



**DESH  
KAL**

**2020  
2021**

 **DESHKAL SOCIETY**  
Knowledge with Practice

# Annual Report





# The 3rd Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues: Reflections and Insights

The 3rd Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues was organized by Deshkal Society in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and in association with Indian Council of World Affairs, and NTPC with the goal of encouraging informed dialogue on multiple themes under the umbrella of 'Sustainable Development, Heritage and Enlightenment.' The 3rd edition of the Dialogues was held at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi on 19th-20th December 2020.

Essentially, the 3rd Edition was a continuation of the discussions and deliberations that were initiated through

the 1st Edition of the dialogues held on March 9-12, 2018 at the World Heritage Site of Bodh Gaya and the 2nd Edition that was held on March 23-24, 2019 at IGNCA, New Delhi. The multi stakeholder dialogues brought together reputed institutions of the government and non-government including public and private sectors in India, in a hybrid format that included both offline and online sessions.

The 3rd Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues created 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.

Following the soulful and meditative effects generated by the performance on Sitar by Dr Sumita Chakravarti, Assistant Professor, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi, the plenary session began with a few words from Dr Pravin Sinha, Member, World Economic Association, who moderated the session. In his speech, Dr. Sinha underlined that the relevance and importance of Buddhist philosophy and ideology has only increased in the current world. Dr. Sinha then invited Mr Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society to deliver the welcome speech and share the context of the dialogues. He



**The Dialogues and the deliberations underlined the need for setting up the Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre in Bodh Gaya that will create a ground to develop organic relationship between the knowledge and practice in this region through research, documentation and case studies. The centre is envisaged to have a pivotal role for connecting and disseminating the knowledge output to the researchers and more than a million enlightened tourists and pilgrims who visit the region annually.**

highlighted that the pursuit for exploring interconnections in a dialogical manner was central to the deliberations of the dialogues especially with reference to the following objectives:

The key purpose of the Third edition of the Dialogues is to create a ground for an institutional and sustainable knowledge base through the Online Course on Bodh Gaya as well as the Bodh Gaya Multimedia Digital heritage Centre.

The Dialogues will also generate meaningful and constructive deliberations on multiple themes of Buddhism and Bodh Gaya like heritage, culture and religion, in public and policy domains

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.

Following Mr Sanjay Kumar, Dr. Shakti Sinha, Director General International Buddhist Confederation New Delhi, was invited to share his thoughts as a Guests of Honor. Dr. Shakti Sinha underlined that Buddhism is a strongly developed philosophy. However, there are also many misconceptions with regards to Buddhism. Meditation, he

cited, is a good example. Unlike the general perception that meditation is meant to achieve peace of mind, he reminded that meditation should enable one to face the realities of life and live in the present. Taking inspiration from this idea, he said, we should tackle the realities of today especially with regards to Bodh Gaya, be that in terms of the lack of infrastructure or the lack of accessibility. The good intentions and thoughts should now be converted into tangible action. It is also important to think whether the approach to Bodh Gaya could be changed, by involving the local community and taking their interests into consideration.

Next, Dr. D.M. Mulay, Hon'ble Member, NHRC, Government of India, New Delhi, was invited to share his thoughts and vision. Dr. Mulay pointed out that in order to understand Bodh Gaya and to initiate deliberations and dialogues on the same, it is important to understand the concept of unity in our society, which is rooted in the tradition that we are all one. He welcomed the idea of a setting up a Heritage Centre at Bodh Gaya and added that it had the potential to become a knowledge centre that gives novel perspectives and vision to the entire world.

Following Dr Mulay's words, Mr. Ganga Kumar, Joint Secretary, Govt.

of India, shared his thoughts. Mr Kumar emphasised that the dialogues, discussions and thoughts thus generated should not be limited to intellectuals and that there is a need for it to be translated and connected to the common people. This, he added, can only be made possible by converting the thoughts of Buddha and Buddhism into intangible ideas of well being. Sites like Bodh Gaya should not be limited as mere centres of tourism; rather their cultural aspect has to be given equal importance, if not more. He also added that the proposed online course could consider including performance art and films under the areas covered.

The session was also graced by Dr. Sekhar Dutt, Former Governor, Chhattisgarh who joined virtually. Dr Dutt spoke on the importance of Buddhist thought in the current world. Beyond being a religion, he pointed out that Buddhism kept forward a philosophy, a scientific mentality. Underlining that the ideals kept forward by Buddhism, was more important in the modern world than ever before, he reminded that the present generation, should ensure that they leave the earth as it was or possible even better than it was, for the next generation.

The Chair for the session Dr Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNC concluded by highlighting the five 'R's that needed to be taken into consideration while taking the message of Buddhism and the relevance of Bodh Gaya, forward. The first one is Reach, which tells us the importance of ensuring the reach of Buddhist thoughts and teachings. The second one is Research, whereby novel ideas in research have to be promoted. The third is Resource. Beyond governmental and private funding, resources could be found from the people whereby the people will also find a sense of belonging. Fourth point is reference, where we need to clarify whether Bodh Gaya is going to follow the reference point put forth by other religious centres or whether it was going to create a reference point of its own, for the entire world, whereas the fifth point called for the rejuvenation of culture, towards which institutions like IGNC have been working.





The plenary session came to an end with a Presentation prepared By Dr. Abhishek Amar, Associate Professor, Hamilton College, USA, titled Online Course On Art, Heritage And Religion Of Bodhgaya, which was presented by Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary Deshkal Society, on behalf of Dr. Abhishek Amar.

An Exhibition titled Jeevika: Symbol of Women Empowerment - A Photography Show by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society was inaugurated by the Guests of Honor and the Member Secretary of IGNCA. Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), an autonomous society under Rural Development Department, Govt. of Bihar has been designated as State Rural Livelihoods Mission by Rural Development Department, Government of Bihar to scale up the "JEEVIKA" model in all 534 Blocks of 38 Districts in Bihar under National Rural Livelihood Mission. It is also implementing "National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)" with key objectives of Development of 100 Model CLFs, Digital Financing, Value Chain Intervention, Organic Cluster Development, Enterprise Promotion, Skill Development & Placement, Digitization of CBOs' transactions and

Capitalization of CBOs etc. in 89 Blocks across 18 districts of Bihar. So far JEEVIKA has been able to reach out to nearly 1.17 Crore rural poor households by organizing them into 10 Lakh women Self Help Groups under 60955 Village Organizations and 1085 Cluster Level Federations.

The dialogues manifested itself through a mosaic of events such as plenary session, panel discussions, film show, and an exhibition. Through the two days, the 3rd edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues had detailed deliberations on the themes of Buddhism, Philosophy Science and Architecture, State Civil Society and Heritage City Plan of Bodh Gaya, Heritage and School, Shared Histories and Relations Between India And South East Asian Countries etc.

The first day began with lasting notes of music and witnessed the plenary session, an insightful exhibition, a film screening and engaging discussions. The first panel of the day was around the theme Shared Histories and Fostering the Relations Between India and South East Asian Countries with Reference to the Rising Role Of Buddhism in India's Soft Power And Bodh Gaya. This engaging session was followed by

a visual presentation with the movie screening of the film White Robes Saffron Dreams. Directed by Ms. Teena Amrit Gill, White Robes, Saffron Dreams is a film on gender, discrimination and inter sectionality in Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. Through the life of a young monk and a Mae Chi (Thai nun who wears white and takes 8 precepts or vows) the film examines the differential treatment of women and men by Buddhist institutions, and Thai society; at the same time looking at the spaces women practitioners have carved out for themselves - despite all odds. The film screening was followed by an engaging conversation between Dr. Shovana Narayan, distinguished Kathak Performer & Scholar with Dr. Sudhir Lall, Professor and Acting Head, Kalakosa Division, IGNCA, New Delhi around the life of Buddha, gender and contemporary world. The day however continued with a virtual session in the evening, on Heritage Centre On Art, Architecture And Religion: Relevance And Possibilities In Bodh Gaya that was held via google-meet.

The second and final day of the event was held entirely in the virtual mode with three important sessions. The central focus of this day was Heritage in relation



University, Shri Kishore Darak, Educationist and Manager, Education at Tata Trusts, Dr. Anuja, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi, Dr. Vikash Ranjan, MPhil/ PhD International Relations, JNU, New Delhi, Dr. Sneha Bhagat, Centre for Canadian, US and Latin American Studies, School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi etc.

At the end of the two day long dialogues, a set of recommendations were generated responding to the objectives of the dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action frameworks for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development in India in particular and the rest of the world in general.

As part of the immediate outcomes, members of the dialogues were informed that a report (print and digital) based on the deliberations and discussions in the dialogues would be published session-wise short videos would be uploaded on YouTube. The report and episodes on YouTube would be an effective public platform for disseminating the key messages and outcomes of the dialogue in the public and policy domains, as well as creating a ground for future dialogues.

The Dialogues and the deliberations underlined the need for setting up the Multimedia Digital Heritage Centre in Bodh Gaya that will create a ground to develop organic relationship between the knowledge and practice in this region through research, documentation and case studies. The centre is envisaged to have a pivotal role for connecting and disseminating the knowledge output to the researchers and more than a million enlightened tourists and pilgrims who visit the region annually.

There is a 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.

to Buddhism in general and Bodh Gaya in particular. The day began with a session on the Art, Heritage and Buddhism in India. This was followed by a panel on Heritage Education, Teachers and Schools in Bihar with Special Reference to Bodh Gaya. The Dialogues were then concluded with a Valedictory session in the afternoon. Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Jammu & Kashmir, delivered the Valedictory Address. The key message of the valedictory address was that the teachings of Buddha and the long philosophical tradition of Buddhism gave its civilizational spirit to India since the days of Buddha. Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Hon'ble President, IGNC, chaired the session and formally concluded the Dialogues. The Dialogues ended with the vote of thanks by Shri Jai Prakash Senior Consultant, Deshkal Society.

The selection of the themes and topics was conceptualized by an interdisciplinary/cross disciplinary 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 second 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 key speakers from UK and USA, in addition to experts and guests of honor from different states in India. The dialogues were also attended by scholars, development practitioners, policy makers and members of civil society.

Some among the distinguished contributors to the dialogues were Dr. Bijoy Kumar Choudhary, Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna, Mr. Uday Sahay, Author and Chairman & Director, SAUV Communications, Shri. Niraj Kumar, Author and Deputy Secretary, Govt. of India, Dr. Gautam Kumar Jha, Centre for Chinese & Southeast Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi, Dr. Max Deeg, Professor in Buddhist Studies, School of History, Archaeology and Religion Cardiff University, UK, Dr. Janice Leoshko, Associate Professor and Associate Director, Center for Asian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, USA, Dr. Manish Sinha, Professor and Head, Dept. of History, Magadh University, Bodhgaya, Dr. Priyanka Jha, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Dr. Shashank Sinha, Independent Scholar and Author who works as Publishing Director, Routledge, South Asia, Dr. Shushmita Dutt, Educationist & Research Consultant, New Delhi, Dr. Binodanand Jha, Director, Research and Training, Dept. of Education, Govt. of Bihar, Dr. Gyan Deo Mani Tripathi, the Dean, School of Educational Training and Research, Aryabhata Knowledge



# The Study on Digital Literacy, Land Rights, and Agricultural Productivity in Bihar

**E**-governance—the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) into the management of public programs—has altered the landscape for rights protection and service delivery. But the success of some e-governance initiatives hinges on citizen engagement, which in turn depends on digital literacy, knowledge of rights, and self-efficacy in claiming rights. In Bihar, where tens of millions of below-poverty-line (BPL) smallholder farmers must weigh the promise of agricultural investments against the threat of dispossession because of pervasive land insecurity, the Department of Revenue and Land Reform (DRLR) has recently begun to build up an ambitious set of e-governance platforms. How and to what extent can digital literacy training and the formation of local land rights advocacy organizations for BPL farmers improve land e-governance, and ultimately increase agricultural productivity and livelihood?

To explore these issues, Deshkal Society initiated a study in the year 2018 which concluded in the year 2020. The study evaluated the e-Adhikaar, a program that was designed and implemented by Deshkal Society. E-Adhikaar trained BPL farmers on digital literacy skills, with a focus on navigating Bihar's land tenure e-governance systems. For example, farmers were taught to access digital records, register complaints,

and file applications. Engagement with e-governance platforms was expected to improve farmers' tenure security. Participants were expected to also benefit from greater access to credit, since land documents are sometimes collateralized, and from improved access to government services and the land records helps in accessing entitlements. Farmers then invest more in agricultural productivity, yielding improved livelihood. Credit, government services, and reduced expropriation risk also improves livelihood independently from agriculture.

While one variation of e-Adhikaar delivered the program through a pair of trainers residing in the village who are themselves trained by Deshkal Society field coordinators, the second version had field coordinators

establishing village-level community-based organizations (CBOs) that coordinate digital literacy and rights trainings, hold regular meetings to discuss local land issues, and advocate on behalf of BPL farmers. Trainers and CBO member were all women in light of Bihar's gender inequities.

To study the effects of digital literacy training and CBO formation, the study employed a mixed-methods impact evaluation centred on a randomized field experiment. 240 villages from across Bihar's Gaya and Purnia districts were randomly assigned to one of three experimental groups:

1. e-Adhikaar delivered by two trainers
2. e-Adhikaar delivered through CBOs
3. status-quo control group receiving no treatment

**How and to what extent can digital literacy training and the formation of local land rights advocacy organizations for BPL farmers improve land e-governance, and ultimately increase agricultural productivity and livelihood?**

## E-Adhikaar trained BPL farmers on digital literacy skills, with a focus on navigating Bihar's land tenure e-governance systems.

Supplementary qualitative fieldwork filled the gaps in the quantitative design through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with farmers, government officials, village elites, trainers and CBO members, and other stakeholders and experts, in addition to document analyses.

By rigorously evaluating variations of a program model that could feasibly be expanded across the state, the study was expected to shed light on the likelihood that scale-up would bring net benefits and, if so, what improvements would maximize impact. Beyond e-Adhikaar, this research contributed more broadly to economists' attempts to better understand the barriers to effective governance, and the ways in which civic-led initiatives can complement government reforms to improve land governance and agricultural productivity for the poor.

### Main Research Questions

This project addressed three research questions at the intersection of e-governance, land administration, and agricultural development, through a mixed-methods randomized evaluation of e-Adhikaar:

1. What are the effects of digital literacy training and CBO formation on farmers' digital literacy skills, use of e-governance platforms, perceived land security, access to finance and government services, agricultural productivity investments, and overall livelihood?
2. How do impacts of the program vary across socioeconomic context, tenure type, i.e., ownership versus tenancy, and other relevant categories?
3. Through which mechanisms does the program exert its effects? Or, if no significant impact occurs, where do the treatments' respective theories of change depart from the observed data?

The program logic worked as follows. BPL farmers in Bihar suffer from tenure insecurity as a result of governance

frictions that make accessing formal records difficult. By making records available online, DRLR's e-governance initiatives can enable easier access, improving subjective tenure security and reducing risks of land conflicts. However, digital literacy rates among BPL farmers in Bihar are low, and e-governance will not improve tenure security if the farmers cannot access the records, or feel that it would not be in their interests to try.

The two treatment arms rely on two different theories of e-governance. The first arm—e-Adhikaar delivered through trainers—assumes that information is the key binding constraint limiting effective citizen participation in e-governance programs. By simply teaching farmers how to use the program, usage is expected to improve and the benefits of e-governance are expected to be realized.

The second treatment arm—e-Adhikaar delivered through CBOs—expects that, in addition to information, participation in e-governance platforms is constrained by BPL farmers' self-inefficacy with regard to governance—the belief that they are powerless and that attempting to claim their rights would do no good. Formation of CBOs is expected to imbue farmers with both the confidence and the political power required to claim and protect their rights.

In evaluating these treatment variations, this study advanced the literatures on e-governance and land rights. While research has already established that e-governance initiatives can be effective at reducing resource leakages and improving bureaucratic functioning (i), there is a dearth of empirical evidence on constraints to citizen participation in e-governance initiatives. This study was equipped not only to experimentally document the impact of two potentially scalable intervention models, but also to adjudicate between alternative e-governance theories.

Similarly, research on land certification initiatives show that these efforts can increase agricultural productivity and

access to finance (although findings for the latter are more mixed) (ii), among other effects, but there has been virtually no rigorous research on how civic initiatives can complement top-down governance and administrative reform efforts. This study not only tested the extent to which a civic initiative can strengthen land rights and thereby improve agricultural productivity, but also how these effects vary across tenure type and other factors that may be responsible for variation in the benefits of training and community organizing.

This study's analysis of the impacts of e-Adhikaar on development outcomes helped to inform governmental and non-governmental development agencies in Bihar on how and to what extent digital literacy training, with and without the formation of community advocacy organisations, represents a worthwhile investment that complements the state's recent e-governance initiatives. Beyond the specifics of these two intervention models, the study shed light on the factors constraining e-governance, and therefore direct practitioners toward the key issues programs should be designed around. Next, if DRLR's e-governance system contains barriers to effective use for BPL smallholders, this study was expected to highlight these and bring them to the attention of DRLR, which can consider how best to resolve them. Finally, by comparing trainer- versus CBO-based delivery, the research will contribute evidence on the relative merit of these two approaches, and the contexts in which each is likely to work best.





# Honouring Longi Bhuiya: The Man Who Built a Canal Single-Handedly

A panel discussion through webinar on the historical work done by Hon'ble Longi Bhuiya on October 1, 2020 from 11 a.m to 1 pm through a Google Meet was held.

Dr. D. M. Mulay, honourable member, National Human Rights Commission, Government of India, joined as a distinguished panellist along with Shri Neeraj Kumar (Honourable Minister, P.R. Dept., Govt of Bihar), Mr. Sudhendra Sharma, (Lead Consultant, World Bank), Shri Arvind Mohan (Journalist and Author). This was an opportunity to honour Longi Bhuiya, for his selfless

efforts and contribution. Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society had the honour of moderating the panel discussion.

His hard work for thirty years resulted in the construction of a canal that is five kilometres long, five feet broad and three feet deep at Kothilva Village in the Gaya District of Bihar. Deshkal Society, expressed gratitude to Hon'ble Longi Bhuiya of Kothilva Village, Gaya District, Bihar for his historical work in constructing the canal. The canal not only mitigates the water crisis faced by the people, but also facilitated irrigation

**His hard work for thirty years has resulted in the construction of a canal that is five kilometres long, five feet broad and three feet deep. The canal not only mitigates the water crisis faced by the people, but also facilitated irrigation in their agricultural fields.**



## Longi Bhuiya

The man who built a canal single-handedly



Deshkal Society expresses gratitude to Hon'ble Longi Bhuiya of Kothilva Village, Gaya District, Bihar for his historical work in constructing the canal. His hard work for thirty years has resulted in the construction of a canal that is three kilometres long, five feet broad and three feet deep. The canal not only mitigates the water crisis faced by the people, but also facilitated irrigation in their agricultural fields. This directly helped the daily lives of nearly 3000 villagers belonging to four villages in the vicinity. Shri Longi Bhuiya is a landless labourer, and belongs to Musahar Bhuiya community and a family that has historically been bonded labours compelled into paddy cultivation. This historical milestone is not a sheer event or a charismatic individual's effort, as the dominant media narrates widely in public domain.

**October 1, 2020 | Thursday | 11.00 AM to 1:00 PM India Time**



Moderator

**MR. SANJAY KUMAR**

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi



Key Speaker

**DR. D. M. MULAY**

Hon'ble Member, NHRC, Govt. of India



Speaker

**SHRI. NEERAJ KUMAR**

Hon'ble Minister, PR Dept., Govt. of Bihar



Speaker

**MR. ARVIND MOHAN**

Journalist & Author  
New Delhi



Speaker

**DR. SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA**

Lead Consultant,  
World Bank, Delhi

The session will be streamed live on Google Meet

[CLICK HERE TO CONNECT](#)

Do consider sharing this information among your contacts/network as appropriate.

We look forward to your virtual presence on October 1, 2020.

**For any other details, please contact**

Nassif Muhammed Ali,

[deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com), +91 120 4362163

in their agricultural fields. This directly helped the daily lives of nearly 3000 villagers belonging to four villages in the vicinity. Shri Longi Bhuiya is a landless labourer, and belongs to Musahar Bhuiya community and a family that has historically been bonded labours compelled into paddy cultivation. This historical milestone is not a sheer event or a charismatic individual's effort, as the dominant media narrates widely in public domain.

The team of Deshkal Society, led by Shri Sanjeev Kumar, Coordinator, visited Kothilva Village, Gaya District of Bihar for expressing gratitude to Hon'ble Longi Bhuiya, for his historical work in constructing the canal. His hard work for thirty years has resulted in the construction of a canal that is five kilometres long, five feet broad and three feet deep. The canal not only mitigates the water crisis faced by the people, but also facilitated irrigation in their agricultural fields. This directly helped the daily lives of nearly 3000 villagers belonging to three to four villages in the vicinity. Shri Longi Bhuiya is at present, a landless labourer, as well as belongs to Musahar Bhuiya community and belongs to a family that has historically been bonded and compelled into paddy cultivation. This historical milestone is not a sheer event or a charismatic individual's effort, as the dominant media narrates widely in public domain.

Deshkal Society believes that Shri Longi Bhuiya has established the argument that emerged through the book *Margin-alized Self*, that was recently published by Primus in association with Deshkal Society. The book states that the Musahars can assert the value of their own worldview and epistemology, and in doing so, they subvert the superiority that is generally assigned to the logical and formal schema in understanding the world, which often speaks in contradictory, evasive, ambiguous, and metaphorical terms. In addition, the earlier work done by Dashrath Manjhi, who removed hillock and to pave a pathway, also underlines this argument.



# Panel Discussion on the Book titled Marginalized Self: Tales of Resistance of a Community

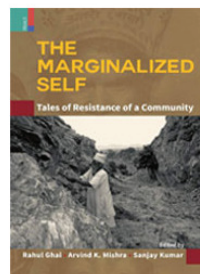
During the trying times of pandemic, a book discussion on the Deshkal's latest book titled, *The Marginalized Self: Tales of Resistance of a Community*, which has been published recently by Primus was held through a webinar. This was scheduled for the 23rd of August 2020 (Sunday) 6 pm to 8 pm and streamed live in the following link: <https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/4b2fae2a-58fc-4dda-b7fb-83df1aade130>

Prof. Gyan Prakash (Dept. of History, Princeton University) and Dr. Arvind K Mishra (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Prof. Raj Kumar (Dept. of English, University of Delhi), Mr. Manish Sinha (DG, NICF, New Delhi) and Sri Arvind Mohan (eminent journalist and author) were part of the panel. The discussion was moderated by Prof. Salil Mishra (Pro-V.C. Ambedkar University, New Delhi).

The volume depicts the multidimensional characteristics of a marginalized community. Quite often, due to the hegemony of dominant discourse of development, marginalized communities are represented only as poor and lacking in agency and abilities that are required to navigate the labyrinth of modern world. The contributors of this volume argue that this deficit-oriented characterization of the community is a partial construction and is represented as natural and objective reality through the ideology of development. The term 'construction' here does not refer to a representation without any substantive basis; it implies, among other things, that this construction is motivated by certain interest and ideology. Using the critical perspective on construction, the contributors argue to shift our gaze from a deficit-oriented view to a strength-oriented one about the community to focus on their power and agency that enable them to maintain their distinct worldview and resist the dehumanizing and ruthless march of project of development. In fact, the central argument of this volume is that a community acquires a special kind of epistemology and wisdom due to its marginalized status.

**DESHKAL SOCIETY**  
Knowledge with Practice

BOOK DISCUSSION



## About the book

The *Marginalized Self* questions the century-old perception of the Musahar community as rat-eating, pig-rearing, habitually drunk, lazy and unmotivated; a perception fostered by the dominant discourse of development, and the historically prevalent hierarchical social system.

August 23, 2020 | Sunday | 6.00 to 8 PM India Time



Background & Context  
**MR. SANJAY KUMAR**  
Secretary, Deshkal  
Society, Delhi



Moderator  
**PROF. SALIL MISHRA**  
Pro-V.C. Ambedkar  
University, Delhi



Key Speaker  
**PROF. GYAN PRAKASH**  
Dept. of History  
Princeton University



Speaker  
**PROF. RAJ KUMAR**  
Dept. of English  
University of Delhi



Speaker  
**MR. MANISH SINHA**  
D.G. National  
Institute of  
Communications  
Finance, New Delhi



Speaker  
**MR. ARVIND MOHAN**  
Journalist & Author  
New Delhi



Speaker  
**DR. ARVIND KUMAR MISHRA**  
Jawaharlal Nehru  
University, New Delhi.

The session will be streamed live on Google Meet

[CLICK HERE TO CONNECT](#)

Do consider sharing this information among your contacts/network as appropriate.

We look forward to your virtual presence on August 23, 2020.

For any other details, please contact

Nassif Muhammed Ali,  
[deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com), +91 120 4362163

**DESHKAL SOCIETY**  
Knowledge with Practice



The Marginalized Self questions the century-old perception of the Musahar community as rat-eating, pig-rearing, habitually drunk, lazy and unmotivated; a perception fostered by the dominant discourse of development, and the historically prevalent hierarchical social system (<http://www.deshkalindia.com/MarginalizedSelf.html>). This collection of essays argues that these victims of the dominant model of development acquire a different kind of power and critical consciousness due to their marginality, which helps them to examine the processes, practices, and institutions that give rise to and justify poverty, displacement, corruption, greed, competition, and violence in the name of development.

Ethnographic studies focussing on the Musahars have demonstrated that this community are capable of offering resistance to the might of the developmental regime in terms of a comparative critique of modern civilization. They can assert the value of their own worldview and epistemology, and in doing so, they subvert the superiority that is generally assigned to the logical and formal schema in understanding the world, and which often speaks in contradictory, evasive, ambiguous, and metaphorical terms. The book offers insights into marginality, culture, and development in India, and will be of interest to students, scholars, practitioners and policy-makers associated with the disciplines of development studies, social work, social anthropology, critical social psychology, history and public policy.

On the occasion, Secretary of Deshkal Society shared about the wider canvass of the work of Deshkal Society and noted the organisation has been strengthening the public institutions by ensuring quality education in government schools, delivering homestead land to the landless poor, and securing livelihood support for women in co-ordination with village-based community-based organisations in primarily the Bodh Gaya region and in Bihar in general for more than two and a half

decades. Informing on the organisation's praxis outcomes he highlighted on the achievements in terms of entitlement to homestead land for more than twenty thousand families, provision of quality education to approximately 40 thousand children by engaging 1000 teachers in 150 schools, and economic empowerment of around 1000 families from among the most marginalised community of Musahar through employing the approach of practice with knowledge. In addition, he informed that Deshkal Society has been formulating the key questions and experiences emerging from the practices and bringing out publications for informing the policy and academic domains in India and abroad.

Deshkal Society (<http://www.deshkalindia.com/>) has been working in Musahar/Bhuiya community in South Bihar focusing on old Gaya district for more than two decades from the perspectives of marginality and development. All these years, Deshkal Society has strived to generate research (academic and policy), documentary film, and audio-video documentation relating to culture, resistance and dignity of the Musahar/Bhuiyan community in south Bihar. The observations and reflective remarks on the book not only created an informed dialogue with an enlightened audience, but also enriched the discourse on marginality, identity and development at the national as well as global level.

**Ethnographic studies focussing on the Musahars have demonstrated that this community are capable of offering resistance to the might of the developmental regime in terms of a comparative critique of modern civilization. They can assert the value of their own worldview and epistemology, and in doing so, they subvert the superiority that is generally assigned to the logical and formal schema in understanding the world, and which often speaks in contradictory, evasive, ambiguous, and metaphorical terms.**



# Imaging Bodh Gaya











2020  
2021

CONTENT | Deshkal Society

EDITOR | Surbhi Mauray

DESIGN | PRINTFORCE

© Deshkal Society

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publishers and copyright holders. Unless credited specifically, all photographs are by Deshkal Society.

Kindly share your feedback & suggestions at:

[deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com)



**DESHKAL SOCIETY**

Knowledge with Practice

Deshkal Society

HEAD OFFICE

D-205, Sector-108

Noida 201304, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

PHONE: +91-120-4362163

E-MAIL: [deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com)

Deshkal Society

BODHI KENDRA

Magadh Vihar Colony Mastipur

Near Wat Magadh Thai Monastery

Bodhgaya 824231, Bihar, INDIA

PHONE: +91-120-4362163

E-MAIL: [deshkal@gmail.com](mailto:deshkal@gmail.com)



<http://www.deshkalindia.com/>



<https://www.facebook.com/deshkalsociety/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/deshkal-society-3b389a165/>



<https://twitter.com/DeshkalSociety>