



PRESENTATION ON
**BODH GAYA
GLOBAL DIALOGUES**
REFLECTIONS & INSIGHTS
2025

29th & 30th March 2025

Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

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7th Edition BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES 2025

29th & 30th March 2025

Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

Organized by **Deshkal Society**
with **Dr. Ambedkar International Centre**
in association with **Indian Council of World Affairs**

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7TH EDITION
BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES
29TH & 30TH MARCH 2025
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**A platform for
expression of
experiences,
reflections and
insights from
plural perspectives
connecting heritage,
education and
sustainability for
building a future on
the foundations of
Buddha's legacy on
enlightenment and
compassion.**

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Co-Travelers



This report marks the culmination of the **7th Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues on Heritage, Buddhist Philosophy and Teachings, and Sustainability**, organized in collaboration with the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi, and in association with Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), Shaskiya Naveen Mahavidyalaya, Raipur, and media partner Pravasi Indians.

Eminent educationists, social scientists, policymakers, and Buddhist practitioners from India and abroad expressed deep concern and a strong commitment to the vision document that emerged from the Dialogues. As a result, the scope of the dialogue expanded, evolving into a shared agenda—no longer limited to the Deshkal Society alone. Their moral and intellectual support was instrumental in shaping the process that led to the finalization of the Dialogues.

We are indebted to Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, eminent journalist and President of IGNCA—a man of few words whose warm assurances consistently instilled remarkable optimism in us.

The presence of Dr. Virendra Kumar, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, added grace to the occasion. His thoughtful remarks laid a foundation for future collaborations and helped shape the strategic direction of the Dialogues.

At the pre-consultative meeting held in 2024 at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, we received valuable support from Dr. Shekhar Dutt, Former Governor of Chhattisgarh; Dr. Shashank Sinha, Independent Researcher and Author, and Publishing Director, Routledge (South Asia), Dr. Arjit Walia, Educationist and Founder of Co-Scholastic; Shri Brijender S. Dua, Architect and Designer, Studio Earth, New Delhi, Dr. Sushmita Dutt, Educationist and Researcher, Dr. Santosh Kumar Ranjan, Centre for Korean Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Ganesh Khude, Consultant, NSDC, New Delhi.

Since 2018, Shri Uday Sahay, Author and Chairman, SAUV Communications, Shri Niraj Kumar, Author, Translator and Joint Secretary, DoNER, Government of India, Shri Rajeshwar Singh, Farmer, Gaya, and Dr. Ajay Kumar Mishra, Associate Professor, IGNC, New Delhi, have walked this journey with us offering cooperation and strategic advice whenever needed.

We express our deep gratitude to all the educators, social scientists, policymakers, and Buddhist practitioners who served as chairs, discussants, and presenters, enriching the Dialogues through their insightful papers and contributions.

We are honoured by the presence and reflections of H.E. Major General Vetsop Namgyel, Ambassador, Royal Bhutanese, Embassy, New Delhi, Shri Sanjay Verma, Chairperson, Research and Information System for Developing Countries RIS, New Delhi, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Hon'ble Member, Rajya Sabha, and Shri Arvind Mohan, Author, Journalist and President, Deshkal Society, Noida whose words brought gravitas to the event.

We gratefully acknowledge the vital collaboration of ICWA in organizing a special session titled *The 7th Edition of Both Gaya Global Dialogues 2025 with a special focus on India-Vietnam Relations: Exploring and Building on the Buddhism Connect and Emerging area of Cooperation*. Their strategic input and unwavering support significantly broadened the vision of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues. Shri Hitesh Rajpal, Director, ICWA, not only shared critical insights in formulating the special session but also provided strategic advice to ensure alignment with the session's objectives. Additionally, Prof. Balasaheb Ghoshal, Former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies and Chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University offered valuable recommendations and suggested scholars and representatives from the Embassy of Vietnam to participate and present.

The cultural performance titled *Shweta Mukti* by Kavita Dwibedi, Odissi dancer, dedicated guru, and cultural ambassador, and a film directed by Shri Benoy K. Behl, filmmaker, art-historian and photographer left a lasting impact. Delegates and participants were deeply moved by their creative expression and thought-provoking presentations.

Shri Brijender S. Dua played a key role in conceptualizing and producing impactful promotional materials, while Shri Yashwant Rawat, Print Force, ensured the timely publication of related documents. Mathura Prasad Yadav remained a constant source of support, always available when needed.

We also acknowledge the contributions of Shri Rai Madan Kishor, Former Special Secretary to Government of Bihar, Dr. Binodanand Jha, Educationist and Former, Director, Department of Education, Government of Bihar, Prof. Manish Sinha, Department of History, Magadh University, and Prof. Ravi Kant, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya, who facilitated participation and helped establish meaningful networks in Bihar—particularly in Bodh Gaya—with monasteries, Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC), and the Gaya district administration.

The core team of Deshkal Society—Shri Sanjeev Kumar, Shri Ashutosh Mishra, Dr. Harish Kumar, and Shri Jayant Chaudhary—rose to every challenge, taking full responsibility for the logistical and operational aspects of the Dialogues.

The two-day event was expertly moderated by Dr. Shruti, Author, Translator & Research Scholar, University of Delhi, whose engaging style and thoughtful introductions of panelists and chairs grounded the sessions in the broader vision and intent of the Dialogues.

Our sincere thanks go to Dr. D.M. Mulay, Author, Diplomat, and Former Secretary, Government of India, Dr. Shasitanand Joshi, Honorable Member Secretary, IGNC and Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, Diplomat, Historian, and Former Director General of ICWA, New Delhi, for their steadfast guidance and support. They not only helped shape and expand the vision of the Dialogues but also connected us with key individuals and institutions.

Last but not least, Shri Akash Patil, Director of the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, remained a friend, philosopher, and guide throughout this journey. His unwavering support—always extended informally and with warmth—gave us the confidence to move forward at every stage. The Centre itself became a space of soulful engagement, enabling profound and meaningful discussions, and nurturing relationships that extended well beyond the event.

This report would not have reached its present form without the consistent efforts and support we received throughout the journey—from the first edition of the Dialogues in 2017 to this 7th Edition in 2025.

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.



Executive Summary

Background

The Seventh Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues (BGDs), held on March 29–30, 2025 in New Delhi, was organized by Deshkal Society in collaboration with the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre and in association with Indian Council of World Affairs. This interdisciplinary platform brought together diplomats, scholars, practitioners, and cultural ambassadors to engage with the intellectual and spiritual traditions of Buddhism. His Excellency Major General Vetsop Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India, delivered the keynote address in the inaugural session, highlighting the rich historical and spiritual bond between India and Bhutan. Anchored in the values of compassion, dialogue, and justice, the event offered a timely reflection on the global relevance of Buddhist philosophy, heritage conservation, and socio-political transformation in light of contemporary crises. The Seventh edition of the Dialogues followed in continuation with the previous editions held in the years of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Goal and Objectives

The Seventh Edition of the Bodh Gaya Dialogues aimed to foster global understanding through Buddhist philosophy and promote dialogue across heritage, education, sustainability, and social justice. Rooted in the Buddha's legacy of enlightenment and compassion, the event served as a platform for plural perspectives, shaped through consultations with diverse stakeholders. In order to move forward to attain the desired goals, following specific objectives were articulated:

- Exploring Buddhism's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual legacy.
- Investigating heritage and economic development via Buddhist circuits.
- Promoting community-led conservation and sustainable tourism.
- Encouraging soft diplomacy and international cooperation (for example India-Vietnam relations).
- Reinvigorating dialogue on human liberation through the shared frameworks of Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar.
- Showcasing creative and scholarly outputs (films, books, performances) to further public engagement with Buddhist values.

Themes and Participants

The 2025 edition unfolded across multiple thematic sessions, each focusing on a distinct aspect of Buddhism's contemporary significance:

The inaugural session featured eminent diplomats and scholars emphasizing Buddhism's role in fostering international dialogue, peace, and regional cooperation.

'Buddhist Philosophy and the Teaching of Buddhism' examined core tenets such as the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, alongside gender dynamics and regional syncretism.

'Envisioning the Buddhist Circuits: Locality, Heritage Making and Sustainability' explored how local heritage can foster ecological and socio-economic development.

'Buddhist Monuments, Heritage and Beyond' addressed conservation strategies that respect both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

A Special Session on *'India-Vietnam Relations: Exploring and Building on the Buddhism Connect and Emerging Area of Cooperation'* discussed Buddhism as a diplomatic and civilizational bridge.

Cultural and scholarly events, such as the Odissi performance 'Shweta Mukti' by Kavita Dwivedi, the film screening of 'Sacred Buddhist Dance' by Benoy K. Behl, a book discussion on 'The Kalacakra Tantra: Translation, Annotation and Commentary' by Niraj Kumar, and a live conversation with Silk Road traveller Sunita Dwivedi, offered alternative modes of inquiry into Buddhist themes.

The Valedictory Session critically engaged with the theme '*Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar: Questions of Human Liberation*', where Ram Bahadur Rai delivered the valedictory address and Dr. Sasmit Patra, Hon'ble Member of the Rajya Sabha, served as the Guest of Honour.

Several scholars, monks, artists, development practitioners, and policymakers actively participated in the event. The Seventh edition succeeded in bringing together a wide range of public and private stakeholders, including international agencies and embassies. Notable dignitaries included ambassadors and diplomats, academics and heritage experts, artists, filmmakers, authors and independent scholars. Together, the sessions reflected a rich cross-section of disciplines, geographies, and methodologies, reinforcing the Buddhist ethos of coexistence, self-inquiry, and community healing.

Brief Summary of the Deliberations

The Seventh Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues featured a diverse range of sessions that brought together scholars, diplomats, artists, practitioners, and independent researchers to reflect on the contemporary relevance of Buddhist philosophy, heritage, and ethics. Through thematic discussions, cultural performances, book presentations, and interactive conversations, the dialogues explored spiritual, academic, diplomatic, and developmental dimensions of Buddhism. The sessions offered interdisciplinary insights and fostered meaningful engagement on issues such as sustainability, gender, soft diplomacy, community participation, and human liberation, anchored in the ethical and philosophical teachings of the Buddha. The deliberations centred on fostering deeper understanding and meaningful exchanges aimed at cultivating a shared practice-based approach to reframing enlightenment as a contemporary leitmotif, with a particular emphasis on Bodh Gaya. This focus was reflected across a wide range of presentations and discussions, which collectively offered a comprehensive exploration of the historical, cultural, and spiritual relevance of Bodh Gaya and its enduring global resonance within Buddhist traditions.

The event began with an invocation of shared wisdom and compassion through the teachings of the Buddha. Ambassador Vetsop Namgyel (Bhutan) and Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma (India) emphasized spiritual diplomacy, especially in the context of India–Bhutan and India–Japan relations. As the chairperson of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), Verma offered a deeply reflective and scholarly intervention on the role of soft diplomacy in India–Japan relations, centered on the Buddhist legacy. Shri Arvind Mohan, President of Deshkal Society, reflected on the evolution of the Dialogues. Key highlights of the session included calls for stronger India–Bhutan and India–Japan ties through Buddhist diplomacy, a proposal for an India–Japan Buddhist Diplomacy Council, and reflections on Bodh Gaya’s enduring relevance. The inaugural reinforced Bodh Gaya’s centrality in global peace-building and the ongoing importance of Buddhist ethical frameworks in a fractured world.

The first session on Buddhist Philosophy and Teaching, chaired by Dr. Kusum Kumari, delved into Buddhism’s intellectual lineage, particularly its emphasis on dialogue, ethics, and humanism. Dr. Snigdha Singh analysed gender dynamics in Jataka tales, exposing the ambivalences and resistances embedded in female portrayals. Dr. Rituparna Ghosh focused on the archaeological site of Pilak in Tripura as a site of religious coexistence, showcasing Hindu–Buddhist artistic syncretism. Together, these discussions highlighted the living and layered nature of Buddhist philosophy across time, gender, and geography.

The second session on Envisioning Buddhist Circuits and Sustainability explored how cultural heritage can be transformed into a sustainable development model. Dr. Arvind K. Mishra critiqued the psychological alienation of neoliberal modernity, calling for a return to intangible cultural values. Dr. Nikhil Raj highlighted the economic potential of Buddhist circuits through inclusive and ethical heritage-linked enterprises. Dr. Binodanand Jha advocated for education reforms that connect youth with local history, while Dr. Pravin Sinha proposed tangible actions such as creating a Buddhist minority institution, launching economic working groups, and integrating cultural teachings into policy. This session redefined heritage as a living resource for healing and development.

The third session on Buddhist Monuments and Heritage, moderated by Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha, moved from monumental preservation to inclusive heritage-making. Dr. Shikha Jain traced the shift from colonial conservation practices to community-sensitive approaches, stressing the need for narrative-based museum experiences. Dr. Elora Tribedy emphasized community involvement in heritage conservation across India and Indonesia, warning against the commodification of sacred sites. Dr. Abhishek Amar presented his digital archive project in Gaya, combining fieldwork, GIS mapping, and VR technology to preserve and make Buddhist heritage globally accessible. The session underscored that sustainable heritage rests on the integration of communities, ecosystems, and digital tools.

The Special Session on *India–Vietnam Relations through Buddhism*, chaired by Shri Ranjit Rae and moderated by Prof. Sanjeev Kumar, explored how shared Buddhist legacies can shape strategic partnerships. Dr. Baladas Ghoshal called for civilizational diplomacy and academic exchange. Vietnamese scholar Dr. Thich Hanh Chanh offered a personal account of spiritual indebtedness to India, praising Indian-origin Pali texts. Dr. Dhruvajyoti Bhattacharjee emphasized Buddhism as a pillar of India's soft power, proposing increased collaboration in scholarship and diplomacy. Dr. Sonu Trivedi highlighted historical exchanges between Kalinga and Champa, advocating restoration projects and bilateral initiatives. The session affirmed that Buddhist diplomacy offers a unique, values-based foreign policy model.

The Odissi dance performance choreographed by Kavita Dwibedi presented the stories of Gautami, Yashodhara, and Prakriti, symbolizing feminine enlightenment. Hon'ble Dr. Virendra Kumar, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, applauded the performance and emphasized India's role as a global spiritual anchor. The performance combined art, poetry, and history, conveying how classical traditions serve as vehicles of spiritual continuity and gendered resilience.

A rich session on Book Discussion of *Kalacakra Tantra: Volume 2* featured Niraj Kumar, whose translation and annotation of Kalacakra Tantra were deeply appreciated by scholars like Prof. Madhu Khanna, Adele Tomlin, and Dr. Abira Bhattacharya. The dialogue examined cosmology, ethics, sacred geometry, esoteric anatomy, and the symbolic role of gender and colour in Tantra traditions. It emphasized how ancient Tantric systems challenge modern materialist frameworks and remain relevant in fields as diverse as mental health, medicine, and cosmology.

The session on *Travelling in the Footsteps of Buddha*, highlighted writer Sunita Dwivedi discussion of her two-decade-long journey documenting Buddhist sites across Asia. Moderated by Uday Sahay, this conversation revealed the spiritual, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions of Buddhist heritage across Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh. The conversation paid homage to scholarship and personal passion, linking Buddhist exploration to broader questions of access, belonging, and conservation.

The Valedictory Session on Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar focused on the intersections between Buddhist philosophy and Ambedkarite thought, especially around human liberation. Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur described Ambedkar's Buddha as a rational, ethical revolutionary, drawing from both Marx and Buddhist traditions. Dr. Sasmit Patra emphasized grassroots democracy, likening India's current political scenario to an "outsourced buffet" rather than participatory democracy. Shri Ram Bahadur Rai reaffirmed the relevance of Ambedkar's constitutional vision as rooted in Buddhist ethics. Shri Sanjay Kumar proposed concrete follow-ups, including a publication of selected papers and multilingual outreach. Dr. Shruti's closing vote of thanks reinforced the event's inclusive spirit and spiritual gravitas.

Recommendations

The Seventh Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues concluded with a focused set of recommendations aimed at advancing heritage safeguarding, sustainable development, and ethical engagement rooted in Buddhist philosophy. Recognizing the challenge of making recommendations actionable and enduring, Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary of Deshkal Society, proposed two key initiatives for 2026: the publication of a well-edited volume of selected papers from the Sixth and Seventh editions (with support from Aakar Publications), and a long-term plan to institutionalize the Dialogues as a sustained platform with multilingual dissemination in Hindi, English, and Odia. These steps aim to uphold the inclusive, participatory spirit of the initiative, under the continued guidance of Shri Ram Bahadur Rai.

As an immediate step, the production of a detailed print and digital report was recommended, along with session-wise videos already made available on YouTube. Together, these tools will help amplify the Dialogues' outcomes across academic, public, and policy domains. The exhibition on Sir Marc Aurel Stein, which attracted over 2,000 visitors, also requires broader circulation to raise awareness of India's civilizational connections with Central Asia.

Buddhist diplomacy emerged as a critical theme. Recommendations included establishing a Permanent India–Japan Buddhist Diplomacy Council and strengthening India–Vietnam cultural exchanges through academic and interfaith initiatives. Buddhism should be recognized as a pillar of India’s soft power, offering ethical responses to global issues such as climate change, mental health, and inequality.

Community-led heritage conservation was strongly emphasized. Local participation in heritage planning—especially around Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda—should be enhanced through skill development, cultural entrepreneurship, and digital documentation (e.g., Dr. Abhishek Amar’s archive). A pilot teacher training program was also proposed to promote heritage education rooted in experiential learning.

In education and culture, integrating Buddhist values, ethics, and history into curricula and developing new courses on Buddhist economics and sustainability were endorsed. Creative and scholarly collaborations, including those with IGNCA and Deshkal Society, should continue to support cultural expression, gender inclusion, and knowledge production. Above all, the Dialogues must evolve into a permanent, collaborative platform—a living expression of the Four Noble Truths—guiding ethical transformation in Bodh Gaya and beyond.





1

Inaugural
Session



MODERATOR |

DR. SHRUTI, Author, Translator & Research Scholar, University of Delhi

WELCOME SPEECH |

SHRI AKASH PATIL, Director, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

CONTEXT |

SHRI SANJAY KUMAR, Secretary, Deshkal Society, Noida

GUESTS OF HONOUR |

H.E. MAJOR GENERAL VETSOP NAMGYEL, Ambassador, Royal Bhutanese Embassy, New Delhi

DR. D. M. MULAY, Author, Diplomat and Former Secretary, Government of India

AMBASSADOR SANJAY KUMAR VERMA, Chairperson, Research and Information System for Developing Countries RIS, New Delhi

SHRI ARVIND MOHAN, Author, Journalist and President, Deshkal Society, Noida

VOTE OF THANKS |

DR. ARJIT WALIA, Educationist and Founder of Co-Scholastic

The Seventh Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues commenced with a powerful and enriching inaugural session at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi on March 29th and 30th, 2025. Hosted by Deshkal Society, in collaboration with the Dr. Ambedkar National Centre, this dialogue series continues to serve as a meaningful platform for cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and transnational discourse on Buddhism, spiritual diplomacy, and socio-political change.

The session began with warm greetings from the moderator, Dr Shruti, who introduced the event as a celebration of shared wisdom and cultural affinity rooted in the teachings of the Buddha. Dr. Shruti opened the Seventh Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues by welcoming participants and emphasizing the event's grounding in the teachings of Lord Buddha—enlightenment and compassion. She described the Dialogues as a space for diverse voices to engage with heritage, education, and sustainability. Highlighting this year's focus on the interconnected histories of Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, and Nalanda, she encouraged meaningful conversations that bridge past and future.

The inaugural session brought together eminent diplomats, scholars, educationists, and thinkers committed to fostering a deeper dialogue between India and the global Buddhist community. **His Excellency Major General Vetsop Namgyel**, Ambassador of Bhutan to India, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the rich historical and spiritual bond between India and Bhutan. He emphasized the timeless values of peace, compassion, and interconnectedness that define India-Bhutan relations and underscored the need for sustained people-to-people ties rooted in shared Buddhist heritage. His message invoked a strong sense of fraternity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility for upholding regional harmony.

Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma, Chairperson of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), offered a deeply reflective and scholarly intervention on the role of soft diplomacy in India-Japan relations, centered on the Buddhist legacy. Drawing from his tenure as the Indian Ambassador to Japan, he detailed the historical trajectory of Buddhism from India to Japan and its evolution into various schools such as Zen, Nichiren, and Pure Land Buddhism. He recounted personal experiences, spiritual insights, and institutional collaborations that continue to shape the Indo-Japanese diplomatic and cultural landscape. He proposed the establishment of a Permanent India-Japan Buddhist Diplomacy Council to institutionalize ongoing efforts in spiritual diplomacy and academic cooperation.

Shri Arvind Mohan, veteran journalist and President of Deshkal Society, offered a reflective account of the evolution of the Bodh Gaya Dialogues. Speaking in Hindi, he emphasized the organic and enduring relationship between Deshkal Society and Bodh Gaya, asserting that the dialogues have become a unique confluence of academic thought and cultural engagement. He celebrated the legacy of the previous six editions and affirmed the continued relevance of Bodh Gaya as a spiritual epicentre of not only Buddhism but of contemporary discourse on justice, coexistence, and transformation.

In a recorded video message, **D.M. Mulay**, former Secretary to the Government of India, emphasized the urgency of dialogue in today's fractured world. He called for the revival of Buddhist principles such as non-violence, interconnectedness, and spiritual enlightenment in response to rising global crises—conflict, climate change, and social disintegration. Citing values such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), he urged for greater conversations rooted in empathy and inclusion.

Dr. Arjit Walia delivered a thoughtful and appreciative vote of thanks, drawing an engaging parallel between the session and an enthralling series one wishes would never end. He acknowledged the intellectual and spiritual enrichment brought by the distinguished speakers and thanked the guests of honour, delegates, organizers, and attendees for their contributions. He especially commended the efforts of Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary of Deshkal Society and convener of the Dialogues, for his continued leadership in sustaining and expanding the vision of Bodh Gaya Dialogues.

The inaugural session of the Seventh Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues successfully laid the groundwork for the discussions to follow. The convergence of scholarly insight, diplomatic reflection, and spiritual commitment reinforced Bodh Gaya's symbolic and practical significance in global peace-building. As emphasized throughout the session, Buddhism remains not just a spiritual legacy but a living, evolving framework for dialogue, diplomacy, and social cohesion in the contemporary world.

2

Buddhist Philosophy and the Teaching of Buddhism



CHAIR |

DR. KUSUM KUMARI, Retired Pro VC, Munger University

SPEAKERS |

DR. SNIGDHA SINGH, Professor, Department of History, Miranda House,
University of Delhi, Delhi

***Empowerment, Ambivalence, and Resistance: Renegotiating Gender Dynamics
in Buddhist Jataka Narratives***

DR. RITUPARNA GHOSH, Assistant Professor in the Pali and Buddhist Studies
Department at Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist University, Tripura

The first session on “*Buddhist Philosophy and the Teaching of Buddhism*” began with an introduction to the enduring intellectual and spiritual legacy of Buddhism, highlighting its influence on ethics, consciousness, and the pursuit of wisdom across time. Chaired by Dr. Kusum Kumari, Retired Pro Vice-Chancellor of Munger University, the session benefited from her insightful remarks on the Indic tradition of dialogue and the rational, humanistic core of Buddhist thought. Dr. Kumari and the speakers Dr. Snigdha Singh and Dr. Rituparna Ghosh were honoured with paintings as a gesture of appreciation before they presented their perspectives. The session explored key themes including gender dynamics, linguistic traditions, and regional religious syncretism, offering a multidimensional understanding of Buddhist philosophy and its continuing relevance to education and spiritual life.

Dr. Kusum Kumari opened the session with a scholarly reflection on the philosophical and textual richness of Buddhism. She emphasized the significance of dialogue in Indian knowledge systems and lauded the Bodh Gaya Dialogues for continuing that tradition. Dr. Kumari elaborated on core Buddhist concepts such as *Dukkha*, *Anitya*, and *Anatma*, along with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. She also explained the distinction between *karma* and *kamma*, and provided an overview of the Buddhist Tripitaka composed in Pali. She emphasized the importance of the recent recognition of Pali as a classical language in India, tying it to the broader cultural respect for the teachings of the Buddha.

Dr. Snigdha Singh, Professor, Department of History, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi presented a paper on *Empowerment, Ambivalence, and Resistance: Renegotiating Gender Dynamics in Buddhist Jataka Narratives*, where she examined the representation of women in Jataka tales, the stories of the Buddha’s previous lives. Dr. Singh approached these narratives through the lens of empowerment, ambivalence, and resistance, suggesting that while many of the stories reflect prescriptive and stereotypical roles for women, they also offer subtle moments of deviation and nuance. She pointed to the dramatization of female transgression, the silences surrounding women’s voices, and the contrast with male portrayals marked by authority and spiritual pursuit. Dr. Singh’s reading of stories like *Vessantara Jataka* and *Maha Jataka* invited the audience to rethink the conventional readings and highlighted the cultural memory encoded in these narratives.

The final speaker, **Dr. Rituparna Ghosh**, Assistant Professor in the Pali and Buddhist Studies Department at Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist University, Tripura, explored the archaeological site of Pilak in Tripura, emphasizing its historical importance as a confluence of Buddhist Vajrayana and Hindu Brahmanical traditions. Situated in South Tripura, Pilak thrived between the 8th and 13th centuries CE and has yielded a wealth of sculptures, temple remains, and inscriptions that reveal a landscape of religious coexistence. Dr. Ghosh noted that the artifacts reflect deep cultural and artistic exchanges between Bengal, Southeast Asia, and Northeast India. Her presentation underlined how Buddhist and Hindu iconographies coexisted peacefully, forming a unique heritage reflective of pluralism and shared spiritual aesthetics.

This intellectually rich session not only deepened the audience's understanding of Buddhist teachings and heritage but also demonstrated how Buddhism continues to serve as a lens to understand contemporary issues—ranging from gender justice to cultural harmony. The blend of philosophical insight, textual analysis, and archaeological case study provided a holistic view of Buddhism's enduring legacy and relevance.

3

Envisioning the Buddhist Circuits: Locality, Heritage Making and Sustainability



CHAIR |

DR. PRAVIN SINHA, Development Economist and Member,
World Economic Association, New Delhi

DR. ARVIND K. MISHRA, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

LEAD DISCUSSANT |

DR. NIKHIL RAJ, Senior Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi

DISCUSSANT |

DR. BINODANAND JHA, Educationist and Former Director, Department of Education,
Government of Bihar

The second session of the day based on the theme “*Envisioning the Buddhist Circuits: Locality, Heritage Making, and Sustainability*” was chaired by Dr. Pravin Sinha, Development Economist and Member, World Economic Association (New Delhi) and Dr. Arvind K. Mishra, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University. They respectively focused on the role of literature and heritage in conceptualizing Buddhist circuits and the issues of hyper-individualization and cultural uprootedness. Further, Dr. Nikhil Raj, Senior Consultant at the World Bank (New Delhi), and Dr. Binodanand Jha, Former Director of the Department of Education, Government of Bihar, provided empirical insights, citing statistical data and economic analyses to highlight challenges and opportunities in Buddhist circuit development.

Dr. Arvind K. Mishra’s speech critically examined the psychological and cultural consequences of neoliberal globalization, arguing that modern development has led to a profound sense of individualism, cultural uprootedness, loneliness, and mental distress. He emphasized that the dominant economic model, driven by instrumental rationality and consumerism, has emptied human subjectivity and eroded communal bonds. Drawing attention to the pervasive influence of Western epistemologies and the commodification of needs and desires, he warned against the unsustainable trajectory of current lifestyles. As a counterforce, he proposed that intangible cultural heritage—rooted in moral sensibilities, communal rationality, and a sense of belonging—offers a potential path to psychological healing, social cohesion, and sustainable living in an increasingly fragmented world.

Dr. Nikhil Raj’s speech emphasized the potential of integrating cultural heritage—particularly around Buddhist sites like Bodh Gaya—with individual, social, and financial capital to drive sustainable and inclusive economic development. As a development practitioner, he underscored the need for collective platforms, skill-building, and formalized market linkages to uplift local economies while ensuring environmental sustainability. Drawing on examples from agriculture, labour, and textile sectors, he argued that to move up the value chain, heritage-linked products must meet global quality standards and be aligned with green and ethical practices. His core message was that sustainability lies in harmonizing cultural value with economic viability and social cohesion.

Dr. Binodananda Jha's speech highlighted the urgent need to reconnect local communities, especially the youth, with the cultural and historical significance of Bodh Gaya. He pointed out the lack of economic benefit for locals from the heritage tourism in the region and the absence of educational content that fosters awareness about figures like Buddha and places like Sujata Garh or the Phalgu river. Emphasizing the need for cultural literacy, he advocated for teacher involvement, more accessible literature in Hindi and English, and the integration of moral teachings from Gandhi and Buddha into educational curricula. He believes that true solutions to modern issues like consumerism and disconnection lie in reviving these philosophies and ensuring their widespread dissemination through schools and community initiatives.

Dr. Pravin Sinha's speech focused on bridging the gap between Buddhist heritage and the economic upliftment of local communities. He emphasized that while heritage sites like Bodh Gaya and Sarnath attract global visitors and generate revenue, the local populations often remain disconnected from the economic benefits. He called for a shift in mindset—from viewing these sites solely as spiritual centres to recognizing them as potential tools for sustainable community development. Stressing the importance of local ownership, Dr. Sinha proposed integrating Buddhist communities into the heritage economy, enhancing their role in resource generation and ideological preservation. He also offered concrete suggestions: establishing a dedicated economic working group within Deshkal Society, initiating collaborations with government institutions like the Ambedkar International Centre, developing a course on Buddhist economics, and considering the formation of a Buddhist minority institution to further propagate the teachings and values of Buddhism while addressing social and economic needs.

In conclusion, the session brought together critical perspectives that redefined heritage as a living resource with social, psychological, and economic relevance. The discussions collectively underscored the need to reconnect cultural identity with sustainable development, moving beyond spiritual tourism to foster inclusive growth. From critiquing the alienation caused by neoliberalism to advocating for community-driven economic models, the speakers highlighted how Buddhist heritage, when anchored in local participation and ethical frameworks, can become a foundation for holistic well-being. The session called for collaborative action among scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and communities to ensure that heritage circuits not only preserve the past but also empower the future.

4

Buddhist Monuments, Heritage and Beyond



S P E A K E R S |

DR. SHIKHA JAIN, Conservation Architect and Heritage Expert,
and Founder Director, DRONAH

Conservation and Interpretation of Buddhist Sites: From Monuments to Museums

DR. ELORA TRIBEDY, Assistant Professor at the School of Historical Studies,
Nalanda University, specializing in Buddhist art, iconography, and archaeology
Beyond Monuments: Sustaining Heritage through Community in India and Indonesia

DR. ABHISHEK AMAR, Associate Professor, Hamilton College, New York
Archiving the Heritage of Gaya: A Digital Database of a Sacred City

M O D E R A T O R |

DR. SHASHANK SHEKHAR SINHA, Independent Researcher and
Author and Publishing Director, Routledge (South Asia)

The session on “*Buddhist Monuments, Heritage, and Beyond*” was moderated by Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha, Publishing Director at Routledge (South Asia). In this session, Dr. Shikha Jain, Conservation Architect and Heritage Expert, discussed *Conservation and Interpretation of Buddhist Sites: From Monuments to Museums*. Dr. Elora Tribedy, Assistant Professor at the School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, presented on *Beyond Monuments: Sustaining Heritage through Community in India and Indonesia*. Furthermore, Dr. Abhishek Amar, Associate Professor at Hamilton College, New York, joined virtually to discuss *Archiving the Heritage of Gaya: A Digital Database of a Sacred City*. The session highlighted the challenges of heritage preservation, the interplay between tourism and sustainability, and the spiritual dimensions of Buddhist heritage.

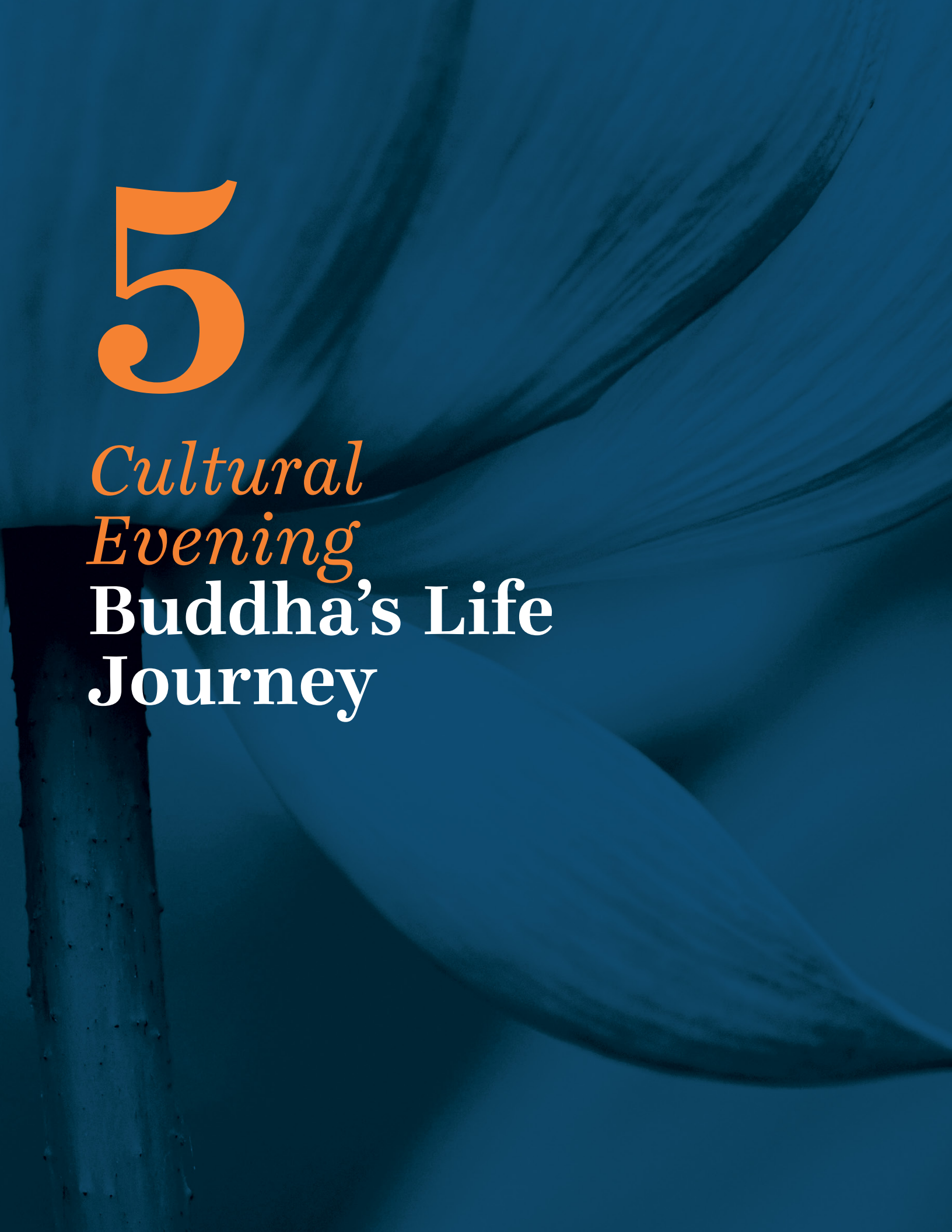
Dr. Shashank Shekhar’s speech emphasized a dynamic and multi-dimensional approach to understanding Buddhist monuments and heritage. He pointed out the historical complexity where monuments predate Buddhist texts, often reflecting lived practices that differ from textual theory. He advocated for moving beyond traditional art-and-architecture studies to incorporate broader elements like geo-cultural connections, afterlives of monuments, intangible heritage (rituals, folklore), and ecological and human interactions. Using examples like Nalanda and Sanchi, he illustrated how Buddhist sites were once integral to community life, including managing water systems and appropriating local cults. He called for interpreting monuments not as static structures but as evolving symbols shaped by history, community, and cultural memory. His role as moderator also framed the session’s aim: to explore heritage through varied lenses—historical, ecological, digital, and cultural—for more holistic and inclusive understandings.

Dr. Shikha Jain’s presentation cantered on the evolving approach to Buddhist heritage, tracing the shift from colonial-era monumentalism and object dispersal to more context-sensitive, inclusive practices in the post-colonial period. Drawing from her conservation work, she highlighted the disconnect between artifacts and their original settings—such as the fragmented display of the Bharhut stupa at the Indian Museum—and discussed efforts to reinterpret and reconnect these objects through immersive museum design and informed narrative. She underscored the importance of balancing conservation norms with community reverence, as seen in the Mahabodhi Temple gilding debate. Concluding her talk, Dr. Jain emphasized the need to recognize landscapes—like Khangchendzonga National Park—as living Buddhist heritage, arguing for a holistic approach to heritage that transcends physical monuments. She pointed to initiatives like the serial nomination of Ashokan edict sites as promising steps toward more integrated and transnational heritage recognition.

Dr. Elora Tribedy's presentation emphasized the need for community-centered conservation to ensure the long-term sustainability of heritage sites. Drawing on examples from India and Indonesia—including Bodh Gaya, Borobudur, and the Moana Jambi site—she argued that preservation efforts must extend beyond monuments to include intangible cultural elements and living traditions. She cautioned against treating heritage solely as a tourism commodity, which can alienate local populations and erode cultural relevance. Instead, she advocated for inclusive conservation models that empower communities through participation, cultural activities, and economic opportunities linked to traditional crafts and performances. Highlighting case studies from sites like Prambanan, Nalanda Bargao, and Pundipuram, Dr. Tribedy illustrated how local engagement, when supported by NGOs and cultural organizations, helps keep heritage sites vibrant and meaningful. She proposed holistic strategies, such as the geopark model, that integrate environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions while respecting local identities and livelihoods. In conclusion, she called for a shift toward conservation practices that are context-sensitive, inclusive, and rooted in the lived experiences of surrounding communities, arguing that sustainability is best achieved when heritage reflects and supports the diversity of those who inhabit it.

Dr. Abhishek Amar's presentation cantered on his long-term research and digital documentation of the city of Gaya, which he has been surveying since 2010. His focus was on uncovering the layered religious history of the city, especially the intersection of Buddhist and Hindu material culture, often coexisting in shared spaces. Through the documentation of 55 shrines and countless scattered sculptures—some in active worship, others not—he revealed how Gaya functions like a living museum. His efforts culminated in the creation of a Digital Archive of Sacred Centres of India, which not only aids heritage preservation but also serves pedagogical and research purposes. Collaborating with tech experts, he integrated GIS mapping, metadata systems, and VR reconstructions to provide accessible and immersive experiences of Gaya's heritage. A key motivation was also to combat heritage theft by establishing a public visual record. Dr. Amar highlighted how local communities, particularly the Gayaval Brahmins, have been crucial in preserving heritage—intentionally or otherwise—while underscoring the potential of digital humanities to connect global audiences to local histories.

In conclusion, the session offered a richly layered exploration of heritage that moved beyond static understandings of monuments to embrace ecological, cultural, digital, and community-based perspectives. Through diverse case studies and methodologies, the speakers underscored the need for inclusive and context-sensitive approaches that integrate local voices, living traditions, and new technologies. Whether through immersive museum narratives, community-led conservation, or digital archiving, the session emphasized that sustainable heritage lies in interpreting the past as a dynamic, evolving presence—deeply embedded in the lives, landscapes, and memories of the communities it continues to shape.



5

*Cultural
Evening*

**Buddha's Life
Journey**



A performance by **KAVITA DWIBEDI**—renowned Odissi dancer, dedicated guru, and cultural ambassador.

CHIEF GUEST |

HON'BLE DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

WELCOME |

SHRI AKASH PATIL, Director, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

The performance 'Shweta Mukti' showcases the life of the Buddha. Shweta Mukti is an intense search, a gripping journey in to the compassionate world of womanhood. This is a story of women, who were dazzled with the aura of illumination and self-realization. Buddha, the supreme soul of enlightenment and greatest torch bearer of liberation for humanity is conceived, nurtured, loved, cared, challenged and charmed by these women.

The first day of the Seventh Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues culminated in a mesmerizing cultural evening held at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The event was graced by the presence of **Hon'ble Dr. Virendra Kumar**, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, who addressed the gathering following an evocative dance performance by renowned Odissi exponent Ms. Kavita Dwibedi and her ensemble.

The highlight of the evening was *Shweta Mukti*, an Odissi dance presentation choreographed and conceptualized by **Kavita Dwibedi**, with music by **Guru Ram Hari Das** and Odia poetry by **Shri Kedar Mishra**. The performance was brought to life by artists **Sonali Barua**, **Arpita Debashree**, **Radharani**, **Nitin Bansal**, and Kavita Dwibedi herself, with lighting by **Shri Gaurav** and production assistance by **Kalyani Behera**. *Shweta Mukti* offered a deeply moving artistic interpretation of the feminine journey towards enlightenment, told through the lives of three women—Gautami, Buddha's foster mother; Yashodhara, his devoted wife; and Prakriti, a girl from a lower-caste background who embraced his path. The performance portrayed Buddha as the supreme embodiment of awakening and liberation, while powerfully highlighting the role of women in carrying forward his legacy. Blending classical dance, poetry, and music, the presentation celebrated the spiritual strength and resilience of women within the Buddhist tradition.



Following the performance, Dr. Virendra Kumar interacted with the performers and presented them with a painting as a token of appreciation. In his address, he praised the team for their compelling portrayal of Buddha's journey from royalty to renunciation, remarking on the emotional depth and narrative power that held the audience's attention throughout. Reflecting on his visit to Thailand, Dr. Kumar shared how the sacred relics of Lord Buddha were received with reverence, emphasizing the deep spiritual discipline prevalent in Thai society. He contrasted this with the growing need for spiritual reconnection in India and globally, noting that the world—especially many in the West—is increasingly turning toward India for inner peace and wisdom. Dr. Kumar also shared a touching anecdote from Vrindavan, where young visitors from around the world expressed in Hindi that they found true peace only in India, inspired by the teachings of Buddha and the country's ancient spiritual heritage. Concluding his remarks, he highlighted India's unique role as a spiritual guide in an increasingly restless world and lauded the organizers of the Bodh Gaya Dialogues for creating a space that promotes meaningful reflection and cultural expression. He extended his best wishes to all involved and encouraged continued efforts to uphold and spread the values of peace, compassion, and enlightenment.

6

Special Session

India-Vietnam
Relations:
Exploring and
Building on
the Buddhism
Connect and
Emerging Areas
of Cooperation



CHAIR |

SHRI RANJIT RAE, Author and Former Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Vietnam, and Nepal

MODERATOR |

PROF. SANJEEV KUMAR, Political Science Department, Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi

SPEAKERS |

DR. BALADAS GHOSHAL, Former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies and Chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University

Vietnam's place in India's Civilizational interactions, People-to-People relations, strategic and Geo-political Outlook

DR. THICH HANH CHANH, Independent Scholar specializing in Buddhism
Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power: The Role of Buddhist Heritage in Strengthening India-Vietnam Relations

DR. DHRUBAJYOTI BHATTACHARJEE, Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

Bringing Buddhism Back as a Pillar of India's Diplomatic Culture: Forging New Avenues of Cooperation

DR. SONU TRIVEDI, Associate Professor, Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi
India-Vietnam: Intersections of History, Culture, and Buddhist Traditions

The second day began with a **Special Session** on “*India-Vietnam Relations: Exploring and Building on the Buddhism Connect and Emerging Areas of Cooperation.*” Chaired by **Shri Ranjit Rae**, Former Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Vietnam, and Nepal, and moderated by Prof. Sanjeev Kumar, Political Science Department at Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi, this session examined India-Vietnam relations through the lens of Buddhism. Dr. Baladas Ghoshal, Former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies at JNU, explored *Vietnam’s Place in India’s Civilizational Interactions, People-to-People Relations, and Strategic Outlook*. Dr. Thich Hanh Chanh, Independent Scholar, examined *The Role of Buddhist Heritage in Strengthening India-Vietnam Relations*. Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharjee, Research Fellow at the ICWA, spoke on *Bringing Buddhism Back as a Pillar of India’s Diplomatic Culture*. Dr. Sonu Trivedi, Associate Professor at Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi, discussed *India-Vietnam: Intersections of History, Culture, and Buddhist Traditions*. This was followed by a quick Q&A session with the audience and a book presentation by Dr. Bhattacharjee to Shri Sanjay Kumar on behalf of the Indian Council of World Affairs.

The session began with opening remarks by **Prof. Sanjeev Kumar**, who introduced the theme by emphasizing Buddhism as a civilizational bridge between India and Vietnam. He underscored the relevance of soft power diplomacy and the spiritual connect between the two countries, while also advocating for expanded cooperation in areas such as education, tourism, and development partnerships. As Chair, Shri Ranjit Rae highlighted the multidimensional nature of India–Vietnam relations, which today span defense, economic cooperation, and spiritual diplomacy. He stressed that Buddhism is not only a shared historical legacy but also a potent tool for fostering peace and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. He encouraged both nations to leverage their Buddhist heritage to strengthen people-to-people ties and enhance bilateral engagement.

Dr. Baladas Ghoshal, former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies and Chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, presented his views on ‘Vietnam’s Place in India’s Civilizational Interactions, People-to-People Relations, Strategic and Geopolitical Outlook.’ Dr. Ghoshal traced the Buddhist influence on Vietnamese society from Indian origins, highlighting the role of Indian monks, scholars, and merchants in shaping Vietnam’s spiritual and cultural landscape. He called for renewed academic collaborations, cultural exchanges, and heritage conservation initiatives to revitalize the Buddhist connect between the two nations.

Dr. Thich Hanh Chanh, a Vietnamese monk and scholar, offered a spiritual reflection rooted in personal experience. As a disciple of Thich Tri Nhan, he spoke of the transformative impact of Indian-origin Buddhist teachings on Vietnamese Buddhism and the enrichment of Vietnamese

spiritual life through Pali translations. He paid homage to India as the land of the Buddha—a gracious gift in his life—and expressed gratitude for India’s contributions to Buddhist scholarship and pilgrimage. His reflections underscored the need to preserve this spiritual legacy and promote its values of peace, tolerance, and compassion.

Further, **Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharjee**, Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), discussed ‘Bringing Buddhism Back as a Pillar of India’s Diplomatic Culture: Forging New Avenues of Cooperation.’ He emphasized the strategic relevance of Buddhism in India’s foreign policy, highlighting initiatives such as the recognition of Pali as a classical language, restoration of Buddhist sites, scholarship programs for Vietnamese monks, and international exhibitions. Dr. Bhattacharjee framed Buddhism as a living knowledge system that informs India’s approach to peacebuilding, mental health, environmental sustainability, and regional collaboration—particularly through efforts like Mission LIFE and the Asian Buddhist Summit’s Delhi Declaration.

Dr. Sonu Trivedi, Associate Professor at Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi, shared her research on ‘India–Vietnam: Intersections of History, Culture, and Buddhist Traditions.’ Drawing from comparative research on Kalinga and Champa, she explored ancient civilizational connections and the cultural exchanges that shaped the Champa kingdom’s religion, language, architecture, and social customs. Emphasizing that Indian influence arrived through settlement rather than conquest, Dr. Trivedi called for increased focus on restoration projects, academic research, and collaborative heritage conservation to preserve this legacy and deepen bilateral engagement.

The session collectively underscored that Buddhism is more than a historical relic—it is a vibrant and evolving platform for cultural diplomacy, academic exchange, and regional development. India and Vietnam share an ancient spiritual bond that continues to inspire avenues for cooperation in tourism, education, and heritage preservation. Speakers advocated for deeper archaeological collaboration, the promotion of Buddhist tourism and pilgrimage circuits, the use of Buddhism in addressing global challenges such as mental health and environmental degradation, and stronger people-to-people ties through educational and cultural initiatives.

An interactive question-and-answer session followed the speaker presentations, allowing participants to further explore the role of Buddhist diplomacy in India’s foreign relations. This special session demonstrated that India–Vietnam relations are rooted in shared values of compassion, coexistence, and cultural depth, with Buddhism serving as a living conduit for future cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Later, the session also featured a symbolic book presentation by Dr. Bhattacharjee to Shri Sanjay Kumar on behalf of the ICWA, representing the Council’s commitment to fostering intellectual exchange and policy-driven research.

A large, stylized orange number 7 is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image. The background is a deep blue with abstract, flowing patterns that resemble smoke or liquid, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Film

Screening

**Sacred Buddhist
Dance**



A film by **BENOY K. BEHL**—acclaimed filmmaker, art-historian and photographer.

INTRODUCTION |
SMT. SUJATA CHATTERJEE

FILM DURATION: 24 minutes

The film explores the ancient ritual dances performed in Himalayan monasteries, embodying Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and devotion. Through stunning visuals and insightful narration, the film reveals the deep symbolism, spiritual essence, and continuity of these sacred traditions in preserving Buddhist teachings and heritage.

The second day of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues featured a special screening of the 24-minute documentary *Sacred Buddhist Dance* by acclaimed filmmaker, art historian, and Buddhist scholar **Prof. Benoy K. Behl**. Introduced by **Smt. Sujata Chatterjee**, the session offered an insightful exploration into the meditative and spiritual dimensions of Buddhist dance traditions, especially the sacred *Cham* dance of the Trans-Himalayan region.

Smt. Chatterjee introduced Prof. Behl as a distinguished figure in the field of Indian art history and Buddhist scholarship, with over 146 documentary films and extensive photography work to his credit. She highlighted his pioneering efforts in photographing the Ajanta cave paintings, his lectures delivered globally, and his recognition in the Limca Book of Records as the most-traveled art historian between 2001 and 2020. Notably, he authored the successful UNESCO nomination dossier for the Mahabodhi Temple, and his book *On the Ajanta Caves* continues to receive widespread acclaim.

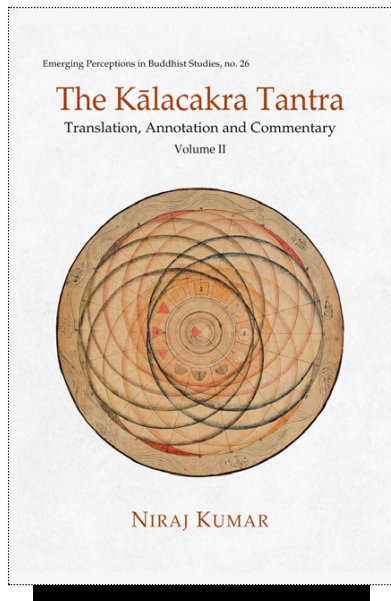
Before the screening, Prof. Behl addressed the audience, introducing the philosophical foundations of the film. He spoke about the Yogachara school of Buddhism, established by Vasubandhu and Asanga in the 4th century, and how its emphasis on yoga evolved into Vajrayana traditions. He traced the origins of the *Cham* dance to Guru Padmasambhava, who carried these sacred traditions to the Trans-Himalayas. Emphasizing that *Cham* is not simply a performance but a meditative act of devotion, he described it as part of a spiritual covenant between monks and their communities. Prof. Behl further noted that, in ancient Indian traditions, all art—including dance and music—was designed to transcend the material world and guide practitioners toward spiritual awakening.

The screening of *Sacred Buddhist Dance* was met with enthusiastic applause and followed by a lively and insightful post-screening interaction. The audience engaged Prof. Benoy K. Behl in a thoughtful and deeply enriching discussion, exploring the symbolic, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions of Buddhist dance. Questions ranged from the role of dance in conveying spiritual teachings to the intricate gestures and rhythms that reflect centuries of disciplined practice. Prof. Behl's responses illuminated the deep roots of these traditions and their enduring relevance in contemporary spiritual life. The session stood out not only for the film's evocative portrayal of sacred rituals but also for the atmosphere of genuine curiosity and reverence it inspired. It served as a profound reminder that artistic traditions such as these are far more than relics of the past—they are living practices that embody meditation, inner discipline, and the spiritual continuity of communities across generations and geographies.

8

Book Discussion

**The Kalacakra
Tantra:
Translation,
Annotation and
Commentary**



DISCUSSANTS |

SHRI NIRAJ KUMAR, Author, Translator and Joint Secretary, DoNER, Government of India

with

PROF. MADHU KHANNA, Founder, Tantra Foundation, New Delhi,

ADELE TOMLIN, Writer, Buddhist Scholar-Translator, Poet and Teacher,

and **DR. ABIRA BHATTACHARYA**, Assistant Curator, Department of Anthropology, National Museum, Delhi

The Kalacakra Tantra: Translation, Annotation and Commentary offers a scholarly yet accessible exploration of the esoteric Buddhist text. Providing a detailed translation with annotations and insightful commentary, the book deciphers the complex cosmology, philosophy, and meditative practices of Kalacakra, linking them to history, science, and contemporary spiritual discourse.

The session delved in a book discussion on the second volume of ***The Kalacakra Tantra: Translation, Annotation, and Commentary***. This discussion featured Shri Niraj Kumar, author of *The Kalacakra Tantra*, along with esteemed scholars: Prof. Madhu Khanna, Founder of the Tantra Foundation, Adele Tomlin, Buddhist Scholar, and Dr. Abira Bhattacharya, Assistant Curator in the Department of Anthropology, National Museum Delhi. Along with dialogue on the chapters and narration of the book, the scholars also delved into the vastness of Tantra philosophy and its presence in everyday life. The session began with a brief introduction of the book by **Dr. Shruti** followed by presentation of paintings to all the panellists.

In his address, **Niraj Kumar** shared a deeply personal and philosophical reflection on his journey with the Kalacakra Tantra texts. He began by congratulating the organizers of the Global Dialogues and recounted his involvement in the international transport of Buddha's relics, emphasizing the reverence with which they are regarded—not merely as artifacts, but as living embodiments of the Buddha. He then described his long engagement with the Kalacakra Tantra, beginning with his translation work in 2017. Despite facing criticism for not being a formal scholar or Buddhist practitioner, he emphasized that his commitment came from authenticity and a belief that the work “chose” him. He recounted an episode during a 2017 symposium when he blanked out when asked to summarize Kalacakra, later realizing that this very emptiness captured its essence. Kumar introduced the concept of the “3Ds”—decay, death, and disintegration—as central to the cyclical nature of the universe, aligning this with the teachings of Kalacakra. His work on the second volume intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time during which he also found symbolic connections—particularly the recurrence of the number 33, linked to the myth of Kalki. He completed translations of all five volumes during this period. Despite facing resistance, including the cancellation of a major talk, Kumar stood by his work and invited open debate in the spirit of the Nalanda tradition. He concluded by expressing his commitment to truth and his ongoing work on the third volume.

Prof. Madhu Khanna delivered a deeply insightful and appreciative address on Niraj Kumar's book. She began by acknowledging the commendable work of the organizers, particularly Sanjay Kumar, and reminisced about her long-standing association with Deshkal and IGNCA. She congratulated Niraj Kumar for his exceptional research and for decoding a highly complex and esoteric tradition with remarkable precision—something she finds missing in contemporary Indological scholarship. Prof. Khanna emphasized that Kalacakra Tantra is not merely a philosophical treatise but an intricate synthesis of ontological doctrine, cosmology, astrology, and subtle anatomy. She highlighted how Kumar's work explores time not just in minutes or months, but as cosmic cycles—*yugas*—connecting microcosmic and macrocosmic realities through mathematical calculations, mantras, planetary systems, and yogic frameworks. She discussed how both Hindu and Buddhist Tantras conceptualize the body as multilayered—comprising not only the physical but also the subtle, psychic, and divine dimensions. This non-materialistic understanding challenges the modern biomedical view and underpins practices like Ayurveda and yoga. Prof. Khanna praised the book's integration of sacred geometry, predictive astrology, and esoteric anatomy—especially its treatment of chakras, *nadis*, and breath cycles. She found the chapter on *Samvad* (dialogue) particularly significant, as it illustrates the rich tradition of philosophical debate in Sanskrit literature. Concluding her talk, she called the book a crucial contribution to spiritual and intellectual traditions, especially relevant in today's violence-ridden world, and emphasized the ethical teachings of Buddhism for a more harmonious existence.

Dr. Abira Bhattacharya began by expressing her gratitude to the organizers and congratulating Niraj Kumar on the much-anticipated release of *Kalachakra Tantra: Volume 2*. She emphasized the book's interdisciplinary depth, highlighting how it goes beyond ritualistic frameworks to encompass cosmology, theology, sociology, medicine, meditation, and yoga. As a scholar working on goddesses' iconography, Dr. Bhattacharya found the book particularly insightful in understanding gender representation and the transformation of textual ideas into visual forms—especially through mandalas and tantric imagery. She appreciated the detailed analysis of colour symbolism in the Kalachakra system, particularly the association of the color black with indestructible wisdom, expanding the commonly known associations of blue and red with deities like Akshobhya and Amitabha. Dr. Bhattacharya also noted the book's deep engagement with Mahayana Buddhist concepts like emptiness (*shunyata*) and *prajña-upaya*, drawing connections to classical texts such as the *Prajñāparamita*. She praised the discussion on syncretism, especially how the *Dashavatara* and Hindu concepts like *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are reinterpreted within the Buddhist framework. She lauded the inclusion of references from *Vimalaprabha*, detailed treatment of mandalas, and the body as a sacred structure within Buddhist ritual, comparing it to the *Vastu Purusha Mandala*. Concluding her remarks, Dr. Bhattacharya described the work as a profound and intensive study requiring prior knowledge of Tantric and Mahayana texts, and expressed anticipation for the future volumes.

Adele Tomlin, speaking virtually due to her inability to attend in person, expressed appreciation for being invited to the discussion, particularly because of her background in Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana. She acknowledged the central role the Kalachakra Tantra plays in Tibetan Buddhism, especially through figures like the 9th Panchen Lama and the 14th Dalai Lama, but pointed out a significant gap in the actual dissemination and understanding of the textual content. Tomlin praised Niraj Kumar's work for filling this critical gap by providing one of the first extensive English translations of the original Sanskrit Kalachakra Tantra text. She emphasized that while Kalachakra rituals have become well-known through public initiations by major Tibetan lamas, there has been limited access to the core philosophical and doctrinal content of the text itself. In this light, Kumar's work stands out as a major scholarly contribution to global understanding of Buddhist Tantra. She also noted a particularly interesting feature of the second volume: the discussion on diet. She highlighted how the text differentiates the virtuous yogi, who abstains from meat and eggs, from the so-called barbarian, offering insights aligned with Buddhist ethical concerns. Tomlin concluded by expressing her interest in further engaging with the text and continuing the conversation with Niraj Kumar and the wider scholarly community.

The book discussion on *The Kalacakra Tantra: Translation, Annotation, and Commentary (Volume 2)* proved to be an enriching and thought-provoking session, marked by rigorous scholarly engagement and a shared reverence for the complexity of Tantra philosophy. The dialogue between Niraj Kumar and the esteemed panelists illuminated not only the textual intricacies of the Kalachakra system but also its profound philosophical, cosmological, and ethical dimensions. Each speaker brought unique insights—ranging from sacred geometry and esoteric anatomy to gender representation and Buddhist ethics—underscoring the text's multidisciplinary resonance. The session reaffirmed the relevance of ancient wisdom traditions in contemporary discourse and celebrated the importance of continued scholarly inquiry into the rich tapestry of Indian and Buddhist Tantric knowledge.

9

Conversation
**Travelling in
the Footsteps
of Buddha**



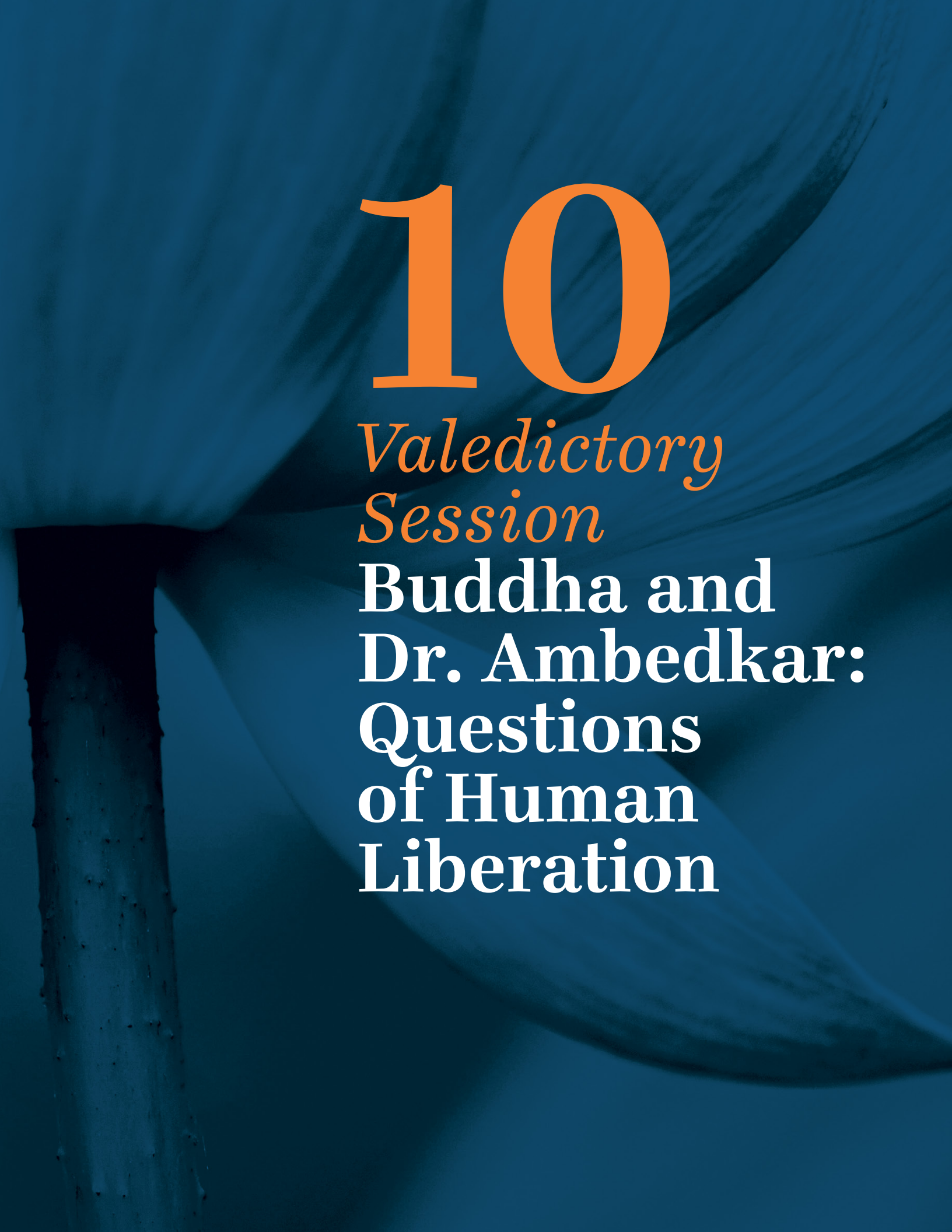
MS. SUNITA DWIVEDI, Silk Road Traveller and Author, New Delhi
with
SHRI UDAY SAHAY, Author and Chairman SAUV Communications, New Delhi

The session titled “*Travelling in the Footsteps of Buddha*” was an engaging and insightful conversation between writer-researcher Sunita Dwivedi and communication expert Sri Uday Sahay, organized with the support of the Deshkal Society and IGNCA. Dr. Shruti introduced the session, highlighting Sunita Dwivedi’s extensive work on Buddhist heritage, especially her upcoming travelogue on Buddha’s trail in Bangladesh.

Uday Sahay opened the conversation by asking Sunita about her inspiration for dedicating over two decades to documenting Buddhist sites across Asia. **Sunita Dwivedi** recounted how her early life in Kushinagar—the site of Buddha’s Mahaparinirvana—sparked her curiosity. Encounters with monks and childhood experiences near the Ramabhar Stupa sowed the seeds of her lifelong passion. Her professional journey began with feature writing, where reporting on the neglected state of Buddhist sites after floods became a turning point.

She went on to describe the many challenges she faced, particularly in gaining access to Buddhist sites across Islamic countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asian republics, as well as politically sensitive regions in China, including Xinjiang and Tibet. Despite visa hurdles, she persevered—eventually convincing the Chinese embassy of her commitment through her personal research collection and dedication.

Sahay acknowledged her extraordinary resolve and linked her work to the legacy of two towering intellectuals—Prof. Lokesh Chandra and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan—both of whom supported and encouraged Sunita’s work. He reflected on IGNCA’s history of supporting independent scholars and shared anecdotes of past collaborations, such as a successful Kailash Mansarovar exhibition. The conversation further explored the cross-cultural observations Sunita made while visiting Buddhist sites across varied political regimes—ranging from China and Central Asia to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—and the status of conservation, accessibility, and cultural status of Buddhist heritage in each country. The session offered a compelling account of one woman’s spiritual and scholarly journey, highlighting the intersections of history, politics, and cultural preservation across Asia.



10

*Valedictory
Session*

**Buddha and
Dr. Ambedkar:
Questions
of Human
Liberation**



INTRODUCTION OF THEME |

DR. MANINDRA NATH THAKUR, Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS |

SHRI RAM BAHADUR RAI, President, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts IGNCA, New Delhi

GUEST OF HONOUR |

DR. SASMIT PATRA, Hon'ble Member, Rajya Sabha

WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS |

SHRI SANJAY KUMAR, Secretary, Deshkal Society, Noida

VOTE OF THANKS |

DR. SHRUTI, Author, Translator & Research Scholar, University of Delhi

The Seventh edition of the Bodh Gaya Dialogues culminated in a thought-provoking Valedictory Session cantered on the theme ***Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar: Questions of Human Liberation***. The session underscored the profound philosophical and socio-political intersections between Buddhism and Dr. Ambedkar's vision of social justice, highlighting their shared commitment to human dignity and emancipation.

The valedictory session commenced with a warm and respectful welcome by the moderator, Dr. Shruti, who invited the distinguished guests to the stage amidst enthusiastic applause from the audience. The session opened on a reflective note, evoking the enduring legacies of the Buddha and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar—two visionaries whose teachings continue to inspire movements for justice, equality, and inner transformation. Emphasizing the symbolic significance of Ambedkar's embrace of Buddhism as both spiritual and political, Dr. Shruti set the tone for a session rooted in deep philosophical and socio-political reflection.

The gathering was further enriched by the ceremonial release of Niraj Kumar's much-anticipated book *Kalacakra Tantra*, with the dignitaries and the author receiving heartfelt congratulations. The session continued with the welcoming of prominent scholars and practitioners, including Shri Ajay Kumar Mishra and Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur, each acknowledged for their contributions to Buddhist thought, literary traditions, and critical academic discourse in India.

Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur, Associate Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, eloquently introduced the theme, setting the stage for an engaging discussion on the contemporary relevance of these ideologies. In his address, Dr. Thakur outlined three central concerns: our current historical moment, the relevance of Ambedkar today, and Ambedkar's interpretation of the Buddha. He emphasized that humanity is at a global turning point, with modernity and capitalism facing profound epistemological, ethical, and philosophical crises. As democracy gives way to techno-authoritarianism and greed undermines the idea of the common good, Ambedkar's vision—shaped by both Marx and Buddha—offers a powerful path toward liberation. Unlike the passive, meditative figure often depicted, Ambedkar's Buddha symbolizes rational resistance and moral courage, advocating cognitive freedom, ethical reasoning, and compassion. Dr. Thakur stressed that Ambedkar's method of dismantling oppressive structures—caste, class, race, and gender—through rational analysis, historical understanding, and deep ethics must be reclaimed today. He concluded by calling for the creation of a new utopian discourse rooted in spiritual resistance, egalitarian community, and self-enlightenment—an antidote to the collapse of capitalist morality and the dangers of digital-age cognitive manipulation.

The session was further graced by the presence of the Guest of Honour, **Dr. Sasmit Patra**, Hon'ble Member of the Rajya Sabha, whose candid interaction with the audience reinforced the urgency of sustaining discourses on human rights and social equity. In his engaging and thought-provoking speech, Dr. Patra emphasized the need to reimagine Indian democracy through the lens of Ambedkar's Buddha—not merely as a spiritual ideal, but as a principle of accountability and civic engagement. He argued that Indian democracy has shifted from a participatory, community-based system—akin to the traditional *pangat*—to an “outsourced buffet” model, where citizens relinquish responsibility after electing representatives. Rather than expecting parliamentarians and MLAs to inherently embody decorum and compassion, he advocated for a bottom-up approach in which people actively question and hold their leaders accountable. Drawing from his personal journey across politics, law, business, and anthropology, Dr. Patra asserted that the real strength of democracy lies in collective vigilance and grassroots participation—not in moralistic expectations from the top.

Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, President of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, delivered the Valedictory Address, offering deep insights into the transformative potential of Ambedkarite and Buddhist thought in shaping a more equitable society. The crux of his speech emphasized that the relevance of great figures like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Gautam Buddha has only increased in contemporary India. He highlighted how Ambedkar envisioned constitutional reform as the path to social change—anchored in equality, fraternity, and justice. Rai noted that Ambedkar urged all ideological groups, including Marxists and Gandhian activists, to suspend protest-based approaches and instead place their faith in constitutional means. He praised the younger generation for shifting away from agitation and embracing Ambedkar's vision of nation-building through democratic processes. Concluding with Buddha's message, “*Appa Deepo Bhava*” (be your own light), Rai affirmed that the Indian Constitution—shaped by Ambedkar—remains a guiding beacon for the nation's progress.

As the session progressed, **Shri Sanjay Kumar**, Secretary of the Deshkal Society, shared valuable reflections on the way forward, presenting key recommendations for sustained dialogue and action. In his concluding “Way Forward” speech, Kumar expressed deep gratitude to all contributors and emphasized the importance of preserving the spirit of the dialogue. Acknowledging the challenge of making recommendations memorable and actionable, he proposed two key initiatives for 2026: first, the publication of a well-edited volume compiling select papers from the Sixth and Seventh Dialogues, with support from Aakar Publications; and second, a commitment to ensure that this growing initiative—described as a “sapling”—continues to flourish under the guidance and blessings of Rai Saheb. He also proposed multilingual publication—in Hindi, English, and Odia—to reflect the inclusive and diverse spirit of the forum. Kumar concluded by reaffirming the emotional and intellectual significance of the dialogue, drawing inspiration from the enduring legacies of Buddha and Ambedkar as future-builders.

Finally, in her heartfelt vote of thanks, **Dr. Shruti** expressed sincere appreciation to all who contributed to the success of the session. She began by thanking Sanjay Kumar for his vision and tireless efforts in making the dialogue both possible and meaningful. She extended her gratitude to the dignitaries and speakers for their thought-provoking insights, and to Shri Ram Bahadur Rai for supporting the exhibition on Sir Marc Aurel Stein, which attracted over 2,000 visitors and received widespread acclaim. Special thanks were extended to the researchers, artists, and filmmakers whose creative and academic contributions enriched the event. Dr. Shruti also acknowledged the volunteers, organizing committee, and technical teams for their seamless support. Concluding on a high note, she thanked the attendees for their enthusiastic participation, which energized the discussions, and encouraged everyone to carry forward the spirit of dialogue and inquiry that defined the event.



The background is a deep, dark blue. On the left side, there is a vertical, textured stem, possibly of a tree or plant, showing small, dark, irregular spots. To the right of the stem, there are large, flowing, leaf-like shapes that appear to be part of a plant, rendered in lighter shades of blue and white, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is abstract and artistic.

Appendix

Glimpses











Media Coverage

FOCUS

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BODH GAYA GLOBAL DIALOGUES-2025

WISDOM WITHOUT BORDERS

The Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues brought together scholars, spiritual leaders, policymakers, and practitioners from across the world to explore the power of India's civilisational values in shaping a more inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable global future.

PRAVASI INDIANS BUREAU (PIB)

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emphasizing the need for inclusive dialogue and shared learning.

Naturally, various sessions were held to capture the essence of Buddha's teachings over the two-day event. The first session—*Buddhist Philosophy and the Teaching of Buddhism*—was chaired by Dr. Kusum Kumari (Retd. Prof., Munger University), and offered insights

Uday Sahay, Executive Editor, PRAVASI INDIANS magazine, had an engaging conversation with Silk Road explorer Sunita Dwivedi, who gave a fascinating account of The Buddha's Footsteps and offered a glimpse into Buddhist heritage across Asia through her personal experiences.

The Seventh Edition of the *Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues* took place on March 29-30, 2025, at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. Organized by the Deshkal Society in association with the Indian Council of World Affairs, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the event brought together an inspiring cross-section of scholars, policymakers, and activists who reflected on the relevance of Buddhist philosophy and Dr. Ambedkar's vision in shaping inclusive futures. As a proud Media Partner, PRAVASI INDIANS celebrated this confluence of scholarship, culture, and social commitment—an enduring call for critical thought and collective action.

The Dialogues opened with an inaugural session graced by several distinguished guests, including:

- H.E. Major General Vetsop Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan in India.
- Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma, Chairperson, RIS.
- Dr. D. M. Mulay, Author and Former Secretary, Government of India.
- Shri Arvind Mohan, President, Deshkal Society.

The event began with a short video highlighting the Dialogues' previous edition. Thereafter, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre Director Shri Akash Patil delivered a welcome address, followed by Deshkal Society Secretary Sanjay Kumar, who dwelt at length on the vision for this year's dialogues,

into Buddhist philosophy, heritage, and development through diverse lenses. Joining her were Dr. Snigdha Singh (Miranda House, DU), who highlighted gender dynamics in Jataka narratives, and Dr. Rituparna Ghosh (Dhamma Dipa University, Tripura), who reflected on the contemporary relevance of core teachings.

The second session—*Envisioning Buddhist Circuits: Locality, Heritage, Sustainability*—was moderated by Dr. Pravin Sinha and Dr. Arvind K. Mishra (JNU). Dr. Nikhil Raj (World Bank) and Dr. Binodanand Jha (former Director, Bihar Education Department) shared data-driven perspectives on Buddha's heritage development and cultural rootedness.

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A special feature on the 7th Edition of the Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues as published in Pravasi Indian

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The third session—*Buddhist Monuments, Heritage, and Beyond*—was moderated by Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha (Routledge, South Asia), and explored tangible and intangible heritage. Highlighting the communities' role in heritage preservation and conservation, the session was attended by Dr. Shikha Jain, Dr. Elora Tribedy (Nalanda University), and Dr. Abhishek Amar (Hamilton College, USA), who joined virtually to emphasise the need for a digital archive of Bodh Gaya's sacred sites.

● ●

We had a session centered around human liberation vis-à-vis Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar which was attended by IGNCA chief Ram Bahadur Rai, JNU scholar Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur, Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra, and Deshkal secretary Sanjay Kumar.

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Day 1 culminated with a cultural performance attended by the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment. The highlight was an Odissi dance recital choreographed by Kavita Dwivedi, portraying Buddha as a beacon of enlightenment.

Day 2 began with a special session—*India-Vietnam Relations: Exploring and Building on the Buddhism Connect*—chaired by former Ambassador Shri Ranjit Rae and moderated by Prof. Sanjeev Kumar (Zakir Husain College, DU). Dwelling on Buddhism's civilizational aspects, soft power of shared heritage, and historical-cultural intersections, speakers included Dr. Baladas Ghoshal,

Dr. Thich Hanh Chanh, Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharjee (ICWA), and Dr. Sonu Trivedi.

In the afternoon, a screening of *Sacred Buddhist Dance* by renowned film maker Benoy K. Behl was followed by a lively book discussion on the second volume of *The Kalacakra Tantra* with author Neeraj Kumar and scholar Prof. Madhu Khanna.

Also, former IPS officer and Executive Editor, *PRAVASI INDIANS* magazine Uday Sahay had an engaging conversation with Silk Road explorer and writer Sunita Dwivedi, who gave a fascinating account of *The Buddha's Footsteps* and offered a glimpse into Buddhist heritage across Asia through stories, reflections, and personal experiences.

The closing session centered around a shared vision between Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar, especially vis-à-vis the question of human liberation. It saw the presence of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts chief Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, renowned JNU scholar Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur, Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra, and Deshkal Society Secretary Sanjay Kumar, leading to insightful discussions, reflections, and recommendations for sustained dialogue and action.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Shruti, the compère for the event, author, and scholar from the University of Delhi, acknowledging the collective spirit that brought the Dialogues to life.

Programme Schedule

Day 1 | SATURDAY 29TH MARCH 2025

REGISTRATION | 9:00 AM–10:00 AM

INAUGURAL SESSION | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

VENUE | NALANDA AUDITORIUM, DR. AMBEDKAR INTERNATIONAL CENTRE DAIC, NEW DELHI

SHORT VIDEO PRESENTATION

Bodh Gaya Global Dialogues

CHAIR | Dr. Sekhar Dutt, Former Governor and Author, Chhattisgarh

MODERATOR | Dr. Shruti, Author, Translator & Research Scholar, University of Delhi

WELCOME SPEECH | Shri Akash Patil, Director, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

CONTEXT | Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society, Noida

GUESTS OF HONOUR |

H.E. Major General Vetsop Namgyel, Ambassador, Royal Bhutanese Embassy, New Delhi

Dr. D. M. Mulay, Author, Diplomat and Former Secretary, Government of India

Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma, Chairperson, Research and Information System for Developing Countries RIS, New Delhi

Shri Arvind Mohan, Author, Journalist and President, Deshkal Society, Noida

REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

VOTE OF THANKS |

Dr. Arjit Walia, Educationist and Founder of Co-Scholastic

TEA BREAK | 12:00 PM–12:30 PM

SESSION 1

12:30 PM–01:30 PM

THEME | *Buddhist Philosophy and the Teaching of Buddhism*

CHAIR | Dr. Kusum Kumari, Retired Pro VC, Munger University

Dr. Ashwini Kumar, Professor, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai
Buddha's Fire Sermon; Monuments, Metaphors and Memories

Dr. Snigdha Singh, Professor, Department of History, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi
Empowerment, Ambivalence, and Resistance: Renegotiating Gender Dynamics in Buddhist Jataka Narratives

Dr. Rituparna Ghosh, Assistant Professor in the Pali and Buddhist Studies Department at
 Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist University, Tripura

LUNCH | 01:30 PM–02:30 PM

SESSION 2

02:30 PM–03:30 PM

THEME | *Envisioning the Buddhist Circuits: Locality, Heritage Making and Sustainability*

CHAIR | Dr. Pravin Sinha, Development Economist and Member, World Economic Association, New Delhi

Dr. Arvind K. Mishra, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

LEAD DISCUSSANT | Dr. Nikhil Raj, Senior Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi

DISCUSSANT | Dr. Binodanand Jha, Educationist and Former Director, Department of Education, Government of Bihar

TEA BREAK | 03:30 PM–03:45 PM

SESSION - 3

03:45 PM–05:15 PM

THEME | *Buddhist Monuments, Heritage and Beyond*

Dr. Shikha Jain, Conservation Architect and Heritage Expert, and Founder Director, DRONAH
Conservation and Interpretation of Buddhist Sites: From Monuments to Museums

Dr. Elora Tribedy, Assistant Professor at the School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, specializing in Buddhist art, iconography, and archaeology
Beyond Monuments: Sustaining Heritage through Community in India and Indonesia

Dr. Abhishek Amar, Associate Professor, Hamilton College, New York
Archiving the Heritage of Gaya: A Digital Database of a Sacred City

MODERATOR | Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha, Independent Researcher and Author and Publishing Director, Routledge (South Asia)

CULTURAL EVENING

05:30 PM–06:30 PM

Buddha's Life Journey

A performance by Kavita Dwibedi

WELCOME | Shri Akash Patil, Director, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi

The performance 'Shweta Mukti' will showcase the life of the Buddha. Shweta Mukti is an intense search, a gripping journey in to the compassionate world of womanhood. This is a story of women, who were dazzled with the aura of illumination and self-realization. Buddha, the supreme soul of enlightenment and greatest torch bearer of liberation for humanity is conceived, nurtured, loved, cared, challenged and charmed by these women.

Ms. Kavita Dwibedi is a renowned Odissi dancer, dedicated guru, and cultural ambassador.

Day 2 | SUNDAY 30TH MARCH 2025

SPECIAL SESSION

10:00 AM–12:00 PM

THEME | *India-Vietnam Relations: Exploring and Building on the Buddhism Connect and Emerging Area of Cooperation*

CHAIR | Shri Ranjit Rae, Author and Former Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Vietnam, and Nepal

MODERATOR | Prof. Sanjeev Kumar, Political Science Department, Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi

CHIEF GUEST | H.E. Shri Nguyen Thanh Hai Ambassador, Embassy of Vietnam, New Delhi

SPEAKERS |

Dr. Baladas Ghoshal, Former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies and Chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University

Vietnam's place in India's Civilizational interactions, People-to-People relations, strategic and Geo-political Outlook

Dr. Thich Hanh Chanh, Independent Scholar specializing in Buddhism

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power: The Role of Buddhist Heritage in Strengthening India-Vietnam Relations

Dr. Dhruvajyoti Bhattacharjee, Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

Bringing Buddhism Back as a Pillar of India's Diplomatic Culture: Forging New Avenues of Cooperation

Dr. Sonu Trivedi, Associate Professor, Zakir Husain College, University of Delhi

India-Vietnam: Intersections of History, Culture, and Buddhist Traditions

FILM SCREENING

12:00 PM–12:30 PM

Sacred Buddhist Dance

Director: Benoy K. Behl

Film Duration: 24 minutes

The film delves into Buddhist spiritual dance traditions, revealing their symbolism, meditative essence, and historical significance, showcasing rare footage and narration that highlights devotion, mindfulness, and cultural continuity across monastic traditions.

Shri Benoy K. Behl is an acclaimed filmmaker, art-historian and photographer.

LUNCH | 12:30 PM–01:30 PM

SESSION 2

01.30 PM–02.30 PM

BOOK DISCUSSION | *The Kalacakra Tantra: Translation, Annotation and Commentary*

Shri Niraj Kumar, Author, Translator and Joint Secretary, DoNER, Government of India

with

Prof. Madhu Khanna, Founder, Tantra Foundation, New Delhi,
Adele Tomlin, Writer, Buddhist Scholar-Translator, Poet and Teacher,
and Dr. Abira Bhattacharya, Assistant Curator, Department of Anthropology,
National Museum, Delhi**CONVERSATION**

02:30 PM–03:30 PM

Traveling in the Footsteps of Buddha

Ms. Sunita Dwivedi, Silk Road Traveller and Author, New Delhi

with

Shri Uday Sahay, Author and Chairman SAUV Communications,
New Delhi**TEA BREAK | 03:30 PM–03:45 PM****VALEDICTORY SESSION**

03:45 PM Onwards

THEME | *Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar: Questions of Human Liberation***INTRODUCTION OF THEME |** Dr. Manindra Nath Thakur,
Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**VALEDICTORY ADDRESS |** Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, President,
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts IGNCA, New Delhi**GUEST OF HONOUR |** Dr. Sasmit Patra, Hon'ble Member, Rajya Sabha**WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS |** Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary,
Deshkal Society, Noida**VOTE OF THANKS |** Dr. Shruti, Author, Translator & Research Scholar,
University of Delhi





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



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