects, and their relationship to the temple complex in a careful scientific manner, which can provide us a glimpse of the immediate context of the Mahabodhi temple.

A study of the nineteenth century excavation and reconstruction of the Mahabodhi temple shows that there are layers of constructions and reconstructions that needs to be carefully examined to understand the

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history of this site. A good example is that of a stupa right in front of the temple, which is made up of several objects that were plastered in the restoration. This has led to the loss of context of each of the plastered objects. Each of these objects has a story to tell and there is no way to recover their stories now.

It is widely understood within the Buddhist tradition that the Buddhist relics cannot be left on their own. There has to be a Buddhist monastic community around to look after the relics of Buddha. Being the place of the enlightenment and the Bodhi tree (a relic of use), it is likely that there was a major monastic establishment at Bodhgaya. It has been affirmed in several pilgrim accounts. One of those monasteries has been excavated at Taradeeh, 20 meters west of the Mahabodhi complex. However, most visitors to Bodhgaya see the temple but they don't know at all about Taradeeh and its importance.

Bodh Gaya today includes the sites of the Mahabodhi complex, the Taradeeh monastic mound, the Bakror stupa and the DUNGESHWARI cave. The DUNGESHWARI cave site includes remains of several stupas at its hilltop and the remains of a monastery. It is important for scholars now to move away from site-centric focus on the Mahabodhi complex and think about each of the above listed sites as constituting Bodhgaya. The pilgrims in the past came and interacted with each of these sites. They came to Bodhgaya not merely to see the Bodhi tree but each of these sites, which provided an experience of the Buddha's biography. Therefore, they need to be considered as a palimpsest.

To situate Bodhgaya within its broader context, one has to carefully examine the smaller monastic centres and explore the villages within the larger Bodhgaya region. Several such centres such as Kurkihar, Dharawat, Dubba and several others have been reported in the last two centuries. A few of them, such as Telhara, have been excavated more recently but many others are yet to be carefully examined. Material remains, especially sculptures, from these sites have been extensively studied in last fifty years by international scholars, specifically. A worrisome point to note here is the theft of many sculptures from this region, which needs to be protected.

Dharawat, a hilltop monastic site, was explored by Cunningham and is known since his report in the 1870's. In fact, there are several other hilltop monastic sites in the region, which are often in close proximity to large water bodies (tanks, rivers, springs and water channels). The question then is what prompted Buddhist monks to develop these hilltop monastic sites near water bodies? How aware were they of the local geographical terrain and how did they manipulate them? This certainly hints at links between these monastic institutions and their immediate social contexts. What was the nature of relationship between the monastic institutions and the society and how does it question the understanding of reliance of monastic institutions on royal and limited patronage? These questions propel us to consider the nature of connections that the Buddhist monastic institutions may have made with the geographical landscape and social context.

In the region, there are hundreds of mounds, temple remains, Buddhist and Hindu sculptures and inscriptions. A careful examination of these materials and their immediate context would help situate Bodhgaya within its broader social historical context. Scholars often overlook that Buddhism is also about these smaller sites and how well integrated Buddhist institutions were with the hinterland. In fact, Bodh Gaya's development is closely linked to this broader hinterland and the ability of Buddhist monastic institutions to develop a socio-political and religious network. An investigation of this network will provide a better and nuanced understanding of the emergence and development of Bodhgaya into the paradigmatic centre of the Buddhist world. Therefore, it is time for us to move away from the exclusive focus on Bodh Gaya to a more a contextual study of the larger region.

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**S**hita Bakker continued about the visual culture of three Buddhist temples surrounding the Mahabodhi temple – the Sri Lankan, the Burmese and the Thai temple. The reason behind choosing only temples

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of Theravada Buddhism is because it makes it more comprehensible for comparison. With a difficulty arising from the lack of conventional academic resources on this topic, more unconventional academic and semi-academic resources had to be used, such webpages.

### **The Sri Lankan Temple**

Referring specifically to the awakening of the Buddha, the first temple to discuss is the Sri Lankan temple which is part of the Mahabodhi society complex, Jayashri Mahabodhi Vihara. Although the complex was founded in 1891, the interior of the temple was not built until 2006.

When entering the temple, a large altar is situated at the back of the chamber. On an elevated shrine, a Buddhist statue is flanked by two disciples and in front of the altar two Buddhist bodhisattvas are sitting on a throne. There are 30 mural paintings showing the life events of the Buddha covering the wall.

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Furthermore, the name of the compound Mahabodhi Vihara is also not far-fetched in the light of the Sri Lankan history of being the keeper of the Bodhi tree. It seems that the Bodhi tree and its leaves is the Sri Lankan choice of highlighting the awakening at this temple.

### **The Burmese Temple**

The second temple is the Burmese Vihar, Bodh Gaya. It was built between 1934 and 1991 by several senior monks and assigned by the government and further financially supported by many Burmese devotees.

Most striking in the temple is the amount of Buddha statues in different sizes, all of Buddha in the earth touching gesture. The amount of statues in this posture reflects the importance and popularity of the event of the awakening evoked by this image.

## The Thai Temple

The third temple is the Thai Temple, the Wat Thai Bodh Gaya, was built in 1956 by the king of Thailand at the request of the contemporary minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. It was to strengthen the relationship between India and Thailand.

The visual elements in the Thai temple related to the awakening are the large main statue of the Buddha in the earth touching gesture, and images of the Mahabodhi temple itself in a form of a wall painting next to the main altar and as part of architecture above the entrance on the rooftop.

**The connection of the three different countries respectively and Bodh Gaya.** Each of these three Buddhist Asian countries have a connection with Bodh Gaya as a place and a relation to a particular national historical connection.

## Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Buddhists are connected with the history of the place itself and the Bodhi tree, by restoring the site while reviving Buddhism and re-planting saplings of the holy tree in Bodh Gaya and in their own country. There are even special laws in Sri Lanka to protect the saplings of the Bodhi tree from being harmed. In this way the Bodhi tree is strongly reflective of the deep connection between Sri Lanka and Bodh Gaya.

## Burma

Inside the Burmese temple there is a painting of the Buddha underneath another banyan tree at Bodh Gaya itself receiving food from two men. The painting refers to a Burmese story at this site near the place where the Mahabodhi temple is now located. According to the Shwedagon legend, a mon made from the 15th century, the 7th week of the awakening of the Buddha, two merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika offered the Buddha food. In return he gave him eight hair strings to be enshrined and worshipped in a Shwedagon Pagoda at Yangon. In the painting a direct link has been made through the Buddha sitting at Bodh Gaya and the merchants from Yangon. The route back to Yangon is also shown.

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Another important connection to Bodh Gaya is the ongoing history of support to the place and the status it has in this country to support and donate. It was the Burmese who made the first grade restoration at the Mahabodhi temple and continued to periodically maintain the temple. The significant role of the Burmese as donors seems to have an important role in this society as is represented in the visual culture of the Burmese temple in Bodh Gaya, which exhibits many plates with names of the donors.

### Thailand

The Thai connection with Bodh Gaya has a striking emphasis on the architecture of the temple. The act of building a temple at Bodh Gaya reflects this contiguous importance between politics and Buddhist religious practices in Thailand. Building replicas of the Mahabodhi temple made it possible for the Thai people to reproduce the idea of Bodh Gaya in Thailand itself.

Thai pilgrims and monks at the Thai temple in Bodh Gaya offer donations to help restore the Mahabodhi temple. More recently a golden spire weight 290 kgs was donated by Thailand in 2013.

### Conclusion

There are three main points which are recognizable: the image of the Buddha in the earth touching gesture, the visual elements relating to the Bodhi tree and the image of the Mahabodhi temple itself. These three elements unite the official culture of the temples discussed. The general use of these elements inserts national cultures into transnational elements of the awakening.

Visual representations of the participating cultures seen in these three selected temples extends outside the disciplinary border of art and culture. Introducing visual culture into different fields of study can contribute to a deeper understanding and extension of the recent developments of globalism; it could reveal a hidden, deeper layer of social-political and religious perspectives.

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**Vandana Sinha** presented on **Bodh Gaya Archives** and shared about the archiving of the materials that have come up in the past one and half to two days. She said that after numerous amounts of work, Bodh Gaya archives were not created, specifically Bodh Gaya archives were not made consciously by the research centre though it was a project that was undertaken long ago. It was one of the longest projects of encyclopaedias on Indian temple architecture which, so far have been published in 14 volumes. In fact, one of the volumes actually covers Mahabodhi temple and Tara temple and other temples in nearby areas – a lot of other temples in areas like Nalanda and Apse, and other places.

When the team had started gathering materials which were related to the Indian temple architecture or Indian architecture in general, huge amount of resources had been gathered. There were published resources like a very big library that contained materials like Cunningham’s publication on Bodh Gaya and Rajendralal Mitra. So there should be about 100 publications available on Bodh Gaya in the team’s collection. Detailed documentation about Bodh Gaya, digital archives and a lot more has been meticulously planned for the entire complex. Most of the temples have been covered and architectural drawings of the same are available.

The speaker said that she wanted to talk about the website where all this is available and which has done amazing things in terms of finding materials and networking of the collections, so that a virtual museum of images and sounds are available for all. So for instance, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad has several objects from Bodh Gaya and that couldn’t be realised until the virtual museum was searched. Similarly, the drawings include a drawing of the plaque which is in the Patna museum. So many things have been travelling and are scattered all over the world but still there are ways

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to virtually bring them together at one place. So this is what is happening through this virtual museum website. One can see collections from Patna Museum, from Gaya Museum and collections from other countries like Los Angeles County Museum that has collections on Bodh Gaya; and the State Archaeology Museum, Nawada Museum in Bihar. Lot of material which one cannot imagine to physically visit and find, is all accessible through this virtual museum site. Similarly there's the documentation of two important museum collections from Bodh Gaya: Archaeological Museum and the Mahant Complex

It is important to highlight the importance of networking and bringing collections together for scholars and researchers. The collections which have come out through these various sessions in this seminar should be archived.



**B**ijoy Kumar Choudhury, the **moderator** of the session again led one of the most interactive sessions of the Dialogues. There were several participants who engaged in discussions towards the end of the session, and these were given liberal time and space.





**THEME 3**

**WATER IN  
BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY**

**SESSION | 2B**

**10 MARCH 2018**

# THEMATIC CONCEPT<sup>1</sup>

**DR. SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA**

Leading Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi, India

According to the Buddhist philosophy there are only four primary elements, 'earth', 'water', 'fire' and 'wind', as these diminish, enhance, harm, benefit, and by nature accommodate both emergence and disintegration. It further propounds that their derivative forms cannot be generated if any other primary elements are absent. Simple it may sound but profound is the explanation nonetheless. If water lacked the earth element, the ice would not form in the presence of extreme cold; if it lacked the fire element it would never warm up; and if it lacked the wind element it would not accommodate movement. The interconnectedness between primary elements provides the crucial holistic understanding of nature, often found in fractured form in mainstream water discourse.

The Vaisesike and Naiyayika philosophical systems view the four elements as these relate to the qualities they possess. These provide differing features on interconnectedness, or the lack of it. For instance, earth possesses the four qualities of material form, smell, taste, and tactility. Water possesses three, since it lacks the quality of smell. Fire possesses two, as it lacks the qualities of smell and taste. Wind possesses one, since it merely has tactility. The features lend additional qualities to water, that helps develop a deeper meaning and understanding of water. That the eyes perceive the color of water, ears the sound of water, noses the smell of water, tongues the taste of water, and the body the tactility of water draws consciousness to its bio-physical manifestation, something that is taken for granted, and hence oblivious to the prevailing discussions. Water represents that 'nectar' of the Buddha's teachings that quenches human (inner) thirst.

The Buddhist philosophy has detailed treatise on the creation of the Earth and the world systems. It views the world beyond its physical dimensions by speaking of the three realms that lend contemporary relevance to the manner in which the primary elements have been (mis) treated. It refers to them as the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. These three are characterised as principally dependent

<sup>1</sup>Based on, and drawn from Science & Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Vol 1, The Physical World (2018), Simon & Schuster

**The Buddhist philosophy provides cosmic insights on viewing planetary and human scale functions of water, to attain sustainability of form and formlessness.**

on external objects of sensual desire, which beyond a point leads to self-destruction. The Buddhist philosophical text believes in the process and power of recreation, and indicates that there are more world systems than grains of sand in the River Ganga. And, when the worlds disintegrate it does so as the three primary elements of fire, water, and wind bring about its downfall. Even in disintegration, there is interconnectedness.

The Buddhist philosophy provides cosmic insights on viewing planetary and human scale functions of water, to attain sustainability of form and formlessness.

# SESSION-2B



## MODERATOR

### **DR. SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA**

Leading Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi, India

## PANELLIST

**Buddhist Meditation Practice, the Water Cycle and the Anthropocene:  
An Inquiry into their Relationship**

### **DR. GOPAL KRISHNA**

Author, Environmentalist, Activist, Patna, India

**Smaller Rivers of Ganga Plain – Integrating River-Culture-Ecosystems through  
Ecological Flow Restoration**

### **DR. VENKATESH DUTT**

Associate Professor, Environmental Sciences, Baba Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow, India

**Governance of Traditional Irrigation Systems in South Bihar: Changing Contours and Emerging Challenges**

### **DR. AVIRAM SHARMA**

Assistant Professor, School of Ecology and Environment, Nalanda University, Nalanda, India

**Universal Access to Safe Drinking Water: Deliberations on the Best Practices**

### **MR. SATYAJIT GHOSH**

Programme Coordinator, WaterAid, India

**Arsenic Problem in Bihar: Preventive strategy through Traditional Cultural Medicines**

### **DR. ARUN KUMAR**

Environmental Toxicologist and Biologist, Mahavir Cancer Institute & Research Centre, Patna, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT:

Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma, Dr. Gopal Krishna, Dr. Venkatesh Dutt, Dr. Aviram Sharma, Mr. Satyajit Ghosh & Dr. Arun Kumar





**Human beings are responsible for causing changes which have been referred to as dangerous interference with the atmosphere. War is unleashed on ecosystems, war is unleashed on water resources, war is unleashed on the water cycle itself, and then charitably it is referred to as ‘industrial pollution’, ‘environmental degradation’.**

**G**opal Krishna, the first speaker of this session presented his thoughts on **Buddhist Meditation Practice, the Water Cycle and the Anthropocene – An enquiry into the Relationship**. After citing an example, the speaker explained that when one lets the mind be, the mind settles. And that is how meditation happens. It is important to put it in a context as we have been hearing of anthropogenic interference – dangerous interference in the atmosphere.

There is no formally designed geological time called Anthropocene. The geological time we are living in is Holocene which began 11700 years ago. Earlier geological processes had geological impacts, but human beings are now causing geological impact. The crisis did not begin because of human beings. The crisis began because of corporate bodies and institutions. It is not Anthropocene; it is Corpocene. How did it happen?

Human beings are responsible for causing changes which have been referred to as dangerous interference with the atmosphere. War is unleashed on ecosystems, war is unleashed on water resources, war is unleashed on the water cycle itself, and then charitably it is referred to as ‘industrial pollution’, ‘environmental degradation’.

The UNESCO motto says, wars begin in the mind. Therefore, peace must be built there. Hazardous toxic chemicals flowing through the veins and arteries or through the depletion of water flow, all is linked.

What is of seminal importance is that the conception of owning water needs to be revisited, one has come across this narrative in Buddhist literature as well, of free-flowing water in a river, what part of river can we claim to be ours? How do you claim a flowing thing to be, how does one own a flowing thing? And it doesn’t only flow in river. It flows through our body, the earth, the fire, the air, they all keep flowing. The human body is not an entity which has emerged scientifically if one looks at it, it is a process, it has never been and will never be a complete entity which has stagnated and been fixed in a moment.

When water has memory, when human society has memory, human beings have memory and when institutions have memory, the institutions which refuse to take cognisance of that memory delegitimize themselves.

Institutions fail to decode the crisis – the human crisis, the societal crisis, the environmental crisis, the climate crisis. It has failed to use the memory which is in its repository. Institutions’ inability to relate with human concerns, environmental concerns have created this situation - the Anthropocene.

If one takes account of the vulnerability mapping and the institutional responses to those vulnerabilities, one will realize the incapacity of institutions and therefore when institutions of organic kind which may have been the original Buddhist monasteries which were not of corporate kind assimilate, they do not externalize cost, they do not disconnect from the society.

Human being is not a thing in itself. It is a becoming process, it has always been and death is also not the end. The circle of life, the circle of nature has never been linear. Institutions fail to witness, comprehend this dynamic nature of nature and human body interaction.



**V**enkatesh Dutta continued the discussion in the next presentation on **Integrating River-Culture-Ecosystems through Ecological Flow Restoration** in the light of the interconnection of the rivers. There are five rivers which are spiritually very much connected to Lord Gautam Buddha’s enlightenment journey from Kapilavastu to Bodh Gaya. The journey route of Prince Siddhartha to Gautam Buddha depicts diverse historic landscape via foothills of the Siwalik range in south-western plains of Nepal, flood ravaged eastern Uttar Pradesh and drought prone south-central parts of

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Bihar. The kingdom of Kapilavastu was well extended to the Himalayas in the north, Pava and Kushinagar in the south, the Rohini River in the east and the Rapti River to the west. Kapilavastu was extended between two rivers – Rohini and Rapti from east to west whereas it touched the Himalayas in the north and approached Kushinagar and Pava to the south. Rohini River, witnessed probably the first classic case of water conflict which is documented well. Kapilavastu, the town of the Sakyans and there was this area Koliya Kingdom. The two kingdoms were separated by the Rohini River. So the water of Rohini River used to flow from these upstream and downstream regions and there was huge conflict because people were growing paddies.

And at that time Gautam Buddha, a young Siddhartha, resolved the water conflict and what we have now is the Panchshila. *“Panatipata veramani Sikkha padam samadhiyami”* - I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures. That means all living beings have a right to their lives and that right should be respected and hence this establishes the rights of water for all, for all riparian communities, for all ecosystem needs and all living beings including the creatures outside water.

And the second Panchshila principle, *“Addinnadana veramani Sikkha padam samadhiyami”*- I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given, which is not my share. So the basic philosophy of water cycle that came from the Buddhist philosophy is that the ‘water is used, reused and returned back to the nature’ in the same state without creating any disturbances to the fluvial and ecological regimes.

Falgu river, or Nilanjana river, as called in Sanskrit, is a small river that has a very vast expanse of sand, with no water – but the river is only dry, not dead. That is how Gautam Buddha describes the knowledge. It is not there in one layer; it is layer after layer hidden, of which only the tip of the iceberg is visible. The sand, the vast expanse becomes a massive flowing river in just one spell of monsoon. The knowledge is not there in just one layer, what you see is the groundwater that comes to life and makes

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a flowing channel of water. Drought and flood, they are part of the river cycles. The everlasting truth is sustainability, enlightenment, what Gautam Buddha describes, as ‘samsaram dukkham’, the world is full of sorrow. And there is another river called Choti Gandak which is a meandering river and that is also groundwater fed. It gets water from the ground and it originates in the Terai region of the Ganga near Maharajganj and that is the place where Gautam Buddha got parinirvana in Kushinagar. He travelled from Vaishali to Kushinagar. At the banks of Anoma River in southern Nepal near Kapilavastu (Ami river, as it is known today), he abandoned his royal dress and took the robes of a monk.

The human world has built landscapes, temples, declared as world heritage sites but what about the Falgu River, and its age? Shouldn't it also be a part of natural heritage? We should give a heritage tag to the river because it is not a manmade artefact. It has evolved through periodic pulses of floods and droughts and seen the historical times way beyond Gautama Buddha.

A lot of work has gone into documenting what is happening in the important rivers and they are part of cultural history, we are missing the water culture component in calculating the minimum ecological flow.

The concept of living rivers has five components – Naav Sanskrit, Ganv Sanskriti, Nari Sanskriti, Vat Sanskriti, Kachav Sanskriti. If these five culture ecosystems can be restored, the river can be restored.



**A**viram Sharma continued with his presentation on **Changing Contours and Emerging Challenges** and shared that for him Bodh Gaya is not only about Buddhism or Bodh Gaya as a city but it is also about the region. The semi-arid region of south Bihar or Gaya in general is

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primarily served by agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone. But if this is the semi-arid zone, then how can agriculture be made possible here? Agriculture was made possible in this region only because there were different kinds of irrigations systems that were available. The article written by Nirmal Sengupta (1980) on Ahar Pyne system is one of the major articles which talked about how traditional water harvesting systems or irrigation systems are pivotal in this region, which has supported agriculture. After that study, some other people have also tried to analyse different dimensions of the Ahar Pyne system. Ahar is basically a saucepan kind of a structure and Pyne is a small rivulet coming out from the seasonal river of this particular region. The problem with these studies is that they romanticised the environmental dimension or they romanticised, ignored or uncritically looked at the governance question which is very much tied to the Ahar Pyne system. Most of these studies did not engaged with the labour question. It is important to bring the three dimensions together – environment, labour and the governance challenges.

To come to the impacts in the tangible and intangible sense – In a tangible sense, the infrastructure which was directly managed by the community under the Zamindari system is now being managed by the state. People have started becoming dependent on the state for the management of this traditional irrigation system. At the same time a lot of land which was under the Ahar-pyne has been encroached by different communities. In an intangible sense, the knowledge which was associated with the communities who were managing this system has also started to diminish over the years. The community has started to recede from the scene and the state actors have started taking control. So in a tangible and intangible sense, the land under Ahar-Pyne system diminished or came under the threat of loss, and thus the knowledge system which was associated with it has also started disappearing.

In terms of state intervention, Ahar Pyne system which was community managed has lost the grandeur and the focus has been shifted to the canal.

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The canals were the new mode for managing irrigation water in this region. A lot of developmental projects (minor and major irrigation projects) have come up over the years but again the developmental trajectory is very interesting, many of them have been started long back, forty years back, but have not yet been completed.

Over the last 2-3 decades, another kind of shift has taken place. Instead of focusing on the surface-based irrigation, whether it is Ahar Pyne or the canal-based, a new kind of boom has happened and that is the tubewell adoption. However, unlike Punjab or Haryana, in this part of Bihar, the adoption of the tubewell has not happened at similar rate, so the development again is not linear in characteristic. The Ahar Pyne system was a “community managed” system but over the years not many new experiments have happened where the community came together to manage the new irrigation networks/systems emerging in the region. There is more individualistic effort and less reliance on community. The rise of the individual farmers and the rise of the state can be seen during the last few decades.

Interestingly, technological change is also not linear in nature. It is multi-directional and recurrent, it may go in one direction, it may return back in some other direction. Ahar Pyne does exist but at the same time borewells are also coming up and canal-based irrigation is also there. There is a coexistence of different systems/technologies for irrigation.

In the current situation, the state is incapable of handling everything. Number of scholars have argued that there is a need of market forces; there is need to involve community and diverse kinds of other non-state actors. In this context, some of them have argued that the state is dead but we can see that the state is very much alive and people are also relying on the power of the state to manage and maintain these resources.

Challenges like ground water extraction is there, river interlinking is being proposed as a solution, new check dams and minor and major irrigation projects are proposed and these new interventions are also leading to different kinds of conflict. The government of Bihar is fighting multiple

**Technological change is also not linear in nature. It is multi-directional and recurrent, it may go in one direction, it may return back in some other direction.**

legal cases with Jharkhand, with UP on several such projects which are coming up in the region. So, what is the future?

Is multilevel governance possible in this region and in this context? Is “community” a homogenous category? If a community which was endowed with this particular knowledge is moving outside this region for economic or any other reason, can we bind them to this region? That will go against the logic of democracy. This will be against the logic of human rights. In this context, the crucial question is who is going to manage this region and these resources? And that is the question as a community, as a diverse community we need to ponder over.



**S**atyajit Ghosh joined in the presentation by **delineating the challenges in universal access to safe drinking water based on their work in the Bodh Gaya region** during the last ten years. There is the fundamental question – how much water to consume? Gandhi remarked that there is a very thin line between need and greed. Basically when one talks about the Ahar Pyne system, the pond and the dug well, it has got a deep cultural meaning, where everybody collaborates with one another to share collective responsibilities.

Recall the hand-pump revolution, initiated by UNICEF in 1967, which depleted all those traditional structures and started the culture of individualism. Now there is a second culture that is coming out, with the supply of safe drinking water, piped water to each and every home. But the question is how much is enough? Unless we reduce consumption, minimise wastage, and promote recycling the gap in supply and demand of water will continue to persist. Can a culture of water, enshrined in traditions, be invoked to address the challenge?

**There is the fundamental question – how much water to consume? Gandhi remarked that there is a very thin line between need and greed.**



**Arun Kumar** continued the discussion in the next presentation on **Arsenic Problem in Bihar: Preventive strategy through Traditional Cultural Medicines** Bihar is the land of rivers too. Seven major rivers are flowing from the Himalayas into the Ganges system, and are loaded with arsenopyrite silt which is also causing groundwater contamination. Apart from the local population affected with the general body weakness, low immunity and anaemia, asthma or recurrent cough, infertility, thyroid, and cancer are common.

The typical arsenicosis symptoms in the population are very high. This problem must have a solution. Studies have found several traditional healing powers in turmeric, Amla, Oyster, Ashwagandha, and Tulsi. Similarly, the Raktachandan seeds, Pteris Longifolia, Fennel, Cumin, Ajwain and coriander are found to be effective.

In terms of mitigation, treatment and supply of de-contaminated water has been taken up and one reverse-osmosis plant has been drilled in Patna. A water ATM has been installed recently in Buxar. Awareness in the villages with the help of Water Aid and other associations is being done. Doctors are looking to spot cases of cancer, and the people and children are being motivated to consume safe water drinking.



**Sudhirendar Sharma**, moderator for the Session concluded the session by saying that though he doesn't think there are answers readily available, but the importance of the session is that it has raised several questions, observations and comments. At the beginning of the session he had said that while designing the session, it was difficult to link water in the context of Buddhist philosophy, until the profound Buddhist thought came

**In terms of mitigation, treatment and supply of de-contaminated water has been taken up and one reverse-osmosis plant has been drilled in Patna.**



**Water represents  
the nectar of  
Buddha's teaching  
which quenches  
human thirst'.**

up – 'Water represents the nectar of Buddha's teaching which quenches human thirst'. Hence it is more philosophical than real in that sense of the term whereas the reality of everyday life in terms of water, water scarcity, water pollution, water access, water affordability and so on and so forth is all around.

It is a complicated issue, but since we have been trying to bring the contemporariness of Buddha and Buddha teachings into play – it is important to explore, even if it is at level of exploration only.





**THEME 4**

**HISTORY, 'HERITAGE',  
AND SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**SESSION | 1B**

**11 MARCH 2018**

# THEMATIC CONCEPT

**DR. ANIL SETHI**

Professor, School of Education, AzimPremji University, Bangaluru

Educationalists and teachers have long seen ‘Heritage’ as an important concept in school education. Schools are ever so keen to introduce students to ‘their’ heritage, at whatever level this is conceived of: the world at large, the nation, region or locality. ‘National heritage’ has been an especially enticing category for governments, legislators, and educators alike. A sense of ‘national heritage’ must be taught, dinned into the students so that some (official) conception of national identity can be forged among the young: a die-hard patriotism that commits the individual to celebrating the nation, if not dying for it! Can the organs of the nation-state such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) subvert the idea of ‘national heritage’ at all? Can they call attention to reflecting upon the category -- analyzing it -- rather than constructing some flat, uninspiring notion of heritage, apparently bequeathed to us by history?

Categories such as heritage are never problematized by those who run schools and teach in them. It is simply assumed that History (with an upper-case H!) has handed down heritage to us – and that we must celebrate, conserve, and pass on this heritage to succeeding generations. Heritage is seen as the un-problematized ‘Voice of History’, as something that is objective and flowing from our past. For History itself --with the upper-case H -- is seen as something fixed, objective, based only on facts, as if we were still in the age of Ranke and Lord Acton! In this conception, therefore, ‘heritage’ needs to be discovered, grasped, and preserved!

It may not dawn upon educators that there could be an element of invention in the retelling of heritage. We may value sites, buildings, things, material forms, practices, symbols, and ideas because of our contemporary positions and concerns, and the concomitant politics, not simply because of their importance in history. We may thus invent a sense of heritage – at least in part! Using a couple of case-studies, my presentation shall demonstrate the invention of heritage and argue for a more reflective, analytical and robust treatment of this category in school education.

Thanks to Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger and others, we are long familiar with the idea of the invention of tradition. The invention of heritage is a similar concept that emphasises selectivity, construction, and analysis in the use of the category ‘heritage’ and in the teaching of history and culture.

**Categories such as heritage are never problematized by those who run schools and teach in them. It is simply assumed that History (with an upper-case H!) has handed down heritage to us – and that we must celebrate, conserve, and pass on this heritage to succeeding generations.**

In so doing, it emphasizes inter alia the interplay between past inheritances and present concerns. Take, for instance, the case of JallianwalaBagh, Amritsar as a heritage site. It is well-known that those killed by General Dyer in this Bagh in 1919 included Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. This massacre was part of the Rowlatt Satyagraha, a movement marked by a strong sense of Hindu-Muslim unity in high politics, unprecedented since the days of 1857. We know that several of the descendants of the Muslims killed in the Bagh became Pakistani after August 1947. While JallianwalaBagh is seen as a heritage site by Indians, it was developed by Nehru and later rulers as such, and the massacre has always found pride of place in school histories of the anti-colonial movement, though neither the event nor the site holds any significance for Pakistanis or in Pakistani school history!

So the memorialization of JallianwalaBagh – as event, site, national memory and metaphor is distinctive of Indian politics, Indian history-writing, and Indian memorialization and without even a trace in the life of Pakistan. The Pakistani descendants of those killed in the Bagh in 1919 as well as their state have chosen to ignore this slice of modern Pakistani history while the Indians have woven a national discourse around it. Beginning with the acquisition of the Bagh by the Congress in 1920, and its memorialization after independence, the history of this heritage site as distinct from the history of the 1919 event has been a long and complex one. It is marked by the role of the state, that of the business world, that of historians, designers, architects, professional experts in memorialization and museumology as also curriculum makers and historiographers of school histories.

The insipid use of the category of heritage in school education is directly linked to the way in which History is taught and learnt at school. It suffers from the disease of facticity with pupils being asked to tediously regurgitate from a single prescribed text. Schools do not communicate a sense of doing History, of handling evidence, querying primary materials, defining categories, distinguishing between cognate concepts, assessing viewpoints and engaging with varied and contradictory voices. Since the student is denied any understanding of how historical knowledge is constructed and of its multi-vocal character, they are also denied an understanding of how the sense of heritage is signalled and constructed.

**The insipid use of the category of heritage in school education is directly linked to the way in which History is taught and learnt at school. It suffers from the disease of facticity with pupils being asked to tediously regurgitate from a single prescribed text.**

## SESSION-1B



### MODERATOR

#### **DR. PEGGY MOHAN**

Linguist, Educationist and Teacher at Vasant Valley School, New Delhi, India

### PANELLIST

**“Conservation Habits?” What we can do for the coming generations!**

#### **DR. SAVYASAACHI**

Professor, Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

**School, Children and Heritage in Bihar: Policies and Practices**

#### **DR. BINODANAND JHA**

Director, Department of Education, Bihar, India

**Why are Schools Blind to the Invention of Heritage?**

#### **DR. ANIL SETHI**

Professor, School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bangaluru, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Peggy Mohan, Dr. Savyasaachi, Dr. Binodanand Jha & Dr. Anil Sethi



In the beginning of the deliberations, **Savyasaachi** in his session presented **on the importance of the connection between education and heritage**, and explained the meaning of a ‘conservation habit’. He emphasised that damages done by the perspectives of tourism, of faith conflicts need to be cured. In this world differences degenerate into conflicts very fast. Conflicts degenerate into violence and violence degenerates into terrorism even faster. He compared the same with the rate at which the earth is exploited for raw materials by human beings, leaving hardly any time for it to heal and replenish itself. He made a very important observation regarding the need to wean children away from patriarchal searches which are essentially interested in transmission of three important aspects of society: transmission of name – ‘Kul ka naam’; transmission of property and; transmission of land and heritage. He next moved on to explain what a ‘conservation habit’ is. Conservation means that one should not waste.

State conceptualised conservation programs do not generate a conservation habit, they actually increase and augment the consumer habit. He beautifully said that there is a very good vernacular description of conservation. There is a word called ‘barkat’. Elders say that one’s hand should have the gift of abundance ‘barkat’, only then there will never be any lack of wealth.

Conservation habit is concerned with this philosophy of Barkat which is what should be given to primary school children so that when this top soil is ready, then all heritage, all conservation, all policies will start to make sense. All change can hence begin at the schools.

While sharing his views on **School, Children and Heritage in Bihar: Policies and Practices**, **Binodanand Jha** mentioned that the keywords in his presentation would be – a. school b. learning and c. heritage. He said that he feels ‘school’ is the most important intervention in the modern world. Ranging across a brief history of how the system of the school started in India, and specifically in Bihar, from the times of the Gurukul; he brought out the importance of a school in the lives of children, and the

**State conceptualised conservation programs do not generate a conservation habit, they actually increase and augment the consumer habit.**

not so privileged, in today's scenario. While delineating the importance of learning, he explained that learning has three objectives:

- To lead a decent life
- To become a useful member of the society
- To develop moral character and wisdom

He discussed the 'Four Pillars of Learning' according to Delors Report (1996) next – and summed up that if learning doesn't bring about the qualitative changes discussed, then learning hasn't happened at all. After this, he elaborated on the importance of heritage and how what is handed down to the children is of utmost importance. He reiterated that it should be served in a way so that it is easy to learn. Learning habits should be such that the retention capabilities of children increase, along with making the experience of learning joyful.

He elaborated on the story of knowledge and ignorance, through the instance of a story from the Life of the Buddha. There is an answer to everything, in the treasures of classical literatures and our heritage. How these treasures can be given to children should be the question of the hour. Knowing about Nalanda, or about Buddha, or the classical literatures like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, cannot be replaced. The classical literatures answer many questions that are raised today. Violence, exploitation of the environment, and the concept of modern development pose questions that might get answers from old classical texts and stories. He says that the Kalpavriksha is our mind, which has the power to grant what is wished. Only if one thinks positive, positive results will emanate. That is why to seek the answers to all these questions of unrest, of violence, of greed, of exploitation – one has to search the rich and endless heritage of the country. Caste, creed, gender, religious differences, and discrimination can all be eradicated through that understanding of harmony.

Times have changed, and so have the ways of gathering knowledge and wisdom. All the important indicators of change have to be evident in the classrooms. He pointed out that though the syllabus and content for

**if learning doesn't bring about the qualitative changes discussed, then learning hasn't happened at all. After this, he elaborated on the importance of heritage and how what is handed down to the children is of utmost importance.**



the Bihar classrooms have been reworked and developed, it is unfortunate that teaching techniques have remained same. There is no scope for active interaction and encouraging inquisitiveness in the children. Comprehensive learning is not possible with the limited scope of questioning in classrooms. Only if students are given the right to ask questions, can knowledge expand and wisdom be achieved.

The Government and the Education Departments should deliberate upon this. The goal of Education should be directed towards developing a holistic learning process.



**Anil Sethi** took the discussion forward when he spoke on **Why are schools blind to the invention of heritage?** Educationalists and teachers have long seen heritage, he said, as an important theme in school education. ‘National Heritage’ has also been an enticing category for legislators and governments. But, according to him, several people -- including school teachers -- look upon heritage as ‘fossilized’ history.

The nation-state and its organs such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) feel compelled to impart to pupils a sense of ‘national heritage’. They did an official conception of heritage into the young in the hope of forging a national identity. Ignoring heteroglossia, they often tend to construct a flat, uninspiring notion of heritage, bereft of different and contesting voices. They rarely analyse the category of heritage or nudge students to creatively reflect upon it.

Sethi argued that heritage is often seen as ‘fossilized history’ because educationalists and teachers assume that History (with an upper-case H) has handed down heritage to us. Furthermore, they believe this heritage must be celebrated, conserved, passed on to succeeding generations. They view heritage as something objective, value-free, neutral, fixed, and

**heritage is often seen as ‘fossilized history’ because educationalists and teachers assume that History (with an upper-case H) has handed down heritage to us.**

singular precisely because they see history in the same light. But the scholarly world no longer believes in any ‘Voice of History’; it argues that all history is contested, that history and heritage are profoundly political categories, that both are marked by a conflict of interpretations. History or Heritage can never bear witness to anything on their own. Always, it is the scholars who make them talk!

Sethi demonstrated, through various examples, the element of invention in the creation of heritage. Sites, buildings, objects, material and cultural forms, practices, symbols, leaders, movements, and ideas are often valued because of our contemporary concerns and socio-political positions. The past by itself does not drop heritage into our laps. Since heritage is constructed from present-day vantage points, inevitably it results from a dialogue between the past and the present. The memorialisation of a site is a matter of selectivity and choice. It is contingent on matters of the present. The state, the business world, academics, professional experts, curriculum makers and writers of school history, all of these people, help create heritage -- and from their own moral and material vantage points.

The insipid use of the category of heritage in school education is directly linked to how history is taught. It suffers from the disease of ‘facticity’. With students being asked to tediously regurgitate from single prescribed texts, teachers do not explain how history is done, how historians examine events and processes, query primary materials, define categories, distinguish between cognate concepts, assess viewpoints and handle the messiness of varied and contested voices. Since the student is denied any understanding of how historical knowledge is constructed, and of its multi-vocal character, they are also denied an understanding of how notions of heritage are similarly created.

While the rational and the transrational are often seen as opposites, they share significant intellectual and moral traits. One of these is reflection. The problem with our curricula and classrooms is they are bereft of reflection. We in India teach neither rationality nor reflection. And unless we do so,

**Since heritage is constructed from present-day vantage points, inevitably it results from a dialogue between the past and the present. The memorialisation of a site is a matter of selectivity and choice. It is contingent on matters of the present.**

**the question as not  
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What is chosen to be  
kept from it becomes  
heritage.**

our students will never fully appreciate the full importance of history or heritage.

The Moderator **Peggy Mohan** concluded the session after a round of interesting discussions open to the floor. She asked a pertinent question, “...do you have any words to wind up?” She said that she took away a notion of connectedness from the session, that there are so many things that are being done; or have parallels in what is being done with heritage. She said she is especially happy to see heritage as something living and the question as not simply something that is invented but that is being made at every moment. What is chosen to be kept from it becomes heritage.





**THEME 5**

**STATE CIVIL SOCIETY  
AND THE CITY**

**SESSIONS | 2A & 3A**

**11 MARCH 2018**

# THEMATIC CONCEPT

**DR. SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA**

Leading Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi, India

The Bodh Gaya Dialogues is borne out of the realization that the irrefutable status of the Mohabodhi Temple cannot remain only of interest to the Buddhist pilgrims. There is more to the temple and its geographical location than what has been made out thus far. Clearly, there is space and scope to enhance not only visitors experience but those who live and eke out livelihoods in its surroundings. The temple is a center of enlightenment that ought to spread its light far and wide, but ensuring that the city remains livable for local inhabitants.

For inexplicable reasons, Bodh Gaya has not received as much attention as other Buddhist site in Lumbini in Nepal. How can the proposed City Development Plan (CDP) becomes a discussion point for ensuring that the ‘world Buddhist centre’ of learning becomes a cultural hub for promoting environmentally sensitive socio-economic development based on the principle of equity? With inflow of overseas tourists increasing every year, there is a need to balance development of tourism and related infrastructure in a manner that offers a win-win scenario for the local residents.

The panel discussed the contours of the Master Plan for Bodh Gaya, drawn in 2003 and 2006, from the perspective of emerging socio-economic challenges. The environmental conditions of the site are conducive to developing the next generation of city plans that not only ensures an all-around livelihood support system for the inhabitants but factors in future resource demands as well. Could it be the city that enlightens the world on how spiritual enlightenment acts as a guide to develop a city that becomes a leader in how future cities ought to be conceived of and developed? The session deliberated on the issues and challenges in engaging the government, civil society, and local people in chartering a new course for city planning and development.

**The panel discussed the contours of the Master Plan for Bodh Gaya, drawn in 2003 and 2006, from the perspective of emerging socio-economic challenges. The environmental conditions of the site are conducive to developing the next generation of city plans that not only ensures an all-around livelihood support system for the inhabitants but factors in future resource demands as well.**

## SESSION-2A



### MODERATOR

#### **DR. JANICE LEOSHKO**

Associate Professor, University of Texas, USA

### PANELLIST

**Growing Up in Bodhgaya: Narratives of a Natives**

#### **MR. MANISH SINHA**

DG, National Institute of Communications Finance, Department of Telecom, New Delhi, India

**A Blueprint of Bodhgaya's Integrated Sustainable Development; A Comparative Study of Buddhist Heritage Site In Lumbini, Nepal.**

#### **MR. UDAYA SAHAY**

Former IPS officer, Chairman & Director, SAUV Communications, Delhi, India

**Sustainable Development and Safeguarding Heritage through Urban Planning, Case-Study: Vrindavan, Braj**

#### **DR. ANURAG VERMA**

Professor, School of Architecture and Planning, Apeeje Institute of Technology, Greater Noida, India

**Making Dialogue Work: Revisiting the Bodh Gaya Temple Act**

#### **DR. DAVID GEARY**

Assistant Professor, Anthropology, Community Culture and Global Studies, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Canada & **MR. MANISH KUMAR**, Independent Researcher, Bodhgaya

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Janice Leoshko, Mr. Manish Sinha, Mr. Udaya Sahay, Dr. Anurag Verma & Dr. David Geary



In the beginning of the deliberations, **Manish Sinha** shared on **Growing up in Bodh Gaya: Narratives of a Native**. He narrated two very important events which happened in this region in a gap of around 500 years. The first was the conversion of Siddhartha to Lord Buddha, the act of enlightenment occurred under the Bodhi tree that led him to become Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha was revered, he was worshipped and there was a lot of reverence for him, but the understanding was a little different from how a very strong Buddhist follower would look at Lord Buddha.

The principle of Ahimsa, non-violence, became very significant for the country itself. So much so that it was the underlying stream of the entire national movement that happened in India. That is why after achieving independence a lot of symbols have been taken from Buddhism to represent the nation. In fact, the Sarnath lion was adopted as the national symbol.

The issue of conservation or keeping that heritage here was largely in those times related to the Mahabodhi temple and its surroundings, and the structures that were there within the Mahabodhi temple.

Slowly people also understood it was a pilgrimage site and lot of people started coming from various countries. The local village was quite isolated in the early days from the Buddhist structure, the temples and even the Mahabodhi temple. There wasn't much interaction in the early days.

But what is it that has been drawing millions of people from all over the world to Bodh Gaya? How do local people relate to it? How do you educate local people about the history of Bodh Gaya? Bodh Gaya was largely "discovered" by Alexander Cunningham in the late 1800s, but there was no place in Bodh Gaya to keep those artefacts. So the artefacts were carried away, but these had to be returned as it became a place for pilgrimage. So, it became important that this site had a chronology of how things happened here – not only for the people who are coming here but perhaps the local people do need to engage with this heritage as well.

**The knowledge of the history is not very well documented, not in the popular literature at least. It maybe there in research papers, which are easy for ordinary people to follow, but this is why local traditions have yet to align itself with its heritage.**



The knowledge of the history is not very well documented, not in the popular literature at least. It maybe there in research papers, which are easy for ordinary people to follow, but this is why local traditions have yet to align itself with its heritage.

There is a need to involve the local tradition to connect with this heritage. The local universities have not been able to do anything adequate in this regard. One of the purposes for these dialogues is also to evolve a method to develop text for varied readership. These are things that need to be encouraged for involving the local population.



**Lord Buddha prescribed only four sacred places for Buddhist pilgrims: Lumbini (where he was born), Bodhgaya (where he attained enlightenment), Sarnath (where he gave his first public sermon), and Kushinagar (where he attained Mahaparinirvana).**

**Udaya Sahay** continued with the next presentation on **Crystal Gazing Future Bodhgaya: Drawing Inspiration from Lumbini**. Lord Buddha prescribed only four sacred places for Buddhist pilgrims: Lumbini (where he was born), Bodhgaya (where he attained enlightenment), Sarnath (where he gave his first public sermon), and Kushinagar (where he attained Mahaparinirvana). Other places were added to the list by his disciples and followers. Out of the four places, Lumbini and Bodhgaya drew maximum attention of the pilgrims and tourists, and both received considerable patronage of the State as well.

But the similarity between the two doesn't go far. Between the two, Bodhgaya enjoys a preferential status for visitors still because it was here that Siddhartha became Buddha and the place has a transformational value for both pilgrims and tourists alike. Both come here to share in the experience, under the extant Bodhi Tree. For they know that all said and done, Buddha was a human being and his success story is a story of realizing human potential, which others too can attain following the path and the method.

Bodhgaya therefore has both inspirational and aspirational value for visitors, whereas the value of Lumbini is primarily emotional. Visitors visit Lumbini for the recall value of an extraordinary birth, which bore the torchlight for life for millions.

Another dissimilarity between Bodhgaya and Lumbini is on the point of the trajectory of physical development that both these sacred territories undertook, especially on their independence.

Drawing his rationale from Panchsheel, the first PM of India, JL Nehru declared the place as an international site and appealed to the Buddhist countries to come and mark their presence by setting up monasteries, which he termed as possible embassies of peace. Bodhgaya Temple Management Act 1949 was thus enacted, keenly drafted by the first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, for providing the legal framework for conservation and maintenance of the Temple. Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee was thus formed in 1953. Later, archeological Survey of India came in under an advisory role, and UNESCO status added to its stature further. However, the land being a State subject in Bihar, resulted in no effort being made to acquire and earmark the land around the temple premises. The first PM as a politician made a grand announcement but had no will to push for its implementation. Country one after another arrived, but they all had to negotiate with the local landowners. Growth was haphazard since no master plan was drawn. Bodhgaya remained a world heritage site of neglect and insularity.

Lumbini's story was different. The Royal Government of Nepal commissioned an internationally renowned Japanese architect (Professor Kenjo Tange), to form a Board, mobilised international funds, acquired hundreds of acres of land around the original birth site, created a canal between original birth site and a newly created Stupa with a backdrop of Annapurna peak and allotted a good size of land on both sides of the canal to Mahayana, Hinayana, and Vajrayana Buddhist countries. These countries set up their respective monasteries, thereby creating distinct cultural islands dotted all over. A research centre and a shopping arcade were added attractions for visitors. The vision, the master plan, and the

**Country one after another arrived, but they all had to negotiate with the local landowners. Growth was haphazard since no master plan was drawn. Bodhgaya remained a world heritage site of neglect and insularity**

**To make all this successful will require a drawing up a communication plan, a grand film, digital cluster, literature, cultural exchange programme to make the experience glocal.**

meticulous implementation created a history for everyone to see. All this happened in a span of 4 years, but reportedly it took almost a decade to develop the vision.

My thesis is that Bodhgaya deserved better development plans because of its transformational, aspirational, and inspirational value, yet it was subjected to a haphazard growth. So it is high time that a vision document, sharing wisdom of all major Buddhist countries is built up for preparing a master plan of a monastery zone in Bodhgaya and its execution (left currently to the local District Magistrate and BTMC) is enhanced and put forth by experts, including architects, town planners, academicians, bringing under its ambit the larger Gaya region including Dungeshwari mountain, Gurupadgiri, Barabar and Nagarjun Hills. The extant local master plan may be tweaked to include a specialised research centre, a centre of alternative medicines, Nalanda University, convention centre, auditoriums, hotels, international airport, helipad, shopping arcade, malls, museums, expressways linking Bodhgaya with Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali, and Kesaria, and setting up research centres to form a part of the big plan. The Government of India, Bihar Government, embassies and high commissions of concerned Buddhist countries, and all credible Buddhist centres of excellence may form a network to sustain the implementation of this vision.

To make all this successful will require a drawing up a communication plan, a grand film, digital cluster, literature, cultural exchange programme to make the experience glocal.



**Anurag Varma** took the session forward with his presentation on **Sustainable Development and Safeguarding Heritage through Urban Planning, Case Study: Vrindavan, Braj**. It is important to discuss intersection of culture and urban planning for sustainable development of Indian cities,

specifically in the context of sacred pilgrimage towns in India. Culture has been identified as the fourth pillar of sustainability (Hawkes, 2001), and is recognised as an area of increasing relevance for development planning. It has also been suggested as central pillar of sustainability in 2006 (Nurse, 2006). Lately, Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2015) and the New Urban Agenda (UN, 2016) which was formulated in 2016 also identified culture as a priority component of urban plans. So it means that at different international forums, the linkages between culture, urban planning and sustainability is gaining understanding and traction. In the Indian context, as we talk about the urban planning domain, we have governmental schemes like HRIDAY, which is Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana, launched in 2015 (Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, 2015). It emphasises the revitalization of the soul of the city, and focuses on greater consideration of cultural aspects at sacred cities.

However, looking at the factual scenario, master plans of sacred cities normally view sacred heritage at these particular places only as built up or tangibly built heritage and seek to address it by conservation of the built fabric. Cultural mapping of the intangible or the natural heritage is not yet a part of, or is not yet integrated into the urban planning studies or processes, and this discussion raises the significance of urban planning as an instrument for safeguarding heritage and sustainability, and advances a framework of more holistic, interdisciplinary, empirical approach for planning of urban futures at such cities.

These cities are repositories of immense heritage value which need to be identified and presently run the risk of discontinuation or non-sustainability, partially because of brisk acceleration of urbanisation in sacred cities. At the outset, framework development for Vrindavan, Braj recognised necessity of following an interdisciplinary approach. Accordingly, the framework emphasises the importance of identifying the cultural and the urban context of a town, which are envisaged as key dimensions for urban planning considerations (Varma & Singhal, 2016). This framework identifies components and attributes for collection of baseline data not only for ur-

**These cities are repositories of immense heritage value which need to be identified and presently run the risk of discontinuation or non-sustainability, partially because of brisk acceleration of urbanisation in sacred cities.**

**It is important to raise the significance of place-specific cultural context in view of the diversity exhibited at culturally-significant places and recognise attributes linked to cultural identity of a place in view of the diversity.**

ban indicators, but also cultural aspects such as traditions and heritage of sacred towns through literature, case studies or field work. Components for the urban dimensions include urban morphology, urban governance, built heritage and spatial patterns whereas significant components of cultural dimensions include cultural economy, theology, community engagement, ecological values and traditional knowledge systems. This information is synthesised to recognise the cultural-urban context at sacred cities, and urban planning process is then embedded in this derived context. It is posited that greater emphasis on these dimensions will help us understand cultural characteristics of sacred places, which through the right measures can lead to sustainability of pilgrimage towns.

It is important to raise the significance of place-specific cultural context in view of the diversity exhibited at culturally-significant places and recognise attributes linked to cultural identity of a place in view of the diversity. Importance of intangible heritage, linkages between cultural heritage and spatial patterns, understanding the exogenous from the endogenous economic drivers of real estate development and learn about engaging with indigenous informal urbanism at pilgrimage towns is to be considered for urban planning of sacred Indian towns.



**Manish Kumar** presented the joint paper of **David Geary** and himself on **Making Dialogue Work: Revisiting the Bodh Gaya Temple Act**. He narrated that the town of Bodh Gaya is a complex social arena that has given rise to conflict and tensions over its identity, in the past and present. Whose site is this? We argue that it is important to move beyond the modern trope of Bodh Gaya as a space of “contestation” that overlooks social factors contributing to amity and dialogue. The main problem we highlight in this paper is that there is a vast number of people looking

after their own self-interests and a general failure to work across lines of difference (cultural-linguistic, religious, sectarian) towards the collective benefit of this quickly urbanizing temple town. What is certainly evident is that nearly all the town planning documents since 1964 up until present, have been neglected and/or dismissed despite considerable expenditure of public funds, leading to much of the haphazard development, urban congestion and environmental degradation we see today. Due to the multiple governance agencies and both civic and religious bodies, this has given rise to structural complexity without a clear flow of administrative duties. Is it time that we revisit the Bodh Gaya Temple Act of 1949 to account for the broader city-wide developments of this expanding urban environment? Can there be a more effective system of governance that brings together these overlapping management systems and stakeholders in order to strengthen the heritage values associated with the place and ensure a more sustainable and prosperous future for Bodh Gaya and its residents? One suggestion we want to put forward is to consider a new management nexus built around a Bodh Gaya Development Association [BGDA]. One major benefit of this, is that it could bring the Bodh Gaya Temple Trust and forthcoming donations /public funds into conversation with the broader vision of the city as a whole and ensure essential infrastructure and needs are being met. This Association could be composed of 7 **Core Committee Members** (similar to the current BTMC) and be entrusted with the task of constituting the following four technical bodies and granting them the consultative status. These additional technical bodies could include a: **1. inter-faith religious body.** The main role of this body is to advise on the religious harmony in the area, and also to ascertain that religious functions and events are carried with utmost sincerity. **2. Environment and urban infrastructure body:** The main role of this body is to advise on city development and town planning, environmental management, land use and infrastructure following sustainable principles and long term growth. **3. Cultural, tourism and heritage body:** The main role of this body is to advise on Bodh Gaya's cultural landscape

**Can there be a more effective system of governance that brings together these overlapping management systems and stakeholders in order to strengthen the heritage values associated with the place and ensure a more sustainable and prosperous future for Bodh Gaya and its residents?**

**Entrusted with the task of supervising smooth interactions between the administrative authorities and peoples' representatives to ensure proper governance of the area.**

and heritage values to ensure international standards of conservation management in line with the development of the place as a living religious heritage site. **4. Social and civic development:** Entrusted with the task of supervising smooth interactions between the administrative authorities and peoples' representatives to ensure proper governance of the area. This body can take stock of the local concerns important for various segments of the society thereby facilitating the exchange of ideas between people's representatives and administrative authorities. It should also liaise with the Chief-minister's office.

The **moderator** for the Session, **Janice Leoshko** conducted a beautiful ending to the session by encouraging several questions from the floor. She let the participants put across their questions, as much time allowed. All questions didn't get answered. She was happy with many questions that came up, and she said following one of the questions in discussion, that truly, as an art historian if they don't start using the same images as with the past, there can hardly be any movement forward.. She said, "So that is what I heard today along with many other valuable things. And though we have gone on forever, longer that we were supposed to, thank you all very much."



## SESSION-3A



### MODERATOR

**DR. PRAVIN SINHA**

Member, World Economic Association, New Delhi, India

### PANELLIST

**Looking Beyond Mahabodhi Temple: Seeing Bodhgaya as Larger Buddhist Site**

**VEN. NANGZEY DORJEE**

Member Secretary, Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee, Bodhgaya, Bihar, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Pravin Sinha & Ven. Nangzey Dorjee





**The main focus of Bodhgaya, besides the main Mahabodhi temple are the Vajrasana, the seat of enlightenment, and the sacred Bodhi tree which are standing as the witness to that great event in the Life of Buddha.**

**N**angze Dorjee in the session **Looking Beyond Mahabodhi Temple: Seeing Bodhgaya as a Larger Buddhist Site** welcomed all participants on behalf of Mahabodhi Mahavihara and Bodhgaya Temple Management. To refresh upon the ideas of the heritage city plan, as secretary of the Bodhgaya Temple Management committee, the certain specific lines guided by the provisions of the Bodhgaya Temple Act of 1949 of this city were delineated by him. This session acted like a summarizing of the entire matter that was being discussed throughout.

Mahabodhi Mahavihara complex as a world heritage site was talked about, which is the cause and development of Bodhgaya as a whole and as a city and of an international importance now.

Starting from the entirety of Buddha's life, the importance of the site like Bodh Gaya is the cradle of Buddhism. Prince Siddharth of Kapilavastu who was born in Lumbini in present-day Nepal renounced the worldly life at the age of 29 and walked out of home in search of truth, and ultimately realised the truth of Nirvana after vigorous penance of six years at Pragbodhi, (present DUNGESHWARI), thereafter meditating under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya in Bihar and becoming the Buddha. After gaining enlightenment, the Buddha started meditating under the Bodhi tree for a week and then meditated one week each at six other places in and around the Bodhi tree until he moved from Bodhgaya to Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh and turned the first wheel of dharma to his first five disciples of the Sangha members. After spending many years preaching the dharma in Bihar and other places in India, he finally attained Mahaparinirvana at the age of 80 at Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh.

The main focus of Bodhgaya, besides the main Mahabodhi temple are the Vajrasana, the seat of enlightenment, and the sacred Bodhi tree which are standing as the witness to that great event in the Life of Buddha. Bodhgaya today is the centre of the Buddhist world and it is well connected by air, rail and road from major destinations all across the world, for the visiting pilgrims and tourists. Historically Bodhgaya is the birthplace of Buddhism with this important place associated with the Life of Buddha. UNESCO World

Heritage Committee inscribed the Mahabodhi temple and its surroundings as a cultural World Heritage Site in 2002. As per the common guidelines, a site management plan was prepared in 2005 and submitted to the World Heritage Committee. There was further intervention by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in regard to the progress of the implementation of recommendations made in the site management plan of 2005. A high level reactive monitoring mission from World Heritage Committee visited Bodhgaya from the 21st to 27th February 2011 and submitted its recommendations and report. The mission met representatives, all local stakeholders in a meeting convened at BTMC office during their visit to Bodhgaya. Based on their recommendation report, a new site management plan of 2014 was prepared by Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee and submitted to the World Heritage Committee in 2015 through the Archaeological Survey of India, with due approval of the Government of Bihar.

The assembly mentions that world heritage property and buffer zones to protect the property. Earlier it was a world heritage site, now further they have clarified it to be a world heritage property. So here because of the ministries concern for designated property, instead of old heritage site, we call it old heritage property.

Earlier a World Heritage Site, now it has started being called a ‘World Heritage Property’. Bodhgaya is growing as an important international place of tourist interest in general – a must-visit, at least once in a lifetime for Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world. The flow of visitors mainly includes pilgrims and general tourists. Visitors including historians, academicians, press and publicity media personnel are increasing year after year. With this trend of continuous increase in flow of visitors and interest in Bodh Gaya from all parts of the world, many agencies from various professions and business are showing interest to get involved or invest in the future development of Bodhgaya, besides the State Government and Central Government’s plans and various schemes for further development of Bodhgaya as a heritage city of international importance.

**Earlier a World Heritage Site, now it has started being called a ‘World Heritage Property’. Bodhgaya is growing as an important international place of tourist interest in general – a must-visit, at least once in a lifetime for Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world.**

**Whatever future plans and projects are proposed to be initiated in Bodhgaya by the public or private sector planners, and willing investors, should focus to maintain and uphold the sanctity of the land with this cultural heritage and values intact.**

The present position of Mahabodhi temple including the holy Bodhi tree as World Heritage Property is well maintained under the control, guidance and patronage of the State Government of Bihar, with the generous donation and support of devotees of the Bodhgaya temple management committee. The holy Bodhi tree is maintained under the technical guidance and supervision of Forest Research Institute, FRI, Dehradun since 2007.

Heritage is thus gradually also stepping into the world of economics. Hence Bodhgaya today, even from the economic point of view, is seen as an unexplored potential site with ample scope for future development.

Appreciating this trend, it is essential to plan and focus on the developmental activities at Bodhgaya with reference and respect to the cultural values and interests of all stakeholders, local goods and service providers. It may also be essential to consider that whatever future plans and projects are proposed to be initiated in Bodhgaya by the public or private sector planners, and willing investors, should focus to maintain and uphold the sanctity of the land with this cultural heritage and values intact, despite the interest of stakeholders, with the Mahabodhi temple complex as the core, and its buffer zone area maintaining the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site. The temple complex is the property of State Government of Bihar on the basis of Bodhgaya Temple Act of 1949.

The State Government is responsible for the management and protection of the property through the Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee and the Advisory board. It also reports that all developmental activities within the premises of this World Heritage Property and at Bodhgaya is growing fast in all spheres of lives and expertise with increase in flow of tourists, public pilgrims. The long-term expectation of the property are to maintain the OUV, the outstanding Universal value of the property. As the site is being visited by pilgrims, tourists, both national and international in large numbers, there is a need to develop infrastructure and public amenities in a big manner. Again the visitor management policy guidelines in site management plan of 2014 recommends the following for the implementation for the “Bodhgaya” and buffer zone areas as world heritage site.

The planning was laid out by Dorjee likewise:

- A multidisciplinary team should be involved in the future management so as to be able to balance the concern of visitor management, latest aspects of living temple with the larger issue of site conservation.
- An inclusive dialogue with stakeholders should guide the planning and implementation of the management plan. The local community needs to be associated with the property and feel a sense of responsibility towards its maintenance. At the same time, the management plan process could be made available for consultation through means of internet media and social networking as an innovative way to reach a larger international community of Buddhists around the world who feel a sense of belonging to this sacred site.
- There is a necessity to create high quality and well-designed visitor amenities based on sensitive design that are located discreetly in the property so as not to detract from the heritage character of the property.
- A multi-pronged interpretation strategy to communicate with the different types and groups of visitors from various regional, geographic, cultural and educational backgrounds is required.
- A multifaceted site management infrastructure to provide amenities to visitors of various economic backgrounds is needed. While it is important to cater to and provide access to all socio-economic backgrounds and allow access to sites at a reasonable price, for those who are able to afford high end services, the site could offer various additions in the form of high quality merchandise to enhance the experience through audio guides and other facilities, keeping in mind the international audience as well.
- There should be an all-inclusive approach to cater to special visitors such as all differently abled and elderly citizens. There should be models and audio tours for the visually impaired.

**The management plan process could be made available for consultation through means of internet media and social networking as an innovative way to reach a larger international community of Buddhists around the world who feel a sense of belonging to this sacred site.**

Bodhgaya as a land of enlightenment of the Buddha presents a lot of scope for future developments and promotion for the need to maintain and uphold the sanctity of this holy land, besides drawing attention to potentiality or scope. This session highlighted the importance of Bodhgaya as the land of enlightenment of Buddha and presented the scenario for developments and to promote both sanctity and economic gains for the benefit of the future generations.



**Bodhgaya as a land of enlightenment of the Buddha presents a lot of scope for future developments and promotion for the need to maintain and uphold the sanctity of this holy land, besides drawing attention to potentiality or scope.**

**Pravin Sinha**, the **Chair** for the session after the presentation commented on what all questions came out of the session – how to make the city a larger city, not only Bodhgaya and not only the spiritual aspect of the city but the city where more than the Mahabodhi temple; but among the residence and the village community, there is some coordination, correlation.

Tourists do come for a spiritual reason, but then they also need a certain infrastructure. That balance has to be there. In many cities there is a relation between the migrant population and the non-migrant population. If it is not managed properly, it can lead to certain discomfort areas. And this city cannot be different than any other city and that is why various development plans have been thought over and proposed. How the civil society can get involved in the process of making this city more liveable has to be understood. How do we develop a city which is not unplanned?





**SPECIAL SESSION**

**SHARED HISTORIES  
AND COMMON DESTINY:  
BODH GAYA &  
SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

**SESSION | 2B**

**11 MARCH 2018**

# SPECIAL SESSION-2B



## CHAIR

**MR. AJANEESH KUMAR**

Deputy Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, India

## PANELLIST

**Pan-Asian Buddhist Manifestations – Glimpsing the Woods Through**

**MS. SUDHA MAHALINGAM**

Journalist and Author, Bengaluru, India

**Case Study of Thai Buddhism-A Religion of Social Harmony and Peace**

**DR. O P JAISWAL**

Former Professor, Patna University, Patna, India

**Cultural Linkages in Building India-Southeast Asia Relations**

**DR. TEMJENMEREN AO**

Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Ajaneesh Kumar, Ms. Sudha Mahalingam, Dr. O P Jaiswal & Dr. Temjenmeren Ao





**Leshan Buddha in the Sichuan province in China is believed to be the biggest Buddha statue in the whole world. It is Maitreyi Buddha, about 71 metres tall. This statue is almost twice as high as the statue of liberty.**

**S**udha Mahalingam, the first speaker of this session presented on **Pan-Asian Buddhist Manifestations – Glimpsing the Woods Through**. She shared that her understanding of Buddhism was gathered from her travels. She got exposed to thousands of Buddhist shrines all over the world and then at times felt that sometime in her previous birth she must have been a Buddhist. Her talk was illustrated with a slide show of the various Buddhist sites she had visited.

Leshan Buddha in the Sichuan province in China is believed to be the biggest Buddha statue in the whole world. It is Maitreyi Buddha, about 71 metres tall. This statue is almost twice as high as the statue of liberty. It took nearly one hundred years to carve it out of a mountain. Buddhists have a penchant for building statues but, here, in Sichuan province, a mountain itself has been made into a statue, because of the three rivers which were creating havoc. Any boat, any ship that sailed through the confluence of these three rivers just disappeared. So there was a monk called Hai Tong who decided he would build a big Buddhist shrine there in the form a statue carved out of a mountain to appease the gods; this should save the boats from disappearing. He started the work in full earnest and continued for a while. But it got stalled midway because they didn't have funds to support the enterprise. Legend has it that he gouged out his eyes as offering. The carving of the mountainside was continued subsequently by another king and took 100 years to build. During the construction, the rubble from the mountain has fallen into the confluence and blocked the river, which is no longer turbulent. Today, Leshan Buddha has become quite the tourist attraction.

Next in discussion was the Bayon temple in Cambodia. She explained that it is a part of the Angkor complex. It is a Khmer temple and is a Mahayana sect Buddhist temple. It was built by King Jayavarman VII. There is some doubt about whether it has the face of Avalokiteswara or that of Jayavarman, the king. But as far as the devout are concerned, Bayon is Buddha. It has undergone several transformations.

Next is Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple, in Java in Indonesia. It is a Mahayana Buddhism temple, built in the 9th century during the reign of King Sailendra. It has nine platforms, six of which are square. On top of it there are three more circular platforms and more than 500 Buddha statues and more than 2000 bas-reliefs. It is a stunningly beautiful temple.

Borobudur is considered a perfect kind of architecture for the Buddhist philosophy. Kamadhatu, Roopdhatu and Arupdhatu, are the circular platforms. Kamadhatu is desire, reign of desire. Roopdhatu is a reign of form. Arupa is formlessness, after which heaven is reached.

Dambulla is in central Sri Lanka. It is a gold-plated Buddha. There are cave temples there in Dambulla with exquisite statuary and paintings dating back to the 1st century.

Bagan is in Myanmar, set in a forest of spires, stupas, temples and pagodas. To date, some 8000 pagodas – also called Payas, have been documented and there are many more, yet to be counted. It is a virtual parade of Payas in the plains of Burma.

Drepung Monastery in Lhasa belongs to the Gelugpa sect which is the same as our Indian Dalai Lama sect. There are three major Tibetan universities of Buddhism: Sera, Ganden and Drepung. Drepung used to have 10000 monks once upon a time, and was called the Nalanda of Tibet.

Elista in Kalmykia, Russia is the only European Buddhist settlement. These Buddhists are nomads originally from the golden horde from Chengiz Khan and they came and settled there and were converted to the Buddhist faith. They are trained now in Gelugpa Buddhism and their abbot, the Chief monk was schooled in Ladakh. So Dalai lama is also their guru.

Ghar Gumpa is in Mustang, a Tibetan province in Nepal. It is located at a high altitude desert of sand. It is so isolated from the rest of the world and it helped to preserve pure Tibetan Buddhist culture which disappeared everywhere else including Tibet. Ghar Gumpa is the oldest Gumpa of the region established by Guru Padmasambava himself. It probably dates back to the 1st century.

Zen Buddhism is a different kind of faith. In Myoshinji Temple complex in Kyoto, Japan, raking of gravel is considered a form of meditation. Raking helps focus the mind in the meditative process. It is a part of the people's daily ritual in this part of the world.

**Elista in Kalmykia, Russia is the only European Buddhist settlement. These Buddhists are nomads originally from the golden horde from Chengiz Khan and they came and settled there and were converted to the Buddhist faith.**

**Whether it is good music, dance, paintings, sculpture, or architecture, every art is nourished and nurtured by religion. Buddhist religion too has its fair share of exquisite architecture of different types. Buddhist architecture often merges with the local aesthetics.**

Buddhists have a penchant to seek out remote and inaccessible places. Phugtal Monastery in Zaskar is one such. One requires to be fit, both mentally and physically, to live in these remote regions.

At Luang Prabang, the former imperial capital of Laos, early mornings, a sacred ritual is played out. At the crack of dawn all the monks go out and seek bhiksha. Those who want to give alms, line up on the street with their offerings and the monks come single file to collect them.

Then, there is Nara in Japan. It is a deer temple where deer are considered sacred. The lanterns and the silence of the temples is conducive to meditation and prayer.

In the high mountains of Nepal, Buddhism is kept alive, not by temples or statues, but just by flags or chortens. And wherever there is a mountain pass, the flags signify the call to the almighty.

Whether it is good music, dance, paintings, sculpture, or architecture, every art is nourished and nurtured by religion. Buddhist religion too has its fair share of exquisite architecture of different types. Buddhist architecture often merges with the local aesthetics. For instance, in Tibet, it is demons of Tantric Buddhism. In all of Asia, Buddhist architecture is embellished, golden and glitters. In Bodhgaya and other places, it is stark and made of rocks. The Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan, which sadly were destroyed, were stunning.

She concluded that through all her travels, she had seen many manifestations of the Buddha, but the single thread that links them all is faith. It takes some insight to see the wood through the trees.



**O.P. Jaiswal** continued in the next session with his presentation on **Case Study of Thai Buddhism- A Religion of Social Harmony and Peace** and shared that Buddhism went to different places, particularly Asia and there it not only mixed with the local culture, it penetrated so deeply that it influenced the entire life pattern of the local people.

At Bodhgaya after achieving enlightenment, Lord Buddha kindled the light which radiated over vast areas, far and wide, changing the lives, thoughts and personality of the masses and the same light is still illuminating the lives of millions and millions of people. This presentation highlights Bodhgaya and its light emphasising its relevance to the present world, especially with a case study of the Thai society. The continued vitality of Buddhism in changing world is due to its close integration with the life of the people practicing social harmony and peace which has permitted it to flourish, despite the encroachment of Islam and Christianity. It has enabled and elevated the people of Asia. It has tamed animal passions of human beings who were in barbaric stages. Buddhism was the religion of the different nations and races of the countries from Afghanistan to China. In India the submerged masses who were not properly taken into Brahminical order found refuge in the Buddhist faith, thus Buddhism became the faith of the world, teaching millions of different races and sons of Asia and Africa who embraced this faith. It must be admitted that Buddhism has enlightened and humanised the people of Asia who have adopted this creed.

The faith seems to have deeply penetrated into all aspects of life for Thai Buddhists. Education, wedding, funeral and religious ceremonies are performed under the guidance of the Buddhist monks in whom the people place their utmost faith and trust. These monks are supposed to devote their whole life for the sake of happiness and well being of others. Every village has a wat, which is a Buddhist temple of some sort. This serves as church, town hall, hotel, recreation centre, school, crematorium and a shelter for the aged and poor. Most important of all is its interweaving with the social system. The minimum noviciate period of three months that every Thai boy or adult serves in a monastery is exemplary. Despite all respect and devotion there is also a charming and debonair quality about that devoutness in the Buddhist faith. The informality with which an ordination is carried out has struck most uninitiated observers as unique. The easy going, openquality about most Buddhist ceremonies shows that merit making is not necessarily burdensome. Buddhism permeates the people's lives to such an extent that the limits to its influence cannot be marked off. It is a religion of universal love, unbounded compassion and

**At Bodhgaya after achieving enlightenment, Lord Buddha kindled the light which radiated over vast areas, far and wide, changing the lives, thoughts and personality of the masses and the same light is still illuminating the lives of millions and millions of people.**

**people enter monkhood either by their own genuine desire or for acquiring knowledge of the dhamma. But the dictum of the custom or as generally is the case, by the two reasons combined, monks of this category return to lay life again as soon as the Lent period is over. This is the reason why accommodation in monasteries or Wats is only full during the Lenten period.**

the middle path rather than of aggressive nature. Responsibility for the individuals' action rests wholly with themselves. Good and evil bring their respective reactions. Buddhism not only fosters self-control but forbids cruelty and the prosecution of others. Free mixing with other people is not hampered by racial or caste isolation and this has enabled the Thai Buddhist to assimilate other nationalities and their cultures.

On the positive side, it has influenced the Thai nation to the extent of penalising those who go against Buddha's commandments. In the field of education, Thailand Wats are still regarded as seats of learning where all men, irrespective of life's positions can go and avail themselves of education and its benefits. Of the formal study of the doctrine, there are three grades with examinations open to both monks and laymen.

Generally, the dhamma and the Pali language studies go hand in hand and take atleast seven years to complete. Of late there has been a new outlook in the education of monks in Thailand with the rapid progress of science and technology. Buddhist leaders of Thailand, monks as well as laymen are awakened to the necessity of imparting broader education to members of the Sangha.

As pointed out, people enter monkhood either by their own genuine desire or for acquiring knowledge of the dhamma. But the dictum of the custom or as generally is the case, by the two reasons combined, monks of this category return to lay life again as soon as the Lent period is over. This is the reason why accommodation in monasteries or Wats is only full during the Lenten period.

A wedding ceremony has also been influenced by the Buddhist doctrine. Traditionally there are two points to be borne in mind regarding marriage. Firstly, marriage is regarded as a contract and must be performed before witnesses. Secondly, it is only after finishing his schooling and entering Bhikkuhood that a man should think of marriage.

The propitiatory ceremony for three-day old baby has its origin in the superstitious belief that the spirits are responsible for the birth of a child and its physical and mental characteristics. According to this belief, the spirits are continually engaged in moulding human forms from a human

reservoir of great depth. These are on the lookout for stray souls with which the readymade human shapes are to be invested.

The role of monasteries in village life of Thai people is immense. The monastery is the most important institution in the life of Thai people. In Bangkok many of its functions have been taken over by various branches of city or national government but it still persists as a symbol for the monastery. In the country, however, social life of the community continues to revolve around the temple compound both literally and figuratively. The Thai monasteries and enclosures are surrounded by a wall containing a number of buildings – small and large, its principal access running east to west with the entrance on the east. There is no regular plan. A large monastery may contain a temple for lay worshippers, a sacred temple for monks, a dormitory for monks and novices and temple boys, a library and a number of rest houses, a stupa and frequently the public primary school. Not all of these are necessarily in every monastery.

The services of the village monks are required by the people for most religious ceremonies. The only important exceptions are the agricultural rituals. Even if the villager doesn't go to the monastery, he comes in daily contact with the monks for it is one of the duties of the monks to beg for the daily food. Every morning the streets, lanes and waterways are filled with stream of yellow clad monks silently going their way with begging bowls of iron or brass. In central and southern Thailand, the individual families provide cooked rice, curry and other foods but in the north some villages have divided themselves into areas, each with a Chief, to provide food for the monks on a fixed day. Giving food to the monks like other services and gifts provided to the monastery brings the donors merit. The most meritorious act which a rural Thai male can perform is to join a monastery as a novice or monk for some period of time. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that for some reasons or other, about 45% of the eligible Thai men in a typical village have never been ordained either as a novice or monks. Those who have served however are in a much higher and prestigious position. The future leaders of the community, religious life usually come from this group and their words carry more weight in the village council meeting.

Membership of the Buddhist order is not stable. The Sangh usually has its greatest membership during the Buddhist Lent Vaasa, which occurs during the rainy season between planting and harvesting.

**The role of monasteries in village life of Thai people is immense. The monastery is the most important institution in the life of Thai people. In Bangkok many of its functions have been taken over by various branches of city or national government but it still persists as a symbol for the monastery.**

Life in the village monastery is not physically arduous. It is not idle. The day begins early, a large part of time is spent in study of the Pali scriptures, the history of Buddhism, the history of conventions. If the monk intends to do advanced study, he must take an examination conducted by the Ministry of Education. Some visiting between a monk and his family or parents is permitted. The monk's furnishings, though sparse, are not uncomfortable.

Although the village women cannot enter into a monastic life, they nevertheless acquire a deep and lasting devotion to the Buddhist faith and perform many acts in the form of gifts and offerings to support the monastery and to gain merit. Older women may join an order of nuns but this group is very small and mostly limited to the Bangkok area.

They play no part in religious ritual but perform various service functions. All Thai religious ceremonials have an air of sociability and festivity. It is through this aspect of religious service that the person finds satisfaction for many of his social and recreational needs.

Villagers do not feel imposed upon when asked to contribute to the building fund of a monastery in another village, for this gives them an opportunity to acquire merit. There is a strong tendency to build new monasteries rather than repair old ones since the building of a new monastery is defined as the highest form of merit making.

Buddhism while being practiced here in India travelled to Far East Asian countries. Thailand is an example for a study about what Lord Buddha preached and what Lord Buddha modelled his order upon, for the same pattern is being followed still in Thailand with vibrancy.

**Life in the village monastery is not physically arduous. It is not idle. The day begins early, a large part of time is spent in study of the Pali scriptures, the history of Buddhism, the history of conventions.**



**Temjenmeren Ao** continued the discussion with a focus on the **Foundation of India's relation with South East Asia.** India's relations with Asia are rooted in socio-cultural ties. During the national movement, Indian historians started to dwell in India's historical past and in order to invoke the feeling of nationalism amongst the people were able to rediscover the

deep and abiding linkages, cultural, social linkages that India had with Asia. They go back to as early as 200 BC.

The Indian merchants were one of the the first to venture into the region for carrying out trade, which laid the road map for the movement of various religious missionaries from the brahmins to the Buddhist monks to enter into the region and spread their theological teachings.

Today Asia has the largest followers of Buddhist faith. India being the birthplace of the Buddha, and with all the important Buddhist sites in India and Nepal, there has been a movement of various pilgrimages and tourism that has been happening over the last many centuries. India and Southeast Asia, civilizational, cultural and people-to-people contact has reinforced the perception of the region as a land of golden opportunity. While one talks of India's relation with the region of Southeast Asia, their shared socio-cultural ties dating back to many centuries remain to be the key element and in this lies the foundation of the continued and sustained relationship that India enjoys with the region of Southeast Asia till today.

The map of Southeast Asia highlights the ten countries of Southeast Asia that collectively form the association of Southeast Asian nations known as Asean. The socio-cultural aspect of India's ties with Asean is very much evident given the fact that it has been proposed by our Prime Minister at the recently concluded India-Asean Commemorative Summit which was held last January in New Delhi to declare 2019 as the year of Asean-India tourism. There has also been a proposal to set up tangible and intangible cultural heritage circuits to further promote tourism. The proposed Buddhist tourism circuit could be important as it would attract tourists and pilgrims between the regions.

The cultural aspect has also remained the major glue that has held up the relationship between India and ASEAN and today they seek to address new areas of cooperation for the progress and growth of the areas of mutual interest among the two entities, through Asean-India Tourism, project on Sea Link to Suvarnabhoomi, and mapping inscriptions along the Mekong River.

**Today Asia has the largest followers of Buddhist faith. India being the birthplace of the Buddha, and with all the important Buddhist sites in India and Nepal, there has been a movement of various pilgrimages and tourism that has been happening over the last many centuries.**



**The ASEAN-India relations were re-drawn firstly through the 'Look East' policy in the early 1990s and when significant improvements were made into the relations, the announcement of the 'Act East' policy provided the much needed push to further propel the relations**

1. Even though India-ASEAN relations go back into antiquity and have been nurtured by the unique bonds, our diplomatic relations is comparatively recent; established only after India's independence. Further, the imperatives of the Cold War geopolitics inevitably drew India and ASEAN apart, both looking at each other from the Cold War prism – in which India was seen to be pro-Soviet and some States in Southeast Asia as pro-West. Until about the late-1980s it was customary to look at India-ASEAN relations largely in a shared civilizational, cultural, and historical prism.
2. While this still forms an important basis of the relationship, the changes following the end of the Cold war that witnessed, inter-alia the emergence of new centres of power, partnerships, and alliances, ensured that the old relations are re-evaluated and reshaped. The ASEAN-India relation was no exception to this especially as India's economic, strategic, and political profile continued to grow.
3. Further, the events of rising extremist violence in Southeast Asia that followed after 9/11 terrorist attack in the US along with India's own long struggle with acts of terrorism brought into the limelight the issue of security and stability in the region. This has set in motion the need for the expansion of the India-ASEAN relations if any real progress and growth in the region was to be achieved. The realisation of the need towards expanding the scope of the relationship beyond the socio-cultural ties and economics thus, gained attention.
4. Thus, the ASEAN-India relations were re-drawn firstly through the 'Look East' policy in the early 1990s and when significant improvements were made into the relations, the announcement of the 'Act East' policy provided the much needed push to further propel the relations. One of the major components of the 'Act East' policy is that of establishing a robust line of physical as well as digital connectivity.
5. Connectivity which has ensured an uninterrupted people-to-people contact over the last hundreds of years for religious pilgrimage and

trade, has and would continue to remain the foundation of India's close ties with the region of Southeast Asia. The shared cultural and civilizational linkages between the regions will continue to provide an important underpinning to the development of the India-ASEAN strategic partnership. There is an agreement amongst the ASEAN states and India on the need towards establishing measures to intensify hard connectivity such as road, waterway, aviation, and digital connectivity.

6. The importance of connectivity as one of the major driver in the overall ASEAN-India relations is very much evident given that fact that last December the first-ever ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit was held at New Delhi, which saw the active participation from India and all the ten ASEAN states.
7. This would help in not only strengthening socio-cultural ties but would also help in doing inter- regional business, carry out trade and commerce and thus, would further enhance growth in other areas of cooperation. Ongoing projects such as the Kaladan multi modal transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway, and initiatives such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement, once completed would allow for the free flow of people, ideas, and goods.
8. The move towards enhancing digital connectivity also indicates other areas of soft connectivity/ infrastructure that needs to be sustainable, digital, financial, seamless logistic and of regulatory excellence. This would enable further cooperation in the area of trade, commerce, and security, while helping cement the historically significant socio-cultural ties. These new areas of connectivity part of the ASEAN Master Plan 2025 – which India also supports – indicates that today connectivity cannot be restricted only to road but needs to expand into the sea, air, and space, while providing new scope for cooperation and collaboration in terms of capacity and capability building.

**The move towards enhancing digital connectivity also indicates other areas of soft connectivity/ infrastructure that needs to be sustainable, digital, financial, seamless logistic and of regulatory excellence.**

9. Given the strong and historical ties of religion, culture, and civilization, that are shared by India and Southeast Asia, the basic foundations for a close relationship already exist in which connectivity through land and sea did play a major role and today with emphasis on further expanding the overall relationship, it would play a major role.



**During the commemoration event marking 25 years of India-Asean relations, it was realised that features like Ramayana is prevalent in majority of these Southeast Asian countries, including countries like Indonesia and Malaysia which are Muslim majority countries.**

**Ajaneesh Kumar** the Chair for the Session concluded after participating in the interaction with the floor. He summed up saying that to an extent our engagements with Southeast Asia, south Asia as well as East Asia has been very strong and historical. It is civilizational. Other than Buddhism, there are ample reflections of Hinduism in this part of the world. Some called it Swarnabhoomi, Land of the Gold. It was also called Tokola, Land of the Cardamom. Another name was Narikel Dweep, Land of the Coconut.

During the commemoration event marking 25 years of India-Asean relations, it was realised that features like Ramayana is prevalent in majority of these Southeast Asian countries, including countries like Indonesia and Malaysia which are Muslim majority countries. All the presentations made by the speakers stress on that fact that we had a glorious past, but all have to remember more or perhaps focus more on where this important resource, this important wealth of soft power connections, will lead into the future.



# EXHIBITION

## AVALOKITESVARA/GUANYIN: FEMININE SYMBOLISM IN BUDDHIST ART



The exhibition on “Avalokitesvara/Guanyin: Feminine symbolism in Buddhist Art” was displayed at Kagyupa Monlam International Trust, Bodhgaya by Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi. It remained open from 9 March to 31 March, 2018.

The central theme of the exhibition was the representations of feminine symbolism in the images of the Avalokitesvara, the most popular Mahayana Bodhisattva as his cult has played an important role in the growth of Mahayana Buddhism and art. The images of Avalokitesvara in India are not feminine, although the body has a sensual form. The well-known painting of Padmapani in Cave No.1 of Ajanta no doubt has a sensuous body, but taken as a whole, looks a male Bodhisattva. The paintings of the famous artist Ravi Varma, do not show Hindu Gods as strongly masculine. Essential features of manliness like muscles, broad shoulders are present but there is a touch of conspicuous feminine quality in the images.

It is not known exactly when the Guan-yin came to be regarded as female deity for the first time. Majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the transformation of Guan-yin into a female deity took place around the 11th century A. D. but this seems to have been the product of a long process and this might have been influenced by many factors combined to bring the sexual transformation.

The representatives of the monasteries, number of tourists and pilgrims, delegates of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues and students and teachers continued to visit the all-day open exhibition on all four days and they had a glimpse of the distinct genre in the Buddhist art which is a representation of the the hitherto underrepresented feminine aspect. The exhibition could be successful due to the gracious grant of the venue by Kagyupa Monlam International Trust, Bodhgaya along with all attendant technical support.



**The central theme of the exhibition was the representations of feminine symbolism in the images of the Avalokitesvara, the most popular Mahayana Bodhisattva as his cult has played an important role in the growth of Mahayana Buddhism and art.**



# CULTURAL EVENING

## Chaar Yaar



The performances of the Chaar Yaar group rendered the cultural evening resonate with the ethos of diversity through the music and song for the delegates and participants in the evening of 10 March, 2018. The guests and the audience remained soulfully spell bound and they eventually immersed in the performance.

In the beginning of the performance, Chaar Yaar traversed the path of Sufi texts dating back to the 12-13th century, beginning with Baba Farid and Rumi and ending with Khwaja Ghulam Farid of the late 19th century. The group then started looking at the cultural bridges across continents. This involved experimenting with songs and poetry spread across various cultures globally and different timelines. In the end of the performance, this led to the incorporation of music and poetry as diverse as that of Brecht, Lorca, Tagore, Puran Singh, Hikmet, Hamzatov, Faiz, Nagarjun as well as the creation of musical bridges; to give one example, between Rumi, John Lennon, Kabir and Bulle Shah in the same song.

With much appreciation for Chaar Yaar group for their deeply engaged and blissful performance, Harsh Singh gave the vote of thanks to the group.

**The group started looking at the cultural bridges across continents. This involved experimenting with songs and poetry spread across various cultures globally and different timelines.**





# CHILDREN'S FEST

Engaging Children with the Life of Buddha



The children selected from the government and public schools of this region participated and expressed their creativity through the multiple activities on the occasion on the third day of the dialogues on **11 March, 2018** on the occasion of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogue at Takshila School, Bodh Gaya. The programme began with the movie screening on the Legend of the Buddha, an Indian animated film directed by Shamboo Falke, produced by Stalin Saravanan and written by Caarthick Raju and Ramesh Karthikeyan. It traces the journey of Siddhartha from being a prince to becoming Buddha. In a very fascinating way it shows how after discovering the sufferings of man, Prince Siddhartha Gautama renounces his family and worldly possessions to be an ascetic and attains enlightenment through years of penance.

After the film show, **Peggy Mohan** performed with a guitar. Through her musical performance, she presented the journey of the life of Buddha, attainment of enlightenment and his preaching among the children. Her understanding behind the conceptualization of the programme was that children can be taught language and concepts through making use of music. The children and even teachers and educators of the schools were deeply engaged and enjoyed the learning programme through music.

Following the film and musical presentation, children presented their paintings on Buddha. Their creative expressions were appreciated by all. At the end of the programme, **Shekhar Dutt**, the Chief Guest distributed awards to those five children whose paintings were chosen as the best. On this occasion **Geeta Kumari** was also awarded for her contribution in training of quality teacher educators and teachers. The Principal of Takshila School gave a vote of thanks for the Chief Guest and the participants.

**The movie screening on the Legend of the Buddha, an Indian animated film directed by Shamboo Falke, produced by Stalin Saravanan and written by Caarthick Raju and Ramesh Karthikeyan. It traces the journey of Siddhartha from being a prince to becoming Buddha.**







# HERITAGE WALK



The Bodh Gaya region is home to over a million tourists and pilgrims each year from within India and across the globe, particularly the SouthEast Asian countries. The delegates and participants primarily visited multiple forms of intangible and tangible heritage, culture and history of Bodh Gaya and its region on **March 12, 2018**.

The planning of the heritage walk was experimental in which the group collectively inquired on the visited sites and discussed the questions which emerged with expertise on the sites. In this way, they could also understand the significance of the local history through dealing the questions on how to learn and build understanding about the sites and their historical and archeological context. The sites visited were the Bodhi Tree, Mahabodhi Temple, the Sujata Stupa, Great Buddha Statue, Bodh Gaya Archeological museum etc.

**Max Deeg** and **Manish Kumar** volunteered to guide the delegates and explained the historical context of the sites during the day long heritage walks.

**The planning of the heritage walk was experimental in which the group collectively inquired on the visited sites and discussed the questions which emerged with expertise on the sites.**









# RECOMMENDATIONS

SESSION | 4

11 MARCH 2018

# SESSION-4



## MODERATOR

### **DR. SUSHMITA DUTT**

Educationist and Research Consultant, New Delhi, India

## PANELLIST

### **MR. SANJAY KUMAR**

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi, India

### **DR. SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA**

Lead Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi, India

### **DR. ABHISHEK AMAR**

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Hamilton College, New York, USA

### **DR. MAX DEEG**

Professor, School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University, U K

### **MS. RICHA SHARMA**

Programme Officer, Deshkal Society, Delhi, India

IMAGES ABOVE | LEFT TO RIGHT:

Dr. Sushmita Dutt, Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma, Dr. Abhishek Amar, Dr. Max Deeg & Ms. Richa Sharma



There are two broad sets of recommendations which emerged from the deliberations and discussions during the dialogues. The first set of recommendations deal with the how the Dialogues will be structured and organised in the future, in order to capture multiple voices and divergent views to create a synergy of collective exuberance, action, participation and celebration among the delegates, participants, presenters, moderators etc. The second set of recommendations respond to the objective of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action frameworks for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region.



### First Set

**The first set of recommendations deal with the how the Dialogues will be structured and organised in the future, in order to capture multiple voices and divergent views to create a synergy of collective exuberance, action, participation and celebration among the delegates, participants, presenters, moderators etc.**

Sanjay Kumar delineated the framework of these objectives which was set by the Dialogues, which can be gauged as to how much we have moved forward, what kind of weakness we have, what we have achieved to summarise, it is important to review the set of objectives we set out to achieve with the Dialogues. The first objective was to facilitate knowledge and develop an action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region. Equally important was the second objective, which was working for the inclusion of rich multiple heritages of the region into pedagogical content and learning processes by engaging with schools and universities. The third was to promote ethical heritage tourism and create community-based livelihood enterprises through engaging with government institutions, initiatives, tourists and pilgrimages in the Bodh Gaya region. The last was to extend relationships and build sustainable networks between Bodh Gaya and Southeast Asia with a glorious recall of the historical and contemporary relationship for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development in the region.

With reference to these objectives, even with certain limitations and questions, the immediate outputs which could be achieved are the following:

- Generating, collecting and disseminating the information and knowledge on Bodh Gaya from a multidisciplinary approach
- Creating a network with multiple stakeholders
- Developing of a vision for Bodh Gaya



**Sudhirendar Sharma**, the next speaker commented that after all the plans that had been going on for a year, the beginning had been rather modest, and the beginning is what gives more indications on the road ahead. At beginning of our planning, there were two tangible objectives in the document – in terms of probing questions. In the dialogues, some questions than have been answered and some new questions have come up, which is indeed a positive sign.

What lies ahead is how to articulate the rest of the questions that came up, how to structure these questions into an action plan. There are linkages and interconnections which have to be explored. It could be concluded from the sessions that a strong interconnection between heritage and history, geography and development, spirituality and society is there. Within these six words itself, the whole exercise or the whole thought process can be encompassed and turned into a possibility.

When the idea of the dialogues has become a reality and after the success of three days of discussion and debate, there are rays of hope. There are many opportunities that have to be explored. Working and trying to find linkages between these different circles of opportunities itself will bring out many more important points. The Bodhi temple is itself one geometric circle and around it will be many more concentric circles of space for work. There are immense possibilities here in Bodh Gaya. And in terms of output, as already mentioned, a brief document that provides a synthesis of the deliberations will be brought out. From this synthesis document one can share with donors who have supported this initiative and the potential donors who are perhaps waiting and looking

**A strong interconnection between heritage and history, geography and development, spirituality and society is there. Within these six words itself, the whole exercise or the whole thought process can be encompassed and turned into a possibility.**



forward to what kind of outcomes are forthcoming. That means there is a further challenge ahead to raise more resources, increase the network, and expand the contexts. Fellowships, scholarships and a lot more can be thought about. For scholarships, care has to be taken about the kind of framework that can be built/chosen within which scholars can be invited, and then there can be the fellowships. The two linkages – scholarship and fellowship, can be linked together and what format it takes, what shape it takes, how it evolves into an ongoing process, that is important to be captured from this exercise.



**A**bhishek Amar spoke next. He said that he has been working on Bodh Gaya for a long time and has always felt the need and scope to work here. He has seen Bodh Gaya change from 1990s onwards and has always felt a need for something revolutionary that could happen. He said that he has attended several conferences either on Buddhism or at least related to Bodh Gaya but these have never been in Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya is changing. So many things that are happening which also lead one to feel irritation, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness. It makes one think: what really is Bodh Gaya? What really is going on here? Is there a way to make sense of it as people?

What exactly is culture, what exactly is urbanism, what exactly does development mean, and what exactly does Buddhism mean. Is it the ideology, the religion... what exactly is it?

And we each have our definition. So maybe this Dialogue is a better platform for not only academics or policy makers but also practitioners, and local stakeholders. Some senior monks here are trying to understand and not simply sitting through hardcore Buddhist studies panels, they were also sitting through architectural issues or temple management committee issues and things like that. So we talk to them not really as, “oh, these are monks and they should be concerned about spiritual domain and why are they sitting through these panels.” That is where the potential of a future is, where these Dialogues will help bring together multiple stakeholders to Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya Dialogues is a platform which can bring people who are working at different Buddhist sites

**Dialogue is a better platform for not only academics or policy makers but also practitioners, and local stakeholders.**

or Hindu sites together. It is a platform that we are imagining for people who are not simply scholars but also practitioners, also travel writers, also people who like to travel and think about these things in a careful fashion, in a critical fashion. So that is where this platform is heading, where one can think about creating a dialogue between people who do urban archaeology, people who do history or religion, it will maybe help if we all think about and know about these issues in a better manner. And that is where I see this heading. The Dialogue is about this: listening to everything that people are thinking about, that people have heard about, that people are grappling with. So that is a good beginning having a bright future.

Everybody likes to use the word Interdisciplinary. What does it really mean? This needs to be thought about as well. That is where the future for this dialogue is heading.



**M**ax Deeg emphasised that speakers before had mentioned that the Dialogues that were held for the first time was a kind of trial, the first of its kind. Things could be felt to be working, intense interaction were held more during coffee breaks, during the tea breaks than during the sessions. He pointed out several aspects where the Dialogues in future could be improved.

The historians, the religionist, the art historian or the archaeologist or the environmentalist could all really get a dialogue going. There are different ways of approaching it. It is just one idea which can be modified and there may be different opinions. The organizers would be happy to give more of those kind of suggestions.

And then on the question of the stakeholders, a very important point was made: that it would probably be a very good idea to include, the villages around. The monastic communities could be engaged a lot more than they were. They are not only engaged with spiritual development, but they are actually very much, very often, engaged with the problems in situ

**The Dialogue is about this: listening to everything that people are thinking about, that people have heard about, that people are grappling with. So that is a good beginning having a bright future.**

in Bodh Gaya – pollution, diseases, all these kind of issues are important for the monasteries, for the monastics as well. They are natural dialogue partners and should be brought in a little more.



### Second Set

- There is an urgent need to develop a framework for a plan with strategic directions for the development of Bodh Gaya as a heritage city that foregrounds ecology, sustainability, and social inclusion. This will also require revisiting the Master Plan for Bodh Gaya between 2003 and 2006. The approach for the framework needs to consider the location of Bodh Gaya at the centre of Buddhist Circuit in India. The development planning of Bodh Gaya needs to also be integrated with Gaya town keeping in view a twin city approach.
- It is necessary to promote ethical heritage tourism that supports and fosters community based livelihoods and enterprises through engaging with institutions, initiatives, tourists and pilgrims in the Bodh Gaya region.
- There is a requirement for developing content and learning materials for the school children in order to build an understanding of the teaching and learning fundamentals of Buddha, Buddhism, including archeology, and the history of Buddhist circuits in Bihar. Equally important, there is a need to develop modules for the teachers which address the question on how the teachers teach and interact in the classroom in this regard. The piloting of the initiative in this regard may begin from Bodh Gaya.
- Destination Branding of Bodh Gaya through TV, radio, website, and social media is a prerequisite for promotion of Bodh Gaya in the South and East Asian countries in particular and globally in general.
- There is a requirement for the generation of a knowledge base about Bodh Gaya through research, documentation and case studies in the light of Buddha, Buddhism, archeology and heritage of this region.

**the question of the stakeholders, a very important point was made: that it would probably be a very good idea to include, the villages around. The monastic communities could be engaged a lot more than they were.**

- There is a need to strengthen relationships and build sustainable networks between Bodh Gaya 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.

Concluding the session, the moderator of the session **Sushmita Dutt**, put an emphasis on the hard work put in by the Deshkal team that had been working to put the Dialogues in place and make all the detailed arrangements, detailed planning so that the entire dialogues could go through smoothly with so many people attending from so many different parts of the world. She also said that she hopes that a direction for all and maybe some action will spring from these dialogues.

Delivering the vote of thanks, **Richa Sharma** expressed deep gratitude to the Chairpersons, moderators, panellists and the distinguished participants who took much pain to travel across the continents, states here in India opting for multiple modes of commuting and arriving at Bodh Gaya. She extended special thanks to the Chaar Yaar group who transformed the ambience of one the evenings with their lilting and intellectually exhilarating performance. The principal and the teachers of Takshila School were specially mentioned for hosting the Children’s Fest. A deep sense of Deshkal Society’s institutional indebtedness for Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts was expressed for extending support since inception in multiple ways through hosting the consultative workshop which consolidated the design and partnership for the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues and the display of a distinct exhibition. The manager and the staff of Royal Residency who provided the necessary support and technical arrangement for the entire dialogues were commended for their dedication for serving the distinguished guests and the delegates of the dialogues. Last but not least, the dialogues would not have possible without the generous support and cooperation of dialogues partners which demonstrated the collective spirit for realizing the agenda of the dialogues.

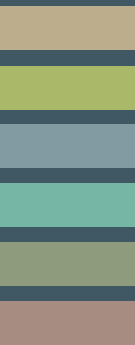
Honouring the delegates with the Mementoes followed after the vote of thanks and the same was given in the form of a leaf of Bodhi Tree and scarf received from the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee.

**Destination Branding of Bodh Gaya through TV, radio, website, and social media is a prerequisite for promotion of Bodh Gaya in the South and East Asian countries in particular and globally in general.**

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The *Dialogues* that 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 the Buddha's legacy on enlightenment and compassion.



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