

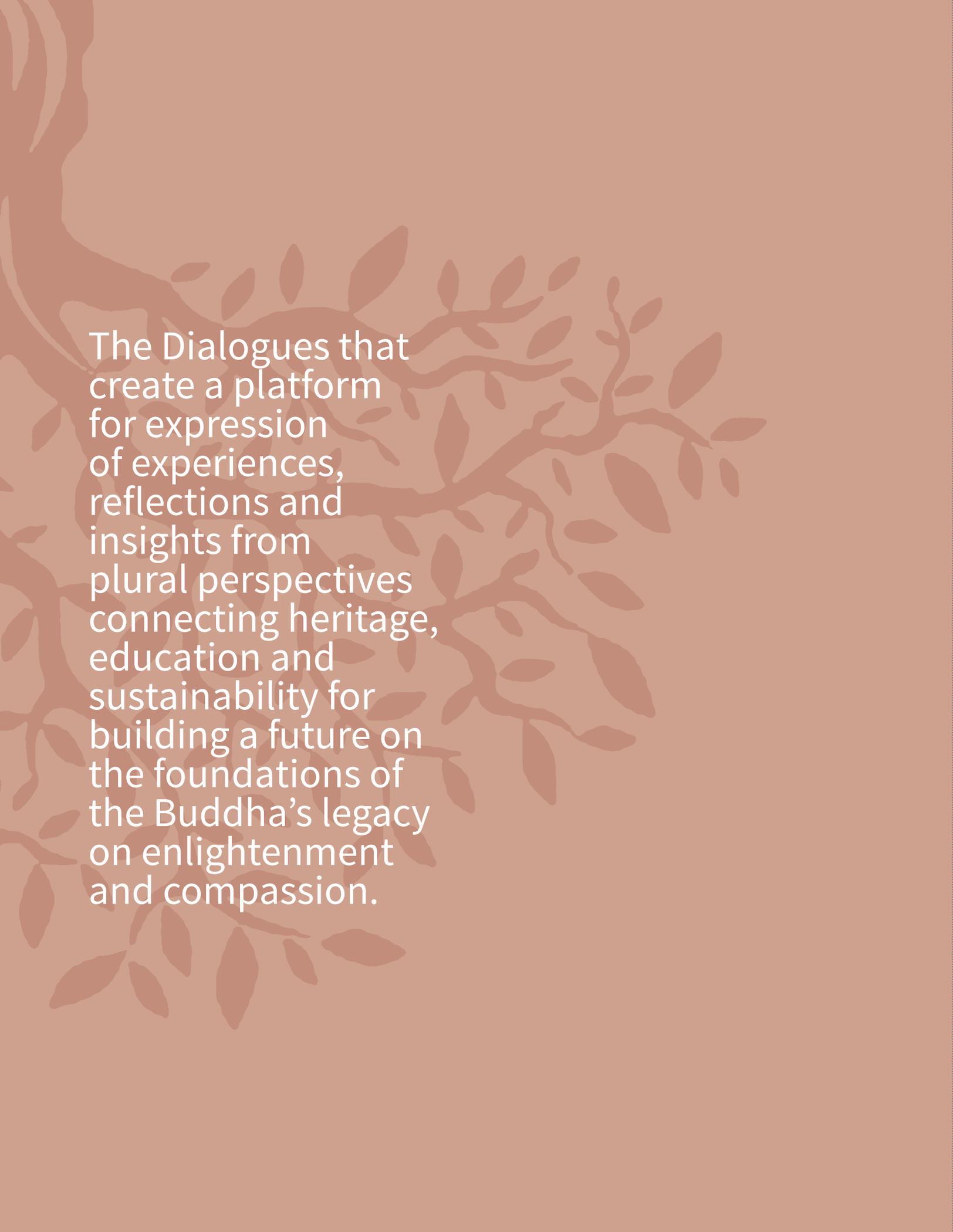
PRESENTATION ON  
2ND EDITION  
BODH GAYA  
GLOBAL DIALOGUES  
2019

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education and  
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building a future on  
the foundations of  
the Buddha's legacy  
on enlightenment  
and compassion.

2ND EDITION  
BODH GAYA  
GLOBAL DIALOGUES  
2019 **REFLECTIONS  
& INSIGHTS**

23-24  
MARCH  
2019

INDIRA  
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**2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION**  
**BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES**  
**REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS**

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# Co-Travelers



## DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO

Chairpersons  
Moderators  
*and*  
Panelists

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Ram Bahadur Rai, President, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi  
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## **Editor's Note**

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



## Overview

The 2nd Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues (BGDs) was organised by Deshkal Society in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi in association with Indian Oil, Indian Council of World Affairs, Tibet House, WaterAid, India and Daulat Ram College with the goal of encouraging informed dialogue on multiple themes under the umbrella of ‘Sustainable Development, Heritage and Enlightenment,’ held at IGNC, New Delhi on March 23-24, 2019.

The multi-stakeholder dialogues brought together reputed government and non-government institutions, including of public and private sectors in India. The 2nd Edition of the Dialogues was in continuation of the 1st Edition of the dialogues held on March 9-12, 2018 at the World Heritage Site of Bodh Gaya, which was conceptualized at the consultative workshop in association with IGNC. The presentation on the first edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues is available at [http://www.deshkalindia.com/festival/report/Presentationon\\_Bodh\\_Gaya\\_Global\\_Dialogues\\_Reflections\\_and\\_Insights\\_2018.pdf](http://www.deshkalindia.com/festival/report/Presentationon_Bodh_Gaya_Global_Dialogues_Reflections_and_Insights_2018.pdf)

The 2nd 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 Buddha’s legacy on enlightenment and compassion.

Following the soulful and meditative effect generated by the performance on Sitar, the plenary session began with the welcome address and sharing of purpose in the context of the dialogues with reference to the following objectives.

- Facilitate knowledge and develop an action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development in India in particular and the world in general.

Facilitate knowledge and develop an action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development in India in particular and the world in general.

- To develop modules and content for school children in order to build an understanding of the teaching and learning of Buddha and Buddhism, including heritage, and history of the Buddhist circuits in India.
- Strengthen relationship and build sustainable networks between Bodh Gaya and South-East Asian nations with glorious recall of the historical and contemporary relationship for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development in the region.

The dialogues manifested itself through a mosaic of parallel events such as plenary session, panel discussions, cultural evenings, film show, travelogue, and an exhibition. Over the two days, the 2nd edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues had detailed deliberations on the themes of Buddhism: Philosophy, Science and Architecture; Gandhi's Experiment of Satyagraha in Champaran; State, Civil Society and the Heritage City Plan of Bodh Gaya; Heritage, Water Conservation and School; Shared Histories and Common Destinies: Connecting India to South Asia and South-East Asia through the Journey of Buddhism; Journey through the Visual Presentation etc. 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.

The dialogues had the first day beginning and ending in lasting notes of music while witnessing the plenary session, an insightful exhibition, participating in engaging discussions through the day, moving to the second and final day of the event with exciting and fascinating panel discussions, conversations, and visual presentations culminating with the screening of Thai fantasy-drama film 'Angulimala'.

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 delegates from USA, Mongolia, Vietnam and Tibet, in addition to delegates from different states in India. The dialogues were also attended by scholars, monks, artists, development practitioners, policy-makers and civil society.

As part of the outcome, BGDs 2019 succeeded in bringing together multiple stakeholders, public and private, including international agencies,

The dialogues also generated a repository of knowledge from multi-disciplinary approach on Heritage, Buddhism, and Sustainability. Additionally, it also succeeded in connecting and sharing the key messages of the deliberation with participants and delegates, especially undergraduate and post-graduate students.

There is an urgent need to build a Center for Heritage and Sustainable Development (digital as well as non-digital) at 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 center is envisaged to have a pivotal role for connecting and disseminating the knowledge output to researchers and more than a million enlightened tourists and pilgrims who visit the region annually.

enabling them to take forward the recommendations of the dialogues. The dialogues also generated a repository of knowledge from multi-disciplinary approach on Heritage, Buddhism, and Sustainability. Additionally, it also succeeded in connecting and sharing the key messages of the deliberation with participants and delegates, especially undergraduate and post-graduate students.

At the end of the two-day-long dialogues, a set of recommendations were made responding to the objectives of the dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action frameworks for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development.

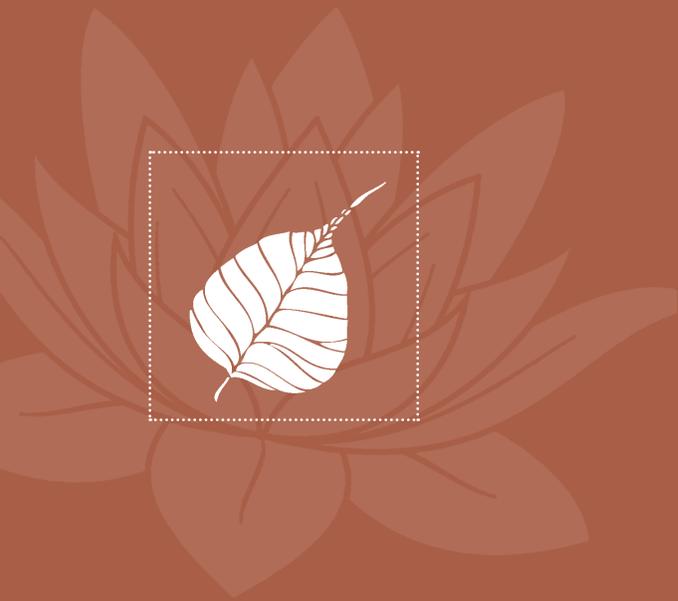
At first, a report (print and digital) based on the deliberations and discussions in the dialogues need to be published and session-wise short videos will be uploaded on YouTube. The report and videos will serve as an effective public platform for disseminating the key messages and outcomes of the dialogue in the public and policy domains.

There is an urgent need to build a Center for Heritage and Sustainable Development (digital as well as non-digital) at 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 center is envisaged to have a pivotal role for connecting and disseminating the knowledge output to researchers and more than a million enlightened tourists and pilgrims who visit the region annually.

There is also 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.

Therefore, the first and foremost task is to explore ways to institutionalize the dialogue as an annual programme by way of creating a strong support on its sustainability.

Last but not the least, the delegates and participants arrived at the conclusion that the key strategy for implementing these recommendations is through a constructive and meaningful engagement with the state, market, and civil society.





**ANCHORPERSON**  
**2ND EDITION OF BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES**  
**Richa Sharma**  
Assistant Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

An alumna of Miranda House and St. Stephen's College, Ms. Sharma has recently submitted her PhD thesis in the area of Philosophy of Education at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Prior to joining Jamia Millia Islamia, she has associated with Deshkal Society as a Program Officer of the first edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues 2018. Earlier she taught at the Department of Education, Delhi University as an adjunct. She has experience of working on several projects under the aegis of UNFPA and Room to Read. She has written number of papers and recently read her paper at the prestigious Vedanta Congress at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA. A number of her poems and stories have also been published on several online portals.



DAY-1 | PLENARY SESSION

# Sitar Vadan





SITAR VADAN BY

**Sumita Chakravorty**

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

## The Strings of Sitar Set the Tone

The performance not only engaged the delegates and participants from India and abroad, but also gave the message of values of co-existence, peace and respect for multi-culture and multi-religion on this occasion.

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues 2019 kicked off with Sitar recital in Raga Lalit, a morning raga considered serene and devotional. The performance consisted of four sub-parts, beginning alap with Majit Khani Gats in Vilambit Laya (slow tempo), followed by Ektal composition in Madhya Laya (medium tempo), Rajakhani Gat in Drut Laya (fast tempo) and concluding with Jhala in Ati Drut Laya (extremely fast tempo), in that order.

The recital of Sitar, representing the heritage of Hindustani classical music and its message, set the ground to make a bridge between art, culture, music and ideas from the multi-disciplinary perspectives to be presented by key speakers, panelists and moderators. The performance not only engaged the delegates and participants from India and abroad, but also gave the message of values of co-existence, peace and respect for multi-culture and multi-religion on this occasion.

# Plenary Session



CHAIR

**Dialogues: Key Attributes of Living Society**

Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi

Member Secretary, IGNC, New Delhi

WELCOME AND CONTEXT

**Bodh Gaya: An Amalgamation of Multiple Identities**

Mr. Sanjay Kumar

Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi

GUESTS OF HONOUR

**Reality is More Complex, Subtle and Mysterious**

Dr. Sekhar Dutt

Former Governor and Author, Chhattisgarh

**Mongolia and India: Past, Present and Future**

H.E. Gonchig Ganbold

Ambassador, Embassy of Mongolia, New Delhi

**Buddhism: Source of Fight against Aggressors**

H.E. Pham Sanh Chau

Ambassador, Embassy of Vietnam, New Delhi

**Dialogues: Key Attributes of Living Society**

Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi

It is an honour for the IGNC to host this Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues for the second consecutive year. We have been deliberating in between the two events, two mega events that we held and it has been our constant endeavour that the dialogue should continue because unless there is a dialogue we cannot reach a solution. India has had a great tradition of dialogue. We always resolved our issues by dialogues. Even our important *shastras*, traditions and important scriptures are in the form of dialogue, be it Bhagwad Gita or Natyashastra. It is all questions and answers. Unless you raise questions, you cannot reach the proper answers. So dialogue is very important and Deshkal Society is trying to retain the great tradition of dialogue within the Indian society and globally.

Dialogue is also the typical trademark of a living society, of a vibrant society. So, I think, whatever our ancestors transmitted to us as our heritage, has to be taken further. We have to take it to the younger generation. And I must compliment the Deshkal Society that quite a few young boys and girls are also here in this auditorium who would be taking this dialogue further to the next generation.

Today we are living in a very difficult era and we are facing many challenges within the country and globally. So words like compassion and contentment are finding their meaning in new terminology. This is an age of rabid commercialisation and globalisation, where if somebody wants to teach us the way of compassion or somebody wants to teach us the way of contentment, it is really difficult for one to convince the other. When we think of development, that too sustainable development, it is very difficult to find the proper definition of development. What is the difference between progress and prosperity and development is also a matter of great debate. So when we talk of development, what exactly development means has to be reassessed and reaffirmed. Similarly, when we talk of culture and civilisation, there is much difference between being cultured and being civilised. So all these terms have to be reassessed and redefined. I think the dialogue which we will have for the next two days would be helpful in redefining all these terminologies, specially for the younger ones who would be taking them further. As Gautam Buddha has said, 'Appo Deepo Bhava' – we have to take the light further, we have to lighten up ourself from within ourself and then we have to enlighten the world. I think this would be the right opportunity for the younger ones to do that.

Three words – coexistence, correlation and cooperation – have to be reminded and constantly remembered when we talk of a global environment and global scenario. All these things have to be learnt and nurtured for the next generations. I think Bodh Gaya has been the best place in the world to teach the entire world the peaceful coexistence. I think it can be the epicentre of teaching the entire world how different communities, different religions, different beliefs can stay together in absolute peace and harmony. That centre has to be nurtured in that way. I think when we continue this dialogue further; we would definitely reach out to an action plan where the intelligentsia of this society comes together.

Three words – coexistence, correlation and cooperation – have to be reminded and have to be constantly remembered when we talk of a global environment and global scenario. All these things have to be learnt and all these things have to be nurtured for the next generations to come.



## Bodh Gaya: An Amalgamation of Multiple Identities

Mr. Sanjay Kumar

It is significant that every year more than 1 million tourists from across the globe visit Bodh Gaya, and what's noteworthy is that while the majority of these people are there to experience and realise the practices of Buddhism, a large section of them don't identify Bodh Gaya narrowly as just a religious place and are primarily there to experience and learn about the heritage and culture of Bodh Gaya.

Bodh Gaya has multiple identities, it is an exceptional cultural, historical, and religious place where a particular religion like Buddhism has emerged, but historically and contemporarily, multiple disciplines have emerged and enriched and continue to do so from the study of various aspects of Bodh Gaya like History, Religion, Culture, International as well as Diplomatic relations. It is not a coincidence that more than 80 countries have established their own monasteries in Bodh Gaya. On one hand, these monasteries represent the respective countries and the corresponding theological and philosophical streams and on the other hand, they give a straight message of their unique international identities. It is significant that every year more than 1 million tourists from across the globe visit Bodh Gaya, and what's noteworthy is that while the majority of these people are there to experience and realise the practices of Buddhism, a large section of them don't identify Bodh Gaya narrowly as just a religious place and are primarily there to experience and learn about the heritage and culture of Bodh Gaya.

The region has two prime universities, an international institution like Nalanda University and a state-run institution like Magadh University, and one common objective of both these institutions is to explore and develop a study on History, Heritage, and Culture including Buddhism. However, there seems to be a complete lack of inter-sectional and interdisciplinary dialogue and a clear disconnect among various knowledge departments/disciplines within these institutions.

Additionally, while the Department of Education has taken initiatives to disseminate significance of the heritage of this region and practice and philosophy of Buddhism as well as the Life of Buddha through school textbooks, but even then these textbooks tend to fail at contextualising the multiple identities of Bodh Gaya among children.

In this background, there is an urgent need to set up a Center for Heritage and Sustainable Development (digital as well as non-digital) at Bodh Gaya which can create grounding to strengthen the legacy, history, and multiple identities of Bodh Gaya, as well as help in generating and maintaining a knowledge base for researchers and students from a multi-disciplinary approach. It will also serve as a supporting institution through which school going children can be taught multiple contexts of Bodh Gaya region, Buddhism and the life of Buddha.

Last but not the least, the success of the objectives of this Heritage Center will emerge as an example globally and not just in the region, as Bodh Gaya itself is looked in a global context. Certainly, Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues will be instrumental not only in creating a knowledge base for the center but will also be very helpful in creating and developing a network with key stakeholders within India and across the world.

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues will be instrumental not only in creating a knowledge base for the center but will also be very helpful in creating and developing a network with key stakeholders within India and across the world.



## Reality is More Complex, Subtle and Mysterious

Dr. Sekhar Dutt

Religion and culture have been the repository on source of our values while science and technology have the capacity to improve human life and living conditions.

This is the second edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues and in a way the continuation of the dialogue which was initiated not last year but more than two million years ago when Gautam Buddha attained Bodhisattva and this whole purpose of life and the entire philosophy connected with it was developed into huge philosophical doctrines which then covered half the world. I am very glad that the Excellency ambassador of Mongolia and Excellency ambassador of Vietnam are here because they have carried this dialogue to great distances, and the civilisation as we see in those countries have evolved into a very unique societies which live in harmony and peace and which bring in a tremendous wealth of knowledge to the world.

Our ancient cultures explained that reality is more complex, subtle and mysterious than the conventional science may hold. Perhaps a deeper understanding of consciousness will lead to a new and expanded understanding of reality in which objective and subjective outer and inner are understood as co-equal aspects of the same entity. Our heritage has always underlined the significance of mind over matter and taught us to concentrate, empower, control and enlighten our mind to purify our soul.

The modern world has been engrossed in the study of matter. The science of physics and chemistry have started with the study of matter and characteristics. Only very recently the world has, after so many years, come to acknowledge the ancient wisdom of our land that places the power of mind at the highest level. Religion and culture have been the repository or source of our values while science and technology have the capacity to improve human life and living conditions. I do not say that mankind could entirely dump scientific researches and continue only to study ancient scriptures, but new

research and study of the ancient heritage and wisdom may help in finding the solutions and understanding the newly-discovered principles in better perspectives.

Ancient India laid the foundations of mathematical and scientific knowledge. In fact, mathematics in which our ancestors defined the concept of zero, or *shunya*, is very closely connected with philosophy and the Buddhist philosophy. So, that is another chapter which people would really enjoy in unfolding, the chapter of *shunyata*.

Our civilisation has brought in the concept of *Vasudaiva kutumbakam*. That means the world is a family. And so the global village actually can be brought into existence by a realisation that everybody is useful to other and they have to be respected for their being in this world.

The ultimate aim to ensure an elevated relationship between an individual and the supreme being has been put by our ancient cultures into different scriptures, different forms of practices. And our entire universe has been regarded as a product of five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. This itself shows the enormous respect of these embodiments of what constitutes the universe has been enshrined in the philosophy practised by our ancestors. This theory mentions how the biosphere and the evolution of life affect the stability of global temperature, ocean, salinity, oxygen to the atmosphere and other environmental variables that affect the habitability of earth. Therefore, to understand this would make us a vehicle of sustainability. If we don't understand, then each one of us would be not playing the part which is intended. And therefore, we have to understand that the sustainability cannot be brought about by some aliens but it has to be what comes out of the way we treat all these resources.

The system of science, biochemistry, ecology and climate science, all were evolved by observation of nature which was the strength of our ancestors. And the inventions in the areas of science and technology led to unimaginable material development and progress. The colossal erosion of all human values made life highly mechanical. In this context, the western world is now focussing on searching light on the vast treasures presented by the oriental culture and heritage. Therefore, we must recognise and then work for that, the immense wealth of knowledge which the oriental civilisation has.

I had discussed with the venerable Dalai Lama the philosophy of Nagarjuna which, I think, is the true embodiment of this dialogue. Because Buddha

The colossal erosion of all human values made the life highly mechanical. In this context, the western world is now focussing on searching light on the vast treasures presented by the oriental culture and heritage.

About Emptiness, the Nagarjuna said, the true nature of reality is not the absence of existence but the absence of intrinsic existence. So this whole concept of *shunyata* was understood and expanded.

did something, he withdrew from the world and spent time incognito at different places and then came and sat down and meditated and evolved the philosophy. This dialogue was started by different people at different places. So in his first sermon, Gautam Buddha prescribed a middle way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Nagarjuna, in an early *sutra*, brought the notion of the middle way into the philosophical sphere, identifying a middle way between existence and non-existence or between permanence and annihilation. For Nagarjuna, the ignorance that is the source of all suffering is the belief of *swabhav*, a term that literally means own being and that has been rendered as intrinsic existence and self-nature. It is the belief that things exist autonomously, independently and permanently. To hold this belief is to succumb to the extreme of permanence. It is equally mistaken, however, to believe that nothing exists, that is extreme of annihilation.

About Emptiness, the Nagarjuna said, the true nature of reality is not the absence of existence but the absence of intrinsic existence. So this whole concept of *shunyata* was understood and expanded. And I think it is an enormous interesting thing to get into this and understand, and you will find that then you are also becoming a scientist because physics and mathematics at the highest level also do the same thing. And therefore, I think this dialogue is required to be carried on not only here, not only in schools or in academic institutions but also within your mind and within your families. And life is an extremely interesting pursuit of finding new problems and providing solutions or finding the multitude of solutions. And this is what Nagarjuna then developed his doctrine of emptiness, analysis of a wide range of topics, examining among other things that Buddha, the four noble truths which Buddha said but Nagarjuna amplified, made people to understand. And that is why, I think, the Dalai Lama went into this cave and stayed there. I don't know whether you were there at that time, and this was talked around. In fact, the security people had suggested that don't go inside the cave because there are bears, but he went and he meditated. So everybody requires to go within oneself and understand what is the real meaning of all what has come out of our ancestors' knowledge.

Deshkal Society and IGNC are doing an extremely good job to carry on with this dialogue. It will enthuse a lot of individuals, especially the community which is in the teaching and learning side, and also persons who are in different pursuits.



## Mongolia and India: Past, Present and Future

H.E. Gonchig Ganbold

It is my privilege to be at the second Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues on sustainable development and heritage and Buddhism. By the way, Buddhism and sustainable development, and democracy are the pillars of bilateral relations between India and Mongolia.

Although I am not an expert on sustainable development, or culture or Buddhism, I am happy to talk about our age-old historic spiritual and cultural relations that reinvigorated in modern times with common values like democracy, human rights, freedom and liberty.

Mongolia and India are two of the earliest nations in Asia, if not in the world. We have been enjoying age-old spiritual and cultural bonds. We also share a great deal of similarities, have the same civilisation which bind us closer in hearts and minds despite great distance of geography and barriers. There is a saying in Mongolia: close friends are better than distant relatives. Mongolians got acquainted with India as the teachings of Lord Buddha reached it over 2000 years ago. Indian *acharyas* went to Mongolia for disseminating *dharma* and *dhamma* at the time of Hunnu (Xiaongnu) empire, known as the first statehood of Mongols, nearly 2200 years back. Some historical sources claim that Buddhist monasteries and temples were built in Mongolia at the time of Xianbei, which came later.

Based on historical resources, historians say that after India, Mongolia was the earliest to receive Buddhist teachings, earlier than Tibet, China and many other countries. Ancient Indian culture and arts spread through its *dharma* to Mongolia and many notions and concepts, like theory of emptiness, are prevalent there.

Kavyadarsha in Oriental literature is considered an important work. Like Aristotle's Poetics in western world, this work was also translated into Mongolian languages from Pali and Tibetan. Learned Lamas, Gelegjalsan and many others translated this work from Tibetan language into Mongolian in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and other lamas wrote commentaries in Sanskrit language. So 13<sup>th</sup> century famous Mongolian historic annals, titled Secret History of Mongols,

The ancient Indian culture and arts spread through its *dharma* to Mongolia and there are lot of notions and even vocabularies in Mongolian daily usage like theory of emptiness and many other since also widely discussed and still nowadays.

Teachings of Buddha helped to form our thoughts. And not only our thoughts but also philosophy; it formed into philosophy that has a huge impact on our political endeavour and philosophy. Thus we attach value to *gyan*, *dharma* and *karma*.

which is the genealogy of Genghis Khan, referred to India in its Chapter 261-264 as Hindu or Hindustan, or the river of Indus, also referred to as Sindh.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji visited Mongolia in 2015. During his visit, he presented the saplings of Banyan tree, Bodhi tree as we call it, as well as statues of Lord Buddha and his two disciples. It was greatly appreciated by Mongolian Buddhists as it gave an indication of our common bonds of *dharma* and close cultural affinities. The truth of Siddhartha (earlier name of Gautam Buddha) cannot be adequately described in short remarks. Perhaps it requires life-long efforts to comprehend for us, ordinary mortals.

Lord Buddha described it in parables – man should seek the middle way between self-indulgence and self-mortification, as Shekhar Dutt mentioned. This middle way, known as noble eightfold path, consisted of right view, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right mode of living, right endeavour, right mindfulness and right consciousness. Thus, teachings of Buddha helped to form our thoughts. And not only our thoughts but also philosophy; it formed into philosophy that has a huge impact on our political endeavour and philosophy. Thus we attach value to *gyan*, *dharma* and *karma*. Mongolians and Indians are sitting on the northern and southernmost fringes of Buddhist Asia. However, we are intertwined; this long history has grown into a solid basis of our formal interstate relations. Next year, we are contemplating to mark the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our diplomatic relations. These events would give us, at least I hope, to sum up what we have passed through and to define what would be, where we can work together as a common aspiration and endeavour.

Our *dharma* and culture, and cultural ties greatly contribute to the spiritual advancement of my nation. I thank India for her vital role in reaching the spiritual horizon of my country and forming people's way of living through teachings of Lord Buddha. Undoubtedly, as my previous speaker mentioned, the present-day world needs a more spiritual way, and more empowerment for peace and sustainable development. It needs to be underlined here that the teachings of Lord Buddha and Swami Vivekananda are more relevant

not only to inspire people for cultivation of wisdom but also for happy and peaceful coexistence, regardless of our political allegiance or geographic considerations, for the sake of mutual respect and togetherness.

When we people from various countries are united, we are stronger. And when we are stronger, if we could join by faith and conviction, we become more sustainable. Spiritual mind never aggravates but cultivates through soul consciousness and guarantees the path of compassion and enlightenment, which is preached by the Dalai Lama, time and again.

We in Mongolia regard India or Bharat as the sacred land of Lord Buddha, and source of wisdom and knowledge. Thus, spiritual ties constitute another pillars of our state-to-state close cooperation. I am pleased that the Government of India also expressed its readiness to accept Mongolian students and youth monks into its universities. So it is not only in the distant past but in recent contemporary period also that we learnt from your experiences. Sons and daughters of India hailed from different ethnic and spiritual backgrounds, courageously led their struggle for national independence through *ahimsa* (non-violence). Thanks to their unwavering dedication, India today is successfully growing as the world's largest democracy with strong economy.

We in Mongolia recently marked 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our first free democratic and fair elections, which is comparatively recent past, that ushered my country into political democracy and market economy. Today we might be one of the smallest democracies in Asia, but I am proud to be together, shoulder by shoulder with India. Following the great Indian tradition of *ahimsa*, three decades ago we launched wide-reaching transformation in all walks of social life peacefully, without breaking a single windowpane and spilling of blood. India supported the sweeping transformations of political democracy and market economy in Mongolia from the very beginning. The parliament of India, along with other Asian parliamentarians helped us to draft a democratic constitution. From the very beginning of 1990s, our students, our experts started coming to study and to gain experiences in India.

While being connected with age-old spiritual and cultural bonds, we are sharing common democratic values and rule of law too. We are willing to reinvigorate our old ties, Asian ties. So between the election bodies, between

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the civil service institutions and legislative bodies as well, we are going to enlarge our limited collaborations. The governments of Mongolia and India have defined their principles to be pursued in bilateral and multilateral relations, which enshrined Indo-Mongolian joint declaration. And today, we have concluded a comprehensive partnership agreement which comprises almost all the areas where we are determined to work on mutually advantageous basis. We have also agreed to collaborate in all available areas to the good of regional and international stability and sustainable development. Our collaborations are exponentially growing in multiple areas. These areas include agriculture, animal husbandry, mining and light industries. As of today, we are working with Engineers India Limited, one of the big Indian companies, to build an oil refinery, because we export crude oil and import petroleum products from other countries and spend a lot of foreign exchange. So that refinery would help us to reduce, if not eradicate our double dependency on foreign trade. As ambassador, I am proud of that.

The Government of India also gives us assistance in training our personnel, and promoting small and medium scale industries under their programmes called ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation) with short and long-term training. So our students are coming to study. We also have a large number of monk students, those studying Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy. Thus we attach particular importance to our spiritual and cultural, educational ties. And we consider India as our third neighbour. We also call it our spiritual neighbour. And we are both peace-loving nations, free from any military alliances and constructively collaborating within the frameworks of United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and many other international fora to facilitate the avoidance of conflicts and help understanding and collaborations in the interest of our two nations and to the good of universal peace and understanding.

I am sure the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues and similar such events would help us to deepen our understanding. Once we understand one another, we can search for a lot of avenues to interact effectively and make a more efficient and meaningful endeavour to the good of sustainable development.



## Buddhism: Source of Fight against Aggressors

H.E. Pham Sanh Chau

I am not an expert on Buddhism. Yet, I accepted the invitation to attend this dialogue for a simple reason. In six weeks, Vietnam will probably host for the third time, Vesak, which is the combination of celebration of the birth of Lord Buddha, of his enlightenment and of his nirvana (demise) day. Some years ago, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising the day called Vesak. Buddhists, especially in the countries where people are predominantly Buddhist, have organised a celebration to mark Vesak.

Interestingly, Vietnam will host for the third time its Vesak day. We hosted it in 2008, 2014 and this time. It means that Vietnam is not like India where you have the privilege of hosting the birthplace and the enlightenment place of Lord Buddha, but we love Buddha very much and want to celebrate.

Talking about Buddhism and relations between the two countries, I often hear the leaders of Vietnam and India saying that they share many similarities – the aspiration for national struggle, for national independence and sovereignty. They always conclude by saying that we love Buddhism, which came to Vietnam from India. So Buddhism laid down a moral, spiritual foundation for the relationship between Vietnam and India.

Today, I want to mention some reflections on how Buddhism influenced Vietnamese culture and how it is different from Indian perspective. Buddhism came to Vietnam in a very pacific way. It was spread into Vietnam about 2000 years ago through merchants from China in the north and from India from the sea. A study we conducted says the thought of Buddhism that came from

I often hear the leaders of Vietnam and India saying that they share many similarities – the aspiration for national struggle, for national independence and sovereignty. They always conclude by saying that we love Buddhism, which came to Vietnam from India. So Buddhism laid down a moral, spiritual foundation for the relationship between Vietnam and India.

When Prime Minister Modi visited Vietnam, he said that many aggressors came to Vietnam but had to leave without leaving any good thing. Only Buddhism that came from India stayed for ever and had good impact.

India has helped Vietnam to keep its own identity. At that time, Vietnam was under Chinese domination, which lasted for 1000 years. Despite that 1000-year domination, we were able to keep our own identity. We were not assimilated; of course, we were influenced by Chinese culture, by Chinese Confucianism, by Chinese Buddhism. But one of the very important factors that Indian Buddhism played was to have Vietnamese culture to balance with Chinese Buddhism and Chinese influence. Thanks to that, we were able to retain Vietnamese identity.

Therefore, when Prime Minister Modi visited Vietnam, he said that many aggressors came to Vietnam but had to leave without leaving any good thing. Only Buddhism that came from India stayed for ever and had good impact. Your vice-president is going to make an official visit to Vietnam in May and will make a keynote speech at Vesak. Buddhism came to Vietnam much unlike other religions, which came with a force.

The second thing I want to share with you is that Vietnamese Buddhism accepts gender equality, which I find very interesting especially in the context of the debate now whether women should be allowed into a particular temple in India. In Vietnam, every village has to build a temple, according to the king's instruction. The temple is dedicated to the saint or village deity that saves people of that village from famine, from flattening etc. But under the influence of Confucianism, only men are allowed to enter the temple. However, in most Vietnamese villages, people decided to build a pagoda

which is dedicated to Buddha. It is the place where women, both young and old, can go and hold meeting. So Buddhism in Vietnam has a vision to protect the rights of women. They provide women a shelter to go not only during the hard time of rainy season but deep down they provide a spiritual shelter for all the women, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. This is a very positive aspect of Vietnam's Buddhism.

The third thing I want to share is that Buddhism in Vietnam has helped her people to fight against aggressors. Buddhism, after its arrival, joined hands with the people of Vietnam in their struggle for national independence. Normally monks are not supposed to join politics or take side in a conflict, but Vietnamese monks provided shelter to guerrilla fighters. Thanks to guerrillas, we were able to fight against the French, the Americans, the Japanese and some others as well. Buddhist pagodas provided haven for the Vietnamese revolutionaries to wage their own freedom struggle. Thus, Buddhism played a very important role not only in the spiritual but also the political life of Vietnam.

That explains why in our National Assembly, like the Lok Sabha in your system, we reserve some seats for some monks. Some people say monks should not sit in parliament, but history has shown that Vietnamese Buddhism has gone with the freedom fighters a long way in course of national struggle. So that is the difference of Vietnamese Buddhism as compared to other countries.

My last point is that it is very difficult for other people, especially westerners and even Asians, to understand why Vietnam can easily put the painful past behind and establish a friendly relationship with its former foes. If you look back, we were under Chinese domination for 1000 years and we had many wars with China in the past but China is our strategic, comprehensive partner now. We were under the French colonialism, like you were under the British domination for 200 years. We were under France for 100 years and we launched two struggles against them to liberate ourselves, but they are now our best European friends. As for America, few people can imagine that just 40 years ago we fought fiercely against Americans. Everyone knows about

Buddhism in Vietnam has a vision to protect the rights of women. They provide women a shelter to go not only during the hard time of rainy season but deep down they provide a spiritual shelter for all the women, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. This is a very positive aspect of Vietnam's Buddhism.

Vietnam wants to be friend with everybody and be a responsible member of the world community despite having fought for so many decades, even centuries of devastating war against the aggressors. But that value could not have taken roots without the influence that came from India.

Vietnam war. But now, we have a comprehensive partnership with America and President Trump visited Vietnam twice in his first year of administration. I want to stress that in the Vietnamese culture, there is one element that is very much influenced by Buddhism – compassion, tolerance and forgiving. It is very difficult for many nations to be able to forgive but Vietnam people are able to forgive. We can never forget the past, because the past for us is painful. In every family in Vietnam, there is one person on this side or the other side who was killed during the war. Or in the previous generation, killed by either the Japanese or the French or the Americans but we don't keep that pain forever in our heart. We put it behind, are determined to look forward into the future.

So the message of our foreign policy is: Vietnam wants to be friend with everybody and be a responsible member of the world community despite having fought for so many decades, even centuries of devastating war against the aggressors. But that value could not have taken roots without the influence that came from India.

DAY-1 | EXHIBITION

# Life and Works of Sir Marc Aurel Stein





## A PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW BY INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

Marc Aurel Stein's name and works have become inseparable from the history of the Silk Road, which was not merely an Eurasian trade route linking China with the Mediterranean, but a conduit of ideas, beliefs, styles of art and technologies. The meticulous works of Stein are invaluable to the Buddhist Studies.

This exhibition on **Life and Works of Sir Marc Aurel Stein** was conceptualized at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in 2015 by Dr. Radha Banerjee Sarkar with the courtesy of Academy of Science, Budapest, Hungary. Since then, the exhibition has been displayed and appreciated at several esteemed institutions, National Library Calcutta, NEHU, State Museum Guwahati of India. This Exhibition introduces Sir Marc Aurel Stein, the man and the scholar, with reproduction of photographs, maps and manuscripts from the Aurel Stein collection preserved in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and other Hungarian Collections.

Sir Marc Aurel Stein who was a scholar and traveler like Xuanzang, travelled through the inhospitable Silk Route, encircling the Taklamakan Desert, and unearthed a great civilization which remained hidden in the sand dunes for centuries. His Exploration and Archaeological discoveries in Central Asia remarkably the sealed cave library 17 of Dunhuang Caves, Gansu, NW of China opened new ways of understanding the Buddhist Heritage. Many of the artefacts collected by him during his forays in the desert are now among the treasures of the National Museum, New Delhi. His name and works have become inseparable from the history of the Silk Road, which was not merely an Eurasian trade route linking China with the Mediterranean, but a conduit of ideas, beliefs, styles of art and technologies. The meticulous works of Marc Aurel Stein are invaluable to the Buddhist Studies.





DAY-1 | SESSION-1

# Buddhism: Philosophy, Science and Architecture



CHAIR

**Buddhism: Language for a Common People**

Hira Paul Gangnegi

Professor, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi

SPEAKERS

**Convergence and Divergence between Quantum Physics and Buddhist Philosophy of Emptiness**

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul

Director, Tibet House, New Delhi

**Architecture for Compassion:****An approach to healing the built environment**

M.N. Ashish Ganju

Architect, Scholar and Co-Founder of GREHA, New Delhi

**Buddhism: Language for a Common People**

Hira Paul Gangnegi

Let me start the session by highlighting the need to look at Buddhism from a multi-disciplinary lens, one of the key problems with the propagation of Buddhism is the language that is used, in some cases words used to describe Buddhism and its ideas are difficult to decipher even for scholars. Therefore, I think that the terminology should be simplified to a level that enables common people to grasp the various concepts of Buddhism and understand the underlying meaning of these concepts. In order to do that, a scientific and rational approach must be taken in developing a vocabulary derived from common day to day language that enables younger generations to understand Buddhism and relate their own context and experience with practices and philosophy of Buddhism.



## Convergence and Divergence between Quantum Physics and Buddhist Philosophy of Emptiness

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul

The root of all our problems is ignorance, which can be defined as a state of mind where perception doesn't tally with reality. To get rid of this ignorance, we need to get rid of discrepancy between the appearance to mind and the reality, i.e. being objective, as is emphasized in modern sciences like physics, biology, chemistry etc. Be it Buddhism, any other religion or modern sciences, the need for us is to deal with objectivity.

Parallels can be drawn between Buddhist/ Nagarjuna's teachings and modern ideas from quantum physics to discuss the ideas of objective and subjective reality, what is an object, what is a subject, and how the basic ideas driven from double slit experiment of quantum physics that the observed only make sense in dependence of the observer is similar to philosophical idea driven from Buddhism that independent of the subject, object doesn't make sense. We dream, but the reality changes once we wake up. Similarly, when we speak about 'Emptiness', it doesn't mean that nothing exists, it simply means that things don't exist from the object, while they do exist from the subject.

There are three levels of Emptiness; Emptiness of Autonomous Substantial Reality, Emptiness of Externality, and Emptiness of Objectivity. More one goes from understanding number one to the number three, one's experience of emptiness deepens and accordingly, the relief that one gets from the fears of life is intensified.

Speaking about the micro and macro worlds, first from the perspective of contemporary physics and then from the perspective of Arya Nagarjuna's philosophy of Conventional and Ultimate truth, we see the same thing from

There are three levels of Emptiness; Emptiness of Autonomous Substantial Reality, Emptiness of Externality, and Emptiness of Objectivity. More one goes from understanding number one to the number three, one's experience of emptiness deepens and accordingly, the relief that one gets from the fears of life is intensified.

We are used to blaming external factors, that are not only too many but also out of our control, which is senseless, and instead we should look at resolving the internal factors that are within us, which can help us eliminate the miseries from our life.

two frame of references and the way to reconcile these two truths is by realising that these two can be brought together only with consideration, with respecting the fact that these two realities of the same object are seen or exist by dependence on two different frames of the perceptions. The *Heart Sutra* states form is empty and emptiness is form.

On the concepts of Emptiness and Quantum Vacuum, one can compare the ideas of Big Bang and Arya Nagarjuna's point of view that everything that one sees as the manifest version of the macro world is nothing but a manifestation of the micro world, while quantum physicists talk about the vacuum. In Nagarjuna's philosophy, there's a mention of Emptiness. From the Emptiness, all the manifestations arise; from the Quantum Vacuum, all of the Universe today came into being.

Going back to the idea of 'ignorance' and how we can possibly eliminate it, we are used to blaming external factors, which are not only too many but also out of our control, which is senseless. Instead, we should look at resolving the internal factors that are within us, which can help us eliminate the miseries from our life, He quoted a wonderful message given by Bodhisattva Shantideva, "Where would I possibly find enough leather with which to cover the surface of the earth? Yet, wearing leather just to cover the soles of my feet is equivalent to covering the entire earth with it."



## Architecture for Compassion: An Approach to Healing the Built Environment

M.N. Ashish Ganju

What Architecture is about, can be explained with the help of a diagram. It's an ancient discipline that emerges at the conjecture of Geography, History, and Philosophy. Geography teaches us about land surfaces and environment, out of which our culture emerges, History teaches us about our society, and Philosophy teaches about the aesthetics. From these three, we are reminded of the clues inherent in the diversity of our environmental conditions, in the lineage of ideas embodied in monuments across time, and in the power of ethical systems, which have shaped our view of the world.

I have worked on installing a statue of Lord Buddha at the Buddha Jayanti Park in Delhi on the request of Tibet House. The process of creation and installation of this statue resulted in my working with not only Tibetan Lamas but also skilled craftsmen – traditional stone carvers, and challenged my belief that ancient crafts were disappearing. Being involved in this process and being concerned with the iconography of the shelter, taught me a lot about both Iconography and Architecture, This involvement resulted in a request to me by His Holiness's sister-in-law to help in building a Buddhist nunnery.

With involvement in this project of Tibetan/ Buddhist nunnery for almost 30 years, I have learnt about Buddhism and about compassion; how we can produce in today's world an architecture which respects not just human beings, but all of nature, a fact that has probably been forgotten in recent times. I used to believe that the truth of Architecture lies in a perfect understanding of materials etc. Most of my colleagues still believe in and preach this extremely superficial doctrine, which has led to a great deal of stress on physical environment. However, building in the Himalayas was a great example of working with the forces of nature, an exercise that respects the land, the stones the trees, and also the human beings.

How we can produce in today's world an architecture which respects not just human beings, but all of nature, a fact that has probably been forgotten in recent times.

Because Architecture is basically and finally the expression of our symbolic understanding of the cosmos, what is around us, the more we can penetrate our own inner understanding of cosmic forces and cosmic reality, the more sustainable and enjoyable will be the Architecture that emerges.

As for the Architecture of compassion, many of the nuns involved in the building process had actually fled from Tibet, after being heavily traumatized there. To relieve themselves of their trauma, they were involved in the building process, which was simplified enough for them to easily take part. I thought the meaning of compassion somehow derived, at least in this situation, from the fact that everyone who was in this community could participate in a process of looking after one's own environment.

There were serious environmental challenges, structural requirements, and innovation involved in building this project. For example, roof of the building was not only to provide protection from rain and the sun, but also insulation against cold and heat, and at the same time something that gave one a sense of symbolic attachment. Because Architecture is basically and finally the expression of our symbolic understanding of the cosmos, what is around us, the more we can penetrate our own inner understanding of cosmic forces and cosmic reality, the more sustainable and enjoyable will be the Architecture that emerges.

DAY-1 | SESSION-2

गांधी का पहला प्रयोग,  
चम्पारण सत्याग्रह

# Gandhi's Experiment of Satyagraha in Champaran



संचालक

**चम्पारण सत्याग्रह : संघर्ष की सीख**

सुधीरेन्द्र शर्मा

ब्लॉग्गर और पर्यावरणविद्य, नई दिल्ली

वक्ता

**गांधी का पहला प्रयोग, चम्पारण सत्याग्रह**

अरविन्द मोहन

पत्रकार और लेखक, नई दिल्ली



## चम्पारण सत्याग्रह : संघर्ष की सीख

सुधीरेन्द्र शर्मा

चम्पारण सत्याग्रह देश के आधुनिक इतिहास में मील के पत्थर के समान है, जो अपने खेतों और खेती को लेकर किसानों के अधिकारों को मजबूती देने के मसले पर वर्तमान को अतीत से जोड़ता है। तब अगर मुकाबला उपनिवेशवादी शासकों से था, तो आज कॉर्पोरेट सत्ता से निबटने की चुनौती है।

चम्पारण सत्याग्रह का यह वर्ष हमें यह मौका दे रहा है कि हम यह समझ सकें कि महात्मा गांधी कितने दक्ष अनुसंधानकर्ता और कितने कुशल रणनीतिज्ञ थे। आखिर उनके इस सत्याग्रह के बारे में यही तो माना जाता है कि इसने उपनिवेशवादी दमन को अहिंसक चुनौती देने का रास्ता दिखाया। सत्ता को चुनौती देने के लिए प्रमाणों को एक अहिंसक हथियार के तौर पर इस्तेमाल करते हुए गांधी ने न्यायपालिका और मीडिया, दोनों का जितनी कुशलता से उपयोग किया वैसा पहले कभी नहीं किया गया था। और यह सब उन्होंने उन हजारों लोगों की खातिर किया, जो निडर होकर गवाही देने के लिए उनके पास आए थे। आज के इस बदलते दौर में, जब निष्पक्ष पत्रकारिता की धारा सूख रही है, निलहे किसानों के जायज अधिकारों की खातिर गांधी के संघर्ष और विचारों में ऐसा बहुत कुछ है जिनका अनुकरण किया जा सकता है।

चम्पारण सत्याग्रह देश के आधुनिक इतिहास में मील के पत्थर के समान है, जो अपने खेतों और खेती को लेकर किसानों के अधिकारों को मजबूती देने के मसले पर वर्तमान को अतीत से जोड़ता है। तब अगर मुकाबला उपनिवेशवादी शासकों से था, तो आज कॉर्पोरेट सत्ता से निबटने की चुनौती है। संघर्ष के पहलू भले बदल गए होंगे, जीवन और आजीविका की रक्षा की चुनौतियां मोटे तौर पर वही हैं। अरविंद मोहन ने चम्पारण सत्याग्रह के इतिहास और समाजविज्ञान का गहरा अध्ययन करके इस विषय पर जो विद्वतापूर्ण लेखन किया है उसने ज्ञान का ऐसा खजाना उजागर किया है जो वर्तमान से लेकर भविष्य तक प्रतिध्वनित होता रहेगा। इस लेखन से इस विषय पर बहुत कुछ सीखा और अमल किया जा सकता है।



## गांधी का पहला प्रयोग, चम्पारण सत्याग्रह

अरविन्द मोहन

चम्पारण सत्याग्रह ऊपर से देखने में एक किसान समस्या का निपटान था। कई बार ज़्यादा बारीकी से गौर करने पर यह सांस्कृतिक और राजनैतिक सवाल भी लगता है—बल्कि सांस्कृतिक अपमान, औरतों की बदहाली, दलितों समेत कमज़ोर लोगों की दुर्गति के सवाल पर तो अभी तक ज़्यादा लिखा-पढ़ा भी नहीं गया है। मुझे स्थानीय स्वतंत्रता सेनानी विन्ध्याचल गुप्त जी की किताब भर में यह पक्ष दिखा तब इसका एहसास भी हुआ। फिर यह राजनैतिक आन्दोलन तो था ही—कई लोग राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन और गांधी के राजनैतिक जीवन में चम्पारण सत्याग्रह की भूमिका को महत्वपूर्ण मानकर ही इसको आज इतना महत्व दे रहे हैं। एक तर्क पूरे उपनिवेशवाद विरोधी वैश्विक आन्दोलन में हमारे राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन और उसकी शुरुआत चम्पारण से होने की बात भी रेखांकित करते हैं और शुद्ध गांधीवादी बिरादरी बुनियादी तालीम, खादी, ग्रामोद्योग और युरोपीय मॉडल से इतर वैकल्पिक विकास के प्रयोग की शुरुआत के चलते चम्पारण सत्याग्रह को महत्वपूर्ण मानता है।

1917 के गांधी के कथनों और लेखनों को देखने के बाद ये बातें टुकड़े-टुकड़े में तो सही लगती हैं, पर गांधी ने इसे परिभाषित करने की कोशिश नहीं की। कुछ समय बाद दक्षिण अफ्रीका के अपने जीवन के बारे में और फिर अपनी आत्मकथा लिखते हुए वे चम्पारण को बहुत स्नेह से याद करते हैं, पर आन्दोलन क्या था या किन बड़े लक्ष्यों को लेकर चला, उस तरह की व्याख्या या समीक्षा की कोशिश उन्होंने नहीं की है। सन् बयालीस में जब लुई फिशर ने उनसे कई दिनों तक चला लम्बा इंटरव्यू लिया तब उन्होंने इतना ही कहा कि चम्पारण रहने और वहाँ के लोगों के कष्ट देखने के बाद मुझे पहली बार लगा कि अंग्रेज़ों को भारत से निकाले बगैर काम नहीं चलेगा। चम्पारण के दस्तावेज़ और ब्यौरे देखने पर तो आपको गांधी किसानों से यही कहते दिखेंगे कि मुझसे कुछ भी मिलने वाला नहीं है। जो कुछ मिलेगा वह गोरे अधिकारियों और निलहों से ही मिलेगा, इसलिये उनके खिलाफ हिंसक होने की जरूरत तो नहीं ही है, दुर्भावना भी न रखें। गांधी के पहले चम्पारण के किसानों ने लड़ाई लड़ी थी, निलहों को जान से भी मारा था। पर गांधी ने ज़रा भी हिंसा नहीं होने दी और जहाँ कहीं हिंसक टकराव की आशंका लगी, निलहों या किसानों की तरफ की कोई भी गतिविधि हिंसा की तरफ बढ़ती लगी तो बहुत तत्परता से शीतल फाहा सा रखकर हिंसा को टाल दिया।

इसलिये गांधीवादी जमात और खासकर राजेन्द्र प्रसाद जैसे उनके चम्पारण के सहयोगी भी जब तब के किस्से लिखते हैं तो वे इसे सत्याग्रह, क्रांति, आन्दोलन की जगह 'झगड़ा-चम्पारण का झगड़ा' ही करार देते हैं। गांधी ने भी हर किसान आन्दोलन की तरह न ज़मीन्दारों के खिलाफ नारे लगवाए, न सभा की, न भाषण दिये, न कर्ज देने वाले महाजनों के दस्तावेज़ फड़वाए। उन्होंने न अखबारों को बुलाकर बयान दिये, न कोर्ट-कचहरी का सहारा लिया। न

सन् बयालीस में जब लुई फिशर ने उनसे कई दिनों तक चला लम्बा इंटरव्यू लिया तब उन्होंने इतना ही कहा कि चम्पारण रहने और वहाँ के लोगों के कष्ट देखने के बाद मुझे पहली बार लगा कि अंग्रेज़ों को भारत से निकाले बगैर काम नहीं चलेगा। चम्पारण के दस्तावेज़ और ब्यौरे देखने पर तो आपको गांधी किसानों से यही कहते दिखेंगे कि मुझसे कुछ भी मिलने वाला नहीं है। जो कुछ मिलेगा वह गोरे अधिकारियों और निलहों से ही मिलेगा, इसलिये उनके खिलाफ हिंसक होने की जरूरत तो नहीं ही है।

गांधी ने दूसरा काम यह किया कि किसी और का मुहँ ताकने की जगह खुद के उदाहरण से अपने सहयोगियों और फिर चम्पारण के लोगों को सच के लिये सामने आने का साहस दिया. अगर उन्होंने एक गलत सरकारी आदेश को सीधे मानने से इंकार करके शासन को बैकफुट पर ला दिया तो महीने भर के अन्दर हज़ारों किसानों ने लिखत-पढ़त में और दस्तखत/अंगूठे के निशान के साथ अपने सच और साहस को जगजाहिर करने में देर नहीं लगाई.

चन्दा वसूला न छाती पीटा. उन्होंने ने सिर्फ सच्चाई को, जो नील के किसानों की मुश्किलों से लेकर लगभग हर चम्पारणवासी के जीवन में अनेक प्रकार की परेशानियों को हज़ारों गवाहियों के माध्यम से इस तरह से सारी दुनिया के सामने रख दिया जिससे इंकार करना खुद निलहों को मुश्किल हो गया—गोरे शासकों ने तो गांधी के पहुंचने के हफ्ते भर बाद से ही खुद को निलहों से अलग करना/दिखाना शुरू कर दिया था. गांधी ने दूसरा काम यह किया कि किसी और का मुहँ ताकने की जगह खुद के उदाहरण से अपने सहयोगियों और फिर चम्पारण के लोगों को सच के लिये सामने आने का साहस दिया. अगर उन्होंने एक गलत सरकारी आदेश को सीधे मानने से इंकार करके शासन को बैकफुट पर ला दिया तो महीने भर के अन्दर हज़ारों किसानों ने लिखत-पढ़त में और दस्तखत/अंगूठे के निशान के साथ अपने सच और साहस को जगजाहिर करने में देर नहीं लगाई. निपट अकेले पहुंचे गांधी को सहयोग देने जुटी वकीलों की टोली को अपनी मोटी कमाई त्यागने, साहस दिखाने और गांधी की सादगी अपनाने में ज़्यादा वक्त नहीं लगा.

यह एक ऐसा विषय जिस पर कम नहीं लिखा गया है, पर उसे ठीक से समझा गया है यह कहना मुश्किल है. इसलिए अभी और लिखे जाने की ज़रूरत भी बताते चलने में हर्ज नहीं है. जो लिखा गया है उसमें भक्तिभाव से गुणगान ज़्यादा है पर आलोचना और गांधी के आन्दोलन को, उनकी रणनीति को, उनकी मंशा को शक के दायरे में रखने वाला लेखन भी कम नहीं हुआ है. इन दो धाराओं के अलावा भी गांधी और चम्पारण पर लिखने वाले कम नहीं हैं पर उनकी सोच और तर्क और उल्टे हैं. कोई चम्पारण सत्याग्रह को गांधी की नौटंकी करार देता है तो कोई इसे गांधी द्वारा वहाँ राजकुमार शुक्ल वगैरह द्वारा खड़े किये गए आन्दोलन को हड़प लेने वाला. बाकी अब प्रभावी हुए दूसरी जमातों के लोग इतिहास लेखन से लेकर राजनाति और समाज की अगुवाई का दावा कर रहे हैं. राष्ट्रपिता को वे न याद करें यह सम्भव नहीं है पर गांधी जो कर-कह रहे थे, जो व्यवस्था बनाना चाहते थे उसकी याद जब गांधी का नाम लेकर शासन करने वालों को नहीं रही तो बाकी से ज़्यादा उम्मीद करना बहुत ठीक नहीं होगा या उनके गांधी की राह छोड़ने का आरोप लगाने का भी कोई मतलब नहीं है. पर गांधी और उनका दर्शन ऐसा भी नहीं है कि दूसरों के भरोसे बैठा रहे. बल्कि इसी चम्पारण में जब गांधी आए थे तो निपट अकेले थे और चम्पारण के राजकुमार शुक्ल को छोड़कर उन्होंने बिहार के किसी भी व्यक्ति को अपने आने की सूचना देने की भी ज़रूरत नहीं महसूस की. गांधी इससे पहले चम्पारण तो क्या बिहार भी नहीं आए थे और चम्पारण के बारे में कुछ भी नहीं जानते थे. उन्हें चम्पारण की बोली भोजपुरी ही क्यों ठीक से हिन्दी भी नहीं आती थी. और

उस कैथी लिपि को वे नहीं पढ़ सकते थे जिसमें भूमि के दस्तावेज़ थे. उन्हें न नील का पता था न उन्होंने कभी नील का पौधा भी देखा था. उनको तो चम्पारण का भी पता न था. बिहार भी इससे पहले वे नहीं आए थे और मज़हरुल हक़ साहब जैसे एकाध को छोड़कर वे किसी बिहारी को जानते भी न थे. उनको हक़ साहब के अलावा बिहार में दादा कृपलानी को तार देने की सूझी वह भी राजकुमार शुक्ल की क्षमता पर शुरुआती शक के बाद.

पर गांधी के अन्दर भी वह चीज़ आ चुकी थी जिसने न सिर्फ़ चम्पारण आन्दोलन को खड़ा किया बल्कि मुल्क और दुनिया की राजनीति और जीवन को नई दिशा दी. उन्होंने यह बदलाव दक्षिण अफ्रीका में कर लिया था—यह जरूर है कि वहाँ ज़्यादातर प्रयोग फीनीक्स और टालस्टाय आश्रमों में हुये थे या सिर्फ़ वहाँ रह रहे हिन्दुस्तानी समाज के बीच. वैचारिक स्तर पर गांधी की राय इतनी साफ़ हो चुकी थी कि उन्होंने हिन्द स्वाराज की रचना भी कर ली थी. पर सारे प्रयोगों, सारी वैचारिक तैयारियों को भारतीय समाज पर, जमीन पर उतारने की शुरुआत चम्पारण से हुई. और चम्पारण बदला, बिहार बदला, मुल्क की राजनीति में नए दौर की शुरुआत हुई, विश्वव्यापी उपनिवेशवाद की विदाई का दौर शुरु हुआ. ज़बरदस्त बदलाव गांधी में भी हुआ, इससे भी ज़्यादा उन बिहारी और सहयोगी नेताओं में हुआ जो गांधी के आन्दोलन की रीढ़ बने और उन्होंने चम्पारण तथा गांधी को जितना दिया गांधी और चम्पारण ने उससे कई गुना ज़्यादा उन्हे दिया या जीवन बदलकर ले लिया.

ज़ाहिर तौर पर चम्पारण आन्दोलन/सत्याग्रह पर भी नए तरह से देखने की जरूरत है क्योंकि गांधी ने अपनी काफ़ी ऊर्जा, समय और साधन लगाए थे, काफ़ी सारे सहयोगी तलाशे थे, काफ़ी चीज़ों की शुरुआत की थी. हम भाग्यशाली हैं कि यहाँ के आन्दोलन की एक बड़ी पैदाइश देश के पहले राष्ट्रपति राजेन्द्र प्रसाद भी थे जिन्होंने आन्दोलन समाप्त होने के कुछ समय बाद ही इसका ब्यौरा लिखना शुरु किया. उनके प्रयास से ही तब के विलक्षण इतिहासकार बी. बी. मिश्र ने चम्पारण आन्दोलन से सम्बन्धित सरकारी दस्तावेज़ों का संग्रह भी तैयार कर दिया है.

पर यह सब एक ही राग के गाने गाते हैं. गांधी के आन्दोलन का एक सपाट सा विवरण देने के साथ लगभग भक्तिभाव से उनके कामों को लिखा गया है. वे कोई चूक कर सकते हैं, यह मानकर बात ही नहीं की गई है और गांधी के पहले चम्पारण के लोग क्या गाय—बकरी की तरफ़ सारा अन्याय सहते ही रहे थे या कभी मुहँ भी खोला था, हाथ भी उठाया था, इसका पता नहीं चलता. इससे किसी और की जगह गांधी के आन्दोलन को ही सही परिप्रेक्ष्य में नहीं समझा गया. फिर यह समझना मुश्किल हो जाता है कि 1857 से ही लगातार लड़ रहे चम्पारण के लोगों में गांधी ने ऐसा क्या कर दिया कि न सिर्फ़ उन्हें नील की तिनकठिया खेती समेत काफ़ी चीज़ों से मुक्ति मिल गई, बल्कि राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन और गांधी के नेतृत्व को एक नया मोड़ मिल गया. गांधी ने क्या देख और समझ कर चम्पारण को अपने रचनात्मक कामों के प्रयोग की भूमि चुना और जिस जगह वे मुश्किल से आने को राज़ी हुए थे वहाँ साढ़े नौ महीने जमकर बैठे और तभी हटे जब बदलाव का भरोसा हुआ. अगर वे खेड़ा और अहमदाबाद के ज़्यादा जरूरी आन्दोलनों के लिये निकले भी तो चम्पारण की चिंता उन्हे रही और वे सिर्फ़ अपने प्रयोगों का फल देखने के लिये चम्पारण आए अपने सबसे विश्वसनीय लोगों को वहाँ रखा.

गांधी ने चम्पारण में किसी क्रांति का नाम नहीं लिया, कोई सत्ता उखाड़ने का आह्वान नहीं

ज़ाहिर तौर पर चम्पारण आन्दोलन/सत्याग्रह पर भी नए तरह से देखने की जरूरत है क्योंकि गांधी ने अपनी काफ़ी ऊर्जा, समय और साधन लगाए थे, काफ़ी सारे सहयोगी तलाशे थे, काफ़ी चीज़ों की शुरुआत की थी. हम भाग्यशाली हैं कि यहाँ के आन्दोलन की एक बड़ी पैदाइश देश के पहले राष्ट्रपति राजेन्द्र प्रसाद भी थे जिन्होंने आन्दोलन समाप्त होने के कुछ समय बाद ही इसका ब्यौरा लिखना शुरु किया.

गांधी ने चम्पारण में किसी क्रांति का नाम नहीं लिया, कोई सत्ता उखाड़ने का आह्वान नहीं किया, हिंसक बदलाव की वकालत नहीं की, किसी जाति, किसी मजहब का नाम नहीं लिया, मुश्किल से हिन्दी बोली पर ज्यादातर उसी का प्रयोग किया, कोई भूख हड़ताल भी नहीं की और हिंसक रुझान दिखने पर सब कुछ छोड़कर उस पर पहले ध्यान दिया, अंग्रेज़ हुक्मरानों ही नहीं निलहों से भी स्नेह का व्यवहार किया. खुद को ज़हर देने का प्रयास करने वाले निलहे विल्सन के प्रति उनकी तरफ़ से कभी कड़वाहट आई हो यह नहीं दिखता.

किया, हिंसक बदलाव की वकालत नहीं की, किसी जाति, किसी मजहब का नाम नहीं लिया, मुश्किल से हिन्दी बोली पर ज्यादातर उसी का प्रयोग किया, कोई भूख हड़ताल भी नहीं की और हिंसक रुझान दिखने पर सब कुछ छोड़कर उस पर पहले ध्यान दिया, अंग्रेज़ हुक्मरानों ही नहीं निलहों से भी स्नेह का व्यवहार किया. खुद को ज़हर देने का प्रयास करने वाले निलहे विल्सन के प्रति उनकी तरफ़ से कभी कड़वाहट आई हो यह नहीं दिखता. कस्तूरबा पर जब उसने व्यक्तिगत आक्षेप किया और आम तौर से अखबारी बहस से दूर रहने की रणनीति छोड़कर भी जब गांधी उसका जवाब देते हैं तो उसमें कोई कड़वाहट दिखाई नहीं देती. और हमको किसी अंग्रेज़ अधिकारी के लिखे में गांधी के लिए कोई सीधी आलोचना नहीं दिखती.

अपनी किताब 'दक्षिण अफ्रीका के सत्याग्रह का इतिहास, की भूमिका में महात्मा गांधी ने 2 अप्रैल, 1924 को ही लिखा था, "यह बात उल्लेखनीय है कि सत्याग्रह में चम्पारण के लोगों ने खूब शांति रखी. इसका साक्षी मैं हूँ कि सारे ही नेताओं ने मन से, वचन से और काया से सम्पूर्ण शांति रखी. यही कारण है कि चम्पारण में सदियों पुरानी बुराई छह माह में दूर हो गई." वे आगे लिखते हैं, "अहमदाबाद मिल मजदूरों की जीत को मैंने दोषयुक्त माना है; क्योंकि मजदूरों की टेक की रक्षा के लिये मैंने जो उपवास किया, वह मिल मालिकों पर दबाव डालने वाला था..... मजदूर अगर शांति की टेक पर डटे रहते तो उनकी जीत अवश्य होती और वे मिल-मालिकों का मन जीत लेते." वे फिर लिखते हैं, "खेड़ा में शुद्ध सत्य की रक्षा हुई ऐसा तो मैं नहीं कह सकता. शांति की रक्षा जरूर हुई.....परंतु खेड़ा ने पूरी तरह शांति का पाठ नहीं सीखा था; और अहमदाबाद के मजदूर शांति के शुद्ध स्वरूप को नहीं समझे थे. इससे रालट एक सत्याग्रह के समय लोगों को कष्ट उठाना पड़ा, मुझे अपनी हिमालय जैसी भूल स्वीकार करनी पड़ी और उपवास करना और दूसरों से करवाना पड़ा." काफी बाद में गांधी ने चम्पारण आन्दोलन के अपने सहयोगी जनकधारी प्रसाद को लिखा, "चम्पारण के सहयोगियों की यादें मेरे मन के खज़ाने में भरी पड़ी हैं. अगर देश भर में ऐसे लोग मिल जाएं तो स्वराज आने में वक्त नहीं लगेगा."

पर यह बात रेखांकित करनी जरूरी है कि यह काम उन्होंने अहिंसा से किया जो इसके पहले चम्पारण ही नहीं इतिहास में नहीं मिलता. चम्पारण के लोगों के शोषण की जड़ें कितनी गहरी हैं और उसके पीछे कितनी बड़ी ताकत है, यह समझ वहाँ वालों को पूरी तरह नहीं थी, गांधी को थी. सो उन्होंने स्थानीय आक्रोश को समेटा, दिशा दी पर एक ही बड़ा बदलाव किया—एक राजनैतिक—आर्थिक—सामाजिक लड़ाई को अहिंसक ढंग से लड़ने का. इससे पहले अपने समाज में महावीर जैसे लोगों ने और दुनिया में कई सारे लोगों ने अहिंसा का महत्व तो समझा था पर व्यक्तिगत आचरण में. गांधी ने उसे लड़ाई का औज़ार बनाया और सामूहिक प्रयोग की चीज़ बनाया. और यह प्रयोग चम्पारण में ही हुई. इसीलिये अगर हम अंग्रेज़ी सत्ता के खिलाफ दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी बगावत, 1857 को देखें तो उसका सबसे क्रूर अंत हुआ. और चम्पारण तक आने में साठ साल लगे जिसमें बार-बार छोटी हिंसक बगावतों और कांग्रेस जैसे संगठन के बनने जैसे कई स्तर के काम हुये. पर 1917 के चम्पारण के बाद मुल्क के आज़ाद होने और दुनिया से उपनिवेशवाद की विदाई का दौर शुरू होने में तीस साल ही लगे.

पर ऐसी लड़ाई के लिए सबसे ज़रूरी है सच को सामने लाना. ऐसा नहीं है कि निलहों को, अंग्रेज़ शासकों को और खुद चम्पारण के लोगों को सच्चाई का पता न हो. पर दुनिया जिस सच को स्वीकार करे और जिसका खंडन करना किसी के वश में न हो ऐसा सच पाने और प्रस्तुत करने की धुन गांधी को चम्पारण पहुंचने के पहले ही लग गई थी. कांग्रेस का चम्पारण सम्बन्धी प्रस्ताव, लोगों से बातचीत, कलकत्ता से पटना आते समय राजकुमार शुक्ल से लम्बी चर्चा में गांधी को जब ऐसा सच नहीं मिला तभी राजकुमार शुक्ल उन्हें बिहार के दो सबसे बड़े वकीलों राजेन्द्र प्रसाद और मजहरूल हक के पास ले गए. वहाँ से निराश होकर उन्होंने मुजफ्फरपुर पहुंचकर अपने परिचित प्रो. कृपलानी से यही सवाल किया. पर बाद में नील का मुकदमा लड़ने वाले बड़े वकीलों ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद, धरणीधर प्रसाद, गया प्रसाद, रामनवमी प्रसाद, रामदयालु सिन्हा जैसों से बात समझ आते ही गांधी ने चम्पारण में किसानों से स्टाम्पेपर पर गवाहियाँ लेनी शुरू कीं. और इन हज़ारों गवाहियों ने माहौल तो बदला ही ऐसा सच सामने ला दिया कि सरकार ने तत्काल जांच आयोग बनाने और गांधी को सदस्य बनाने की घोषणा की. कमेटी में कभी भी सरकारी पक्ष, ज़मींदार पक्ष और रैयत पक्ष ने गांधी के तथ्यों को नहीं काटा. पर सबसे हैरानी की बात यह है कि निलहों के प्रतिनिधि ने भी अपने संगठन से बार बार फटकार सुनने के बावजूद गांधी की बातों से सहमति दिखाई. और बाद में गांधी ने बाजाप्ता पत्र लिखकर उसका आभार बताया. आज सौ साल बाद भी ये हज़ारों गवाहियाँ सिर्फ नील की खेती के ही नहीं चम्पारण के जीवन और गुलामी के हज़ारों दूसरे सच को उजागर करती हैं. दूसरी ओर हम देखते हैं कि आज के सबसे चर्चित टूजी मामले में जज तथ्यों का सच का इन्तज़ार करते बैठे रहे और सारे मुजरिम छूट गए. सिर्फ राजनैतिक हंगामा मचा, सरकार बदली लेकिन एक भी अपराधी पकड़ा नहीं गया.

लेकिन इस नए अस्त्र का प्रयोग वही कर सकता है जो निर्भय हो, निस्वार्थ हो. गांधी ने चम्पारण में अपने उदाहरण से ये दोनों बातें स्थापित कीं. और फिर तो देर न लगी. जिस चम्पारण में और बिहार या देश में लोग लाल टोपी वाले को देखकर डर जाते थे, उसी चम्पारण के लोगों के लिये ब्रिटिश हुकुमत का खौफ खत्म हो गया. शुरुआत तो गांधी द्वारा जिला छोड़ने के आदेश को न मानकर जेल जाना, सजा पाने की पेशकश से हुई. फिर हम धरणीधर बाबू और रामनवमी बाबू को उनका अनुसरण करने को तैयार होते देखते हैं. फिर तो सारी धमकी और बदले की कार्रवाई के बावजूद बेतिया और मोतिहारी पहुंचकर अपने दुखों का सही-सही ब्यौरा लिखवाने वालों की ऐसी भीड़ उमड़ी कि नए लिखने वाले बुलाने पड़े, लाइन लगानी पड़ी, शासन की सलाह और जांच कमेटी बनने के बाद छोटी गवाहियाँ लेनी पड़ी और करीब पच्चीस हज़ार किसान-मजदूर निर्भय होकर बयान देने आए. औरों को रोकना पड़ा या उनके बयान की जरूरत नहीं रह गई. इस निर्भयता को पाने के लिये गांधी को अपने आत्मबल के प्रदर्शन के साथ अपने गोरे सहयोगी चार्ल्स एंड्रूज को बाहर भेजने, कृपलानी जी को लगभग बेगुनाही में भी जेल भेजना पड़ा और शासकीय गोपनीयता कानून का कदम-कदम पर उल्लंघन करना पड़ा.

एक आलोचना यह की जाती है कि तब नील अपनी स्वाभाविक मौत मरने जा रहा था क्योंकि तब तक कृत्रिम रंग बन गए थे और पौधे से बनने वाले नील की विदाई हो रही थी. तब सिर्फ

पर ऐसी लड़ाई के लिए सबसे ज़रूरी है सच को सामने लाना. ऐसा नहीं है कि निलहों को, अंग्रेज़ शासकों को और खुद चम्पारण के लोगों को सच्चाई का पता न हो. पर दुनिया जिस सच को स्वीकार करे और जिसका खंडन करना किसी के वश में न हो ऐसा सच पाने और प्रस्तुत करने की धुन गांधी को चम्पारण पहुंचने के पहले ही लग गई थी.

गांधी का चम्पारण प्रयोग कई मायनों में विशिष्ट है—सिर्फ हमारे राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन और ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद की समाप्ति के पहले प्रयोग के रूप में ही नहीं। इसके इस रूप की चर्चा तो होती है भले ही पूरी तफसील और गम्भीरता का अभाव भी रहता हो। यहीं और इसी आन्दोलन के दौरान गांधी ने रचनात्मक ही नहीं सभ्यतागत विकल्प के अपने प्रयोग की विधिवत शुरुआत की जिसमें उनकी इच्छा अंग्रेज़ी शासन से ही नहीं निलहों से भी सहयोग लेने की थी जो पूरी नहीं हुई।

विश्व युद्ध के चलते कुछ समय के लिए मांग एक बार फिर बनी थी और गांधी ने उसी अवसर का लाभ लिया। अब सबको यह दिख रहा हो और खुद निलहे नील की खेती से मुहँ मोड़ रहे हों तब गांधी को यह समझ न आ रहा हो यह सम्भव नहीं था। चूँकि उन्होंने इसी रणनीति से आन्दोलन का बुनियादी लक्ष्य हासिल किया, समाज के सभी वर्गों का साथ ही नहीं लाखों लोगों की भागीदारी भी सुनिश्चित कर ली और नील की खेती के कष्ट दूर कराने के साथ अंग्रेज़ी हुकुमत और गोरी चमड़ी का डर दूर कराने, अपनी सादगी, अपने देसी तौर—तरीकों पर भरोसा जमाने और रचनात्मक कामों का विकल्प पेश करने का सफल प्रयोग भी कर लिया इसलिये इस पर इस रणनीति पर शक शुबहा करने की ज़रूरत नहीं होनी चाहिये।

कायदे से तो अब इसके हर पक्ष पर गम्भीर विश्लेषण करके ऐसे निष्कर्ष निकालने चाहिये जो आज की दुनिया की समस्याओं के सन्दर्भ में राह दिखाएँ। गांधी के इस आन्दोलन में न कहीं लाठी चली न बन्दूक, न किसी को लम्बा जेल भुगतना पड़ा, न जानलेवा अनशन करना हुआ, न चन्दा हुआ, न दिखावे का खर्च करना पड़ा। गांधी ने चम्पारण से एक भी पैसा चन्दा नहीं जुटाने दिया। और कहना न होगा कि आज स्थितियाँ चम्पारण से कई गुना ज़्यादा खराब हैं और हमें ठीक एहसास भी नहीं है। चम्पारण के किसानों का बहुत शोषण होता था, बहुत जुर्म होते थे, पर हमने यही पाया है कि उन्होंने गुस्से में किसी गोरे की जान ले ली, उसके किसी लठियल को पीट दिया—भले बाद में उनको उसकी ज़्यादा बड़ी कीमत भुगतनी पड़ी। पर यह नहीं हुआ कि अपनी पीड़ा के चलते लोगों ने खेती छोड़ी हो, आत्महत्या कर ली हो। तब किसी की बहु—बेटी के साथ गलत काम हुआ होगा और इसके लिये किसी ब्लूमफील्ड जैसे गोरे को लोगों ने लाठी—डंडे से मार दिया होगा, पर अपनी बहु—बेटियों को खुशी—खुशी नचवाने और खुद तमाशबीन बनने वाले दौर में हमें नंगई के खिलाफ बोलने की भी नहीं सूझ रही है। उसी चम्पारण में, उसी बिहार और उसी हिन्दुस्तान में आज विदेशी उत्पादों, सेवाओं, तकनीक और पेटेंट से कितने की लूट हो रही है, यह समझ में भी नहीं आ रहा है।

गांधी का चम्पारण प्रयोग कई मायनों में विशिष्ट है—सिर्फ हमारे राष्ट्रीय आन्दोलन और ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद की समाप्ति के पहले प्रयोग के रूप में ही नहीं। इसके इस रूप की चर्चा तो होती है भले ही पूरी तफसील और गम्भीरता का अभाव भी रहता हो। जैसा पहले कहा गया है यहीं और इसी आन्दोलन के दौरान गांधी ने रचनात्मक ही नहीं सभ्यतागत विकल्प के अपने प्रयोग की विधिवत शुरुआत की जिसमें उनकी इच्छा अंग्रेज़ी शासन से ही नहीं निलहों से भी सहयोग लेने की थी जो पूरी नहीं हुई। उपयोगी होता कि इस मामले में ज़्यादा बारीक शोध होते और प्रयोग की शुरुआत, उसके प्रारम्भिक मूल्यांकन और विस्तार वगैरह की तब हुई चर्चाओं को सामने लाने का काम होता, बाद में हुए बदलावों और विस्तार पर शोध होता। खुद गांधी ने इस तरह के कामों को आगे बहुत महत्व दिया, विस्तार दिया और चम्पारण भी ऐसे प्रयोगों की सफलता का गवाह बना, पर उनको आगे बढ़ाने और पश्चिमी विकास माडल का विकल्प बनाने में गांधी के बाद के कांग्रेसी शासकों को कम रुचि रही। उसका क्या हश्र हुआ, कुछ काम अब तक कैसे चल रहे हैं और क्या होना चाहिए यह अध्ययन और शोध भी होना चाहिये।

DAY-1 | CULTURAL EVENING

# Chaar Yaar





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.

The group Chaar Yaar came into existence in 2004. As the name suggests, it comprises four musicians – composer, vocalist and poet Madan Gopal Singh; guitarist and banjo player Deepak Castelino; sarod player Pritam Ghosal and multiple percussionist Amzad Khan. Initially, 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. 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.

Information Credit: <http://www.sounds-of-the-world.com>

DAY-2 | SESSION-1

# State, Civil Society and the Heritage City Plan of Bodh Gaya



## CHAIR

**Bodh Gaya: Multifaceted Archaeological Sites**

Bijoy Kumar Choudhary

Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna

## SPEAKERS

**Growing up in Bodh Gaya:****An Introductory Note on Narratives of a Native**

Manish Sinha

DG, National Institute of Communications Finance,

Department of Telecommunications, New Delhi

**A Blueprint of Bodhgaya's Integrated Sustainable Development: A Comparative Study of Buddhist Heritage Site in Lumbini, Nepal**

Uday Sahay

Author and Chairman &amp; Director, SAUV Communications, New Delhi

**Heritage Development Plan of Bodh Gaya**

Divay Gupta

Principal Director, Architectural Heritage Division, INTACH, New Delhi

**Digital Heritage Center: Context and Relevance in Bodhgaya**

Abhishek Amar

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Hamilton College,

New York

**Bodh Gaya:  
Multifaceted Archaeological Sites**

Bijoy Kumar Choudhary

Bodh Gaya is an important site and this archaeological site has a continuity of more than 2600 years.

Bodh Gaya is an important site, and I am particularly struck by the fact that this archaeological site has a continuity of more than 2600 years. It has had great resilience. You probably are aware that Buddhism began to decline in mainstream India from 6th-7th century CE onwards, but flourished in eastern India till 12-13th century CE. Bodh Gaya, unlike many other places, never went into complete oblivion, particularly because it had international interventions. On the international level, people were aware of the existence of Bodh

Gaya and its importance. So, given the resilience and the past of Bodh Gaya, I'm confident that this religious site is going to survive for centuries to come.

It is very important to think of the past of Bodh Gaya, the present and to make a strategy for the future. Although the basic ethos of Bodh Gaya emanates from its Buddhist character, the reality is much more complex. There are many layers of complexity in this. You can realize it by recalling that it has been a venue of multiple ethnicities. Trans-regional identities have been present in Bodh Gaya since early ages. We have evidence of the construction of a Sinhalese monastery in 6th century CE for the stay of Sinhalese monks there. And more so in present because we have such a vast international presence.

But there are conflicting and diverse interests of different stakeholders in Bodh Gaya. For example, on the one hand you have sincere Buddhist ethos, with the challenge of maintaining sanctity of the site. On the other hand, you had the unique situation of the presence of Mahabodhi temple, a Buddhist temple, in a very isolated manner. In ancient period, it was a Buddhist site, surrounded by several other Buddhist sites. Now, it is a single Buddhist place in midst of a huge land mass where there is no Buddhism. This is a unique place, which really caters only to international worshippers. The local people, the local government look at the site as a heritage site, which has great potential for tourism.

It is very important to think of the past of Bodh Gaya, the present and to make a strategy for the future. Although the basic ethos of Bodh Gaya emanates from its Buddhist character, the reality is much more complex. There are many layers of complexity in this.



## Growing up in Bodh Gaya: An Introductory Note on Narratives of a Native

Manish Sinha

Foreign visitors were just a trickle then. And, they would come during the winter months, because Gaya had a very harsh summer. Much later, things developed that brought Buddhists here from 14 countries where Buddhism remains a dominant religion till date.

I had been a resident of Gaya from the 1970s, till the last decade, I have not really been there to know what are the immediate changes happening. But when we were little children, we knew that something very significant had happened relating to Buddhism, to the south of the town. Geographically, almost the entire town has a hill running from east to west. There are two roads that lead to Bodh Gaya, one on the eastern side, which is next to the dry river, Falgu, and one that has been built recently to house what is now the military cantonment.

But in the 1970s, local visitors and other pilgrims from India and abroad took this eastern route, visited the Mahabodhi temple and that was more or less the end of their visit. Some 'international' temples existed too, built mostly by foreign governments. So, there were some very simple structures, like the Chinese and the Bhutanese ones. Then there was a more functional kind of a temple – the Tibetan temple – where you could go and turn the wheel and follow some Buddhist practices.

A beautiful Thai temple exhibited very well the culture and architecture of the nation that it represented. That came up on the other side of the road, the western side of the Bodhi temple, because the population was very sparse. It was a good place to go and meditate. Many young people like us would often go there and sit down, with the Buddhist chanting going on in the temple. It was a very unique experience for us, being exposed to Buddhist practices at a very young age.

Foreign visitors were just a trickle then. And, they would come during the winter months, because Gaya had a very harsh summer. Much later, things developed that brought Buddhists here from 14 countries where Buddhism remains a dominant religion till date.

So, in the 1970s and 1980s, people were, in some ways becoming aware. That awareness came largely because the foreigners, who were Buddhists, started trooping into Gaya when accessibility improved and the local airport was made modern.

I remember meeting famous Hollywood actor Richard Gere in Bodh Gaya long time back in 1980s. He had a shaven head and was sitting in a shack outside the Tibetan temple. We were three in number. We had just seen his movie, *The Officer and a Gentleman*, in Delhi, and thought he can't be the famous hero, Why should he come to Gaya? But he was there.

After a few minutes, we gathered courage and asked him. He said, “Yes, I'm here on a private visit for meditation. But, please don't go around telling people because my life will become difficult.” But we were wondering where was he staying, because there were no good hotels at Bodh Gaya, offering top-class hospitality. So, that was the condition right till the 1980s.

There are very peculiar problems when it comes to dealing with the government machinery in Gaya or Bihar. These could have been the factors which initially restrained just four or five countries to build temples there. These temples had associated *viharas*, which provided accommodation to the small number of visiting tourists. As one entered Bodh Gaya, there were just a few University buildings, a government guest house and large empty space. It was a good promenade for a nice walk right up to the Bodhi temple in those days. That's what the worshippers did in those times.

All that is gone now. The erstwhile empty spaces are now full of *viharas* and hotels. They provide comfortable accommodation, but have really congested the space there. Frankly, I was deeply disappointed with that change. The moment you enter Bodh Gaya, there's granite on either side of the road, right up to the temple. Earlier, the Bodhi temple was isolated, standing out with little population around it. The change has even enveloped the local village next to the temple. I was regularly there from 1980 to, may be, 1996 or so. In the 1980s, you could cycle from Gaya to Bodh Gaya, park your cycle right in front of the Bodhi temple, stroll around in the courtyard, see the pond and Sujata's seat there and then even sit with friends on the branches of the Bodhi tree and chat.

I only want to say that it has become unthinkable to access the temple now, in that way. Tibetans played a major role in these changes, because they came with exotic goods. Gaya had a new experience of visiting foreign tourists. More and more people and tourists are coming. There are now more than a hundred *viharas* – about 114 at the last count, I was told - in and around Bodh Gaya.

I think Bodh Gaya continues to be the worst connected pilgrimage town in India, with the kind of importance that it has. I wish something is done to provide better accessibility, for a very large number of people are keen to visit the place, I've travelled abroad, including Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China. Even in China, in times of trouble, they say go to the Buddhist temple; it's like our Bajrang Bali. In spite of Cultural Revolution, that feeling within the common population remains. So, there is great desire to come here.

We, at Gaya, are waiting to benefit from tourism, if it takes place in a big way. Deshkal Society started with the idea of sustainable development of the area, so that Bodh Gaya gets in harmony with the surroundings and hopefully, its population also meets the requirements of visiting tourists.

In the 80s you could actually cycle down from Gaya to Bodh Gaya, park your cycle right in front of the Bodhi temple, stroll around in the courtyard, see the pond and Sujata's seat there and then even sit with my friends on the branch of the Bodhi tree and chat.



## A Blueprint of Bodhgaya's Integrated Sustainable Development: A Comparative Study of Buddhist Heritage Site in Lumbini, Nepal

Uday Sahay

In the beginning of my presentation, I would like to bring to your attention that 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, Archaeological Survey of India came in under an advisory role, and UNESCO status added

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).

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 Kenzo 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 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 drawing up a communication plan, a grand film, digital cluster, literature and cultural exchange programmes to make the experience global.

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## Heritage Development Plan of Bodh Gaya

Divay Gupta

We have begun a project to develop a Heritage Development Plan for Bodh Gaya in association with Government of Bihar. We looked at the basic issues of access, of traffic, of noise pollution, of visual clutter, environmental improvement, public conveniences and also the need for expansion of the airport.

We looked at just three basic ideas. One, how to restore grandeur of the temple? It is physically centre of the town, but how does it visually become so? Then, how do we remove the clutter and create a place like Lumbini in Nepal. And the third was connectivity. We looked into the issue when we approach the temple, either from the riverbank or from the airport, how it could give a sense of entry to a sacred place. As of now, you go through sort of lanes, with vendors trying to sell their goods.

The first basic proposal was about visual control. Thankfully, as per the ASI Act, this area falls within the regulated and prohibited zones of 100 metres and 200 metres, respectively. No new construction can happen around the 100- metre periphery of the temple. Construction beyond 200 metres is also restricted. But, somehow, nobody in Bodh Gaya seems to know about this law. There is no enforcement of the law, or people don't tend to follow it.

Then small pockets of green areas like the Jaiprakash Park, the ASI land etc need to be integrated within this particular zone. We also proposed to realign the existing Domuhan-Gaya road. A new entrance to the temple from a different direction was proposed. We also proposed a new pedestrian bridge across the Falgu river. Unplanned settlement between the temple and the river was also proposed to be relocated. Road to the airport was proposed to be widened to four lanes, as there's no space for eight lanes. We also proposed a circular road around Gaya and certain other important roads were also to be expanded.

We looked at just three basic ideas. One, how to restore grandeur of the temple? It is physically centre of the town, but how does it visually become so? Then, how do we remove the clutter and create a place like Lumbini in Nepal. And the third was connectivity.

Then, we also proposed decongestion of the area by relocating many facilities around the temple, which are not required there. There is a huge chunk of waterlogged land away from the town, which could be used for this relocation. The hospital to the north of the temple can also be shifted. Even the eye hospital trust building can be relocated to create a larger open space around the temple. We were also creating large green areas, including on both sides of the riverfront, with lots of trees around various monasteries and the 80-foot-high Buddha statue.

Even in terms of public facility, we wanted to shift the bus terminal out and make it more suitable for pedestrians, like in Lumbini. The existing bus parking space was proposed to be converted into e-rickshaw or golf cart zones, so that people with walking difficulties or old people could be transported from the bus station to the main temple area. And linear informal market along Jaiprakash Park was also sought to be moved out.

New public toilets were also proposed. We also proposed certain parts of the city to be open only for pedestrians. So, you could walk to the temple, worship and meditate. That will create a much less noisy city. As of now, you don't experience noise inside the temple, but while going to the temple I think it is a very noisy zone.

Another thing we thought of was riverfront development, not in Sabarmati style, but more green, more naturalised, which could also be a pedestrian path all the way from Gaya to Bodh Gaya.

Thus, this is what we were proposing: a ring road around a new road which went directly to the temple, a bus stand here and a pedestrian area. There were to be four access paths to the temple. All the land around the temple, which is mostly green, was to be combined into a single green zone covering close to about 150 acres. A new bridge was to be built on the river, and new development was to be done on the other side. Many more monasteries and better tourism infrastructure can also come up on both the sides. A new pedestrian bridge to link the two sides was thought of, which has been constructed as part of another pathway.

Regrettably, this particular plan was not implemented on the strange ground that the government had changed! This particular portfolio had gone to a different partner of the government at that time. We still hope to engage with the government to implement this in coming times.

Regrettably, this particular plan was not implemented on the strange ground that the government had changed! This particular portfolio had gone to a different partner of the government at that time. We still hope to engage with the government to implement this in coming times.



## Digital Heritage Center: Context and Relevance in Bodhgaya

Abhishek Amar

Bodhgaya's preeminent position as the paradigmatic center of the Buddhist world has been reaffirmed through its designation as a UNESCO world heritage site and its continued importance as a major religious and tourist attraction in the colonial and postcolonial India.

As many of you already know, the Bodhgaya Global Dialogues has made consistent efforts to emerge as a platform to develop and promote an understanding of the multidimensional cultural past and present of not only Bodhgaya but the larger Bihar region and other parts of India. To accomplish this goal, the Deshkal society brought together scholars, policy makers, institution builders/heads, and heritage enthusiasts from various parts of the world to share their knowledge and experiences, which can shape and inform the initiatives that the Deshkal Society proposes to undertake at the site of Bodhgaya. One major initiative that the Deshkal Society proposes today is to develop a knowledge-based 'Digital Heritage Center at Bodhgaya'. This paper aims to spell out the context, necessity and relevance of such a center, and I look forward to receiving your critical feedback and comments that will immensely benefit the vision and hopefully the establishment of this center in near future.

Before venturing into the issue of why we need such a center, let me briefly speak about the context of Bodhgaya here. Bodhgaya's preeminent position as the paradigmatic center of the Buddhist world has been reaffirmed through its designation as a UNESCO world heritage site and its continued importance as a major religious and tourist attraction in the colonial and postcolonial India. However, there is a clear disconnect between what has been declared as world heritage, which is the Mahabodhi Temple complex, and what constituted Bodhgaya today. No doubt, Bodhgaya's major historic/touristic attraction is the Mahabodhi temple complex but there is much more that the visiting pilgrims and tourists come here for. Even if one looks only at the historic materials at Bodhgaya, there is much more to be seen. In fact, the surrounding areas of the Mahabodhi complex has been largely ignored and a holistic and contextual study of this important site is yet to be done, despite the fact that this site has been studied since the early nineteenth century. A good example of this is the site of Taradeeh that has been excavated between

1980 and 1999 but is yet to be preserved and studied in tandem with the Mahabodhi complex or included within the tourist map of Bodhgaya. Another excellent example of this phenomena is the Shaiva Dasnami monastery of Bodhgaya, which dates back to the seventeenth century. Despite receiving much scholarly attention because of the dispute over the control of the temple complex between the Shaiva monastics and other stakeholders in the colonial India, the monastery has neither been studied nor documented in the postcolonial India. No tourist goes to see the impressive architecture of this monastery or its beautiful cemeteries and Shaiva temples that have the potential to convey the story of this powerful Hindu monastic center when it was at its prime in the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The monastery has not been included in the tourist map of Bodhgaya and there is no guidebook to convey its institutional history. This is a good example of how we often prioritize ancient past (of the Mahabodhi temple/Buddhist past) over the medieval or modern, something that we inherited from our colonial rulers. Today, this monastery still functions but is in a critical condition. Its walls are falling off, which needs to be repaired. Similarly, it does have many documents and material remains from past that can be utilized to write its institutional history but firstly they need to be documented and preserved for posterity.

Let us pause for a moment and question the idea of Bodhgaya. What constituted Bodhgaya? Is it just the Mahabodhi temple complex or other past historical remains? I think the above discussed two examples from Bodhgaya clearly problematize the idea of Bodhgaya. Here, I would like to further complicate this idea by asking us to think about the impressions and experiences many of us had at Bodhgaya last year. So, what constitutes Bodhgaya today? Bodhgaya has grown tremendously in last six decades. It has emerged as an international tourist destination and attracts lakhs of visitors and pilgrims every year. To accommodate these pilgrims and their needs, the place has also developed adequate infrastructure including hotels, restaurants, cafes, monasteries/temples, transportation and an airport. It has also become a major hub of employment. This development and growth of Bodhgaya has received some attention in scholarship in the last decade and scholarly academic presses have come out with guidebooks

Let us pause for a moment and question the idea of Bodhgaya. What constituted Bodhgaya? Is it just the Mahabodhi temple complex or other past historical remains?

Even a cursory survey of the town today hints at the complexity of socio-political, religious and developmental matrices of Bodhgaya that has neither been mapped nor understood. There are several local stakeholders at the site but none of them seem to either have a coherent vision or engage with the complexities of growth.

like Oxford University press, which published a guidebook by Fredrick Asher. Similarly, some scholars including myself have published scholarly pieces and an edited volume titled '**Cross-Disciplinary perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site**' in 2012. More recently, David Geary has published his monograph titled '**The Re-birth of Bodhgaya**', which is an ethnographic study of the rapid growth of Bodhgaya in last few decades. Despite these efforts, the scholarship hasn't been able to keep up with the new developments that continue to transform Bodhgaya on a daily basis in the post liberalization India. Moreover, scholarly works often have limitations because of their specific focus and limitations imposed by the press. This is visible in the development of new infrastructure at Bodhgaya, specifically new Buddhist monasteries from different countries, new religious shrines, meditation centers, hotels, cafes, that have come up in the last two or three years.

In fact, even a cursory survey of the town today hints at the complexity of socio-political, religious and developmental matrices of Bodhgaya that has neither been mapped nor understood. There are several local stakeholders at the site but none of them seem to either have a coherent vision or engage with the complexities of growth. I will illustrate this by pointing to two examples here. The Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC, hereafter) is focused inwards on managing and running the day to day affairs of the temple and is barely concerned with the Buddhist heritage outside of the temple complex. Taradeeh, the site of multiple Buddhist monasteries coterminous with the Mahabodhi temple and example discussed earlier in this paper, is located barely 20 meters west of the temple complex but has never been considered important enough to be included within Buddhist heritage by the BTMC. Magadh University was another local stakeholder, which was established to study and promote local history and culture in the postcolonial India. However, it has failed to utilize its potential to either document or oversee the developments within Bodhgaya. Even though the University established different departments to study the historical/ archaeological past of Buddhism and developmental pattern, it has failed to generate quality scholarship and any policy related information. Sadly, number of programs related to Buddhist studies are currently being investigated by Bihar vigilance for plagiarism and fake PhDs.

The above discussion clearly sums up the context of Bodhgaya and now we can transition to the necessity and relevance of a ‘digital heritage center’ at Bodhgaya. Let me first articulate the three-tiered plan of action: Short-term, mid-term and long-term, which are listed below:

#### **SHORT-TERM GOALS**

- Establish the ‘**Living Archive**’ and begin documenting the daily developments of Bodhgaya, which can be a knowledge-based resource center
- Immediate survey of all monasteries, their infrastructure and role in religious/touristic activities
- Document Rituals during the season carefully and negotiation details
- Special events such as Bodhgaya *Mahotsava* and its impact on tourism and generating awareness
- Engage with existing stakeholders critically and advocacy with new institutions

#### **MID-TERM GOALS**

- Develop digital records and Publish them digitally for research, policy-making and advocacy
- Create Digital platforms for facilitating Multi-religious and multi-cultural dialogues
- Develop Digital museum of smaller but important Buddhist sites in the Gaya district (Kurkihar, Hasra Kol etc.) to generate awareness and better access
- Develop a coherent vision for Bodhgaya’s development, which can act as a developmental model for other sites

#### **LONG-TERM GOALS**

- Wider engagement with Government Bodies and other policy related institutions
- Generate funds through national and international collaborations Publications

Through the above listed plan of action, the proposed ‘Digital Heritage Center’ will engage with multiple older and new institutions that have been in existence or have been recently established in Bodhgaya/ Gaya and other parts of Bihar. Each of these institutions have their agenda and focus. Many of

The proposed ‘Digital Heritage Center’ will engage with multiple older and new institutions that have been in existence or have been recently established in Bodhgaya/ Gaya and other parts of Bihar. Each of these institutions have their agenda and focus.

As a knowledge center, it will attempt to document the ongoing dialogue between past and present, which happens at Bodhgaya on a daily basis, thereby transforming Bodhgaya.

these recently established institutions are located not too far from Bodhgaya but may not feel the need to engage with Bodhgaya. The proposed Heritage center will not only attempt to engage critically with existing stakeholders such as Bodhgaya Temple management Committee and Bihar Heritage Development Society (BHDS) but also work as a resource center (or undertake some advocacy) to develop new stakeholders among the newly-established institutions such as the Indian Institute of Management, Central University of South Bihar, Nalanda University. It could also work as a resource center for already existing study abroad programs located in/visiting Bodhgaya (such as Antioch Bodhgaya Program), and research students at Post-graduate level in the above listed institutions in creative and critical ways. As a knowledge center, it will attempt to document the ongoing dialogue between past and present, which happens at Bodhgaya on a daily basis, thereby transforming Bodhgaya.

Bodhgaya, as a UNESCO world heritage site, is part of the Buddhist circuit within India and Nepal. Even though we see Bodhgaya as part of a local Buddhist circuit such as Rajgir or Nalanda, the Buddhist practitioners/ followers see it as a part of the regional Buddhist sites such as Sarnath, Kusinagar or Sravasti and many of them go on to visit Lumbini in Nepal and other Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand that attempted to replicate Bodhgaya by constructing their own Mahabodhi complexes. Therefore, Bodhgaya needs to be evaluated and understood as an important part (or the center) of the local, regional and global Buddhist network. A good example here is the growing number of international Buddhist monasteries at Bodhgaya that are potential sites to locate and document inter- and intra-Asian dialogues. Similarly, its links with local and regional sites are yet to be examined. In fact, Bodhgaya's unprecedented and somewhat unplanned growth has become a developmental model for other sites (such as Rajgir and Vaishali) that are at different stages of development. This is apparent in the new construction of monasteries and shrines at sites such as Rajgir and Vaishali. However, this unplanned growth needs a coherent vision, which can only emerge through a careful examination of Bodhgaya and its growth in last two decades, a task that the proposed knowledge center will earnestly undertake. In future, the center will foster cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas and different approaches that will benefit the study of Heritage sites in India and across the world.

DAY-2 | SESSION-2

# Heritage, Water Conservation and School



MODERATOR

### **Restrictive Pedagogies Become a Barrier to Connecting Heritage and Practices of Water Conservation**

Jyoti Raina

Associate Professor, Gargi College, New Delhi

SPEAKERS

### **Why are Schools Blind to the Invention of Heritage!**

Anil Sethi

CEO, Pokhrama Foundation and Former Professor, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

### **Create a Dialogue between Heritage, Water Conservation and School: Problems and Possibilities**

Raman V.R.

Head of Policy, WaterAid India, New Delhi



## **Restrictive Pedagogies Become a Barrier to Connecting Heritage and Practices of Water Conservation**

Jyoti Raina

The school systems and practices consisting of decontextualized / centralised curriculum and restrictive pedagogies do not provide adequate space for expression of communitarian sensitivities and locale-specific epistemologies which becomes a barrier to connecting heritage, culture and local life with school.

I have read the programme schedule and realise that this session has two speakers. The first is speaking on 'why schools are blind to the invention of heritage', where it will be interesting to hear what the speaker means by the term 'invention of heritage'. The second speaker is talking of problems and possibilities in creating a dialogue between heritage, water conservation and school. The preliminary response that the topic(s) of the session evokes is that our school curriculum and pedagogy offer little space, if any, to connect school and heritage. The school systems and practices consisting of decontextualized / centralised curriculum and restrictive pedagogies do not provide adequate space for expression of communitarian sensitivities and locale-specific epistemologies which becomes a barrier to connecting heritage, culture and local life with school. Pedagogical interventions that bring down the barriers between heritage and school. I was reminded of Anupam Misra's work on resurrecting community held knowledge of indigenous water systems in arid regions of Rajasthan, highlighting how preserv-

ing community heritage alone has been the key to overcoming water scarcity for centuries in a region with minimum rainfall in the whole country. Reflecting on our conversation, I was overtaken by insights from his writings, that it is only our continuing civilizational heritage that can lead to sustainable development and locale-specific pedagogies can offer possibilities to link the school curriculum with the life-affirming heritage of children's lives.

Deshkal's study on social diversity and learning achievement disparity have pointed out how Gaya and Katihar districts have a rich linguistic heritage of several local dialects. The language of teaching, learning and school instruction however is Hindi, one in which children particularly from marginalised communities do not have proficiency in. Not only is this cultural heritage of local languages ignored in schooling but children need to learn Hindi in order to study school subjects, which becomes a barrier leading to a learning gap affecting their learning achievement. Restrictive pedagogies are very evident in the context of language education as classroom processes are characterised by rote memorisation, mechanical writing of questions and answers dictated/ marked from textbook by teachers and read aloud without comprehension in the classroom.



## Why are Schools Blind to the Invention of Heritage!

Anil Sethi

Educationists and teachers have long seen heritage, as an important theme in school education. 'National Heritage' has also been an enticing category for legislators and governments. But, 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 din 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.

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Heritage is often seen as ‘fossilized history’ because educationists and teachers assume that History has handed down heritage to us.

Heritage is often seen as ‘fossilized history’ because educationists and teachers assume that History has handed down heritage to us. Further, they believe this heritage must be celebrated, conserved and passed on to succeeding generations. They view heritage as something objective, value-free, neutral, fixed, and 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!

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 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 trans-rational 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, our students will never fully appreciate the full importance of history or heritage.



## Create a Dialogue between Heritage, Water Conservation and School: Problems and Possibilities

Raman V.R.

We need to critically examine our own heritage, how we approach it, how there is a perceived lack of scope and space of questioning what version of history is accepted as heritage and if we can celebrate all that we have inherited. We need to see water in Culture and Heritage but also water itself as Culture and Heritage. Culture and Heritage are critical pillars of sustainable development. In order to realize this, we must be mindful of present because we are creating future heritage.

The various guidelines that are the conceived and stated policies around water in the curriculum by National Curriculum framework under the broader themes of Water and Environment, consisting themes like where water comes from, how are the seas, rivers and oceans formed, what are our local water sources, why do wells dry up, etc. Then there is Social aspects of Water, with important sub-themes such as who controls the village well, who fetches the water, do we have enough water, caste and class divide in access to water, purity and pollution of water, gender division of labour and availability of water. We need to look at how various state curriculums are addressing these issues and how in some states these topics are handled more carefully, and if activity-based learning exists.

There are two critical problems, one is of our school syllabus missing the element of past good practices and carriers of tacit knowledge, and how we don't see the strengths and weaknesses of the past. Also, there is the problem of tacit knowledge, dependent on the narrator and we must be cautious of that information being transferred down to generations. Second is contradictory depictions of our heritage; for example one being the untouchability around water and the other through poems from Buddhist perspective, deprecating the whole idea of untouchability around water, and we need to question which heritage we are inheriting.

We need to see water in Culture and Heritage but also water itself as Culture and Heritage. Culture and Heritage are critical pillars of sustainable development. In order to realize this, we must be mindful of present because we are creating future heritage.

We wish to see at the school level, what could be done at the curriculum and pedagogy level, and what could be done at the policy and system levels, and how can we change the water infrastructure around school and institution level in order to communicate and engage children, teachers, and communities.

We must figure out how we will equip teachers about the critical pedagogy around water, how we involve teachers so that they can evoke critical thinking from their students around water and we need to talk about schooling and learning methodologies a lot more. When we talk about education we must look at how the rich children and children from lower classes and rural classes look at water very differently and how that results into different messages being perpetuated to the future generations. There is a requirement of developing conservation of water as a need rather than an option and we must address how the conversation around conservation ideas differ among different classes need to be addressed.

I will conclude by emphasizing the need to identify civil societies forces, academic forces, thought leaders who can identify and drive the change that we wish to see at the school level, what could be done at the curriculum and pedagogy level, and what could be done at the policy and system levels, and how can we change the water infrastructure around school and institution level in order to communicate and engage children, teachers, and communities.

DAY-2 | SESSION-3

# Histories and Common Destiny: Connecting India to South Asia and South-East Asia through the Journey of Buddhism



CHAIR

**Connect is Maritime Heritage**

T.C.A. Raghavan

Director General, ICWA, New Delhi

SPEAKERS

**India, a Soft Power for Centuries**

S.D. Muni

Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and Former Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

**Promoting the Unifying Element**

Baladas Ghoshal

Secretary General, Society for Indian Ocean Studies and Former Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

**The Buddhist Connection and India's Role in Southeast Asia**

Udai Bhanu Singh

Senior Research Associate and Coordinator of the Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

**Connect is Maritime Heritage**

T.C.A. Raghavan

What is excluded in connecting India to South Asia and Southeast Asia in a Buddhist paradigm is as important as what is included. If we look at Southeast Asia from a Buddhist paradigm, there is a large element of exclusion. Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore and Philippines are the nations which are excluded. Indonesia and Malaysia have Buddhist heritage, but in the contemporary times, that is only a veneer. When we connect India to Southeast Asia, the limitations of Buddhist paradigm have to be kept in view. Similarly, in South Asia while Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal are included, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Maldives are excluded. How our ideas of Buddhism have been impacted by our sense of modernity? When one travels in Pakistan and Afghanistan, one finds a rich history of Buddhism in terms of archaeological sites and archaeological memory but in

the contemporary times Buddhism no longer exists. It has to be remembered that our own ideas of Buddhism are influenced by the events of the early 19th and 20th centuries, in particular by the writings of Dharmapala, Angarika and Dharmapala. Revival of Buddhism in South Asia, especially in Sri Lanka and India, has a great deal to do with the events of the early 19th and 20th century.

What is the Indian cultural context in the larger historical framework and how much of this historical activity owes itself to scholars and intellectuals of the early 20th century? We tend to see the past through the light of the present and see South Asia through the prism of 'Look East' or 'Act East', but, in fact, there were early traditions in 20th century when intellectuals gathered loosely around the Society for the Study of Greater India and rarely there were efforts to explore how Indian culture travelled to Southeast Asia or Central Asia in ancient or medieval period. If we do not see continuity to that process to what exists today in terms of our policy towards South Asia and Southeast Asia, that would be erroneous. Those intellectuals were trying to establish some kind of parity between Indian culture and colonial impact and western imperialism in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

When we look at the shared history and common destiny even from the perspective of Buddhism, it is important to keep in mind how much of contemporary politics intrudes into that discussion. If we look at India and Myanmar for instance, it is possible to construct a very rich and varied history of civilization context in the Buddhist context, but one has to keep in mind the attitudes toward the Indian diaspora in Myanmar, especially in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and later. Getting too focused on the common destinies overlooks this aspect.

Finally, South Asia and Southeast Asia have to be seen in the larger framework in which looking at Southeast Asia in the Buddhist perspective makes much more appeal in the contemporary sense if we see it in the larger context of maritime heritage rather than simply a shared Buddhist paradigm. The connect between South Asia and Southeast Asia is the maritime heritage. Similarly, when we look at India and Central Asia, it is much more a continental contact than Hinduism or Buddhism. Much of the foreign policy can be seen as dialectic between maritime and continental contacts.

How our ideas of Buddhism have been impacted by our sense of modernity? When one travels in Pakistan and Afghanistan, one finds a rich history of Buddhism in terms of archaeological sites and archaeological memory but in the contemporary times Buddhism no longer exists.



## India, a Soft Power for Centuries

S.D. Muni

How Buddhism played a key role in projection of the soft power in phases, with three layers of civilization infusion in Asia by the world.

Much thinking is required on the theme of the session – ‘Connecting India to South Asia and Southeast Asia through the Journey of Buddhism’. It is now a fashion to project India’s soft power, though this has been the case for a long time. India has been an established soft power for centuries, much before Joseph Nye spoke about it. We were acknowledged as a soft power both in pre-Islam period and in the colonial era. Western and Chinese scholars acknowledged it. Chinese called India their guru and many of their institutions imbibed Indian philosophical ideas. It is fascinating that India established major centres of learning without using military missions, with one or two exceptions. Possibly except for Chola dynasty defending their trade routes, there was no aggressive design. It was entirely on the basis of soft power – wisdom and *gyan*, backed by commerce. This was done through pilgrims and scholars. Thus, we have been soft power for centuries, even without conceptualizing it.

How Buddhism played a key role in projection of the soft power in phases, with three layers of civilization infusion in Asia by the world. First, in the pre-Buddhist period, it was Hinduism all around and there were princes and kings who learnt from Hinduism and shaped their institutions, their governance, rules and regulations on how to deal with people. Then Buddhism took over and swept the Hindu tradition, which was followed by a synthesis. Then came Islam, and Islam fought both Hindu and Buddhist ethos and in the process, a synthesis emerged. Hinduism revived itself in India and marginalized Buddhism, with only one per cent Buddhists in India. In other countries, particularly Indo/Asia pacific, Buddhists constitute 95 per cent of the population. Between 200 BC to AD 400 to AD 600, India was predominantly Buddhist. As a synthetic tradition, Buddhism fits very well in the foreign policy aspect.

Revival of India as a soft power took place after independence. There is a feeling that soft power in foreign policy has emerged only recently, which is not true. This emerged even during the independence struggle. Khilafat movement was on that ideological plank. Jawahar Lal Nehru has written on this. Reams have been written on how civilization and culture were so important to us in order to carve out and project our identity. It is here we say that Buddhism is the most effective foreign policy asset, if we call it that, because peace and equality of all is inherent in Buddhism, which is not found in Hinduism in which we had ‘Dharma Yuddha’. But peace, equality and coexistence is inherent in Buddhism.

Nehru adopted that in foreign policy. In the Panchsheel agreement with China, emphasis was on the Buddhist notions. Even non-alignment and disarmament were derived from Buddhism. He held an international Buddhist conference in 1952, later in 1956 another international conferences was held. Even in 2011, we had a conference and the Dalai Lama was invited. NDA government made it a component of foreign policy, with conferences in Bodh Gaya in 2015, Varanasi in 2016, Rajgir in 2017 and New Delhi in 2018. In institutions like BIMSTEC, formal adoption of a resolution has taken place with reference to the development of Buddhist Circuit. Thus, there is continuity. There is nothing new, there has been a tradition but it has been projected far more assertively in recent years.

How can we confront China by using Buddhism, which is related to most of our neighbours. Chinese are using it tactically, but we have been doing it on low key. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is backed with a lot of money. Frankly speaking, spiritual content is far more with India and we are injecting this through projecting Buddhism in policy, because we know a large number of Buddhists live in Asia-Pacific region. Thailand is helping us. We need to rise above tokenism, through having conferences, through emphasizing on the development of infrastructure and other services of the Buddhist circuit. The government has put in \$53.6 million for improving infrastructure of the Buddhist Circuit- related shrines and sites. We need to get out of tokenism and rise above that.

Using Buddhism as a part of cultivating neighbours is welcome, but the way we are doing it is not enough. What more can we do for strengthening it? A lot of projects with Buddhist countries' assistance have lingered on. There is a problem called India's delivery deficits. We promise but we do not deliver. We deliver but not as impressively as targeted countries would welcome it. We are comparing with China, and there have been connectivity projects which need to move very efficiently. We have been making a road for the last 10 years but have not completed the trilateral and multimodal highways.

Ten countries can be identified as Buddhist – Thailand, Laos, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam, Bhutan and Mongolia. We must integrate Buddhist population in India, which is a sensitive point. If Buddhists

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We must revisit our Tibet Policy. We committed ourselves to cultural autonomy of Tibet, and freedom and independence of the Dalai Lama, which China has not ensured yet. Post peaceful coexistence agreement, we have not made any forceful attempt to ensure these, largely due to our own weaknesses.

are suffering here, we cannot go to a neighbouring country and say look we have a Buddhist identity; that won't sell. We have to thank neighbours for preserving Buddhism, while we marginalized it. We should give credit to them. In terms of society and policy, we have to reinforce whatever Buddhist traditions and heritage we have. Thirdly, we have to capitalize on intellectual and philosophical bonds. Nalanda University is not coming up as envisaged, in terms of faculty and curriculum even though buildings are coming up now. We have not done much work in Sanskrit and Pali, even though Pali was the vehicle of Buddhism.

We must revisit our Tibet Policy. We committed ourselves to cultural autonomy of Tibet, and freedom and independence of the Dalai Lama, which China has not ensured yet. Post peaceful coexistence agreement, we have not made any forceful attempt to ensure these, largely due to our own weaknesses – that if we do this, they (the Chinese) will create problems in North-East and Kashmir. We must set our house in order. On Tibet issue, we can ask China to resolve it. This is connected with the border issue as well. We know that China will snub any effort to raise it. At the international level, there exists the responsibility to protect principle, in which if a state is not protecting its citizens then the international community can intervene.

If we cannot intervene, we need to be consistent. We have used the Dalai Lama, sometimes we invited him to the conferences, and at other times, we asked officials not to attend his conferences. Governments and countries need to be encouraged to invite the Dalai Lama very quietly. We encouraged Mongolia but Chinese made their foreign minister apologize to them. We cannot compete with China in terms of money but we indeed can do much more through revisiting our China policy.

Buddhism will not take us far, since India's culture is largely a composite one, consisting of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. We should also consider owning Islam. We have two powerful schools in which Sufi Islam is primarily India's contribution. West has Wahabi influence. We must project our composite culture as we have Buddhist and Islamic countries in our neighborhood. If we project one at the cost of other, that would not carry us far and give any legitimacy.



## Promoting the Unifying Element

Baladas Ghoshal

Maritime heritage was important but Buddhism spread through scholars travelling across the world, with exchange of relics and texts. Interestingly, Buddhism survived in the maritime South-East Asia, namely Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos while Islam took over Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. It is not only the maritime heritage but the constellation of factors which were responsible for the survival of Buddhism.

There is no one monolithic Buddhism, just as there is no one Hinduism and Islam; there are variations. There are two divisions in Buddhism, one is North-bound and another is Southeast bound, such as Theravada and Heenyana. Therefore, it would be wrong to take Buddhism as one entity. It is important to take various forms and shapes of Buddhism into consideration, before one could consider on how Buddhism could play a role in connecting to the South Asia and Southeast Asia and promote geo-civilization ethos. It is also Hindu Buddhism, since the strains of Hindu tradition are present. For example, in Thailand, on the occasion of the coronation of King, a Hindu priest recites mantras. Even in Malaysia, mantras are whispered in the ears of the King. Thus, Islam is blending with the Hindu tradition in Malaysia.

All religions adapted to the local tradition. In Indonesia, there is a saying that calls for taking the juice of the orange while throwing away the peel. Even in the case of Islam, 40-45 years back in Sumatra, when there was a clash between Aadat/ custom and religion, it was the former that prevailed. The problem today is that all these syncretic cultures and traditions are disappearing under the influence of globalization, internet and disruptive technologies. This began with Iranian revolution, as every state is suffering from a crisis of identity, with the result that each state is trying to define religion, culture and tradition in a way that the regime finds suitable.

Even in the case of Islam, 40-45 years back in Sumatra, when there was a clash between Aadat/ custom and religion, it is the Aadat/custom which prevailed.

There is a need to understand the nuances that have gone in the making of the world view of these countries. You may emphasize that aspect of the religion that talks about universal aspects, because each religion has a humanist approach, but these may have been distorted.

Geo-economic and geo-political issues could be contested but the common geo-civilization strains across religions are the common binding and uniting strains. South China Sea issue is geo-political, while BRI represents geo-economic issue where there is a contest between nations involved. We always thought that geo-civilization issues would be important if one tried to define geo-civilization issues in a certain manner, which could lead to contestation and cracks in the soft power itself, as there is a contestation between India and China in promoting Buddhism.

How to cope with this? There is a need to understand the nuances that have gone in the making of the world view of these countries. You may emphasize that aspect of the religion that talks about universal aspects, because each religion has a humanist approach, but these may have been distorted. Each religion began with a humanist message. You need to underline the human aspects of these religions and try to represent a sense of unity, that we alone are not the bearers of those cultures but there are other countries also. If you talk about comprehensive security, then we can put these as unifying force rather than dividing force.

There are many ways India can promote the unifying element. For example, every Muslim goes to Mecca. Following that example, we can organize a festival inviting all 10 Buddhist countries, including Myanmar, Nepal, Japan, Vietnam and Indo-Chinese countries, to join and Chinese may like to visit various places as part of pilgrimage. This occasion should be an attempt to unify these approaches, and do it in a nuanced way, in an elaborate fashion. Then, it can emerge as a unity bond, otherwise it will remain a contested area.



## The Buddhist Connection and India's Role in Southeast Asia

Udai Bhanu Singh

The 10 countries with predominant Buddhist population and India had a common history and a common destiny, that beckoned them as there is large population in many of the South Asian countries and the influence that India had is significant. There are 140 million Buddhists and 7 million Hindus in Southeast Asia at the moment. The impact that India can have on these countries is immense.

On the history of this contact, Kalingas started trading in the East two millenniums ago. That was first 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy. The trade began not only from the East coast, but from the South as well, Cholas had trade relations with South Asian countries. Buddhism spread from India to Central Asia through the Silk route, i.e. land route. It spread to other regions via the maritime route, via the Isthmus of Kra to Malaysia, China and Japan. Later on, Jawahar Lal Nehru's role is important as the linkages were encouraged by freedom fighters.

Coming to recent years, from the time ASEAN was founded in 1967 to 2018, when India organized the ASEAN commemorative summit, we had a number of occasions when we could re-establish Buddhist heritage as part of the coming together of India and Southeast Asia. The religious diversity which exists in South Asia has been pointed out by earlier speakers. What is important is that Buddhism, which arose in India, has less than one per cent adherents in India. In Southeast Asia, especially in inland states, not the maritime states, the number of Buddhists is large.

There are 140 million Buddhists and 7 million Hindus in Southeast Asia at the moment. The impact that India can have on these countries is immense.

Buddhism has always played an important role in South Asia and Southeast Asia, with Buddhists being politically very active. This can be seen in Vietnam war; self-immolation of monks in South Vietnam, protesting against ban on the use of Buddhist flag, had a great impact on the minds of people, especially in USA which was leading the war.

There are different forms of Buddhism, namely Therawada and Mahayana. Therawada in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and Mahayana and its different forms in China and Cambodia had an impact on how society developed there. Buddhism has always played an important role in South Asia and Southeast Asia, with Buddhists being politically very active. This can be seen in Vietnam war; self-immolation of monks in South Vietnam, protesting against ban on the use of Buddhist flag, had a great impact on the minds of people, especially in USA which was leading the war.

Later in 2007, Myanmar had Saffron revolution, where Buddhist monks raised demands to the military regime which had been in power for 15 years. What is significant is that the (Buddhist) Sangha had almost the same number of members as the Myanmar army. Even though the military rule has ended, it is semi-democracy today.

The government is promoting Buddhist links in Southeast Asia, with the Prime Minister of Singapore being presented with Buddhist relics. However, there are concerns like the attack on the Mahabodhi Temple (in Bodh Gaya) some years ago, as reaction to a certain amount of instability in our neighborhood in Myanmar. This temple attracts followers from China, Japan, Sri Lanka etc, and is a world heritage monument, so any kind of harm to the temple would be very problematic.

A similar kind of attack had happened in Borabudur in Indonesia, which shows how social turmoil in the neighborhood could lead to potential recruitment among terror groups. So if a problem is not resolved at the domestic level, it can lead to problems in South Asia and Southeast Asia, and in India. At the pagoda of Shwedagon in Yangon, security is elaborate in evening hours when devotees visit it in large numbers.

Can Buddhism and Islam co-exist? A fellow panelist had made a point: that India cannot take up one denomination at the cost of another. Myanmar officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, but Rohingyas have been stripped of their citizenship and rendered stateless. Can we give humanitarian assistance to Rohingyas, who have become a soft target for terror recruits. Isn't that a problem that we need to be conscious about? Of course, we have refugee problem and the problem of repatriation to Bangladesh, where Rohingyas' camps are located. Resolution of this problem cannot be done unless we go to the root cause, which is citizenship of the Rohingyas.

In recent developments in India's foreign policy, the 10 predominantly Buddhist nations were invited on the occasion of Republic Day in 2018. The Trilateral Highway is in competition to China's BRI and her use of soft power for economic gains. China's long pipeline and the rail network go right up to Nanjing from Taupo. China's economics plus soft power are a big challenge which India would have to confront in times to come.

The Delhi Declaration issued in 2018 did not mention China, BRI etc, We need to utilize all organizations in the neighborhood, including BIMSTEC. The ASEAN's third plan of action (2016-2020) mentions the need to implement the Langkawi declaration of the moderates for countering terrorism. With this, we can protect monuments and structures representing civilization bonds between India and Southeast Asia. These are some of the ways through which we can make positive contribution.

Can we give humanitarian assistance to Rohingyas, who have become a soft target for terror recruits. Isn't that a problem that we need to be conscious about? Of course, we have refugee problem and the problem of repatriation to Bangladesh, where Rohingyas' camps are located. Resolution of this problem cannot be done unless we go to the root cause, which is citizenship of the Rohingyas.

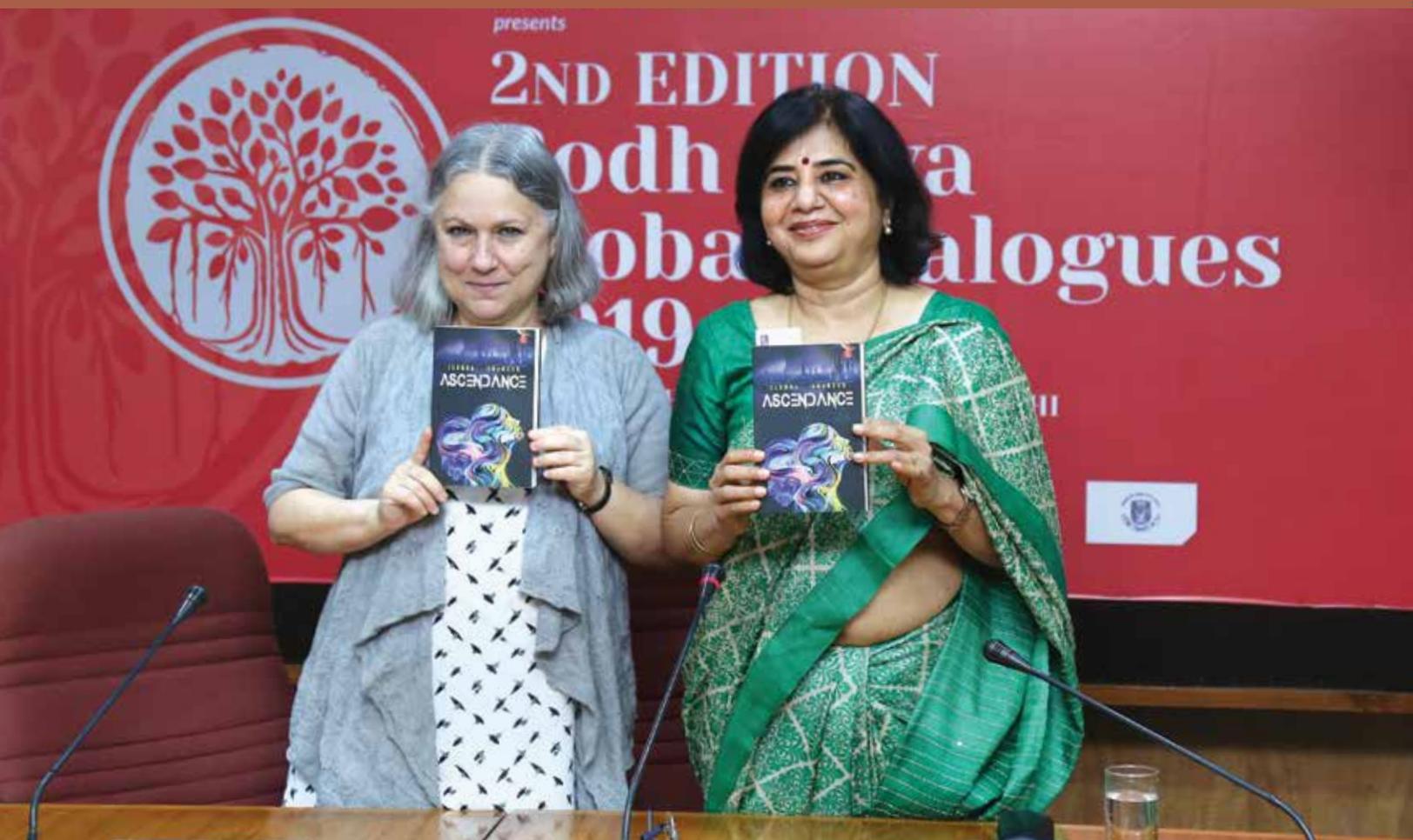
The important way forward is that we do not need to adopt a patronizing approach.

Southeast Asia has indigenized much of what has happened and developed on its own.

The important way forward is that we do not need to adopt a patronizing approach. Southeast Asia has indigenized much of what has happened and developed on its own. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has a role to play as it did in Angkor Wat temple's restoration in Cambodia. INTACH is providing fellowship. Think Tank to Think Tank relationship would be useful. Setting up cultural centres in Southeast Asia, many of which have already come up, and sending right kind of people there to head them are important. The centres have been talked about for looking after the diaspora links. Indian diaspora, which suffered in the past, needs to be attended and looked after. Infrastructure development, which has been lacking and languishing, needs to be given a push. A long history of interacting with each other will help in overcoming difficulties brought by uncertain international environment.

DAY-2 | SESSION-4

# Conversation



## Peggy Mohan

Author and Linguist

### IN CONVERSATION WITH

## Sadhna Shanker

Author of *Ascendance*, Blogger and Civil Servant



*Ascendance* introduces us to a new planet called Elone in the space. It's a unique planet- here women and men live separately. They are divided by a fence. In the past they battled twice and it meant a lot of loss to both sides. The truth behind their conflicts is far more penetrating than just the territory gain. On this planet, lust for immortality is something bigger than any other hedonistic desire.

**Peggy Mohan:** How did the book develop and what made you think that science fiction should be the way?

**Sadhna Shankar:** As a young person, I loved reading science fiction and was also interested to know about the writer. We are a generation which has seen maximum change. The more I saw technology changing, the more it gave me the feeling that it is going to change our lives dramatically. Having been born in India and also having a child and husband, one had to deal with gender issues. I wondered that with cloning coming, could men and women not need one another for procreation? So this idea was recurrent to my mind, which could have had no other setting but a science fiction. This could not be done in the contemporary setting, it had to be set in the future. So it ended up being a science fiction. I did not start thinking that it would be science fiction. It took me five years to write the book for two reasons - I was a full-time government servant, and since I was not a science student it took me one-and-a-half years to research the subject. I studied science only up to Class X, but I read a lot about reproductive technology, ethics of cloning and the whole idea of life extension. How much life has extended around us! And humanity is indeed moving forward to longer lives. So these three things had a lot to contribute before I started noting down the points. I planned my men and women characters, So writing the book took a long time, and three years to find a publisher.

**Peggy Mohan:** I can imagine the whole process, lot of looping back. Did you write on computer, like I do?

**Sadhna Shankar:** Yes, I wrote it on a computer.

**Peggy Mohan:** You visualized what you would write ahead and say, wow, this has to change?

**Sadhna Shankar:** Yes, a lot like that. If you introduce X on page 25 and then on page 200, you need to see that it ties up.

**Peggy Mohan:** I just did that in something that I have been writing. There are lots of little things that have to be taken care about. There are lots of topics, but firstly about reproduction in future. Young people are having their children much later, and with various problems. They care about medical aspects. People need to have assistance in having babies. A lot more IVF and such other things are going on. This could happen somewhat in Silicon Valley.

**Sadhna Shankar:** Oh yes, if you look at surrogacy, it is a kind of outsourcing the birth of a baby. But actual outsourcing would be when the womb is not needed. When you incubate the baby in a machine, then we would be reaching the final outsourcing stage. We have not yet reached that stage.

**Peggy Mohan:** The impression which I got from your book is not about cloning at all, There is big problem. Sheep Dolly was a clone but she aged quickly.

**Sadhna Shankar:** The processes of IVF or cloning for reproduction will have to be made more advanced. All this cloning will come with gene engineering. That is how I feel.

**Peggy Mohan:** It has already started. In-vitro fertilization is happening. Embryos are all tested before they are implanted. The best of embryos are chosen and all kind of things. There is the something of a blend. India having a powerful influence in the future yet not India like Maya and Arya. In the distant future of Earth just as China thinks, it is doing and apparently are the ones who have space technology. Astronomy is coming from India. There are echoes of India in this. Amar and the little girl Tara. Because, it is much distant in the future and they have the option to tinker with the genes, I notice, you mention a lot of eyes and colors of the hair of different colors which is completely un Indian. For example, an American may come and say did you see the girl with the green eye? The girl with reddish hair! We do not look at eyes and hairs. Everybody has the same eyes. I notice that if someone says, what color of eye so and so has. I say, we do not look at eyes and hairs.

It is a kind of outsourcing the birth of a baby. But actual outsourcing would be when the womb is not needed. When you incubate the baby in a machine, then we would be reaching the final outsourcing stage. We have not yet reached that stage.

Yes, there is definite Indian touch. But, there is an element of violence. It is not some misguided individuals, it is the whole of planet. It is a kind of: Let us have it and bash out the others.

I asked, what color of eyes, I have? He looked closely to see that my eyes are not brown. I was expecting them to be brown. It is interesting to see on how you blend and use the words that echo back to India.

**Sadhna Shankar:** Maya and Aryan are names of two characters of my book. If you look at them carefully, Maya is a name which exists across continents. There is Maya in Latin America, in Europe and in India also. Maya is transcontinental and in the same way, Aryan is also transcontinental. The reference to names, eyes and colours is made as I did not want it to be a story of India, but a story of the humanity and the world. Thus, they have to look different, somebody has a red hair, some have blue eyes. So, when one reads my book, one doesn't think that I am writing about a certain area or a country.

**Peggy Mohan:** When we think about people outside India, they are generally thought of as whites. In a way, we exclude the whole of Africa, China etc, for which you are, of course, not responsible.

**Sadhna Shankar:** I have not mentioned skin color. I haven't spoken about anybody's complexion in the book. My effort has been to represent all. But yes, names like Amar, which represents immortality, and Vish, which is poison, are Indian since I come from India. At the same time, there is Enav which is a Latin word and Phrawa, which means a garden.

**Peggy Mohan:** Yes, there is definite Indian touch. But, there is an element of violence. It is not some misguided individuals, it is the whole of planet. It is a kind of: Let us have it and bash out the others.

**Sadhna Shankar:** Violence for claiming what is rightfully yours, territory included, is part of our mindset. So, even if you take out man and woman not being dependant on each other for procreation, that does not take out the inherent humanness. That is the reason they say they did not have a war for a long time and need it now. This violence can never be out of our lives, since we are acquisitive by nature. We have this strong sense of acquisitiveness; this is not going to leave us. That's my view on this.

**Peggy Mohan:** Having a different slant on this, we are descendants of those who fought wars. We have got a sort of programming built within us. We on Earth are not necessarily peaceful people. However, even if we have genes, we

have the capacity to stand up against violence. Some of those whose ancestors may have done brutal things are scientists and thinkers now and capable of standing back and say, wait why did this happen. We could not imagine and be part of it. They are the ones who stay back from violence.

**Sadhna Shankar:** Actually, in my book, women say let's leave as and when they are in a destructive mode.

**Peggy Mohan:** This is a real page turner. But, I was getting to the end. How it is going to resolve? So few pages left! What is she going to do? But, I also felt, I was in safe hands and whatever she was going to do was going to work and going to be highly ingenious.

**Sadhna Shankar:** I have been accused of being harsh to men. Some people have pointed out that at many places in the book, I have been harsh to men. However, I feel, I have tried to be very fair to men.

**Peggy Mohan:** You have shown in both (men and women) special qualities, an equal capacity for reflectiveness and staying away from violence. So, I do not know, whether one is better or worse at the end; women have a terrible shock that they are equally responsible. But, the very idea that science fiction can make you turn around and think that we are not particularly going through an easy phase and the other need not be a different gender but it can be all kind of other things, is different. It could be a species, or it could be different whoever you designate as the other. Others are equal in size usually in situations of a community. It then seems that this cannot happen since the two genders are more or less equal in number.

**Sadhna Shankar:** I never thought of the size as I said, antagonism was between the two of them only. So, I never thought of it in that sense. I just knew it was not about alien species coming in, and the conflict and its origin was between men and women.

**Peggy Mohan:** That was exciting because you have built a situation which could stay stable for an awfully long time. It cannot at the risk of everyone dying and can be easily resolved.

I have been accused of being harsh to men. I am glad you felt that way. So many places in the book, some pointed out, you have been harsh to the men in the book. I have tried to be very fair to the men.

The book has two perspectives. One is gender and another is the desire for immortality. In all cultures, we find the desire of immortality, such as in the blessing 'Yug Yug Jiyo'. Thus, I wanted to explore this possibility. That is the reason I have brought in that character. The concept of loss of something makes possession of something interesting.

**Sadhna Shankar:** When people refer to science fiction, they think of dystopia. That you are talking about some world where everything is going wrong. I have not written the book as a dystopia, but one of the possible future scenarios to which we are heading. In the book, there is none who is longing to go back and there is an acceptance of life as it is. There are challenges, but there is no hankering for going back to a past. There is a thought process, there is a churning. How is it if you lived for ever? There is no character referring to going back. Besides the possible future mentioned, there can be many other possible future scenarios.

**Peggy Mohan:** There was something actually wrong when men and women interacted. Men might be thinking all was nice, but women had complaints and those complaints are part of life. So you knew that going back had a lot many problems. There is another thing that came up, extending your life span forever. I kept wondering what you do with life if there is no ending. It is a kind of stalemate and you do mention that the passion is gone. Passion not in the sense males and females have for one another, since that is over. Passion for something to endeavour for. They carried on despite knowing that there was not much to do.

**Sadhna Shankar:** The book has two perspectives. One is gender and another is the desire for immortality. In all cultures, we find the desire of immortality, such as in the blessing 'Yug Yug Jiyo'. Thus, I wanted to explore this possibility. That is the reason I have brought in that character. The concept of loss of something makes possession of something interesting.

DAY-2 | SESSION-5

# Travelogue: Journey through the Visual Presentation



MODERATOR

## Changing Times and Travelers' Perspectives

Aditya Malik

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, K.R. Mangalam University, Sohna Road, Gurugram

SPEAKER

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

Sudha Mahalingam

Journalist and Author, New Delhi



## Changing Times and Travelers' Perspectives

Aditya Malik

The field of energy economics involves so many disciplines — it's cross-disciplinary and clearly concerns something that is very urgent today, like how we treat the environment, and how we use energy, and the kinds of policy we develop around energy and environment.

It's a great pleasure to chair this session. I have been reading up about you, and reading your articles in The Hindu. They are really fascinating. I think that we have a great opportunity and privilege to have you here today, with all your experience having travelled to 60 countries.

And the field of energy economics itself, I didn't know much about it, in fact, so I have read up a bit about it, and involves so many disciplines also, you know, it's cross-disciplinary and clearly concerns something that is very urgent today, like how we treat the environment, and how we use energy, and the kinds of policy we develop around energy and environment. In a sense it links to the last/ previous talk, because one of the questions that came to my mind was well is there going to be a species around to do all this; that wasn't really discussed, I mean we are assuming it is going to continue and there is going to be a future but in some ways looking at how things are going now the default position will be well maybe another 100 years and that's not me that's Stephen Hawking, particularly with regard to Artificial Intelligence.



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

Sudha Mahalingam

First of all, I would like to share with humility that my understanding of Buddhism was gathered through the travels. I 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.

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 of 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. 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.

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.

Through all my travels, I have 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.

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 Gompa 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 Gompa is the oldest Gompa of the region established by Guru Padma-sambava 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.

Buddhists have a penchant to seek out remote and inaccessible places. Phugtal Monastery in Zanskar 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.

Let me conclude that through all my travels, I have 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.

DAY-2 | MOVIE SCREENING

# Angulimala



MODERATOR

Uday Sahay

Author, Chairman & Director, SAUV Communications, New Delhi

SPEAKER

**Quest for Spiritual Liberation through Angulimala**

Ira Bhaskar

Professor, Cinema Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi



## Quest for Spiritual Liberation through Angulimala

Ira Bhaskar

*Angulimala is a 2003 Thai fantasy-adventure-drama film based on the Buddhist-scripture story of Angulimala as interpreted by the director and actors of the film. The film is directed by Sutape Tunnirut and stars Peter Noppachai Jayanama as Angulimala, Stella Malucchi as Nantha, John Rattanaveroj as Vikul, Alisa as Mantanee and Catherina Grosse. The story is a tale of redemption for the character, who embarks on a series of killings in which he murders 999 people (the Buddha was to be his 1,000th kill), collecting a finger from each victim and wearing the fingers in a garland around his neck. Later, when he realizes he was tricked into his wrongdoings, he tries to atone for his sins by becoming a Buddhist. The film was controversial on its release in Thailand, with religious leaders, local public and government officials arguing it was a distortion of Buddhist teachings.*

Thank you very much for inviting me here and it's a real pleasure to be here and to say a few words on this remarkable film from 2003. Angulimala is a Thai film and it's directed by Sutape Tunnirut. This is a very old story, a story that is found in Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan and Chinese sources, this is a very central story in Tharavada Buddhism. It is a story about transformation and the reason why I suspect you have chosen this is because even though it is an ancient story, it is a story that is relevant to contemporary times today. I wish to speak a little bit about that and little bit about the film itself.

Certainly Wikipedia will give you different epigraphical sources and the representation of Angulimala and why he was such an important figure in Buddhism, but I think the main reason this story is important to us is because it's a narrative about a figure who because of his destiny, a little bit like Oedipus who was destined to lead a life of violence, like Oedipus, Angulimala was also cursed by his destiny which was to kill 1000 people or at least 999 people before he could attain any kind of liberation. You will see in the film that the child is very innocent, very serious, very reflective, and very philosophical. His name is Ahimsika, named as someone who follows non-violence. He is keen on actually pursuing a path of knowledge. It's a great irony for the reasons that the film will outline very clearly how for various reasons he is pushed into history of violence. He kills 999 people, he is called Angulimala because he wears a *mala* of fingers, he takes a piece of finger

from every person he kills and threads it on his mala and wears it around, because his goal is to kill 1000 people and he has been told that only after that he will have true knowledge and true liberation and that is his goal.

What is very interesting about the film, apart from the technological aspect which is advanced, but when you look at the imagery of the film, it is a film which is focused on spiritual transformation, for the way in which it is shot with the lighting and with the quest for spiritual liberation is actually done through shooting of the film and the way in which light plays. The presence of spiritual world is evoked through lighting in the film, however of course at the centre you have an extremely violent man because you have series of episodes after the first 20-25 minutes of him killing people because he has been told that killing them you are going to liberate them from their suffering and life as we know in Buddhism life itself is a process of suffering and you have to go beyond that. So he falsely believes, he has been told that liberating people from suffering will lead to his liberation and he believes killing indiscriminately as he does is fine. And, I think the film is actually interesting because you have this violent figure but it's also a film about his inner contradictions, the fact that even though he is set on a path he is beset with doubts about this course of action and that's very important, and other thing that is very important and the reason why this is a text in Buddhism is that at the core of this story despite the violence is the idea of radical spiritual transformation and the fact that no matter how evil or how violent anybody has been, the goal, the path of transformation of giving up violence, of actually becoming a different man and of taking on the role/path of *ahimsa* non-violence is open for everybody.

What I found is that it is a story of redemption, redemption of a man who if you go by his deeds is an extremely evil man but he doesn't have evil intentions, his intentions in the kind of violence that you see on the screen unleashing before us is of spiritual knowledge, except that he is misled on the path of spiritual knowledge. The film is about ideology, which I find very relevant today, ideology and certain belief systems can mislead you into believing that violence is also okay, killing people is also okay because it is justified by the ideology.

What is very interesting about the film, apart from the technological aspect which is advanced, but when you look at the imagery of the film, it is a film which is focused on spiritual transformation, for the way in which it is shot with the lighting and with the quest for spiritual liberation is actually done through shooting of the film and the way in which light plays.

In contemporary world  
Gandhi's philosophy  
of non-violence and  
Buddhism have an  
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relevance both globally  
in context of terrorism  
and in India.

I think the possibility of redemption, the possibility of giving up violence for a different path – the path is the path of peace, the path of compassion and that is always very difficult, that is an extremely important idea in the film. How do we discuss spirituality; this is not a film about religion and it's a critique of fundamentalist religion that advocates violence against fellow beings. I find this film extremely relevant today because it's a film about indoctrination, where the hero is taken by a fake ideology, he wrongly believes that freedom from suffering is through violence and killing, how can that ever be, and the film is actually about that. What is very interesting is the conversation towards the end of the film that takes place between Buddha and Angulimala, it takes place in the forest, its shot where nature is very important and as I said earlier lighting is very interesting, if you watch the film it is through light that the idea of revelation and transformation is conveyed.

There was lot of controversy at the time of the release because the film is violent, it was difficult for Buddhists to accept that Angulimala is a figure that is violent, for them he is a figure of compassion and hope. While it is not shown in the film, interestingly in Buddhism Angulimala is revered as a figure of fertility and that transformation from bringing death to bringing life is a wonderful idea. In the film we don't actually have the story of Angulimala which is life affirming, which is for life, which is bringing joy to the people. This film concentrates much more on the spiritual discovery of Angulimala and his internal conflicts and you see that at different points that he has the kind of an inner conflict even though he is dedicated to his false ideology somewhere he is not convinced.

The last point that I will like to make is that in contemporary world Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and Buddhism have an extremely important relevance both globally in context of terrorism and in India where, I am afraid, politics of hatred has recently become the dominant kind of discourse, in that context a politics of love, a politics of compassion, a politics of non violence are very important ideas for us to actually uphold.

DAY-2 | CONCLUDING SESSION

# Recommendations & Way Forward





Deliberations at the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues 2019 resulted in recommendations which respond to the primary objective of facilitating knowledge and action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region.

Deliberations at the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues 2019 resulted in following recommendations, which respond to the primary objective of facilitating knowledge and action framework for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region.

- 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, formulated 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 also needs to 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 archaeology, and the history of Buddhist circuit in Bihar. Equally important, there is a need to develop modules for teachers which address the question on how they teach and interact in classrooms in this regard. The piloting of the initiative in this regard may begin from Bodh Gaya.
- Destination Branding of Bodh Gaya through TV, radio, websites, and social media is a prerequisite for promotion of Bodh Gaya in the South and South-East Asian countries in particular and globally in general.
- 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.

The way forward to achieve these recommendations are as follows:

- There is an urgent need to build a Center for Heritage and Sustainable Development (digital as well as non-digital) on the basis of documentation and research aiming for generation of empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, case studies, academic reference books and oral narratives. It is noteworthy that one of the key components of the Center will be a digital form.
- In addition to this, the Center will also facilitate the ongoing work of Deshkal Society in the thematic areas of culture, education and land rights for strengthening the voice of the marginal and oppressed communities in the region in order to bring in substantial change in their quality of lives.
- The annual Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues, as part of the multi-stakeholder programme creating a repository of the knowledge and network at the local, national and international levels would remain a sustainable resource for the Center. Therefore, the first and foremost task is to explore ways to institutionalize the Dialogues as an annual programme creating strong support for its sustainability.

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The outline of the Heritage Center can be demonstrated through the flowchart on the facing page.



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



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