

PRESENTATION ON
4TH EDITION

BODH GAYA
GLOBAL DIALOGUES
2022 **REFLECTIONS
& INSIGHTS**



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

4TH EDITION
BODH GAYA
GLOBAL DIALOGUES
2022 **REFLECTIONS
& INSIGHTS**

25, 26 & 27
MARCH
2022

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DESHKAL SOCIETY IN COLLABORATION WITH
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS (IGNCA)



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4TH EDITION
BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES
REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS
25, 26 & 27 MARCH 2022
IGNCA, NEW DELHI



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Co-Travelers



DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO

Chairpersons
Moderators
and
Panelists

INDEBTED TO

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

Background

The 4th 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 with the goal of encouraging informed dialogues on multiple themes under the umbrella of Heritage, Culture and the Philosophy and Teachings of Buddhism held at Hotel Royal Residency, Bodh Gaya on March 25-27, 2022. The 4th edition of the Dialogues followed in continuation with the first, second and third editions held in the years of 2018, 2019 and 2020. The reports of these dialogues are available at https://www.deshkalindia.com/bodh_gaya_festival.html

It is noteworthy apart from all participants who were gracefully present at the venue, there were large numbers who joined online in virtual mode.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues is to create a platform for expression of experiences, reflections and insights from plural perspectives connecting heritage, education and sustainability for building a future on the foundations of Buddha's legacy on enlightenment and compassion. In order to move forward to attain the desired goals, following specific objectives were articulated in the consultative process with the key representatives of the multiple stakeholders of the Dialogues:

- To create dialogue, knowledge building and sustainable network with international organisations, non-government organisations, politicians, policy makers, practitioners, ordinary citizens, tourists and pilgrims for safeguarding the heritage and securing sustainable development of the Bodh Gaya region.

- To develop a heritage education programme in order to facilitate the engagement of children in the promotion, protection and transmission of heritage, in a manner which makes heritage relevant and meaningful to their own development trajectories.
- To strengthen relationship and build sustainable network between 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.

Themes and Participants

The themes adapted for the 4th edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues under the umbrella of Buddhist Art, Culture and Heritage were diverse and expanded through Religion, Art, Archaeology and Heritage with respect to Bodh Gaya, Philosophy and Teachings of Buddhism, Sanatan Philosophy, Buddhist and Sanatan Dharmic sites. The dialogues manifested itself as a mosaic of parallel events such as the plenary session, panels, film shows and conversation over the three days. The 4th edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues had detailed deliberations on changing patterns of growth in Bodh Gaya, training of travel guides in Bodh Gaya, timeless intangible heritage and biodiversity, travelling in the footsteps of the Buddha, conversation around the life of Buddha and gender in the contemporary times, and film screening titled *White Robes*, *Saffron Dreams* were integral part of the thematic framework of the dialogues. At the conclusion of the Dialogues, Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA delivered the valedictory address. He shared the relevance of Bodh Gaya Dialogues that it is an effort to create an awareness among the intellectual fraternity. It is not a routine university kind of a research exercise which is only termed in the books and has never been practised on the field. The project which Deshkal Society is undertaking under the Bodh Gaya Dialogues is to be implemented on the field and that is why IGNCA is making all efforts to give ample opportunities to able scholars to do research work and bring out new facts related to knowledge for the world.

The Dialogues were attended by scholars, monks, artists, development practitioners and policy-makers. In continuation of the earlier three BGDs, the 4th Edition of the Dialogues succeeded in bringing together multiple stakeholders, public and private, including international agencies and embassies. The format of the Dialogues adopted both offline and online modes and this hybrid format extended the visibility of the Dialogues to a larger audience within India and the abroad through Google Meet, YouTube and Facebook Live (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXcewNeg8N7oSb2Hrb16rLFHBk1QPXFCY>).

Brief Summary of the Deliberations

The main focus of the deliberations revolved around seeking deeper understanding and exchanges in order to build a constituency of practices that bring fresh dimensions in capturing enlightenment as the new leitmotif with special focus on heritage and sustainable development through attaining concrete outcomes in Bodh Gaya and Bodh Gaya region. This was manifested in wide range of presentations on introduction to the Philosophy and Teachings of Buddhism, Changing patterns of growth in Bodh Gaya, Buddhist Scriptures and Schools, Culture and Religion of Tibetan Bodh Gaya, The Need for a Digital Heritage Centre at Bodh Gaya and a film on Jeevika showing women empowerment through women entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood led by rural women of Bihar were the special features of the dialogues. The Dialogues generated a repository of information and knowledge resources from multidisciplinary approach on heritage, development and sustainability.

Recommendations: The Next Possible Steps

At the end of the three-day Dialogues, a set of recommendations were made responding to the objectives of the dialogues which is to facilitate knowledge and action frameworks for safeguarding heritage and securing sustainable development. There are two sets of recommendations. One set deals with

the immediate action plans and the other set of recommendations are part of advisories to the governments both at state and central as well as the international agencies. The immediate next possible steps are the following: At first, a report (print and digital) based on the deliberations and discussions in the dialogues need to be published. Session-wise short videos have been already 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 set up the Digital Repository on Heritage, Art and Culture in Bodh Gaya and its region. The proposed repository will seek to survey, collate and digitally documentation (history, archaeology, culture etc.) of the site of Bodh Gaya and its region as well as all relevant material from individuals and institutions (including archival museums in India and abroad) and provide access to wider public for awareness generation and knowledge dissemination. There is a need to initiate a pilot project to build the capacity of the teachers in understanding the concept of heritage in all its forms and introduce diverse forms of heritage and history in both classrooms and outside-the-classroom contexts. In addition, the delegates and participants also reached a conclusion to set-up a training and skill building programme with the aim of creating sustainable livelihoods for women and adolescent girls located on the margins through Sewing and Designing that showcases Buddhist Arts and Sculptures of Bodh Gaya.

The most important task is to explore ways to institutionalize the Dialogues by way of creating a strong support on its sustainability through receiving sustained support from the government. 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 within India and abroad. If this could be possible, this perspective will certainly connect to the realization of the four noble truths of disease, the cause, the cure, and the medicine at the ground level through its practice that emanates from Buddhist philosophical traditions and Buddhist economics. This will serve as an exemplar in true sense for the realization of enlightenment in Bodh Gaya particularly and the world too.



DAY-1

Plenary Session


इन्दिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केंद्र
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 Ministry of Culture
Government of India

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Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav

Deshkal Society in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts [IGNCA]
presents

10TH EDITION

North Gaya Cultural Dialogues



KED SENGDAVONG

Prof. RAHESH C. GAUR

Dr. SHIVANA NARAYAN

 DESHKAL SOCIETY

10TH EDITION
North Gaya

DAY-1
SHORT VIDEO PRESENTATION**Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues: Glimpses of the Previous Dialogues****CHAIR**

Ram Bahadur Rai, President, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA),
New Delhi

MODERATOR

Gunjan Joshi, Heritage Professional and Coordinator, 4th Edition Bodh Gaya
Global Dialogues

WELCOME SPEECH

Manish Sinha, Professor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya
and Hon'ble Member of the Organising Committee of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues

CONTEXT AND JOURNEY OF THE DIALOGUES

Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi

GUESTS OF HONOUR

Shovana Narayan, Distinguished Kathak Performer and Scholar, New Delhi

Ramesh C. Gaur, Dean, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New
Delhi

Keo Sengdavong, Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of Lao PDR in New Delhi

Kiran Lama, General Secretary, All India Buddhist Sangh, Bodh Gaya

Neeraj Kumar, Former Minister, Information and Public Relations Department,
Government of Bihar

GLIMPSES: MODEL VILLAGE ADOPTED BY DESHKAL SOCIETY IN BODH GAYA

A presentation of the initiative in Sewing and Embroidery by the group of women
of the Model Village

Screening of the photographs of the Village

CONVOCATION

Certificate Distribution of the 1st Batch of the Online Certificate course
on Bodh Gaya and Buddhism

REMARKS BY THE CHAIR**VOTE OF THANKS**

Jai Prakash, Programme Director, Deshkal Society



The 4th edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues commenced with Welcome Remarks by **Gunjan Joshi**, Heritage Professional and Coordinator of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues.

In her opening remarks, Gunjan gave a brief overview on the key objectives of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. She asserted that the aim of the Dialogue is to create a platform for expression of experiences, reflection of insights from plural perspectives as well as connecting heritage, education and sustainability to build a future on the foundation of Buddha's legacy of enlightenment and compassion. This was followed by a short video capturing the essence of previous editions – “**Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues – Glimpses of the Previous Dialogues**”. Post her opening remarks, Gunjan invited Manish Sinha to deliver his welcome address.



Welcome Speech

Manish Sinha

Manish Sinha extended a warm welcome to the participants to the land of enlightenment – Bodh Gaya, which has been the foundation and inspiration of the Indian civilization. He spoke about how Bodh Gaya has been an intrinsic part of his growing up; he was born in Gaya and has been teaching history at Magadh Bodh Gaya for the past 26 years. He fondly recalled his childhood days, when he along with his father and friends used to visit Bodh Gaya and enjoyed thukpa at Tibetan joints. He cited the belief which they all grew up with that the visit of H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama brings along auspicious rains to Bodh Gaya. He shared how Bodh Gaya had gone through a transformation from a nondescript mofussil town to a world heritage site over the last couple of decades. Describing further, he added that Bodh Gaya has a multifaceted history and a multi-cultural past. While the central theme of Bodh Gaya was how Siddharth became Gautam Buddha and achieved enlightenment, it had multiple meanings and narratives. It resonated with both Buddhist and Hindu past and has variety of stakeholders at present – local, international, pilgrims from South-East Asia, local businessmen, government, etc. who contribute to the sustainable development of Bodh Gaya.

Manish Sinha congratulated Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society for taking up this grand initiative of celebrating the Bodh Gaya Dialogues. The Dialogues was conceptualized in 2017 in Delhi with first Bodh Gaya Dialogues being held in 2018. Sinha has been associated with the Dialogue in diverse roles since its inception.

Manish Sinha shared that Deshkal, which conceived this Dialogues as a plural platform, is linking the past with the present. Bodh Gaya is a living heritage site. It is only through dialogue and brainstorming sessions amongst stakeholders that solutions could be derived for the overall sustainable development of Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya is a land of enlightenment – its every street, lane, nook, and corner reverberates of Buddha's teachings of compassion, peace and non-violence. There is a need to build bridges between various stakeholders which would benefit the society within the parameters of the Buddhist ethics, he asserted.

As a final word, Sinha once again thanked the dignitaries for joining the Dialogues. He especially welcomed Shovana Narayan, Keo Sengdavong, Ramesh Gaur and Kiran Lama and wished all the participants and dignitaries, intense deliberations, and discussions to derive viable narratives to fulfil the objectives of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues.



Context and Journey of the Dialogues

Sanjay Kumar

Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society while setting the context, shared the journey of the Dialogues. He, on behalf of IGNCA, Deshkal Society and other partnering organizations, extended a warm welcome to the dignitaries and specifically acknowledged the gracious presence of Shovana Narayan, Ramesh Gaur, Keo Sengdavong and Kiran Lama. He mentioned that the last two years – 2020 and 2021 – were a difficult period due to unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. He spoke about his admiration for mankind that could face such challenges by drawing strength from the spirit of civilization and collective consciousness, which also gave Deshkal the strength to take the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues forward.

He alluded that the broad theme of the Dialogues is Heritage, Culture and Enlightenment. It aimed to create a ground for an institution and sustainable knowledge based on Heritage, Culture, Buddhism and Sanatan Dharma of Bodh Gaya. The Dialogues would generate meaningful and constructive deliberations of multiple themes on Buddhism. It is a mosaic of parallel events over two and half days, which would help connect India to South-East Asia through a common thread of Buddhism, which represents shared philosophy and heritage and a common destiny. The Dialogues has been designed to feature several engaging discussions, conversations and visual presentations, culminating into recommendations and the way forward, he added.

The Dialogues is a dynamic living process. It was conceived in 2017 and the first edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogue was held in 2018, second in 2019 and third in 2020 at IGNCA, New Delhi. It is based on a thorough consultative process with all stakeholders – institutions both governmental and non-governmental, public and private sector – and all reports are available at Deshkal's website. Wrapping up his address, he shared a quote of Prof E. H. Carr, "Dissent paths contribute in creation of a formidable future", and wished that the 4th edition of the Dialogues would provide a ground for keeping up the endeavour for heritage, sustainable development and enlightenment.



Shovana Narayan

Shovana Narayan began her discourse by recalling her long acquaintance with Sanjay Kumar. She deeply appreciated his sensitivity and concern for humanity. At first, subjects such as Musahar Jaati and later Buddhist Global Dialogues brought them together. The binding and common factor between the two was the sensitivity and concern for humanity, she revealed.

The world is suffering from existential crises because of lack of sensitivity, lack of concern for others and lack of humanity. She shared an ancient Sanskrit proverb – *Chita* (funeral pyre) and *Chinta* (worry, anxiety) differ only by a dot/point, but it speaks volumes. *Chita* is a lifeless entity and consumed by fire whereas, unless we accept and overcome *dukkh* (grief), *chinta* consumes us – burns us with the fire of immense worries. The message of Buddhism is loud and clear – we need to seek within ourselves to grow up into a healthy human being, mentally and spiritually. She urged on the need to appreciate differences and differing points of view; accept that *dukkh* is a part of life but so is overcoming it; accept *mratyu* (death) as a part of life and that everything is momentary – even *sukh* (happiness) is momentary and just an illusion. It is our journey. If we are at peace within, we can find *sukh* everywhere – even in a smile of a child, in a blooming flower, in a soft gust of wind, she explained. If we vortex ourselves in depression, we get into a spiral path of decline, which is neither good for our existence, nor for the society.

She said that the Dialogues gives us a chance to revisit the teachings of Buddha and share our experiences and learn from each other. Lastly she expressed her gratitude to the organizers for giving her a chance to be part of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues – an important platform for brainstorming and deliberations.



Ramesh Gaur

Ramesh Gaur commenced his address by extending a hearty welcome, on behalf of IGNCA, to dignitaries on the dais. He especially thanked Sanjay Kumar of Deshkal Society and Manish Sinha for making IGNCA a partner of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. He stated that while he was not a Buddhist Scholar, his connect with Buddhist heritage has been as an expert and preserver of heritage. He has travelled across South-East Asian countries and served for five years as an International Expert with Digital Dunhuang in China. IGNCA offers multiple academic programmes, one of them being Post Graduate Diploma in Buddhist Studies and Certificate Course with Deshkal Society. He expressed a concern that across the world the younger generation was unaware of Buddhism's heritage. Education and training was not enough, the preservation, promotion and dissemination must also be given importance, he stated.

Dunhuang is a replica of Ajanta. In fact, Ajanta has bigger sculptures. While China is meticulously moving towards digitization and creating a portal where anybody could see caves and images using virtual portal, there is no interesting portal or virtualization programme, using VR or augmentation technology or immersive technology, where people could experience Ajanta, Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, Rajgir or Kushinagar. While it is a pride for us that Buddhism has travelled from India to rest of the world, it is not enough. Everyone cannot come to Sarnath or Bodh Gaya. We need to connect with people all over the world with evidence and images. Within this context, he recommended that India should create a virtualization program and digitize all the Buddhist sites. This could be done through collaborative efforts amongst universities and institutions. He suggested Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues to come up with a concrete plan on how to leverage technology not only to digitize and create virtual images, but also to create a virtual era of Buddhism where one can enter, feel and know

much more about it. He gave the example of virtual images of Hampi, where one could experience the priest engaged in worship in clothing from those times. He also emphasized the need to take recommendations of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues forward by sensitizing bureaucrats and policy makers and persuading them to come up with some kinds of policies and plans.

He also spoke about the need to build partnership with private sector to tap CSR funds. In his discourse he suggested to use the fundings available with DST, DSIR and UGC to develop virtualization project of Buddhist sites. He recommended the institutions to take a lead in creating much more interactive corridors in UP and Bihar to impart a feel of Buddhist philosophy in partnership with the state governments and Ministry of Tourism, which have funds but lack good projects.

Buddhist philosophy is hugely relevant in the present context of conflicts and distress. If we want our traditions to be alive, we need to connect with masses and the common people. He expressed his regrets that schools and colleges were totally ignorant to Buddhism. Young minds need to be given an understanding and information about Buddhism. The new generation is more comfortable with technology – mobile phones and computers. We need to leverage technology and multi-media to attract them, and it must start from the very childhood learnings, he concluded.



Keo Sengdavong

The next address was delivered by **Keo Sengdavong**. In his address, he thanked IGNCA and Deshkal Society for inviting him to this auspicious event and congratulated them for organizing the 4th edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues: Heritage, Culture and Philosophy Teachings of Buddhism. He opined that the Dialogue would facilitate sharing of views and experiences and bring together multiple facets of Buddhist heritage, architecture, culture and philosophy on one platform and hugely benefit all. It would help build an understanding on how to strengthen and keep heritage – tangible and intangible, art, culture and philosophy of Buddhism for new generation, he said.

Narrating the roots of Buddhism in Laos, he stated that Theravada Buddhism was introduced to Luang Prabang in the 13th-14th century. Mahayana Buddhism might have been introduced in 8th -10th century but could not take hold long enough to have a lasting effect. Theravada Buddhism was given a big boost by King Fangum, the monarch who unified Laos and created the first Lao kingdom in the mid-14th century and converted his kingdom to Buddhism. Today 66% population of Laos follows Theravada Buddhism which is a strong force in Lao culture and a major influence in everyday life.

Each ethnic Lao village has its own temple – called “*wat*”, which is the focal point of village festivities and rituals and has traditionally had a guesthouse, monastery, and school. Buddhist images are found in every shop, home, and office for worship.

He stated that it was very important to have dialogue and exchange views to promote heritage and culture of Buddhism. He recommended that to promote Buddhism study, Government of India should give more funds and scholarships to monks. He concluded his address by wishing the Dialogues all the success.



Kiran Lama

Kiran Lama initiated his address with a short chant invoking the blessings of Buddha, His Dhamma and His Sangha. He said he was blessed to be at the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. He has been with Deshkal Society throughout its journey, since its inception. He appreciated the efforts of Deshkal Society and IGNCa in putting together the 4th edition of the Global Dialogues in Bodh Gaya – the land of enlightenment, despite obstacles posed by the Pandemic.

He welcomed all the participants and respectfully acknowledged the kind presence of Shovana Narayan, Manish Sinha, Keo Sengdavong and Sanjay Kumar. Bodh Gaya has two Laos monasteries.

He enumerated the circumstances which made him the 'encyclopedia' of Bodh Gaya. He had been in Bodh Gaya for the past 40 years; first coming here at the age of 26. He was then associated with the Mahabodhi Society of India in Kolkata. For last 40 years he has been associated with the Japanese Temple in Bodh Gaya as its Secretary, Caretaker and Chowkidar. The headquarters is in Nagoya, Japan. Though he is associated with the Daijokyo Temple, he has been serving others including Mahabodhi Society of India, Bodh Gaya Temples Management Committee, the Gaya District Administration, etc.

Reflecting on the three-day programme of the Dialogues, he hoped that deliberations would help each one of the participants to learn more. He appreciated the views of all the speakers before him who shared their experiences and explained Buddha Dharma or Manav Dharma. He requested Keo Sengdavong to visit Bodh Gaya more often and during the pilgrim season.

As the world is getting back to normalcy, pilgrims have started coming to Bodh Gaya. A 10-day Tripitaka Chanting under the Bodhi tree was being organized next month which would be attended by monks from Myanmar, Laos and Bangladesh. They have already done one programme in Delhi and went to Sankasya and they would be going to Kushinagar the next day, he informed.

He described Buddhism not as a religion but a way of life. He felt that if human beings follow the path of Buddha, the world would become a beautiful place to live in. He said, though H.H. Dalai Lama represents Bahai Buddhism,

he always introduces himself as a simple human being and asks us to follow simple way of human life, taught by Buddha. He is 92 years old and is extremely humble. Everyone in Bodh Gaya is looking forward to his next visit when so many Tibetan shops would come up and it would be an outing for Bodh Gaya people.

Kiran Lama recalled that when he came to Bodh Gaya it was a sleepy village. He came from Kolkata. He was a Nepali national and when he decided to work for Daijokyo Temple, everyone asked him what he would do in Bodh Gaya; there was no movie theatre or any kind of excursion. He expressed happiness that he is blessed and had got more than what he would have wanted. He said he was fully content with and would like to lead his life this way till his last breath. He congratulated Deshkal Society and wished everyone present joyful deliberations.

He also appreciated the activities of Deshkal Society, established in Bodh Gaya. He requested participants to visit the Buddha Statue. Buddha lived eighty years here. The Japanese have therefore built a 80 feet statue of Buddha. It is made of several pieces of stones – sandstones came from Chunar and sculptures and artists from Mirzapur. It was designed by the Japanese artists and was remodeled by Ganapati Satpati ji, principal of Mahabalipuram Art College. He stated that he had witnessed the transformation of Bodh Gaya. It is much crowded now. Earlier sharing of information was difficult. Nowadays due to the Internet one gets connected within a second. He requested the young generation not to misuse it. It is a useful tool, use it appropriately as it is supposed to be. He concluded his address by once again welcoming the participants and congratulating Deshkal Society and IGNC for organizing the Dialogues in Bodh Gaya.



Post speeches by the Guests of Honour, Gunjan welcomed **Naina Kumari**, Chairman, Zila Parishad. This was followed a presentation of glimpses of the Model Village adopted by Deshkal Society of Bodh Gaya. It included a presentation on the initiative in sewing and embroidery by the group of women of the model village and screening of photographs of the village.

Sanjay Kumar enumerated that inspired by the core philosophy of Buddha, Deshkal has established a Bodhi Kendra in Bodh Gaya last year. Ram Bahadur Rai has been the main source of inspiration for this. Many activities are being conducted under the Bodhi Kendra. One of the activities is to make an ideal village here. The village depicts the lives of Musahar tribes. As per the Human Development Index of South Asia this tribe ranks at the lowest. Bodhi Kendra is trying to see how this tribe could be helped by implementing the four Noble Truths of Buddha. He highlighted the role of young women from this tribe, who have come forward for this cause. Bodhi Kendra is helping them to create products of Madhubani and Magadh art, and also linking them with the market network of Buddhist circuit to sell their products for sustainable livelihood, he informed. Sanjay Kumar said that he had spent two decades with Musahar tribes in Gaya and that was how this idea came up to him. He made a special mention of Sunita Dwivedi who, in commemoration of her mother Saraswati Devi, donated 1 lakh rupees to Bodhi Kendra for this noble cause.

This was followed by a Convocation that witnessed distribution of certificates to the 1st Batch of the online Certificate Course on Bodh Gaya and Buddhism.



Ram Bahadur Rai

Ram Bahadur Rai in his remarks said that this was the 4th edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. The journey started back in 2018 with an aim to spread the heritage of Bodh Gaya. It was an attempt to connect Buddha's philosophy with people's lives in today's context. The Bodhi Kendra presents a new dimension of this experiment. He requested all to read the book "*Bhagwan Buddha: Jeevan aur Darshan*", by Dharmanand Kausambi to understand the heritage of Bodh Gaya. He narrated an incident from the book. One day Lord Buddha visited the field of a rich farmer. The farmer was giving food to his laborers. He could not recognize Lord Buddha. Considering him as an ordinary beggar, he asked him, why doesn't he too do farming, plough the soil, sow some seeds, cultivate and earn his livelihood. Why does he beg? Lord Buddha replied, sin and regrets are the hilt of my plough, the mind is the rein, memory is the plough and consciousness is the whip. I have control over my body and speech. By being limited in diet, I weed out the flaws of my thoughts, contentment is my rest and enthusiasm is my bull. My vehicle goes in the direction where there is no need to grieve.

Ram Bahadur Rai suggested that in the context of 2022, the vehicle of Bodh Gaya Dialogues should go in the direction where it nurtures the happiness and prosperity in the society. He felt that we needed to seek new meanings of the four Noble Truths and this could be found through the Dialogues. He recalled that in 2002, a news appeared in a newspaper that a Buddha Club has been formed. The full name of the club was Lord Buddha Club. He wondered where Lord word had come from west in India. Lords lived in England. He felt such efforts were distractive. Many such deviations have been made in the name of Buddha. He advised to avoid such distractions. From this point of view, he felt, the Bodh Gaya Dialogues was an attempt to bring the heritage back on track. In the Dialogues, there are cultural perspectives, heritage, education etc. and Bihar has a history of giving intellectual direction, he said. In the form of Bodh Gaya Dialogues, a founding framework was taking a shape

which would open the vistas for unity of South Asia and unity of its culture. He further stated that these Dialogues were not events, these are a process. Events come and go and end but the process continues. He mentioned that before 10th century Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, Buddha was being worshiped as an incarnation in three Puranas – Vyasa Puran, Vayu Puran and Matsya Puran. With a sense of gratitude, he remembered the contribution of each milestone in India's culture journey that made Buddha an incarnation. In order to know the place and contribution of Buddha in the wisdom tradition of India, one must study the Buddhist sources like Lalitvistarara, Buddhacharita, Tripitakas of Ashvaghosha etc. He said that the journey of knowledge was incessant, and it needed assimilation from time to time and this dialogue should be seen as a step towards that direction.

He cautioned to be careful particularly from historians who are trying to divide the Buddhist, Vedic and Hindu streams and make them compete with each other. He further stated that if we remained alert and kept our focus on assimilation, we could then fight such voices and defeat them and their intention. He asserted that Buddha was a divine being and his personally united the whole world, especially South Asia in a cultural stream beyond the borders of the countries. Buddha has paid more attention to the philosophy of humanity. We should understand the meaning of humanity properly. The consciousness created by Lord Buddha through meditation is humanity which connects us with each other. He explained that in Sanatan tradition of India, the importance of Gaya pilgrimage has existed since ancient times. As a symbol of that tradition, the followers perform *shraadh* and offer obeisance to their ancestors to attain liberation in Gaya. The harmony between Sanatan Dharma and Buddhism would give a new meaning to India's religious, spiritual and cultural journey. He concluded his address by emphasizing that the Bodh Gaya Dialogues is a step in that direction and while destination is far away, if we keep walking, we would reach the destination one day.



Jai Prakash

Jai Prakash on behalf of IGNCA and Deshkal Society proposed the Vote of Thanks. He particularly thanked Ram Bahadur Rai, President, IGNCA for his kind presence, moral support and his words of inspiration. He thanked the distinguished Guests of Honour for taking pain and sparing their invaluable time to be at the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. Referring to the speech of Shovana Narayan, he said that deliberations were brilliant beyond words, and it was an enriching experience for one and all. He expressed gratitude to Prof. R. C. Gaur for his continued academic, intellectual, moral and financial support to the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. His thorough reflections would decide the future course of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues, he said. He also thanked Keo Sengdavong for his presence and address. Thanking and acknowledging the gracious presence and support of Kiran Lama, Jai Prakash said that he had been the guiding personality on Buddhist philosophy. Last but not the least, he expressed his gratitude to the participants both who were present physically as well as those who joined online. The Inaugural Session was then formally declared closed.



4TH EDITION Bodhi Tree Global

Dr. SHOVARA NARAYAN



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DAY-2

Session 1

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Amrit Mahotsav



DAY-2**Session-1****CHAIR**

Pranav Khullar

An Expert in Comparative Religion, DDG, Telecom, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India

LEAD PRESENTATION

Bhagat Oinam

Professor, Department of Philosophy, JNU, New Delhi

'Introduction to the Philosophy and Teachings of Buddhism'

Ajay Verma

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, JNU, New Delhi

'Buddhist Scriptures and Schools'

Chairing the session on Buddhist Philosophy through video conferencing, **Pranav Khullar**, an Expert in Comparative Religion and Deputy Director General – Telecom, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India recalled his association with Deshkal Society and the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. He said, over the years the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues has evolved, grown and matured. He expressed his regret that he could not be present physically at Bodh Gaya but happy to be the part of the Dialogues albeit online. Kashi and Bodh Gaya are the two nerve centres and the intellectual and cultural hubs of the two faiths. He deeply appreciated the efforts of Deshkal in creating Both Gaya Dialogues as a major platform for interfaith dialogue. He then invited Ajay Verma, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, JNU, New Delhi for delivering his presentation on Buddhist Scriptures and Schools.



Buddhist Scriptures and Schools

Ajay Verma

Ajay Verma began his address by describing “what Buddhism is not about”, and the philosophical views that were prevailing during the time of Buddha. Explaining through an example, he said that one makes sense of new objects using past categories in one’s mind and that is how one creates concept around new objects and engage with it. For example, he said, we have chairs here and when we see chairs we know the use of chairs. But there could be larger questions such as who made these chairs, which require us to go beyond the given. Once you start doing that you keep going backward, as Aristotle said when things are moving then there must have been somebody who moved them, but then the mover also must have been moved by somebody. However, regress is not acceptable, and the chain must stop somewhere. There has to be first mover and the first mover is God. These surmises were prevailing during the time of Buddha. However, these surmises have fallouts. At times instead of being liberating, they could hold you back from liberation. There is a famous dictum, “Knowledge is only that liberates”.

Verma then moved on to explain “what Buddhism is about”. Buddha put human being right at the centre of the philosophical discourse. The first Noble Truth is suffering in the world. Only the person who suffers knows it. It is very existentialist in nature. Buddha would not have liked to be remembered as a propounder of a religion or for that matter a philosopher. He at times remained silent. As per Sutta literature — a lot of that is anecdotes of different occasions — when Buddha engaged in a debate or had a dialogue, he did not speak much. He would allow others to speak. He was against metaphysics. He is attributed with saying that “I am a physician”. This is what Buddhist philosophy is all about – human suffering and curing it. The person who is suffering is at the center of the process of cure. Second Noble Truth is if there is suffering, there must be a cause. According to Buddhism what is the cause, *Dwadesh Chakra – Avidya* and then the entire cycle begins. If there is a cause or *Karan* then there is a *Nivaran* of *Karan*. If you remove the cause, then the effect is also gone. This is the third Noble Truth. The fourth Noble Truth *Maag* – there is cure for sufferings. This is how Four Noble Truths go about. What is really distinctive about them is the existentialist kind of tenor. Human being and his/her suffering is at the center and optimism about removal of all of that suffering is sure.

Second, Buddha’s position on causation is very unique. Explaining it further, Verma stated that there were two philosophical surmises on causation. One was that there’s an eternal cause which is called *Satkaryavada*. It could be Brahma, it could be *Prakriti* in *Samkhya* system. The overall idea is that there is one single substance and everything else that is visible to us is modification of that. This was called *Shashwatvad* – eternal principle of causation. As opposed to that there was *Chhedvad*, which means that there is nothing abiding, and everything is a new thing and so on so forth. Buddha opposed both of them and took a middle path which is called *Pratityasamutpada* – everything is dependently originated. It means that nothing has an essence of its own. Elaborating on the concept of *Pratityasamutpada*, Verma said that it was basically the idea that things are fleeting momentary. For example, we give so much importance to ourselves, I am this, I am that but if somebody asks you not to breathe for even five minutes, where would we be? If somebody asks us not to take water for 3-4 days, we would not survive. We are not an independent being. The term for that is *Swabhava*. For example, we are what we are, only in so far as *pratyayas* are there – the elements that sustain us are there. The moment those elements are removed, there is nothing independently existing on their own. *Swabhava* comes from the two words – *Swa + bhava*, means your own + being. This is another fundamental tenet of Buddhist philosophy.

On the emergence of the sects and schools, Verma described that this question did not arise when Buddha was alive. Buddha did not leave any written work. He was just talking to people. The question of interpretation arises only after his *Mahaparinirvana* – after he left the world. Something intriguing about Buddha was that depending upon the nature of the person he would give different answers to different people. On certain occasions, he wouldn't give answer at all or on another occasion if a question is put before him, he would answer it by another question. This technique was called *Upaya Kausalya*. The question arises how to present a picture of what Buddha said. What his teachings were. That became a very difficult task because he was completely learner centric. One way of going about was to remember what he said on different occasions and put that as a kind of record. This is what Sukta literature did. Putting a simple record without interpolating, where, as disciples, you are not interfering with the teachings. There was a different group of disciples who said what about what he did not say. He was silent on many occasions. If somebody would ask him, is there a soul, he would remain silent. These questions were called *Avyakrat* questions or *Thappaniya* in Pali. These disciples said that silence was even more important aspect of him as a teacher. So that aspect also needs to be systematized. This task was even more difficult. How do you philosophize something that Buddha did not say. This is the task that *Sunyavadis* and *Mahayanis* undertook. There are so many different schools of thought within Buddhist philosophy. They are engaging in debates with each other. *Sunyavada* texts are very small because they are philosophizing silence. *Sunyavad* would not give any arguments. They would only demolish the argument but they would not have any arguments of their own because they did not have any philosophy to defend.

Building it further, Verma said that the main points of debate were whether Nirvana is eternal or not. Sunyavadis believe that everything is of the nature of *sunya*. They say even *Nirvana* is *sunya*. For example, Chair is chair, depending on how you use it, it serves the purpose. But beyond that, if you start looking at it philosophically, meaning from the point of view of causation, from the point of view of like “who made this”, then you start realizing its *sunya*. So, the same word when viewed from the point of view of *sunyata*, it becomes *Nirvana*; whereas Hinayanis would say that there is some kind of permanence about *Nirvana*.

Verma then enumerated the role of Buddha given in the two systems. Buddha is thought of as a guide. So, seeker has to find his or her own way. Buddha can only guide his/her through but the path has to be travelled by you. Whereas in Mahayana system, Buddha is presented in a much broader way. Buddha is not only a guide but also he has infinite *karuna*. As the famous story goes, he is still standing at the door of heaven. He says, I would not enter heaven until everybody is liberated. In Mahayana text including Vajrachedika which is more famous as Diamond Sutra or the Lotus sutras, Buddha is saying

everybody would eventually get *Nirvana* including animals. His task wouldn't be completed unless everyone has that. So, the idea of Bodhisattva is much larger, much broader. Another important difference is that in Abhidhamma text, what is called Hinayana text, their interpretation of Pratityasamutpada is little different. They would say that things are fleeting in nature. They're impermanent in nature but there are these composing factors, *pratyaya*, what they call *dharmas*, *ayatnas*, these atoms are permanent in nature. Atoms are there but what arises out of them is fleeting. There is some kind of fundamental reality at some level. Buck has to stop somewhere. That is yet another difference between the two. Whereas Mahayanists take it all the way down. They say everything is relative, including the basic atoms.

Another school is Vajrayana which comes into existence by mixing up of *tantra* tradition. *Tantra* tradition was one of the dominant ways of thinking and it goes into Tibet where Mahayanas teachings get mixed up a little bit with certain kind of practices, certain kind of mythology and symbolism and a whole new trajectory emerges. Another interpretation of Hinayana tradition is presented by Ambedkar, which is called Navyana where it is used as a liberation theology. This is how you find four main trajectories going into different directions, Verma concluded.



Introduction to the Philosophy and Teachings of Buddhism

Bhagat Oinam

Bhagat Oinam, Professor, Department of Philosophy, JNU commenced his address by explaining why Buddhism should be considered as a philosophy and the way of life rather than a religion. He said that in western philosophical tradition (Judeo-Christian Islamic tradition), religion has the presupposition of the existence of God. All philosophical, philological, creation, cosmological narratives are centered around the idea of God. In Buddhism there is no idea of God. It was only in the later part when Mahayana Buddhist propounded that Buddha was the reincarnation of God. Brahmanical system also made him a part of Dasavatar. The core philosophy of Buddhism does not believe in the presence or existence of God or a creator. It even denies the presence of soul – *Aatman*. Anatmavada itself says that there is no *aatman*.

There are three major dimensions of the philosophy – ontology, epistemology and ethics. The journey of the philosophy begins with the question “there is something” which is permanently and invariantly unchangeable. As it is said *Anadi Anant*. The concept in Upnishad and Vedanta suggest that something which has no beginning and no end, which is permanent which is Brahman. Ontology is the question of “what is it to be”. Next is the question of epistemology “how you know”. If we make a statement about anything, like I say X is Y, the next question is how do you know. Then you devise methods to explain. The third aspect of philosophy is “the way human exists”. “What I am” is something which is given, but “what I do” and “what I ought to do” become a significant question of ethics. All these three aspects of question “of being”, the question of “how I know the being” and “how I ought to behave as being”, are integral part of the Buddhist philosophy.

Elaborating further he said, many theologians and philosophers have tried to explain the nature of God through different articulations. They say everything in this world has an antecedent and there is a final antecedent. For example, every effect has a cause and that cause has an effect and that effect has a cause and that cause further becomes an effect and so on but there must be an uncaused cause. The final cause from which everything else comes is the God. Then there are moral, theological, ontological arguments and so on and so forth.

Buddhism does not require a religion or God via which you enter into philosophy. There are several conceptions in Buddhism which are very significant. It has eightfold paths but the foundation to Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths – *Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirodh* and *Magga*. The Buddhist philosophy begins with “something which is here and now.” “I exist.” “I find myself in the world.” First thing you encounter in life is pain, suffering or *dukkha*. Buddha perhaps touched by the fact that death is the end of journey of every life. It forecloses all possibilities and here Buddha begins with the fact that there is suffering and pain, inseparable in every life. This is the First Noble Truth. The Second Noble Truth is there is *Samudaya* – there is a reason of *Dukkha*. Without reason there will be no suffering. Buddha says there is a possibility of *Nirodh*, that *dukkha* can be stopped. It’s a very scientific. If something is happening there is a cause. If you know the cause that cause can be stopped. He then prescribes *magga* – a way to *nirodh* the *dukkha*. The fourth Truth. For *dukkha* *nirodh*, there is a *Magga* and this is the most rationalistic approach towards understanding of human lives and existence. Nowhere do you find mysticism, myths and God. What the existentialists are calling today in the 20th century about facticity, the suffering, Buddha had brought it out much earlier saying that this is human finitude with which we have to live but you can change that suffering and that is Buddhist philosophy.

Buddha prescribes the Eightfold path – Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness (*sampajanna*) and then Right Samadhi. Eightfold path is part of soteriological approach that Buddha initiates. It is path of a religious ethical teaching. Ethics is all about “what we ought to.” It is not about what I am but what I ought to do because my existence is known through my activity, my actions, my thinking. My existence is known through my mindfulness, what I think about myself and others, how I behave myself, how I act. My bodily existence is not a fixed bodily existence but body in movements. Once you are into action, Buddha’s teaching is that there are eightfold paths that one ought to follow in order to lead a morally meaningful life.

When it comes to origin, the metaphysics or ontology of Buddhism comes into play. It says that there is birth and the death – *Janam-Maran*. This is the first point of suffering. *Dukkha* is because of the death and next to it is the desire to be born. There is an attachment with the world. There are twelve-linked chains of causation. He says this is *Chakra*. Finally, he says all is because of *Avidya*. In Shankar philosophy this is called *Maya*. In Buddhism it is known as ignorance or *Avidya*. You think this is your world, this is your father, this is your body, these are your objects of possession. This possession and desire to possess is *moh*. This is because of ignorance that this is not yours, you start thinking it to be yours. The question of *Samudaya* – the origin, is precisely because of this. It is a philosophical make up that needs to be rectified and one needs to come out of that. Once you overcome the ignorance then you understand what reality is and you reach *nirvana*. That is the liberation that Buddha talks about.

The question of the ontology of Buddha’s philosophy begins with suffering. The question of being or existence is built on *dukkha*. Linked to this, Buddha is submitting twelve-linked chain of *chakra*. It is ignorance through which you are somehow clinging to this world. One desires to possess this world because of his ignorance – *avidya*, but the moment you realize, moment you overcome this *avidya*, the moment you get *gyan* that nothing is permanent in this world. There is nothing that begins and will not decay. Everything that ‘is’ will also seized to be. When you overcome this ignorance or *avidya*, you start realizing that the universe is impermanence. There is no permanence in this world, everything is in the process of becoming. This philosophy is challenging any question of *Anadi Anant*. This philosophy is challenging the very thought that something permanent, something absolute, something infinite is there, is a being. For Buddha, the being is impermanence, being is always in the becoming. Another ontological position for Buddhism next to *dukkha* is impermanence. If everything is impermanent, everything is in the process of becoming, what about me? Immediately, after all the psychology is about the ‘I’, my thinking, my pain, my seeing the pains because there are deaths happening. It is ‘me’

who is suffering. The question is, if there is suffering which is the first point of ontological narration. There is nothing permanent in this world, everything is in the process of becoming. Becoming is the ontology of Buddhism. Third one is, all these experiences of pain, understanding of impermanence are through me who is the witness. I am the witness to the pain, I am experiencing the pain, I am witness to the impermanence. Buddha says there is no self, there is no soul, there is no *aatman*. There are three ontological positionings — the *dukkha*, impermanence and non-being which is very near to the Buddhist ontology. This is the part of Shramana tradition. Shramana tradition, Buddha tradition and Jain tradition do not accept the authority of the Vedas. Eightfold path prescribes how you lead a moral life. Existence is not merely about givenness but existence is all about thinking and doing. ‘I am’ is also linked with “how I live” my life. If that is the case then soteriological articulation of how to lead a good life, the Eightfold path becomes very significant.

Buddha talks about a middle path. What is this middle path? In his time two traditions were going simultaneously. One is the Jainism who are extremely soteriological. They almost neglect this body. If you detach yourself from this body then you are supposed to be going higher to spiritual level of life. This is extreme asceticism. On the other side, you have those who are in Tantra and Shakti tradition where the body becomes the vehicle that you do. Buddha finds itself in the middle of these two traditions. Body becomes a central part in Buddhism but body is not the ultimate. He wants to say that body is also impermanent. Nothing is permanent. Even the soul is impermanent. It goes beautifully from the mundane existential dimension of life towards the non-permanence of the world around you and finally towards the impermanence of the ‘I’, the self itself. Even ‘I’ doesn’t exist as permanent one. This is one of the fundamental Buddhist articulations of middle path.

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Session 2A

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Dr. SHOVARA NARAYAN

Dr. SHOVARA NARAYAN



 DAY-2

Session-2A
CONVERSATION

Shovana Narayan

Distinguished Kathak Performer and Scholar

with

Teena Amrit Gill

Filmmaker and Consultant

The central theme of the conversation is around the life of Buddha, gender and contemporary world. The salient features of the conversation are as follows:

Yashodhara: Sacrifice of the wife of Lord Buddha: Exploring the tender relationship between Buddha and his wife Yashodhara through the eyes of Yashodhara Sound of Emptiness and Harmony: A Symphony of Kathak and Buddhist Chants for World Peace.

Sujata: The questions raised by Buddha's initial refusal of taking meal from Sujata raised several questions?



Life of Buddha, Gender and Contemporary World

Shovana Narayan in conversation with Teena Amrit Gill

Teenamrit Gill began the conversation with Shovana Narayan on “Life of Buddha, Gender and Contemporary World,” by posing a question about relevance of Buddha’s teachings for women. She said that while women have played an important part in Buddha’s life, both during his lifetime and then later as woman Buddhist Practitioners, the history of Buddhism has excluded women because most of the history of Buddhism has been written by men with androcentric gaze.

Shovana Narayan appreciated the presentation of Verma which, she felt, was simple yet succinct and full of depth. Agreeing with the remarks of Teena Gill that most of the literature written on women have been written by men, she referred to Maithili Sharan Gupt and said that certain men have tried to understand the heart and mind of a woman which can be found in few pieces of literature. Some of it is known and some not so well known. They delved into areas of silence—what Buddha has not said—and came out with a remarkable psychological insight. She gave the example of Yashodhara in this respect.

Addressing the question on teachings of Buddha for women, Narayan said that Buddha did not differentiate between genders. Men and women can equally be dumb and intelligent. Both could be emotional or otherwise. She quoted a story of Sujata to give the women perspectives and what they were going through at that time and Buddha’s point of view. Sujata asked Buddha, “Is it because I am untouchable that is why you have not taken from me or because I am a woman that is why you are not accepting from me.” Buddha replied, “I did not think about it.” Buddha never differentiated. He was searching for himself – a search of himself for him or search of whatness of whatever he was. Buddha said, “I will take first meal of the day from your hands only.” He ate the kheer cooked by Sujata. Sujata was also grateful to him. Similarly, Amrapali asked Buddha, why women were not allowed in Sangha. She asked, “Is it because you are unsure of yourself. A woman in the midst of men makes you unsure of yourself. Do you feel that it would not fit well in male *sangha* or is it something else that you are thinking of philosophizing?” These were her questions. Buddha maintained his silence. Then the lady continues in that particular piece of

literature and says if you think that I might pose a danger, let me tell you, I am emotionless. I am desireless. I have crossed all that stages. I have come to a point where my *atma* is seeking something else. I am also looking for who am I or what am I. So, there was a meeting point of the two points of view of the person. Shovana referred to another literary work – a poem of Rahul – ‘*Maa kah ek kahani*’, where the writer has brilliantly portrayed another aspect of woman when she was trying to explain why he had gone.

It was the silence of Buddha that caused this inner conversation of writers to pen it down and delve into the psychology of both this person as well as that person. Buddha says, “I am in search of my soul, my thinking is different from others”. These aspects defined Buddha. He was beyond that emptiness, the *shunyata*. He was beyond everything. He had gone beyond. He never thought in terms of genders.

Teena Amrit Gill highlighted that patriarchy was very dominant even 2600 years ago at the time of Buddha. The society in which Buddha existed, taught and lived, was itself very discriminatory towards women, especially women from the cities around Magadh region like Vaishali.

Shovana Narayan pointed out that democracy short-lived in Vaishali, about 70-75 years but it enjoyed much more democratic privileges than even its compatriot Athens at that time. Unfortunately, it was short lived.

Teena Amrit Gill remarked that even in those republics women were not given the choices. Women who could opt out of marriage or motherhood or being caregivers were nuns or *bhikshunis*. Buddha was radical to allow for *bhikshunis* full ordination. Other women who had the option to opt out of these very set systems were courtesans or prostitutes. Therigatha—the Buddhist text with collection of short poems of early enlightened women who were elder nuns—captured the voices of these women and nuns of Buddhist time. These were all in oral tradition and written down later. Buddha was criticized and is also criticized for leaving his wife Yashodhara. How could he do such a thing? This is one aspect which a lot of women have had umbrage with.

Shovana stated that it was natural for Yashodhara to ask this question. Even if we were to face such a situation, we would ask our wives the same question. However, later we would also try to find the answer ourselves. It could be for self-solace or mental solace. Another reason could be the larger good is better than an individual happiness. But larger good comes much later. It starts off with a personal search. So, the question “I wish, he had told me before going, I would not have been an obstacle” is a very pointed question asked by Maithili Sharan Gupt through the lips of Yashodhara –

स्वयंसुसज्जितकरकेक्षणमें,
प्रियतमको, प्राणोंकेपणमें,
हमींभेजदेतीहैरणमें—
क्षात्र-धर्मकेनाते

It was a question for any woman, and particularly for Yashodhara that you belied a confidence. When you're married, there is something known as sharing — you will share. There's a spirit of sharing. Somewhere you did not honor that spirit.

Physiologically and biologically, a woman and a man in all cultures are the same. The natural instincts of man and woman would be the same irrespective of which part of the world they grow up in or which culture they are born into. However, difference in behavior depends on geographically as how we train our minds. In our own country, a woman of the hills behaves very differently from the woman of the plains and a man from the hills will behave very different from a man of the plains. It depends how we grow up and where we are raised. External circumstances and factors condition and impact our behavioral attitude.

She further stated that everything is speculation. Even people who had written reams of literature are speculating or trying to philosophize from their perspectives. Had Buddha discussed with Yashodhara that he wanted to denounce the world, Yashodhara would have probably started crying. We don't know whether she would have agreed to it or not. How would Buddha's mind have functioned at that time? It can only be speculated. If litterateurs were going to speculate on that, let it be, Shovana opined. She said, I have another point of speculation — was it right of Yashodhara to donate Rahul? He was a small kid, merely six years old. Didn't she think of him? One can discuss these issues, one can write about them, but these are human relationships. Human relationship and the working of a human mind is fascinating. One can never come with a final answer because whatever is said, it is not.

Joining the discussion, **Ajay Verma** quoted the famous Zen saying, "Rivers are rivers. Mountains are mountains". In Shashwatvad there is a defining substance that is "women are women, men are men". But Sunyavad undoes that where the second thought comes in "rivers are no more rivers, mountains are no more mountains".

Taking the discussion forward, Shovana Narayan said that when we say *shwet aur shyam* (white and black), both of them have actually colored frequency lights. There is a light available in both but the speed at which its travelling makes the difference and one sees the same thing changing. She stressed on the point that there is no such thing known as absolute truth or absolute untruth. She gave the example of her visit to Bodh Gaya long time ago. She said when she came to Bodh Gaya to perform, she saw a pond. She asked someone, where Buddha used to sit and meditate. She was told that Buddha used to take *parikrama* of the pond and meditate while doing so. Shovana further said that when she was young and learning dance, her *guru* used to say that one must dance at a speed that one can hear the music in

itself. Later she realised that when you are meditating or while dancing, you can hear the music in itself. That is the 7th level of yoga. She shared a story of a musician. He was teaching his disciples about tuning the strings. He was giving instructions that the string should neither be so tight that it breaks nor so loose that it becomes distorted. Laws of physics also define the same thing. If one tightens the wire beyond a point, velocity will jump and break the wire. She said nothing is absolute. Even when we say that it is perfectly tuned, though it is tuned, but still it may have the difference of 0.000001%. These aspects make you think about the absoluteness because there's nothing absolute.

Bringing forth another aspect of Buddha into the discussion, Teena Gill said that Buddha after achieving enlightenment Nirvana did not make himself a recluse; rather he made a conscious choice to engage with society and his *kriya*. His practice was not just meditation for months on but being in here and now and actual practice – to walk, eat, hear – deep listening, mindful walking. That we are all impermanent was very central to his understanding. His ability and his putting into practice and deciding to engage and teach what he had learned and what he had learned was what he had experienced. He always said that, take the Buddha and burn him, the Buddha is meaningless. What is meaningful is only what you experience otherwise nothing else matters. Teena Gill asked Shovana Narayan to share her experience as a dancer of these aspects.

Shovana said that there are always multi perceptions to any situation. Ten people will react to one situation differently. Even great teachers when they are teaching, it is a sharing of their experiences. She said that one would have experienced the situation in one way and others in other way and so the perspectives could differ. A good teacher never binds down disciples not to think different. Any good teacher would share but also allow discussion. Our ancient *shastras* are in the form of dialogues and discussions. It's not a top down. It is always an encouraging dialogue. It has encouraged several tributaries of thoughts and several flows and currents. I believe that one learns more from opposing currents. That has been the strength of our ancient experiences as given to us, left to us in our *shastras*, she asserted.

She emphasized on the point that society existed at various levels in all times. Even in yesteryears, society had its own brand of highly enlightened women. In fact, *upnayan* ceremonies and *shraadh* ceremonies could be performed by woman pandits. Society later thought of it differently. She quoted the Manu and said even in Chapter 4 of Manu it is written that a time become when one must modify everything, abrogate, modify, amend and throw it out of the window. She urged all to not to hesitate to do it because change is the only constant factor. Nothing is constant except change.

DAY-2

Session 2B



DAY-2

Session-2B

MODERATOR

Arjit Walia

Consultant, Co-Scholastic Education (Project Development and Marketing)

WORKSHOP

LEAD TRAINER

Prakash Chandra Nayak

Culture and Communication Expert, New Delhi

'Training and Orientation of Travel Guides of Buddhist Circuit

Focusing on Bodh Gaya'



Arijit Walia began by introducing the topic for the session. One of the most important places for the followers of Buddhism, Bodh Gaya is a sacred Buddhist pilgrimage center in the world. Tourism in today's time plays a vital role in enhancing a country's soft power which is important to spread our culture and heritage to the people around the world. This soft power connects the people and places to our culture. There is high inbound tourism in Bodh Gaya presenting a huge opportunity for India that goes beyond just capitalising on tourism. Bodh Gaya offers the potential to diplomatically leverage its historical-spiritual connect to the Buddhist world and meaningfully operationalise India's 'Act East' foreign policy and use it to augment its soft power. The sharing of knowledge and information on Buddhist places has fueled the tourist potential of India's Buddhist circuits in the light of recent advancements in the infrastructure and hospitality sectors. Most pilgrims and monks come from the South-east Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, Thailand and Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh, Mongolia and Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop the site as the spiritual capital of the world and use it to strengthen the civilisational bond between India and the Buddhist world.



Training & Orientation of Travel Guides of Buddhist circuit Focusing on Bodh Gaya

Prakash Chandra Nayak

The tourism potential of Buddhist circuit of India is tremendous in the context of recent developments on the infrastructural, travel and hospitality industries fronts. This has been further fuelled by the knowledge and information sharing of Buddhist heritage sites, through mass and social media advertising, that has increased many folds. The tourist flow to Gaya increased pre-pandemic times and there was a steep decrease due to travel restrictions and sanitary distancing. With the restrictions removed, the Buddhist circuits again turning hub for Buddhist pilgrimage.

Deshkal Society has long been experiencing the gap between the tourist footfall and the Buddhist circuits. In its Bodh Gaya Dialogues 2022, the Society ideated organising a training module for the travel guides and tour operators of Bodh Gaya. Initially, and based on the feedback and suggestion, the training material would be contextualised and replicated elsewhere in the state and rest of the country. The training module is based on the feedback from tourists, tour operators and the generic training module prepared by Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, New Delhi.

In the sidelines of the Dialogues 2022, Deshkal Society and collaborators organised an interactive training workshop for the travel guides of Bodh Gaya, titled “Training and Orientation of Travel Guides of Buddhist circuit focusing on Bodh Gaya”. This was a first such activity to orient and educate the roles and responsibilities, situating experiences of national and transnational networks of the Buddhist pilgrimage. The optimal use of the travel guides would promote tourism, local enterprises and increase community livelihoods in the area. However, the critical links between tourists and Buddhist circuits of India are hardly well prepared to handle the bulk inflows of inbound tourists. This has been reported by tourists to Bodh Gaya. Many of those who visit the places

here report that quite often needs and expectations of tourists are not met. Additionally, it should be noted that the inbound tourists to Buddhist circuits differ from the tourists coming from other parts of the country and abroad.

About 2500 years ago, the message of peace, truth and non-violence were spread to the rest of the world from India. The message of Gautam Buddha changed the thought process of the people the world over. The followers of Buddha are now getting attracted to the Buddhist circuit of the Indian subcontinent. On the other hand, India is regaining its lost glory and heritage and becoming a centre of soft power. Tourism and hospitality are rejoining paths, people and practices across the region.

Certain themes were oriented to the travel guides that form the standard training modules for travel guides in heritage sites which are as follows:

—**Coordinate with Travel Partners:** Handling inbound tourists with travel partners is crucial for the travel guides. Interacting with the travel agents and tour operators, understanding the work requirement, estimating the cost, reporting and documenting the activities that include visa facilitation and exchange of currencies.

—**Engage with Tourists:** Basic behavioural and mannerism skills were provided to the travel guides by which they could ensure greeting the tourists and ensuring etiquettes and safety of the tourists and achieving tourist satisfaction.

—**Guide the Tourists at the Heritage Sites:** Even though there are books and audio-visual content on the heritage sites, the in-person description at the heritage site is more engaging and memorable. Tour guides were oriented on how to brief about the tourist spot.

—**Communicate with Customers and Colleagues:** The backward and forward interaction and communication with the tourists is important and therefore should be done effectively.

—**Maintain Customer-centric Service Orientation:** Keeping the tourists at the centre of Buddhist circuit tourism, the importance of engaging with customers for assessing service quality requirements, achieving customer satisfaction, fulfilling customer requirement, were emphasised among the travel guides.

—**Maintain standard of etiquette and hospitable conduct:** The diverse profile of Buddhist tourists demands standard etiquette and hospitable conduct that is expected from the travel guides. They were sensitised on how to adopt behavioural, personal and telephone etiquettes, treating customers with high degree of respect and professionalism, resulting in achieving customer satisfaction.

—**Maintain Health and Hygiene:** The recent Pandemic has set in new standards and protocols on health and hygiene. For ensuring cleanliness around workplace, personal hygiene practices and taking precautionary health measures were also discussed in length.

—**Follow Gender, Age and *Divyang* sensitive service practices:** Educating customer on specific facilities and services available, providing different age and gender specific customer service, following standard etiquette with women at workplace.

—**Major Inbound tourists to Bodh Gaya:** Recent years have witnessed Buddhists tourists from countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Bhutan, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, China etc. Equal numbers of tourists also visit Bodh Gaya from Europe, UK and the USA. Direct flights coming from Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and the upgradation of Gaya International Airport and nearby Varanasi and Kushinagar International Airport will facilitate visits of international pilgrims further.

Major countries are also running Monasteries and guest houses for the Buddhist pilgrims and monks of their respective countries. Hotels and guesthouses by entrepreneurs are also coming up to meet the international standards.

Way Forward

The investment on the barefoot travel guides which have little or no formal education on the travel and hospitality industries are lifelong and incremental on their livelihood. This might equip them to become micro-entrepreneurs in Bodh Gaya and elsewhere in the Buddhist heritage sites.

Tourism is linked to livelihood promotion and sustainability. Gaya has the potential to become the global hub of religious tourism, leading to new job opportunities. It is the hub for Hindu religious services such as *pind daan* and *shraddh puja*. It can be modelled on the Kumbh and Maagh *melas* for a better pilgrim experience.

DAY-2

Session 3A



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

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Dr. ABHAY K. SINGH

Dr. MANISH SINGH



DAY-2

Session-3A

CHAIR

Abhay Kumar Singh

Professor and Dean, School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, Nalanda

LEAD PRESENTATION

Manish Sinha

Professor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya and

Hon'ble Member of the Organising Committee of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues

'The Culture and Religion of Tibetan Bodh Gaya'

The session was chaired by **Abhay Kumar Singh**, Professor and Dean, School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University. **Manish Sinha**, Professor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, and Hon'ble Member of the Organizing Committee of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues was the lead speaker.



The Culture and Religion of Tibetan Bodh Gaya

Manish Sinha

Manish Sinha, in his address spoke about ‘**The Culture and Religion of Tibetan Bodh Gaya**’. He described how Tibetans have contributed to the transformation of Bodh Gaya from a small nondescript town to a prominent well-recognized place on the global map that it is today. While several factors have contributed to this transformation, the association of exiled Tibetans and particularly of H.H. Dalai Lama, one of the living symbols of engaged Buddhism, has hugely contributed to the globalization and internationalization of Bodh Gaya, he stated.

Furthering the discussion, he referred to Dalai Lama’s autobiography “Freedom in Exile” in which Dalai Lama referred to India as his *karmabhoomi*. Tibet was annexed by China in 1949. Dalai Lama was forced to sign a 17-point agreement with China. In 1956, Dalai Lama was to attend the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebration which was attended by the then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru and many other dignitaries from Southeast Asia. He asked for permission which was denied by the Government of China, which made him very disappointed and depressed. However, later with the help of good office of the Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, he was able to visit Bodh Gaya.

Sharing about his connection with Bodh Gaya, Sinha stated that he was born in Bodh Gaya and has been teaching history at Magadh city Bodh Gaya for the last 26 years. He stated that the Tibetans in exile have contributed to the globalization and revitalization of Bodh Gaya under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The performance of the religious rituals of the Tibetans in winter season is marked as pilgrimage season under the leadership of Dalai Lama and other Tibetan lamas and gurus. In addition, *pujas* of various Buddhist sects like Gelug, Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu are organized at a large scale. The Light of Dharma Foundation organizes Tripitaka chanting in Pali language. Among all, Kalchakra puja is the biggest which is a *tantrik puja*. Sinha further elaborated that through their rituals Tibetans have creatively combined spiritualism with nationalism. They represent the original Buddhist culture and ethos which is the greatest marker for their survival in exile. The pilgrimage season is also an opportunity where they can espouse the nationalist cause. The association of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who is the living embodiment of engaged Buddhism and respected as living Buddha, has acted as a catalyst for the globalization of Bodh Gaya.

During the winter season, the Bodh Gaya is transformed into a Tibetan spiritual hub with thousands of Tibetans making the city their temporary residence, participating in religious ceremonies and selling antiques. Earlier it was a disorganized place but now they have designated a place to sell dresses, *malas* and other items. They also sell winter wear in Lhasa market. There are Tibetan eateries, and some of them are quite delicious. Thukpa is the favorite dish. During winter Bodh Gaya is heavily crowded. Thousands of monks, wearing maroon robes walk on the streets, circulating their beads in hands and whispering prayers. That is a marvelous sight to behold. It transforms the place into a spiritual land. Spiritualism oozes out from every corner of Bodh Gaya. Not only Tibetans but many tourists from trans-Himalayan states, East Asia, Taiwan, China, and Southeast Asian countries come here, in addition to the local people. Bodh Gaya becomes a melting point for various cultural backgrounds. It is also an opportunity for exile Tibetans to setup their temporary roots. It becomes a mega social occasion for all to meet, he added.

Tibetans have linked the green movement with the Tibetan cause. After the Arctic and the Antarctic, Tibet is the home to the largest water reservoir in the world. The Tibetan plateau is home to ten rivers which feed Southeast Asia and India. Brahmaputra originates from here so does the Indus River. For years, Tibetans have been telling the world that China is damming the rivers only for its own interest. Therefore, saving Tibet is not only vital for Tibetans but also for the world at large.

The presence of maps of Bodh Gaya in the 7th or 8th Dalai Lama works is evident that Tibetans have been imagining Bodh Gaya. For them Bodh Gaya was the center of earth. *Vajrasan* is the holiest place in Bodh Gaya which is in the form of a stone slab where Buddha meditated. This was discovered in 1891 during the excavation when Alexander Cunningham had especially visited the Bodh Gaya. During the excavation they found coins from Kanishka and Ikshvaku period which is dated from around the 1st century CE. On the location of Bodh Gaya and Kushinagar, Sinha informed that Tibetans were not aware the place of Buddha's enlightenment and his Nirvana. Earlier, Tibetans visualized Kushinagar to be in Assam. They also associated a place near Rawalpindi where Buddha gave his first sermon. Their visualization was based on latitude and longitude. It was the Colonial archeologists who discovered sites related to Buddha on the basis of the travelogues of Chinese travelers Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang.

Tracing the journey of Bodh Gaya attaining preeminence, Sinha informed that 19th century is an important period when Sir Edwin Arnold wrote his famous book "Light of Asia". This was the beginning of the Buddhist modern revivalist movement. Priest Anagarika Dharmapala came here from Sri Lanka. He was the founder of the Mahabodhi Society. He first visited here in 1894. He was appalled to see the condition of Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya temple was under the control of Bodh Gaya *mahants* during that time under the leadership of Acharya Krishnagiri from the Giri sect. In the year 1590, a Shaivite monk founded a Shaivite monastery in Bodh Gaya. Since then, the Bodhi Tree temple came under his care. He started worshipping as one of the *avatars*. Thus, the culture

here is multifaceted — on the left of the Bodhi Tree world heritage site, *samadhis* of Giri monks are also found. However, Anagarika felt that for the Jews, there is Jerusalem, and for the Muslims, there is Mecca, and Hindus have Haridwar. So, like wise Bodh Gaya belongs to the Buddhists. A case was filed in the Calcutta High Court. In 1922, during the Gaya Congress, Bodh Gaya temple controversy was raised. A committee was constituted under the supervision of Rajendra Prasad to find an amicable solution. In 1935, he submitted his recommendations on the basis of which Bodh Gaya temple Act was constituted in 1949.

Sharing on the nature of political and spiritual role of Dalai Lama, Sinha informed that on 2nd February 1960, Dalai Lama gave the statement that Tibetans need to go for democracy. He relinquished his political power in Bodh Gaya. He wanted Tibet to change to a modern political system. He also spoke about elections. Elections were held for Tibetan Parliament Kashag on 2nd September 1960 and Kalon Tripa was elected. Bodh Gaya, therefore, is a very important place for them as the democratic governance started from here. From 2nd September 1975 onwards, this day is celebrated as the Tibetan Democracy Day.

He further informed that Kalchakra puja was celebrated by Dalai Lama in 1974, 1985, 2003, 2012 and 2017. More than 1 million people participated in this. This is most the advanced form of Vajrayan practice. It is a most complex system of *tantric* Buddhism. The 14th Dalai Lama is the prominent person to conduct this *puja*. It is a mega spiritual event but it also serves as a social and nationalistic platform. Kalachakra initiations given by the Dalai Lama at Bodh Gaya have contributed significantly to the global perception of Bodh Gaya as a spiritual hub of Buddhism. The Kalchakra puja has acted as a catalyst for international tourism for Bodh Gaya. Dalai Lama's spiritual association with Bodh Gaya has contributed immensely to Bodh Gaya's globalization.

DAY-2

Session 3B



DESHKAL SOCIETY

Ministry of Culture
Government of India

Deshkal Society in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)
presents

4TH EDITION
Bodh Gaya
Global Dialogues
2022

25-27TH MARCH 2022 | WORLD HERITAGE SITE, BODHI GAYA



DAY-2**Session-3B****MODERATOR**

Aviram Sharma

Assistant Professor, Nalanda University, Nalanda

LEAD PRESENTATION

Dalip Kumar

National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi

**‘Changing Pattern and Growth of Bodh Gaya Block:
Evidence from Census Data’**

Kailash Kumar Mishra

Chairman, Folkbrain

**‘Timeless Intangible Heritage of Herbs and Biodiversity of Gaya:
An Ethnographical Observation’**

Aviram Sharma stated that both the speakers including Dalip Kumar and Kailash Kumar Mishra have done extensive work in the area of contemporary thoughts and developments happening in the regions Gaya and Bodh Gaya. He emphasised on how in demographic and economic terms things have changed in Bodh Gaya.



Changing Pattern and Growth of Bodh Gaya Block: Evidence from Census Data

Dalip Kumar

Dalip Kumar presented on the **Changes in the Socio-Economic Indicators in Bodh Gaya after Independence**. Being in the transitional zone between eastern humid and western arid parts of the most fertile Indo-Gangetic plains, Magadh always attracted interaction between societies with different agrarian practices. Dense population, proximity to metallic minerals and strong political power provided conducive ecosystem for the growth of agriculture and trade. Bodh Gaya occupies religious significance both for Hindus and Buddhists. Millions of Hindus visit Gaya for *pind daan* to their ancestors during *pitra- paksha* every year. Lord Buddha got enlightenment here, so millions of Buddhist pilgrims visit the place all through the year. Developed roads, rail network and air route facilitate tourism which provides direct and indirect employment to large number. The paper underlines the changing socio-economic indicators in various Censuses like number of households, population profile, sex ratio, literacy rate and women participation. The changes in the size of work force, classification and status of workers, non-workers, cultivators, agricultural and household workers and other categories have also been explained.

Here, the number of households increased from 9,637 in 1961 to 16,418 in 1981. There were 38,457 households in Bodh Gaya block including 6,303 (16.27%) in urban and 32,156 (83.73%) in rural areas. Population density in 2011 was 154 houses per sq.km. Urban area is densely populated than rural areas. The population of Bodh Gaya block was 67,281 in 1961 including 34,067 males and 33,214 females. It increased by 25.18% from 84,220 in 1971 to 1,06,882 in 1981. The rural population in the district increased by 18% whereas urban population witnessed 125.66% growth. Urban population grew faster than in other blocks of the district. Bodh Gaya block has population of 2,36,243 according to Census 2011 which includes 1,21,231 males, 1,15,012 females, and 38,459 households. It has the sex ratio of 975 in 1961, 952 in 1981, 913 in 2001 and 949 female/1000 male in 2011. Number of Children (0-6 years) in Bodh Gaya Block was 44,352 which is 19% of the total population (Census-2011.). This includes 22,654 male and 21,698 female children. Thus, Child Sex Ratio of Bodh Gaya Block is 958 in 2011 which is higher than that in Bihar (949). Urban Child population of Bodh Gaya is 6854 which is 17.83% of population, whereas rural child population is 37,498. Child Sex Ratio is 958 against 935 in Bihar.

Child population (0-6 year) decreased from 21.83 in 1991 to 18.77% in 2011. The proportion of urban girls in the age group of 0-6 years decreased from 22.55 in 1991 to 18.10% in 2011. It was due to National Population Policy resulting into fall in the population growth as well as spread of female literacy which is the best contraceptive for birth control.

In 1971, the population of Bodh Gaya Block was 84,220 including 77,252 in rural and 6,968 in urban areas. These three corresponding figures rose to 1,06,882, 91,158 and 15,724 respectively by 2011. Rural population comprises of 46,484 males and 44,674 females whereas Urban Population has 8,268 males and 7,456 females. The share of rural and urban population in the block is 85% and 15% respectively. The proportion of male and female in the rural region is 51:49, whereas it is 53:47 in urban areas. 16.3% population lives in urban areas and 83.7% in the rural areas. The average literacy rate is 70% in urban and 58.1% in rural areas.

The changing trend in the rural population witnessed decline from 90.64% in 1971 to 83.73% in 2011, whereas urban population went on increasing from 6,299 in 1961 to 38,439 in 2011. The decade (1971-1981) witnessed the highest annual growth rate of urban population at 8.48%. It was due to expansion of secondary and tertiary sectors resulting in to urbanization. The urban population density at 2,647 is higher than that in Bihar at 1,102. The slum population of Bodh Gaya is 17,704 which is 46.05% of urban population. The rapid migration of work force to urban centers due to poverty and unemployment led to proliferation of urban slums.

According to Census-1981, the highest number of Scheduled Castes (32.30%) live in Bodh Gaya town whereas the 11.49% in the other towns of Gaya district. Scheduled Caste population of Bodh Gaya Block became 88,695 including 45,451 males and 43,244 females. Rural population was 75,697 including 38,788 males and 36,909 females. By 2011, the urban population reached at 12,998 which includes 6,663 males and 6,335 females. 33.81% of Scheduled Caste population lives in Bodh Gaya town. Population of SCs increased only around 2% from 1981 to 2011.

According to Census-2011, the average literacy in Bodh Gaya Block is 60.1% including 70.08% males and 49.55% females. Number of literates in Bodh Gaya Block is 1,15,328 of which male and female are 69,087 and 46,241 respectively. Number of rural literates in Bodh Gaya Block is 93,207 including 56,268 males and 36,939 females. Rural literacy rate in Bodh Gaya is 58.14%. 22,121 persons reside including 12,819 males and 9,302 females reside in urban Bodh Gaya. At 70.04%, literacy rate in Bodh Gaya urban which is higher than that in Bihar at 61.80%. In Bodh Gaya, male literacy is around 78.13% while female literacy is 61.29%.

As per 2011 Census, two major religious communities in Bodh Gaya are – 2,16,036 Hindus and 19,299 Muslims. However there are other minorities also like Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians but they are less in number.

Out of Bodh Gaya's population (2,36,243), 85,570 are engaged as total workers. 55.6% of workers describe their work as Main worker, while 44.4% are Marginal workers who earn their livelihood for less than 6 months. Out of 85,570 main workers, 15,167 are cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 17,080 are agricultural labourers. The number of non-workers in the total population is 1,50,673 (63.68%) including 64,766 males and 85,907 females.

The share of total worker is 33.38% of total population in Bihar which includes 46.47% males and 19.07% female workers. In the same year the percentage of workers increased to 36.39 which included 50.64% males and 21.4% females. The share of total workers in population of Bodh Gaya is higher than that in Bihar. The percentage share of male workers is almost the same both in Bihar and Bodh Gaya but number of female workers in Bodh Gaya is more than that in Bihar.

Main workers in Bihar in 2011 were 20.52% including 31.82% males and 8.21% females. In 1981, the corresponding figures rose to 29.68, 49.2 and 9.06%. The share of female main workers was much higher in Bodh Gaya Block (16.87%) than that in Bihar (9.06%) in 1981, but by 2011 the gap reduced both in Bodh Gaya (9.75 %) and Bihar (8.21%).

In 2011, Marginal workers were 12.84% in Bihar including 14.65% males and 10.87% females. In Bodh Gaya there were 16.07% total marginal workers which included 16.56% male and 15.56% females. The share of female workers is higher in Bodh Gaya (15.56%) than that in Bihar (10.87%) in 2011.

In 2011, the Non-workers category constituted 66.64% population including 53.53% males and 80.93% females. Corresponding figures for Bodh Gaya stood at 63.78%, 53.42% and 74.69%. The reason for the reduced share of female non workers is the spread of women literacy in 2011 compared to that in 1981. Demographic profile of General as well as SCs in Bodh Gaya changed due to incremental male workers reducing the male marginal workers and high concentration of females in marginal workers' category. Occupational distribution of workforce shows the reducing number of cultivators due to fast Urbanization in this block. Due to it, number of slums proliferated leading to increased air pollution and traffic jams. The inflating urban population, air pollution and lack of social and physical infrastructure is affecting the world heritage monuments and civic amenities in Bodh Gaya. The paper discusses some social indicators like education, literacy rate, sex ratio and workforce participation shown in Census report to get clear and comprehensive understanding of the changing pattern of society and economy of Bodh Gaya block.



Timeless Intangible Heritage of Herbs and Biodiversity of Gaya: An Ethnographical Observation

Kailash Kumar Mishra

Kailash Kumar Mishra shared about the **Intangible Heritage and Biodiversity of Gaya**, which is one of the most sacred places in India. It is considered to be the centre for religious, cultural, educational and scientific thoughts for Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Gaya and surrounding geographical pockets are example of a rich bio-cultural zone. Gaya has also provided an unhindered space for indigenous ritual and cultural practices to flourish. In fact, Gaya and the whole of Magadh including the Chota Nagpur plateau is the hub for medicinal plants, roots, berries, and other resources.

While the archaeological and historical importance of Gaya is well-known, the exploration of Gaya through ethnography and cultural industry can open new vistas and opportunities for local folks including artists, tourist agencies, hotels, local shopkeepers, guides, priests, NGOs, etc.

The literal meaning of ethnography is being there. As it is clear from its nomenclature, ethnoarchaeology is the branch of archaeology that is engaged in exploring the layers of undiscovered facts about the archaeological remains through the study of the people and their tangible and intangible cultural practices by way of living with them. It is a comparative study of archeological remains and their techniques, patterns, materials, and thought with the local community residing in the vicinity of the archeological sites. This method of exploring archeology helps archeologists to construct the past with a positive attitude and living database.

The culture industry of Gaya since time immemorial has been very powerful. The stone art, terracotta, specialized food items including sweets, herbal and indigenous medicines for curing diseases and better lifestyles, clothes, etc. are the well-known products. Sweet items such as *anarsa* (a rice-based pastry-like

sweet dish), *peda* (made of *khowa*, sugar, and flavorings), *Silao ka khaja* (the divine flaky sweet known for its connection with Nalanda and for its taste, crispiness and multi-layered appearance which is attributed to the local water and climate of Silao), and *tilkut* (a unique treat made from sesame seeds and jaggery or sugar).

Similarly, the sculptures of Pathalkatti village, some rare forms of terracotta products, cotton saris and garments, etc. are quite famous and can be promoted among travellers and tourists and buyers from towns and cosmopolitan cities of India.

In order to systematically promote and provide a local, national and international market linkage to culture industry of Gaya, a skilled team can be created. The team should create a brand and convince the local sellers and shopkeepers of Buddhist and Hindu sites of Gaya to sell their products. The products can be sold in the domestic and international markets through digital and online networks.

I believe that if this model is done professionally, it can change the fate of local economy and the community at large. It will generate huge job opportunities for the local youth. In the long run, it can be leveraged to sustain the partial activities of the organization.

DAY-2

Session 4

Society in collaboration with
Bharatiya National Centre for the Arts [IGNCA]



Ministry of Culture
Government of India



10th EDITION

Bodhi Gaya

Global Dialogue

2022

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Dr. AVIRAM SHARMA



DAY-2

Session-4

CHAIR

Shashank Sinha

Independent Scholar and Author and Publishing Director, Routledge, South Asia

LEAD PRESENTATION

Sunita Dwivedi

Silk Road Traveller and Author, New Delhi

'Travelling in the Footsteps of the Buddha'

Aviram Sharma

Assistant Professor, Nalanda University, Nalanda

'Worldling of Bodhgaya'



Buddha in Afghanistan - From Kunduz to Kandahar

Sunita Dwivedi

Sunita Dwivedi shared her presentation on ‘**Buddha in Afghanistan – From Kunduz to Kandahar**’ showcasing the remnants of Buddhist cities and their salvaged antiquities. It also reminds us of the ties that India and Afghanistan have shared since ancient times when the word of the Buddha permeated every valley and mountain cliff of the region.

Afghanistan assumes importance for any study on the Buddhist heritage of Asia. We learn about the first *stupas* built for the Buddha in the valley of the Oxus, near Balkh. More importantly Sakyans of Kapilvastu (the clan to which Buddha belonged) are even said to have ruled in Bamiyan, Badakshan and other regions of Afghanistan.

Considering the number of Ashokan inscriptions and colossal Buddha images as also images of Hindu gods and goddesses found in Afghanistan, we can say that Afghanistan was a stronghold of both Buddhism and Hinduism. Interestingly, Afghanistan is still the custodian of the one of the world’s largest Reclining Buddha (1000 feet long) as seen by Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang. The country is also the custodian of one of the world’s longest Buddhist art galleries at Bamiyan and an abundant repertoire of Sanskrit manuscripts retrieved from Bamiyan caves and stored with the Schoyen Collection.

Most importantly, judging from the past events of 2001 when Taliban dynamited the colossal Buddhas of Bamiyan there is a continuing threat to the Buddhist heritage of Afghanistan. Not only due to the prevailing political dispensation there and situation of conflict but also because of greedy international companies who want to dig into the mineral resources of Afghanistan and could thereby destroy the very heritage that we seek to study and learn about. The 2000-year-old Buddhist city of Mes Aynak, 38 kms from Kabul is in danger due to the Chinese mining company MCC. The company has a contract to extract the world’s largest copper reserves in large open cast mines which pose a danger to the Buddhist treasures buried there.

The 2,000-kilometer-long corridor joining India and Afghanistan is said to have been the 'Buddhist Corridor' – the repository of major Buddhist sites of South Asia. The colossal corridor connected Bengal with Balkh through the ancient Uttarapath (the northern highroad), in medieval times the Sher Shah Suri Marg (now the Grand Trunk Road). Starting from Bengal, it ran through the present states of Bihar, UP, Punjab in India, through Taxila and Peshawar in Pakistan and onwards to Kabul, Bamiyan, Samangan and Balkh in Afghanistan. This was a trade corridor. It was the route that carried the message of the Buddha along the Asian Circuit. Along this corridor existed some of the biggest centres of Buddhist learning for example Kunduz, Balkh, Kabul, Kapisa, Bamiyan, etc. Monasteries with *stupas*, monk cells, long galleries, courtyards and water bodies can still be seen at the heritage sites of Bamiyan and Samangan visited by this author.

IMPORTANT BUDDHIST SITES

Nagarhara was famous throughout the Buddhist world for the parietal bone of the Buddha in Hadda and his tooth in Nagarhara. The Buddha's robe and staff were also sacred remains in Hadda. During excavations, several Buddhist establishments viz. Tepe Kalan, Tepe Kafiriha and Tepe Shotor, dating from the 2nd-7th century CE have been found in the Jalalabad valley stretching from Basawal to the gorge at Darunta. The 3-km long complex consists of 100 groups of caves on the north side of river Kabul. Precious antiquities from the sites can be seen today at National Museum at Kabul and the Musée Guimet, Paris. The important Jataka story of Dipankar Buddha and his prophecy too had its setting in Nagarahara. Among the most precious relics from the Buddhist complexes in the Jalalabad Valley was a relic casket of gold inlaid with precious rubies and carved with the figures of the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* which was recovered from a *stupa* in Bimaran dated 1st century CE.

In and Around Kabul: The wealth of Buddhist antiquities recovered from Kabul and its surroundings and displayed in the museums around the world, gives ample evidence of the flourishing state of Buddhism in the region during the early centuries of our era. These include the Buddhist cities of Sarai Khuja,

Paitava, Shotorak, Goldarrah, Gol Hamid and Tepe Kafiriah at Mes Aynak, Tepe Maranjan, Tepe Narenj, Shewaki *stupa* and monastery, Tope Darra (Valley of Stupas) near Istalif, *stupa* at Tapa Iskandar. The Koh-i-Daman valley which was the route for trade and religious missionaries going to Kapisa is also littered with Buddhist remains.

Mes Aynak: 40 kms from Kabul in Logar province lies the Buddhist city of Mes Aynak. Here, the Afghan Institute of Archaeology has identified the remains of a Buddhist city covering over a thousand hectares around the Babawali Mountains, that functioned from the Kushana to the late Shahi period (1st-9th century CE). Archaeologists have discovered two large monastic centres, namely, the Gol Hamid and Kafiriat Tepe.

Kapisa: Lying 60 km north of Kabul in Begram district and situated at the confluence of the Ghorband and Panjsher rivers, the renowned monastic site of Kapisa was a flourishing trade centre. Due to great wealth and patronage of merchants and rulers, a plethora of monasteries were erected on the hills of Begram. Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang informs that there were nearly 100 monasteries with 6,000 priests and renowned scholars of Buddhism like Prajnakara lived there. The list of monasteries included Shotorak, Paitava, Kham-i-Zargar, Sarai Khuja and Karratcha—all dated between 2nd-4th century CE.

Bamiyan- Kakrak-Foladi Caves: Itinerant monks from India are believed to have settled in Bamiyan during the time of the Mauryan emperor Asoka's Dhamma missions to the Greek kingdoms. It continued to be a major centre of Buddhism during the subsequent Indo-Greek and Kushan periods.

Sitting 2,500 metres above the sea level, the long east-west Bamiyan valley is fed by two rivers, the Kakrak to the east and Foladi to the west, both having their origin in the Koh-i-Baba range. The principal archaeological sites are Bamiyan in the Bamiyan valley and Kakrak and Foladi sites in the respective river valleys.

Two immense rock statues of the Buddha, believed to represent 'Lokottara'—the 'Lord of the World'—once dominated the Buddhist complex. Thousands of cave shrines, assembly halls and residences for monks were carved out of cliffs between the two giant Buddhas and were decorated with paintings. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) involved in the restoration work at Bamiyan (1969-76) have dated the colossi between the 3rd and 4th centuries CE. The giant Buddhas stood guard over the valley for over a millennium and a half before being blown up in March 2001 by the Taliban.

Manuscripts in Brahmi and Kharosthi: In the monastic establishments at Bamiyan were found manuscripts on birch bark, palm leaf and vellum written in Brahmi and Kharosthi. Some Buddhist manuscripts with the Schoyen Collection have been preserved in the library of the National Museum, Kabul dated from about the first century CE. These are believed to be the oldest Buddhist manuscripts yet discovered.

Caves of Kakrak Valley: A second abode of the Buddha colossi (known as Kakrak Buddha) stood in the ravine of Kakrak river, east of the Bamiyan cliff. The caves are located about six kilometres southeast of the city. The famous Standing Buddha of Kakrak is said to have been over six metres high. The statue was destroyed by the Taliban along with the two giant Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001.

Foladi Valley: The third centre of Buddhist art dated around 6th century CE in the Bamiyan region is the Foladi Valley. Here lie painted cave shrines and possibly some dwellings of monks in adjacent hills. The exquisitely embellished caves were all dedicated to the Buddha while monks lived in humble dwellings in adjacent hills. Some cliffs appear like palace structures with long balconies having embroidered canopies in stone using a variety of mineral colours obtained locally from the mountains.

Kunduz: Xuanzang supplies us with interesting information about the condition of Buddhism in 7th century at Kunduz. He tells us that in Kunduz there were about ten monasteries with about a hundred monks and both Mahayana and Hinayana sects prevailed. A beautiful image of Maitreya Buddha from Kunduz monastic centre (perhaps one visited by the Chinese pilgrim) can be seen at the National Museum, Kabul.

Samangan: The famous monastery of Samangan lies at Aibak, about 100 km from Balkh in the valley of the Khulm River. It is in the ruins of these monastic settlements of Aibak that some scholars have traced the existence of the ancient Naubahar monastery which Xuanzang mentioned in his travelogues. The 8-meter high and 28-meter in diameter *stupa* of Top-e-Rustam is said to have been built in the 2nd century CE. Cut out from an outcrop of Aibak hills, the *stupa* shines like the polished Asokan pillars of the 3rd century BCE.

Takht-i-Rustam: Inside another hill close to the Top-e-Rustam *stupa* lies the massive hill monastery of Takht-i- Rustam with several rectangular and circular halls, courtyards, and galleries whose walls have been decorated with floral motifs. There are deep-arched niches and on the floor are water bodies cut into the rocks. The interconnected galleries take the visitor from one hall to another; these galleries, halls and walls were carved by human hands. The expansive multi-roomed establishment with large assembly halls were decorated with carvings and paintings of the Bodhi tree and a multitude of lotuses adorning the ceilings and walls.

Ghazni: In southern Afghanistan we have the sites of Ghazni and Kandahar. One of the monastic centres located on a hill of the Dasht-i-Manara plain at Tepe Sardar, Ghazni had richly decorated *stupas*, chapels and monk cells which were excavated by modern archaeologists in the early 20th century. An inscribed votive pot found at the site attested to the name of the sanctuary as the Kanika Maharaja Vihara (the Temple of the Great King Kanishka) and that it was built during the Kusana period in the 2nd century CE.

The towering central *stupa*, 22 metres square was the focus of the complex. The chapels surrounding the *stupa* give evidence of colossal statuary art. A gigantic Reclining Buddha measuring over 15 metres was found in a chapel of the Tepe Sardar monastic complex. An example of the beautiful statuary art from Ghazni can be seen at the National Museum at Kabul. The large Buddha head dated 5th-7th century CE from Tepe Sardar must have adorned a life-size image of the Buddha in *dhyānāmudra*.

Goddess Durga at Ghazni: Interestingly, the complex also hosted a Hindu Shaivite shrine where an image of Durga Mahisasurmardini was found during excavations. The size of the original image can be guessed from the colossal head of the goddess preserved in a glass case in the National Museum. The image gives evidence that female divinities were worshipped in Afghanistan.

Kandahar: Buddha's Bhikshapatra – This is said to be the holy *bhikshapatra* (begging bowl) of Buddha found at Kandahar in the *khanaqa* of a saint Mir Wais and later brought to the National Museum, Kabul. The precious relic was seen by Chinese pilgrim Fa Xian at Peshawar on the Khyber Pass route to Nagarhara in the early 4th century CE and finds mention in his travelogue. In 1925, the huge begging bowl of the Buddha was found at Kandahar where, because of

its holiness, it had the pride of place at the *khanaqa* of the renowned sufi saint Mir Wais Baba and from where it was brought to Kabul and now it stands in the front gallery of the National Museum facing the entrance, as an object of great piety.

Conclusion: The plethoras of Buddhist heritage sites in Afghanistan epitomize the continuous Indo-Afghan dialogue on trade and culture for over two millennium. One of the primary tasks before world heritage bodies and the Government of India is to safeguard this cultural dialogue and heritage from destruction not only at the hands of nature but also due to the political turmoil that engulfs Afghanistan.



Worlding of Bodh Gaya

Aviram Sharma

Bodh Gaya presents a unique opportunity to study the idea of ‘worlding’ because of its strategic location and the emergence and revival of Buddhism in the region, especially in the last couple of decades. Worlding implies analyzing the ways in which cities are envisioning their future and planning interventions and speculative experiments to fulfil those visions. The geographical area of Bodh Gaya has doubled since 1961. The area of the town was approximately 11 sq km in 1961, which extended up to about 19.6 sq km in 2011. The population of the town increased from 6,299 in 1961 to 38,439 by 2011. Presently, Bodh Gaya is administered by a Nagar Panchayat and for administrative reasons divided into 19 wards. The post-independence history of Bodh Gaya is a history of displacement of villages and redevelopment of the land spaces around the Mahabodhi Temple. Since the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations in Bodh Gaya, the state has actively tried to shape its urban and cultural landscape.

The first Master Plan of Bodh Gaya (1966) envisioned a phased development programme. It emphasized two points: (i) Preservation of its supremely important historical, cultural and archaeological background; and (ii) The necessity of channelizing physical and economic development in a manner that highlights the dominance of nature and spirit and does not either compromise or obscure the basic character of the town. The priority was given to archaeological sensitivity and agriculture in the vicinity. After more than four decades under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, the City Development Plan 2006 of Bodh Gaya was formulated. The CDP 2006 envisioned Bodh Gaya as a 'World Buddhist Centre, a centre of learning, a green, healthy, humane town with equitable opportunity for all and a pilgrimage destination.' The focus shifted from preserving the archaeological site to developing the place as a global pilgrimage site.

The revival of Buddhism since the 1950s has led to the establishment of monasteries and religious institutions by several Asian countries in Bodh Gaya. Yet till the 1980s, there were merely six monasteries and a couple of hotels with limited pilgrimage activities. Bodh Gaya emerged as a major pilgrimage centre with a massive tourist influx only after 2000. As a result, Bodh Gaya witnessed a rapid transformation and became one of the major tourist sites in India during this period. David Geary argued that this was the result of several changes at a different scale: the declaration of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002, the opening of Gaya International Airport and a relatively stable law and order situation in the state after 2005. The urban population of Bodh Gaya has not increased at such a rapid rate, but the number of tourists visiting the town has increased manifold. According to the Tourism Department of Bihar, in 2001, only 2,06,141 tourists visited Bodh Gaya, which increased to 16,24,497 by 2019. Most of the tourists visit Bodh Gaya during a short period of the year, primarily in the winter months (October to March). Many new monasteries, meditation centres and religious shrines were established after 2000. Several hotels, cafes, and associated infrastructure came up to cater to the increasing number of tourists in Bodh Gaya. According to the International Buddhist Council, 62 monasteries are currently operational. However, the actual number of monasteries is much higher. In the last few years, many monasteries from Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Bhutan and Tibet have been established in Bodh Gaya. In the current situation, the Bodh Gaya

Temple Management Committee, International Buddhist Council and many other monasteries play a significant role in shaping the urban processes of Bodh Gaya. Apart from religious institutions, the hotel industry emerged as another crucial stakeholder at the local level, capable of shaping the urban landscape. According to the data provided by the Nagar Panchayat, 44 hotels and guest houses are operating in Bodh Gaya. However, the head of one of the hotel associations claims that the number is more than 200. Most of these hotels started after 2000. The small town of Bodh Gaya has many luxurious hotels, which are primarily catering to international tourists. The state and central government wished to develop Bodh Gaya as a model heritage town to showcase it as an emblem of cooperation between local and global actors. Over 67% of the land area in Bodh Gaya is under agriculture and water bodies. Most monastic establishments feel that the town still lacks aesthetic values. Beautification, cleanliness and greenery are the main components inscribed in developing a 'Buddhaland' in their vision. They wish to develop Bodh Gaya primarily as a pilgrimage centre catering to the Buddhist population. However, the local business community wishes to develop Bodh Gaya as a tourist site capable of supporting their livelihoods and aspirations. Many of the hoteliers, local vendors and residents stated that they face severe challenges in earning a livelihood in the current scenario. The hoteliers accused the monasteries of operating as business hubs and catering to the needs of tourists coming from their respective countries. This claim was rejected by the monasteries. According to the head of many monasteries, they only serve the 'poor' populace of their country, who visit Bodh Gaya as pilgrims. Contrary to that, many local residents believe that the monasteries are thriving at the cost of the local people. The underbelly of Bodh Gaya presents a frightful scenario, where one can witness a vulnerable local population struggling to meet ends.

In conclusion, the worlding lens has enabled us to assess the myriad worlding practices employed by the major stakeholders in Bodh Gaya. The dominant actors wish to develop Bodh Gaya as a worldclass town/city catering to the needs of tourists and the global Buddhist community. The varied visions for the town can be broadly divided into two categories; the first includes those who wish to see Bodh Gaya as 'the Buddhaland', while the latter group consists of those who wish to have a city that has a place for them.

DAY-2

Session 5

Deshkal Society in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)
presents
4TH EDITION

Bodh Gaya
Global Dialogues
2022

25-27



DAY-2

Session-5
MOVIE SCREENING**MODERATOR**

Jai Prakash
Programme Director, Deshkal Society

White Robes, Saffron Dreams

Director: Teena Amrit Gill

White Robes, Saffron Dreams is a film on gender, discrimination and inter sectionality in Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. Through the life of a young monk and a *Mae Chi* (Thai nun who wears white and takes 8 precepts or vows) the film examines the differential treatment of women and men by Buddhist institutions, and Thai society; at the same time looking at the spaces women practitioners have carved out for themselves – despite all odds.



White Robes, Saffron Dream is a film on gender discrimination and intersectionality on Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. It is noteworthy that in India, in the early days of Buddhism, women played an important role, both as fully ordained female monastics (or *bhikkhunis*) and as active members of society. They shared the same space and opportunities as men in their spiritual practice. Over the centuries however, as monastic institutions strengthened women found themselves increasingly excluded and side-lined, not just in the running of monastic bodies, but in their own spiritual practice. The Theravada *bhikkhuni* order survived in India and Sri Lanka till the 9th and 11th centuries CE respectively, after which women had to accept a quasi-religious status as nuns, without the right to be fully ordained. They were not accepted by the Buddhist Sangha and had no legal status to speak of. But the revival of the *bhikkhuni* order has always been central to their dreams and struggles, and in 1996, nearly a thousand years after the *bhikkhuni* order died out, it was resurrected in Sri Lanka. Following this, in 2001, a Thai academic and Buddhist scholar, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (now Bhikkhuni Dhammananda), decided to take the all-male Buddhist establishment in Thailand head on and travelled to Sri Lanka to be ordained. The law in Thailand does not allow female ordination. Two years later she became a fully ordained Theravada *bhikkhuni*, and took 311 precepts, much to the consternation of the Sangha body. Through the life of Phra Kham Phon, a young monk, and Rochana, a *Mae Chi* (Thai 'nun' who takes 8 precepts or vows) the film explores how Buddhist institutions, which provide a social security network to boys in a country where a large percent of the population are poor, do not give girls and women access to these facilities, including a free education up to the masters and PhD level. The main reason for this is the fact that while Thai boys can be ordained, girls cannot, and therefore they are not allowed to use the facilities provided by the temples. However, a small nun's institute in the north of Thailand, started by an older *Mae Chi*, provided girls with an opportunity to pursue their education. Mae Chi Rochana came all the way from her home town in Ubon Ratchathani province, near the Cambodian border, to complete her schooling here. But such places are few and far between, and even this institute has since been shut down. The voices of Ouyporn, an activist

and trainer working with Buddhist nuns, and Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, the first Thai woman to be ordained as a *bhikkhuni* in the Theravada tradition, weave their way through the film. Since Bhikkhuni Dhammananda's ordination, over 170 Thai women have been fully ordained, along with over a hundred novice nuns or seminaries, even though the Buddhist Sangha has strongly resisted and denounced this.

This film was made in an environment where there was very little open discussion about Buddhist institutions, and on attitudes towards women, including *Mae Chis*. It was thus very difficult to shoot the film, and to get people to speak on this subject. The film screening set the tone for including the space and voice of women practitioners of Buddhism and their beliefs.



DAY-2

Session 6

Deshkal Society in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts [IGNCA]
presents

4TH EDITION

Bodh Gaya

Global Dialogue



DAY-2

Session-6
[FORMAT-VIRTUAL]

MODERATOR

Manish Sinha

Professor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya

Abhishek Amar

Associate Professor, Hamilton College, New York

‘The Need for a Digital Heritage Center at Bodh Gaya’



Manish Sinha thanked Abhishek Amar for outlining the basic adequacy of digital documentation which is an absolute necessity for a place like Bodh Gaya. Digital documentation is essential taking into consideration the multifaceted and multi-layered past of Bodh Gaya. He has clearly pointed out on why a digital resource centre is a necessity. He believes that the primary activity of adequate digitalisation has not been done. Multifarious activities have been happening in Bodh Gaya but there is no way of recording them and if we do not keep a record, how can we refer to them and make use of them. Therefore, there is a need to compile all these resources together so that they can be referred to. As he has rightly pointed out that when we talk about Bodh Gaya, the focus is on the ancient past which has been the natural corollary of the colonial archaeology. But in that prioritization, the medieval aspects and modern dynamics of Bodh Gaya have not been paid attention. Amar is talking about a need of establishing a connect between these various paradigms of Bodh Gaya. He has rightly pointed about the Dasnami monastery that has played an important role in Bodh Gaya's history and is a living heritage site. But its present condition is in a sad state of affairs. Until we do not know about something, how can we do anything for its amelioration and attract the concerns of society, government and policymakers which is the most essential.



The Need for a Digital Heritage Center at Bodh Gaya

Abhishek Amar

Bodh Gaya 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 Bodh Gaya but the larger Bihar region and other parts of India. To accomplish this goal, 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 Society proposes to undertake at the site of Bodh Gaya. One major initiative that the Deshkal Society has proposed is to develop a knowledge-based Digital Heritage Centre at Bodh Gaya.

The city's preeminent position as the paradigmatic centre of the Buddhist world was reaffirmed through its designation as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2002 and its continued importance as a major religious and tourist attraction in colonial and postcolonial India. However, there is a clear disconnect between what has been declared as the world heritage, which is the Mahabodhi Temple complex, and what constitutes Bodh Gaya today. No doubt, Bodh Gaya's major tourist attraction is the Mahabodhi Temple complex but there is much more that visiting pilgrims and tourists come here for. Even if one looks only at the historic materials at Bodh Gaya, there is more to see. In fact, the surrounding areas of the Mahabodhi complex have 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 19th century. A good example of this is the site of Taradeeh, which was 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 Bodh Gaya. Another excellent example of this phenomenon is the Shaiva Dasnami monastery of Bodh Gaya, which dates from the 17th century. Despite receiving much scholarly attention because of the dispute over the control of the temple complex between the Shaivite monastics and other stakeholders in 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 Shaivite temples that have the potential to convey the story of this powerful Hindu monastic centre when it was at its prime in the 18th and 19th centuries. The monastery has not been included in any tourist map of Bodh Gaya and there is no guide book to convey its institutional history either. Today, this monastery still functions but is in a critical condition. Its walls are crumbling and in need of urgent repair. Similarly, it does have many documents and material remains from the past that can be utilized to write its institutional history, but more importantly, they need to be documented and preserved for the future generations.

These examples also raise the question about the idea of Bodh Gaya. What constitutes Bodh Gaya? Is it just the Mahabodhi temple complex or all other past historical remains? The above discussed examples from Bodh Gaya clearly problematize the idea of Bodh Gaya. The city has grown tremendously in postcolonial India. It has emerged as an international tourist destination and attracts millions 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. Despite these efforts, scholarship has not been able to keep up with either the new materials found from the region or new developments that continue to transform Bodh Gaya on a daily basis in post liberalization India. This is visible in the development of new infrastructure at Bodh Gaya, specifically new Buddhist monasteries from different countries, new religious shrines, meditation centres, hotels, cafes, that have come up in the last two or three years. 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 Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee 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. Magadh University was another local stakeholder, which was established to study and promote local history and culture in postcolonial India. However, it has failed to utilize its potential to either document or oversee the developments within Bodh Gaya. Even though the university established different departments to study the historical/ archaeological past of Buddhism and developmental patterns, it has failed to generate quality scholarship and any policy related information. Sadly, a number of programmes related to Buddhist studies are currently being investigated by the Bihar government's vigilance department for plagiarism and fake PhD's.

The above discussion clearly sums up the context of Bodh Gaya and the knowledge production around this site, which can also frame the argument about the necessity and relevance of a 'Digital Heritage Centre' at Bodh Gaya.

DAY-2

Cultural Evening



DAY-2

CULTURAL EVENING

SITAR VADAN

Sumita Chakravorty

Eminent Sitar Maestro and Assistant Professor, University of Delhi

DAY-3

Session 1

75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav



DAY-3**Session-1****LEAD PRESENTATION**

Ajay Dandekar

Professor, Shiv Nadar University, Gautam Buddha Nagar

and

Rahul Ghai

Associate Professor and Dean, School of Development Studies, IIHMR University, Jaipur

‘Contemporary Times and Relevance of Siddharth: Some Reflections’

Rajat Sanyal

Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta

‘Understanding Mahabodhi Temple Complex: Layers of Temple’



Contemporary times and relevance of Siddharth: Some Reflections

Session with Ajay Dandekar and Rahul Ghai

Gunjan introduced lead presenters **Ajay Dandekar**, Chairperson, Center for Public Affairs and Critical Theory (C-PACT) and Professor, Department of History, Shiv Nadar University and **Rahul Ghai**, Associate professor and Dean of School of Development Studies, IIHMR University, Jaipur and invited them to address the gathering on “Contemporary times and relevance of Siddharth: Some Reflections”.

Ajay Dandekar addressed the gathering through the digital platform. Presenting his views, he said that technology has shrunk the world. One can reach digitally anywhere. The world looks impossible without Facebook, WhatsApp or computers. This is the world of instant solutions and instant problems. There is a lack of stability.

Elaborating further, he said that information communication and technology has brought 2-3 changes. First, big capital transfers from one market to other market has become instant. The managers and controllers of the capital have the ability and the technology to deploy it anywhere in the world instantaneously. Agriculture share in the GDP has gone down whereas the share of service sector has increased. Under the service sector, financial sector has grown exponentially. Countries are competing to attract world's capital. In the process, our understanding of development has become limited. Chomsky has written a book on '*Manufacturing Consent*'. Knowledge and thinking which used to be before the explosion of capital controlled information age is gone. Long back an American Sociologist C. Wright Mills coined a term “power elite”. The “power elite” is a class of people who may not be visible but are playing an important role in making policies and influencing people's thinking. They may not be elected under democratic system but they have permeated in the society. After 1991, not only the Indian economy but people's thought process has integrated with the global system. Its physical results are quite visible. He

said that there is a need to rethink of 'development'. We inherited clean air, clean soil, clean water but can we pass on the same to our future generation. If we can then it will be our great achievement.

Charles Allen has written a beautiful book on rediscovery of Ashoka – how rock edicts were discovered and scripts deciphered by historians. There is a tranquility in Siddhartha's life. He is not involved with anything, at the same time he is involved with everything. It is a very high status of awareness and consciousness.

Secondly, Siddhartha is not attached to anything that is material. It is very difficult to detach yourself from material world. As Siddhartha says, one needs to lessen the attachment to material needs. Not to desire and having an attachment to desire are two separate things. One of the most eminent writers and novelists, thinkers of the last century and of this century also asked "is another world possible". She answered not only another world is possible, but it is on the way. The way things are, the way strong hold of the capital on the world material is, on the world of technology, on the world of creation of information, the way mind is conditioned, that night is getting longer. Effort will have to be to shorten that night. We do not have a choice. All the petty differences of political nature must be cast aside for this. We must free our minds first and only then the alternative world is possible, he suggested.

Rahul Ghai first thanked Sanjay Kumar and other members of Deshkal Society for organizing the summit in Bodh Gaya.

He started his address by setting the context of transition of Siddhartha to Sakya Muni and then to Buddha. He further stated that it is important to understand the transition to understand the contemporary relevance of Buddhism. Buddha has given the technology of self-discovery. He has not taken the religious path but he took a scientific and logical process. He said, don't believe in anything which is said, which is hearsay, which is just heading down from tradition or comes with the authority of teachers and elders but do something, experience it and see if it is also useful and conducive to the benefit of all. Then only you start living in it. Buddha is showing us the path which is conducive and beneficial to all.

He stated that the technology of self-discovery is like meditation where one seeks serenity and quieting of mind. Mix the serenity with deep insights, insights which are non-judgmental, which are having awareness of impermanence and of inter being, interconnectedness. Our notion of achievements is incorrect. He opined that we need to adopt this technology of self in our lives. It is a thing which can unlock various other contemporary relevance. Look at how application of Buddha's techniques is so relevance. Buddhism is open to so many things, so many ups and downs and so many proliferations etc.

"Technology of the self" which is propounded by Buddha can take you to even understanding, practicing and adopting them. The whole work on psychology, whether in western tradition or even in Indian field of work, is using these techniques to reduce stress, to reduce anxiety. Technology of self means quieting of the mind where there is serenity and stillness. Stillness comes from insight, insight to live mindfully, which Buddha says, is beneficial and conducive to all.

Speaking about contemporary relevance of the Buddha, Ghai gave his own example of how his association with Deshkal Society since 2017 has positively impacted his life. He said Buddha is a powerful evocative symbol for rallying communicative public action, for various things which are related to good quality of life of people not only in Bodh Gaya but also the region around it.

He emphasised that one should talk about responsible tourism which links up with very dignified primary productive groups. The whole idea of talking about it is a very good city heritage plan of Bodh Gaya. Deshkal should lead the path in this direction and our best wishes are with them.



Understanding Mahabodhi Temple Complex: Layers of Temple

Rajat Sanyal

Rajat Sanyal believes that Bodh Gaya is probably the only centre of Buddhism in eastern India that witnessed a continuous growth of a sacred place of pilgrimage right from the early historic period till the modern times. Like many other material evidences from the site, the inscribed images, found at Bodh Gaya and subsequently either shifted to Museums or kept within the larger Bodh Gaya 'complex' of locales, are almost irretrievably removed from their original contexts. As a result, the image that one extracts from these materials, have to remain sometimes in a shroud.

He began his address by speaking on the heritage value of the Mahabodhi temple. Mahabodhi at Bodh Gaya holds the most holy status in the Buddhist atlas of Asia. Of all the archaeological sites of South Asia associated with the life of Buddha, the one at Bodh Gaya enjoys a special celebrated status owing to the fact that it marks the site of enlightenment of the Buddha.

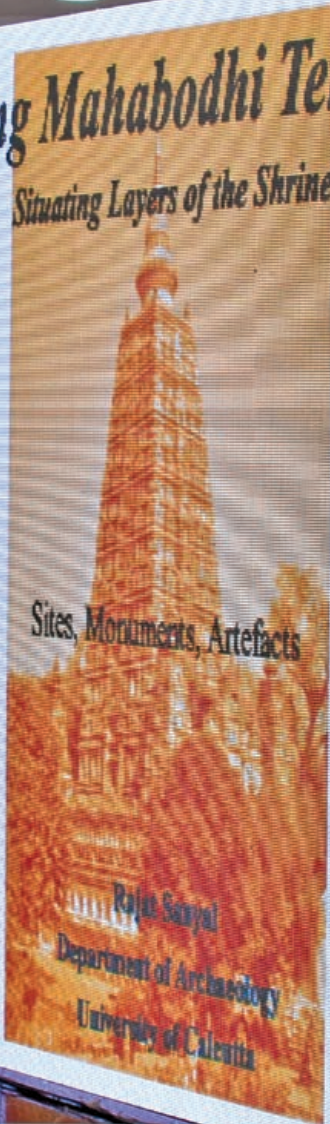
As an archaeological site, the complex at Mahabodhi stands on the west bank of the river Phalgu. At the centre of the structural complex is the lofty temple facing east with a monastic site to its right and a tank named Buddha Pokhar to its left. Outside the complex, to its south, is the village of Urel (identified with ancient Uruvela) where one also comes across a large tank called Urel Pokhar. A large number of sculptural remains and an extraordinary assemblage of votive *stupas* are located at different points within the Mahabodhi temple complex. Several accounts of the temple between the 4th-5th and the 14th century CE, either in the form of inscriptions or travel accounts of monks who actually visited the Bodh Gaya temple are available.

The central temple is surrounded by stone railings to which we will have occasion to return; the celebrated *vajrasana* at the foot of the Bodhi tree, excavated in the late 19th century, is located just at the back of the temple. The inscribed stone carved with the feet of the Buddha is located in front of a

small temple just beside the central temple. Thus, the archaeological markers supporting an early date of the temple around the 2nd/1st century BCE are: the stone-carved *vajrasana*, the sandstone railings surrounding the sanctum, of which one still carry an inscription in the early Brahmi characters, the bas reliefs at Bharhut and Sanchi dating to the 2nd/1st century BCE and finally, a Kharosthi inscribed clay tablet dated in the 1st/2nd century CE, preserved in the Patna Museum showing a model of the Bodh Gaya temple. The above set of evidence fairly suggests that at least a prototype of what we now see on the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya was standing at the BODH GAYA. A large number of sculptural remains located in or around the site, particularly at the neighbouring mahant's complex, clearly suggest that the site had a long history of sculptural art activities in the early medieval period. For an archaeologist, modern Bodh Gaya has two spatial identities: the Buddhist site of the Mahabodhi temple and the Xaiva seat at the neighbouring Mahant's complex. These two have given Bodh Gaya the status of one of the most interesting contested archaeological sites of South Asia. This contest had its root in the struggle of Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sri Lankan monk who demanded an exclusive Buddhist ownership of the Mahabodhi temple complex, finally resulting in the formation of a Management Committee including the Buddhists and the Hindus, by the Government of Bihar in the year 1949. It was on the 26th of June 2002 that the UNESCO announced the World Heritage status for the Mahabodhi temple complex at Bodh Gaya. As an archaeological site, Bodh Gaya did not stand in isolation. Apart from the well-known site of Kurkihar that stood as a major atelier of the Pala period close to Bodh Gaya, more recent excavations at the site of Bakraur, located on the right bank of the river Phalgu just opposite Bodh Gaya, has unearthed an extensive *stupa* made of brick. Based on the discovery of an inscribed image, the place has been identified by the excavator as the place of residence of Sujata, one of the prominent characters in the life of the Buddha prior to his enlightenment.

Understanding Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Situating Layers of the Shrine



Sites, Monuments, Artefacts

Rajen Sanyal
Department of Archaeology
University of Calicut



DAY-3

Session 1A



 DAY-3
Session-1A**WORKSHOP FOR THE TEACHER EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS****ORIENTATION SESSION**

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

CHAIR

Binodanand Jha

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

LEAD EDUCATORS

Gyan Deo Mani Tripathi

The Dean, School of Education and Training and Research,
Knowledge University, Patna

Post orientation session, the educators and teachers visited the specific archaeological and historical sites of Bodh Gaya. After the visit, all educators and teachers presented their own reflections and observations at the workshop venue. At the end, they submitted the assignment on the theme to Binodanand Jha and Gyan Deo Mani Tripathi.

Binodanand Jha began his lecture on how to impart quality education and knowledge to children. He said that more often, though unintentional, we have the tendency to ignore the voices of the children. There is a need to create space for an inclusive voice and representation of reality. For the holistic development of a child, it is important to focus on the practical approach of teaching skills. The focus in the education system these days is on the students whereas in the previous times teachers used to be the centre of education. Elaborating further, he said that there is no co-relation between age and knowledge. Rather than parents, teachers should prepare themselves to play the role of an elder brother/sister or a friend to facilitate and encourage the child. The knowledge acquired in this environment will travel long distance with the student. Teachers will develop shared understanding with which knowledge will be created.

Describing there are three kinds of people viz. “*raichandra*” who gives his opinions on everything, “*gyaanchandra*” who believe that they have knowledge and information on everything and the third “*karamchandra*” who are full of generosity, he advised everyone to become “*karamchandra*” — the one filled with kindness and generosity.

DAY-3

Session 2



DAY-3**Session-2**
MOVIE SCREENING**OVERVIEW**

Manish K. Chaudhary
Assistant Professor, Daulat Ram College, New Delhi

MODERATOR

Gunjan Joshi
Heritage Professional and Coordinator,
4th Edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues

A film on Jeevika showing women empowerment through women entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood led by rural women of Bihar.





Manish K. Chaudhary gave an overview of Jeevika which is a Bihar Rural Livelihood Project under the Department of Rural Development, Government of Bihar. The project aims to promote rural livelihood and enhance social and economic empowerment of women.

He elaborated that Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), an independent society under Department of Finance, Government of Bihar, undertook the five years long project in 6 selected districts namely; Gaya, Nalanda, Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Khagaria and Purnia. These districts were identified based on the poverty assessment study done by ADRI, Patna. The parameters of selection of these districts and blocks were the presence of social capital, existence of vulnerable groups, and possibilities of carrying out livelihood interventions. The ethos behind the whole mission is that the poor need to be organised and their capacities need to be built up systematically so that they can access self-empowerment opportunities. The core strategy of the project is to build vibrant community institutions of women, which through member saving, internal loaning, regular repayment and economic activities become self-managed institutions.

Ritesh shared the story of how Jeevika started. He said the main aim was to enhance social and economic empowerment of rural poor in Bihar and diversify and enhance household-level income and improve access to and use of nutrition and sanitation services among targeted households. To achieve the objectives, Jeevika mobilised rural women into strong community organisations such as self-help groups (SHG). The number of SHG reached to one million, which is the highest number of SHGs formed by any agency in the world. He further shared that when they started the journey it was a struggle with only one SHG. The main problem was how to intervene in the villages and mobilise and convince women to come together to form SHGs. When they interacted with women, men questioned as to why they only talked to women. So Jeevika also engaged men to convince them. Initially Jeevika tried to convince the women on the importance of savings. They asked the women to save rupees five a day which would help them in times of crisis like indebtedness, food insecurity, medical facilities.

When they went to these villages, they did not have any place for staying and somehow managed to stay in *kuchcha* houses for one and a half year. They gradually started explaining the women on importance of savings and why is it necessary to form SHGs. The first SHG was formed in December 2006 and since then they have been promoting SHGs by collectivisation women. The community started placing its trust on self-help groups and raised awareness about them. On one hand, the women became strong with the SHG movement, on the other hand, SHGs were supporting them in performing various activities which inspired people to join the movement.

Jeevika's team helped in expediting the pace of SHG formation and as a result 1,25,00,000 households came under these SHGs. It was only possible because of their hard work, vigour and commitment. Members of SHGs were encouraged to open their bank accounts in order to embolden them to deal with their financial matters and thereby march towards empowerment. This is an important step towards building financial literacy among SHG members. To ensure better banking services for the target beneficiaries, Jeevika also entered into MOU with different commercial and regional rural banks. Credit linkage is an important strategy to make the SHG women self-reliant. This helps in leveraging resources from mainstream financial institutions and brings in financial discipline among SHG members. This project has brought out tremendous and transformative change in Bihar, he stated.

Pawan who has been associated with Jeevika since its inception in 2007, stated that Jeevika had a transformative impact on women's lives in Bihar. He expressed his happiness and proud that the journey of his career started from Sherghati, a town in the Gaya district in Bihar which was the most dreaded Naxal area. Jeevika believes in institution development and building capacity of its members especially of women as it considers that women are as competent as men, he added. The women members of the SHGs have emerged as an important political constituency in the state. The percentage of women voting has been increasing over the years. There is a gradual but steady shift from mere participation to women influencing the agenda of the local governance institutions as well as holding them accountable. They contest the elections and now are calling the shots as Mukhiya Pati or Sarpanch Pati of Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samities at Block level and Zila Parishads at District level.

Another aspect of growing political presence and voice of women is reflected in the fact that women are now holding institutions accountable. While some women were occupying these positions before the mandatory reserved seats for women, the change that Jeevika has brought could be seen in the type of candidates that are contesting the elections and the issues raised during the campaign and strategies. They have proved that whatever task they take, the core strategy of the project is always to build vibrant and bankable women SHG and nurture them in such a way that over a period, they emerge as self-managed and financially sustainable community institutions.

In conclusion, Jeevika responded with great attention and commitment to the need for women's empowerment. There is every possibility for deepening this impact and need of innovative thinking, pooling of expertise and resources, both technical and financial, to create responsive models for women from 5 million households. They are learning to raise their voice to seek their rights and entitlements. Today women have new aspirations for themselves and their daughters. They dream of the day when they do not have to worry about their daughter's safety and they can see their daughters in well-paying jobs, traveling around the country bringing about a change in other poor women's lives.

DAY-3

Session 3

Deshkal Society in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)
presents

4TH EDITION

Boh Gava

Dialogue

Ministry of Culture
Government of India

75
Anniversary
1947-2022



DAY-3

Session-3

CHAIR

Nangzey Dorjee

Member Secretary, Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee, Bodh Gaya

LEAD PRESENTATION

Kailash Prasad

Department of Buddhist Studies, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya

'Monasteries of Bodh Gaya: Historical Context and the Present'



Monasteries of Bodh Gaya: Historical Context and the Present

Kailash Prasad

Kailash Prasad, Department of Buddhist Studies, Magadh University began his address by stating that first instance of a monastery in Bodh Gaya is found in the literature and scholars are of the opinion that first monastery in Bodh Gaya was built by Meghavarna, the King of Sri Lanka with the permission of Samudra Gupta, the King of Magadha in 5th century CE. It was situated in the north of the present Maha Bodhi temple. It is believed that famous author Buddhaghosa also studied here. Thereafter, Burmese made some efforts to make residences for monks in Bodh Gaya. Another instance of a monastery is found in 19th century when Dharmapala, the founder of the Mahabodhi Society, came to Bodh Gaya in 1891. He stayed at Burmese monastery near the main temple. Both monasteries do not exist anymore.

The condition of Bodh Gaya in 1891 was quite deplorable. Buddhism was not well known. He started a movement to create a Buddhist environment in Bodh Gaya. He conducted a conference at Bodh Gaya on 31st October 1891 which was attended by representatives of Chittagong, Japan, China and other countries. He built the first monastery at Bodh Gaya which is Maha Bodhi Society building. It was completed in 1901.

Arama and *Vihara* are the common words which are used in Buddhism. *Arama* means rest house and *Vihara* means a place where there is a Buddha image (kind of temple), Buddhist teachings are conducted and where monks reside.

Before independence there were four monasteries at Bodh Gaya. First, Mahabodhi Society built in 1901; second Burmese Vihar monastery completed in 1937; third Gaden Phelgyaling monastery built by Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism and the fourth one was a Chinese temple at Bodh Gaya built in 1940. After independence rapid development of roads, temples, museums took place. In 1956 a big celebration was organized on the occasion of 2500 years

of Buddhism. In 1973 a Japanese temple Indosan Nippon came up. Daijokyo, where Great Buddha Statue is situated, was built in 1983. The number of monasteries in Bodh Gaya increased from four before independence to 25-20 by the end of 20th century. At present, there are more than 100 monasteries in Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya has become a trans-national network of Buddhism where many countries are having their establishments, Prasad added.

He further elaborated that Dalai Lama played a major role in the development of Bodh Gaya. Dalai Lama first came in 1959. One of the settlements of Tibetans is in Bodh Gaya. Around 30 monasteries at Bodh Gaya belong to Myanmar, 30 to Thailand and 30 Monasteries to Tibetan type of Buddhism or discipline, including Bhutan and Ladakh. These three disciplines of Buddhism themselves have 90 monasteries at Bodh Gaya. Vietnam has also shown interest in Bodh Gaya in recent times. Lam who is a scholar and Buddhist propagator, built the first monastery in 1976. It is a 7 storey pagoda and it is like a forest. He has a temple at Lumbini also. In Tibetan monastery there are 5 major sects – Gelugpa sect, Nyingma pa, Sakya pa, Kagyu pa, Karma pa. There are sects within sects so they have many temples – Dolma, Karma Pa, Kagyu, Vajrayana monasteries are in Bodh Gaya. There are also monasteries of Mongolia, Korea, Bhutan, Sri Lanka. China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Tibet. There are 4 Japanese monasteries – Indosan Nippon, Daijokyo Temple, Busshinji, and Isshinji Temple. All these Japanese monasteries are in one area. There are regional monasteries which belong to states like Tripura or Bengal, Chakma Buddhist Vihara Society, Vajra Bodhi Society, Trijewal Centre, Chandramani Vihar, Dhammachakra mission and Anand Vihar, Vana Vihara, Bodhi Dhrum, Bodhiraja, and Trilokya Buddha Vihara. There are number of monasteries in Bodh Gaya today and maybe after two decades this number could go upto 1000 monasteries.

Bodh Gaya is the most important Buddhist site in India. The monasteries or temples are symbol of transformation of Bodh Gaya where many countries have made different kinds of settlements. In winters, 80-90% of the population on road is from other countries. This gives a very colorful picture of Bodh Gaya. The monasteries give architectural pattern and culture background of different countries.

Western people are also taking interest in Bodh Gaya and they have some kind of establishments. Theravada influence was more visible in Bodh Gaya by late 70s or 80s. However, with the growing institutional presence Bodh Gaya now gives a look of Mahayana Buddhist centre. There is a diffusion of Buddhism. Rapid growth of monasteries has given a kind of race of representation of structure and culture from various countries. There is a creative competition where many monasteries are trying to give their best. Bodh Gaya is a kind of exhibition of varied Buddhist culture, Prasad concluded.



Nangzey Dorjee

Nangzey Dorjee, Member Secretary, Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee proposed the vote of thanks. Dorjee thanked Kailash Prasad for his address and giving an overview of the monasteries of Bodh Gaya, their historical context and the present.

He said that there are more than 100 monasteries which are a learning centre besides a place of worship. Mahabodhi temple is the most important place with its historical background. All the monasteries are places of worship representing traditions of various countries. There are number of meditation centers along with the cultural and social activities. As per official records, the main monasteries / temples are around 50 but several new monasteries are coming up with the initiatives of foreign countries and Himalayan regions. They represent the heritage, culture, architecture, traditions and ceremonies of these countries. There is a diversity in the unity in all prayers and ceremonies. With the sound of their chants one can make out whether they are Thai or Sri Lankan or Burmese.

Dorjee concluded his vote of thanks by emphasizing on the point that while Bodh Gaya has been declared as heritage site and it has huge historical or archaeological importance, it is a lively place – the only place where one can see so many traditions under one roof. He congratulated Deshkal Society and IGNCa for organizing this multicultural engagement and wished the deliberations a success and peace and harmony in the world.



DAY-3

Session 4



DAY-3
Session-4**VALEDICTORY ADDRESS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMING UP****CHAIR**

Sachchidanand Joshi
Hon'ble Member Secretary, IGNC, New Delhi

GUEST OF HONOUR

Ven. Dhammapiya
Hon'ble Secretary General, International Buddhist Confederation, New Delhi

KEY SPEAKER

Bijoy Kumar Choudhary
Executive Director, Bihar Heritage Development Society, Patna

SUMMING UP

Ajay K. Mishra
Convenor of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues and Assistant Professor,
IGNC, New Delhi

Sanjay Kumar
Secretary, Deshkal Society, Delhi

VOTE OF THANKS

Jai Prakash
Programme Director, Deshkal Society



Sachchidanand Joshi

Sachchidanand Joshi began his address by sharing that this was the fourth year of IGNCA's association with Deshkal Society for the Bodh Gaya Dialogues. Bodh Gaya Dialogues is an effort to create awareness among the intellectual fraternity and it has come a long way since IGNCA's collaboration with Deshkal.

Briefing about the certificate course on Bodh Gaya that Deshkal and IGNCA have launched, he said that the course is one of its own kind and the response from students and professionals is very good. He further stated that eminent scholars of different fields are engaged and delivering lectures and the result has been phenomenal. They would soon start an interpretation centre at Bodh Gaya and Deshkal Society has adopted a village to bring all theories into practice to showcase what could be done with strong determination and dedication.

Speaking about Dhammapiya who said that Bodh Gaya was the intellectual capital of the world, he reflected on how important it is to be an intellectual capital in today's time. When we look around, the biggest battle which we fight in today's scenario is the battle of narrative. The battle of narrative is strong and dangerous as compared to the battle we fought with arms and ammunition. When we fight the battle of narratives sometime even the false narrative created by selfish motivated people takes the lead because it has been told by persons who should have refuted or taken a stand against it. We need to create a proper narrative related to our rich cultural heritage and our lineage. Bodh Gaya gives us inspiration to put things in the right perspective and create right narrative related to our country, he opined.

He further mentioned that the next 50 years are going to be important. The world is going to face the battle of narratives and for that battle, the role of Indian intellectuals is going to be very important. India has always been the Vishwa Guru and has always shown an intellectual path to the world since vedic period, the period of Gautam Buddha. India's intellectual strength and the narrative has always been acknowledged, revelled and respected world over. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the intellectual people to come forward and respond to the challenges.

Speaking on the relevance of Bodh Gaya dialogues, he said that it is an effort to create awareness among the intellectual fraternity. It is not a routine university kind of a research exercise which is only termed in the books and has never been practised on the field. The project which Deshkal Society is undertaking under the Bodh Gaya Dialogues is supposed to be implemented on the field and that is why IGNCa is making all efforts to give ample opportunities to able scholars to do research work and bring out new facts related to knowledge for the world. IGNCa has a rich treasure of manuscripts available in repositories. IGNCa would like to have scholars who could read and decipher these manuscripts. Bodh Gaya Dialogues hopefully would be a path-breaker in terms of real research and field work, he added.

In conclusion, he emphasised on the treasure of knowledge which takes one through the difficult times and it is the only way one could succeed and overcome the challenges. As it is rightly said,

न चोरहार्यं न च राजहार्यं न भ्रातृभाज्यं न च भारकारि ।
व्यये कृते वर्धत एव नित्यं वदियाधनं सर्वधनप्रधानम् ॥

na corahāryaṃ na ca rājahāryaṃ na bhrātṛbhājyaṃ na ca bhārakāri |
vyaye kṛte vardhata eva nityaṃ vidyādhanaṃ sarvadhanapradhānam ||

This means that the wealth of knowledge is the richest and biggest of all which can neither be stolen nor divided among the brothers or snatched away by the king. The more you spend, the more it gets increased. It is the precious of wealth of all.



Ven. Dhammapiya

Ven. Dhammapiya began his address by stressing on the importance of Bodh Gaya. He said that it is given in text that Siddhartha Gautama came to Uruwela, now known as Bodh Gaya, because it was the central focal point and the navel of the earth. The whole subcontinent was known as Jambudvipa. It is said that not only the Shakyamuni Buddha but even Buddhas of the past and of the future – the Buddhas who will be born-would attain supreme enlightenment in Jambudvipa.

The teachings of Buddha become much relevant for many reasons. First purification – to purify the pollutants within and outside; second development, alleviation, evolvement of human mind. Whatever violence and war is there it is because of the undeveloped human mind. If a person has a developed mind, he can transcend the defiling conditions. There is a need to transform and evolve the human mind to avoid aggression, violence and atrocities on underprivileged humans or even animals and nature. That is how the teachings of the Buddha are relevant – not only in the form of discussion, but by practising it in one's own life.

Third, have right knowledge and understanding. We are given different perspectives by our society, religion, parents, neighbours who shape our understanding of the world. This is where the Buddhist teaching is very important which speaks about keeping the different views aside and understanding within the framework of one's own mind. He further said that once a person develops the mind to perceive things beyond the normal perceptions and see the universal truth – that one who is born will have to die and all are subject to same kind of illness, disease and adversities, one develops the right understanding. Buddha has said have the right understanding about the physical and mental world and apply these to alleviate, transform and transcend yourselves.

Discussing the importance of teachings of the Buddha, he said that there is something God or nature-given for example water, air, sunlight and there is something that we have evolved and developed. Gifts given for free by God are getting polluted. We have caused environmental damage. There is no second earth. It is our responsibility to protect whatever is given to us. We have invented or created things like culture, heritage, philosophies or teachings which did not evolve in a day or two but took thousands of years. In conclusion, he said

that whether it is God or Nature-given or things that we have developed like culture, heritage, philosophy, wisdom, it should be our collective responsibility to protect, preserve and sustain to live in peace and harmony and for the upcoming generations so that they do not get into such situations where the world would be no more a place worth living. This is where the Buddha's teaching is relevant and important. Buddha always said that be responsible for your own actions; do not attribute your wrongdoings to almighty.



Bijoy Kumar Choudhary

Bijoy Kumar Choudhary has been associated with Bodh Gaya Dialogues since its inception. Choudhary is the Director of K. P. Jaiswal Research Institute. He has published an archaeological gazetteer of Gaya District that consists of more than 400 archaeological sites out of which 150-200 belongs to the Buddhist sect. He spoke about combining realm of academics and activism which Deshkal Society follows.

Speaking about the need to document the art and sculpture of Bodh Gaya, he said that Bodh Gaya finds its representation in the earliest sculptures of India. For example, the Mahabodhi tree and the *Vajrasana* find representation in the earliest *stupas* of the Indian subcontinent namely Sanchi and Bharhut. The *Bhumisparsh Mudra*, a sculpture that is popular throughout Asia is the theme of Mahabodhi premises.

The architecture of Mahabodhi has impacted the Asian countries in a major way. For example, there is an exact replica of Mahabodhi temple in Bagan and architects of Burma have been inspired from the architecture of Bodh Gaya. While densely populated, Bodh Gaya is coming up with many modern structures, the ancient structures are looked down upon. The Archaeology Directory undertook an excavation in 1980s beside the Mahabodhi premises

at a place called Taradih. Excavations at Taradih brought out a human culture that dates back to neolithic age about 2000-2500 BCE. From those diggings, evidence of stupa and cells of monks belonging to 4th-5th century BCE were also found.

Bodh Gaya has always had international presence. Since the early historical period, multicultural and multiethnic communities have stayed in Gaya. For example, in 6th century Sri Lankan king had built a monastery for the stay of Sinhalese monks at Bodh Gaya. Therefore, lot of archaeology excavation needs to be done at Bodh Gaya. This is high time to do it because with the pressure of development, there would hardly be much land left for digging. He suggested making a resolution to give to the government that they need to do some solid archaeological excavations at Bodh Gaya to unearth the hidden resources.

He highlighted the concern about cleanliness of Bodh Gaya. He said, even Mahatma Gandhi once after his visit to Gaya in 1924-25 wrote that undoubtedly Gaya was the prince amongst the holy cities of India but it was full of piles of garbage and dirt. Bodh Gaya is an international centre. Bodh Gaya needs to address this problem as otherwise it gives a very bad image of us in the entire world.

He further said that there are tremendous universal values in Buddhism – value of rationalism, broad-mindedness and how to reach cognition. Buddhist psychology is one of the most refined psychologies in the entire realm of religions in the world. He gave the example of Chinese Buddhist Monk Xuanzang who expressed the universal value of Buddhism very succinctly when he was leaving from Nalanda Mahavihara after a stay of five months. Other Monks named him Mokshanand and never wanted him to leave. They requested him not to go to China as it is a country of barbarians whereas India is a land of civilisation where the master himself was born. They asked him, since he has got an opportunity to live in the land of Buddha, why he wanted to leave. He listened very patiently and asked the monks why they are stopping him in the name of Buddha. The Buddha's message is universal, not confined to Nalanda or India. Buddhism has universal value and it is meant for all.



The Four Purusharthas

Ajay K. Mishra

निंदसि यज्ञ विधेरहः श्रुति जातम्।
सदम हृदय-दर्शित-पशु-घातम्।
केशव घृत-बुद्ध-शरीर जय जगदीश हरे।
बुद्धं शरणम् गच्छामि। धम्मं शरणम् गच्छामि। सघं शरणम् गच्छामि।

First, I would like to thank all of you esteemed guests, delegates and my colleagues for making this dialogue a grand success. We have acquired so much knowledge, learning and remarks for way forward from all our scholars and delegates coming from variety of fields. I deeply thank all our delegates, scholars and participants for the reflective remarks and suggestions shared during the dialogue.

I am humbled and deeply grateful to each one of you who joined to discuss and deliberate during this dialogue to collectively find newer ways forward.

As the convener of this dialogue, I am extremely proud of the proceedings and the successful completion of the 4th edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues.

I will try to sum up and put some of my insights as finally as possible and I would try to keep this very short.

First off, sitting here through the dialogue and listening to all our speakers and deliberating, I can't help but think about and realize that the life of Gautam Buddha, his teachings and the fate of Bodh Gaya have stayed and flourished since time tested. These have gone through much rigor and have many similarities to issues that we face in today's world as well. We can somehow try to help answers, create a better world if we try to take some examples from the Buddha's life and teachings.

Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksha are the four Purusharthas. Among these four efforts, *Moksha* is the ultimate effort. *Moksha Nirvana Kaivalya-Jin – Mukti-Nishreyas*, etc., are synonymous with *Apavarga*. All philosophers—Vedic-Literalists-Scientists—are constantly trying to achieve *Parampurusharthmoksha*. But how can the salvation be attained, even though the paths of schools are different, in answer to this, knowledge is the ultimate path to salvation. No one has any objection to this.

ऋते ज्ञानान्न मुक्तिः। विद्यया विन्दते अमृतम्।
विद्यया अमृतम् अश्नुतै।
-इत्यादि

The Upanishad sentence itself is the proof. In this way, it is necessary to acquire the element of knowledge. Only by knowledge can we call *Swargadivaikunth Dham* or *Moksha-Nirvana-Kaivalya-Jin-Mukti-Nishreyas*. Because this world is a form of lust born of false knowledge. Whatever is perceived by our senses in the world, everything is sorrow. Although, in Sankhyadi, philosophies, three types of sorrow have been accepted from the spiritual – *Adhibhautik-Adhidaivik* distinction. However, in *Nyaya-Vaisheshik*, six senses, six knowledge, six subjects, 21 types of sorrow have been accepted from the difference between pleasure and pain of the body. There is the entry of happiness under the said sorrow, that happiness is also worldly happiness, that too is in the form of sorrow. In this way, the destruction of sorrows is the ultimate liberation or ultimate happiness. As stated:

यन्न दुःखे न सम्भिन्नं यन्न ग्रस्तमनन्तरम्।
अभिलाषोपनीतंच तत् स्व पदास्पदम् ।।

In this way, attainment of happiness is possible only through knowledge. Knowledge itself has been called intelligence in the scriptures. Derivation of the word intelligence from Mercury+Ktin suffix, which means – direct knowledge, address mind, wisdom, talent, etc., Kalidas has said in *Raghuvansh* – *Shastreshvakunthita Buddhih* (Raghuvansharm). Intelligence is important in *Sankhya*. In *Nyaya*, intelligence is attainment, knowledge, realization, etc. In Buddhism, intelligence is wisdom. In this way, in order to attain wisdom, Gautam Buddha, thinking of the whole world as a form of sorrow, abandoned the desires of the world and started spiritual practice to attain Bodhisattva. After the *Samadhi*, a Buddhist monk asked Gautam Buddha, 'What did you get from this *Samadhi*?'. Buddha ji replied with a very simple heart, 'Nothing was achieved. But a lot has been lost from *Samadhi*, such as – lust, thought, craving, attachment, malice, jealousy etc., which was obtained from the family tradition.' If seen from the point of view of *Sanatan*, Lord Krishna said in Gita –

क्रोधात् भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृति विभ्रमः । 9
स्मृतिभ्रंशात् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धि नाशात् प्रणश्यति ।।

This simply means that human life is the most valuable thing. Having got it, one should not lose it by being infatuated with lust. That's why Buddha said to lose anger, greed, attachment, etc. The one who cannot be lost is the form of truth,

the form of knowledge, the form of joy, that is *Sachchidananda*. That is why it is also clear that in the Har-Parvati dialogue in *Gautamiya Tantra*, Mahadev, the God of Gods, says to Parvati:

उत्पत्ति स्थिति संहार कारणम् सर्व कारणम्।
गंभीर सर्वभावज्ञ सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ॥

Religion is also that which is always eternal truth.

While defining *Dharma*, Buddha said that considering Karma as the basis of the moral institution of the human life is *Dharma*. Buddha's belief is that do well, so that it supports moral deeds and humanity is benefited in it. To understand religion, it is necessary to know unrighteousness. But believing in nature, believing in soul and offering animal sacrifice in the name of religion or *yagya*, believing things based on imagination as religion, accepting religious texts as proof, refusing to change anything in religious text that Buddha used to consider doing, etc., as unrighteousness.

Buddha has done a great favour by attacking man's faith, he has laid a basis for man to think, his mental freedom. Due to this, a possibility has been created for the new birth of religion. According to Buddha, religion should not be based on faith, but on conscience. Not faith but knowledge be his soul. Science is the science of matter, and religion will be the science of consciousness. In fact, right religion has always been a science. Buddha's experiences are not dependent on faith, but on judicious self-experiment. Buddha says about *Sadharm* that by erasing the filthiness of mind and making it pure is *Sadharm*. The mind is the root of all. Mind is the reason, mind is the master, if the mind is pure it will speak pure words and do good deeds. Buddha wanted to make the world a *Dharma Rajya*.

In the journey of Buddha's life, like a shadow, there was a conductor, a disciple and a faithful follower – 'Ananda'. The seven indispensable principles of *Dharma* that Buddha preached, is today still the ideal of Republic. Once Ajatashatru sent Barshakara to the Buddha for consultation with the aim of knowing the secret of Vaishali's invincibility. Buddha asked Ananda present there – in answer to which he accepted a variation that Vijji meet together. Together they accomplish all the tasks of upliftment. He respects elders. They respect the brides and daughters-in-law. They don't kidnap and defile. They protect the places of worship. People come and go easily in the state. Then calling Barshakar, he said – as long as the Vijji's keep following these indispensable *Dharma*, they will continue to grow progressively. It is clear from this that Buddha wanted to make the whole world *Dharm Rajya*. He believed that there is *Dharm Rajya* on this earth. This can be achieved only by walking on the path of religion. Tathagata wanted to establish *Dharma* of 'Lokhitaya'

and 'Loksukhay'. His religion was *Lokdharma*. He emphasized more on behaving justly and religiously with others to eradicate the suffering group of creatures. He taught and laid emphasis on following the principles of Right Knowledge, Right Vision, Right Speech, Right Thought, Right Labour, Right Livelihood, Action, Exercise and called it *Dharma*. Following these perfections is their religion.

Buddha says that the work of religion is not only to preach but awaken the inner consciousness of the dormant soul as it may be. Such people must be motivated toward virtue. Often today's man seems to be sleeping continuously. Today, meaninglessness has entered everybody's mind. Everybody seems to be suppressed and breaking down due to the boredom. Is this life? They must be awakened by teaching them about religion because life is awakening. Sleep is the counterpart of death. No one wakes up just because the eyes are open. To wake up it is necessary to open the inner eye. The door to real awakening is within. The one whose conscience is asleep, is not awake even after waking up, and the one whose conscience is awake, is not asleep even after sleeping. It is the form of Buddha's religion to wake up such sleeping people. That's why this dialogue should not be limited only in Delhi and Bodh Gaya but also in foreign countries. The path of is one that increases wisdom. Due to the innovative form of this religion, this era is considered to be the era of spiritual realization. This spiritual age is known as *Abhisambodhi*. The seed of this spirituality is the awareness of individual life. For this awareness a person must leave his consciousness or mindset in his actions or thoughts. The religion of war gives us this inspiration that we should not do any work or any thought in sleeping state, but with full awareness.

Buddha teaches that witness is born in oneself when one continues to have such a belief. Due to continuous attack on the mind, natural awakening starts in that person's dormant intelligence. Then slowly, an understanding consciousness starts living with it easily. It does not leave your side even in your sleep. Buddhism opens the way to knowledge for all. It is a religion that enhances modesty, compassion, friendship with wisdom. The path of Buddha is going to break the walls of inequality between man and man. Buddhism evaluates a man on the basis of his deeds rather than his birth. It paves the way for equality and tolerance between man and man. Thus, in order to get the element, it is necessary to abandon the element that contaminates the consciousness, lust, etc. Thus *Samadhi* is necessary for the renunciation of matter. *Bodhisattva* can be attained only through *Samadhi*. Attainment of *Nirvana* is by *Bodhisattva*.

न पुनरपि जननं न पुनरपि मरणम् ।
पुनरपि जननी जठरे शयनाम् ॥
-इत्यादि

The meaning of the sentences can be proved.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti.



Conclusion

Towards the conclusion of the 4th Edition of Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues, **Jai Prakash**, on behalf of IGNCa and Deshkal Society extended his vote of thanks to the esteemed guests.

Firstly, he expressed gratitude and sincere thanks to Ram Bahadur Rai ji, President, IGNCa, New Delhi for his distinct presence and for presiding over in the plenary session of the dialogues. The valuable thoughts that he has expressed will guide us in the future endeavour. He thanked him for his encouraging words and guidance. He conveyed gratitude to Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCa for extending all required support from the concept to the commissioning of the dialogues. He is a true mentor and we owe our indebtedness to him for his intellectual and financial support for the dialogues since its inception in 2018.

He extended a huge round of applause for Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society. He thanked the guests of honour of the plenary and valedictory sessions for taking the painstaking trouble in attending the dialogues and for enlightening everyone with their valuable thoughts on the occasion. Sincere thanks to the chairpersons for all the sessions – Pranav Khullar, Abhay Kumar Singh, Shashank Sinha, Ajay Dandekar, Binodanand Jha, Nangzey Dorjee and all others who handled the event throughout. He thanked all the learned speakers and lead presenters whose erudite presentations impregnated with academic excellence made the dialogues a memorable event, distinguished moderators who chaired the sessions with brilliance and a special thanks to Sumita Chakravorty for the melodious evening.

Further, he thanked Ritesh and Pawan from Jeevika for their inspiring presentation. The 3-day Dialogues witnessed a huge participation of young minds from Central University of South Bihar, Nalanda University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Magadh University.

A wide round of applause and thanks to all those who participated and continuously contributed to make the Dialogues a memorable one. Finally, he thanked Gunjan and the organising committee that worked so hard in organizing the 4th Edition of the Dialogues.

Y



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

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