



DHAMMADUTA®

JOURNAL OF THE ASIAN BUDDHISTS CONFERENCE FOR PEACE

2568 BE

2025 Issue



**The 90th Birthday of ABCP Patron,
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama**

Our prime purpose in this life
is to help others.

And if you can't help them,
at least don't hurt them

The 14th Dalai Lama





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ཕྱོད་གསུམ་རབ་གྱུར་ཕྱག་བཅས་ཞུ་གསོལ།

[illegible][illegible]

ཨ་ཤི་ཡའི་ནང་པའི་པདོ་ཚོགས་རྒྱུང་ /Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace/ ཉེ་ལྷོ་མོ་༡༩༩༠ ལོར་
ཨིག་མར་གཞི་བཅུག་པ་དང་། འཛིག་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་པའི་པདོ་དང་ཕུན་སྲུང་། གང་པོ་ཚོས་ལྷག་མེད་གསུམ་པོ་ལྟར་ཅན་གྱི་ཡུལ་ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམ་
དང་བཅས་པ་ལོ་ཚེ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཆེད་དུ་མཉམ་འབྲེལ་གྱིས་ཐབ་མེད་དེ་མཉམ་ཡུལ་གཅིག་པའི་ནང་པ་མང་ཚུལ་པ་རྒྱམས་འདུས་ཆོག་པུ་པའི་རང་
དབང་གི་ཚོགས་པ་ཞིག་ཡིན།

ཆོགས་པ་དེ་ཞི་བདེ་དེད་ཆེད་ཀྱི་ལས་ཀྱི་ལམ་ལ་ མཁོན་པོ་གང་ཉིད་ནས་དེ་དུས་ནས་ད་ཆེད་བར་དུ་ལག་ལྟོས་ལས་སྒྲུབ་དང་ཐུགས་ཆེད་ཐུགས་
ཀྱིན་ཀྱིས་ཐུག་སྐྱོད་མཛད་ཅིང་མཆོས་ཀྱི་ལས་ལ་ཀྱིན་པར་མཛད་ནས་ད་བར་ཆོས་དུ་ལོག་པར་ཆད་ཅིང་ཀྱི་ལག་ལྟོས་ཆེ་ཞུ་རྒྱུ་ཡིན། ལེ་མཁོན་
པོ་མཆོག་གི་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཐུགས་ཆེད་ཀྱི་ཆོས་དང་མཐུན་ལས་ཀྱིས་ད་ཆེད་ཞི་བདེ་དང་ཞི་བདེ་དེད་ཆེད་པ་དེ་ཀྱིད་ཀྱི་ལས་ཆོར་དང་ལྷ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་མཐུང་དུ་
འལེལ་རྒྱས་འགོ་རྒྱུར་ཡིད་ཆེས་ཆེན་པོ་ཡོད།

ਅਰਥ: ੧) ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਸਹੂਲਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਉਪਬੰਧਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਰਤਣ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਧੀਨ ਰੱਖਣਾ।

ཞེས་ཞེ་ཤི་ཡའི་ནང་པའི་ཞི་བདེའི་འཕུས་མི་ཚོགས་པའི་གཙོ་འཛིན། བཀའ་བཅུ་

ཆོས་ཀྱི་མཆོ་ནལ།

[illegible]

Message of greetings (in Tibetan) on the 90th Birthday of ABCP Patron, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama from Gabju D. Chojijams, President of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace,
dated 6 July 2025

Below is the unofficial translation from Tibetan into English of the congratulatory message of Most Ven D. Choijamts, President of ABCP sent on 5 July 2025 on the auspicious occasion of the 90th Birthday of ABCP Patron, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Birthday Letter to His Holiness the Dalai Lama

With due respect to the Most Noble and Supreme Vajradhara, Holder of the Threefold Lotus, Regent of the Sage of this World, Great Teacher of the Twenty-First Century, Incomparable Great Friend of All Beings Including Gods, Great Captain of World Peace, Universal Spiritual Leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the All-Knowing and All-Seeing Supreme One at Your Lotus Feet we prostrate with the three doors of reverence.

On this auspicious day of the 90th birthday celebration of our gracious root guru, the Great Captain of World Peace - His Holiness the Guide of Gods and Humans, the Refuge Lord, the All-Knowing and All-Seeing Supreme One - whose actual name is the Venerable Jampal Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, the Incomparable Glorious One Who Wields Power Over the Three Realms - we welcome this occasion with joy, faith, and delight, and offer countless heartfelt congratulations and auspicious greetings from the depths of our hearts.

We express our deepest respect and admiration for the immeasurable great activities and efforts that His Holiness the Precious Victorious One has accomplished throughout the world in the areas of democracy, human rights and freedom, religious and cultural practices, loving-kindness and compassion, non-violent methods, environmental protection and sustainable living. The wonderful deeds through which His Holiness, through Your blessings and the nectar of Your teachings, has led countless disciples on the path of enlightenment and liberation are beyond what worldly minds can comprehend.

The Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace was first established in 1970 as an independent organization bringing together Buddhist practitioners with the shared deep goal of promoting world peace and harmony, upholding righteous religion, and protecting and strengthening the valuable cultural traditions of various peoples.

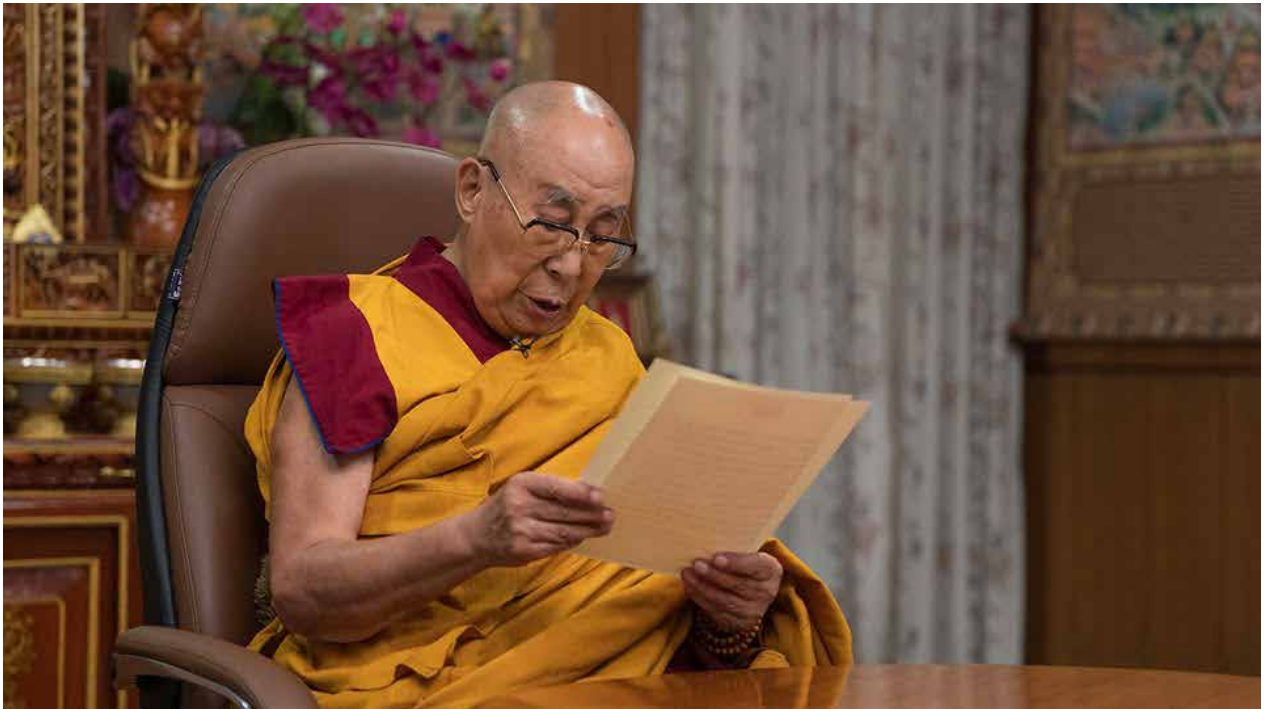
For the peace activities of our organization, His Holiness has continuously provided guidance, teachings, and the supreme refuge of compassion from that time until now. Through Your compassionate blessings and power, You have continuously supported our peace and welfare activities and work, and have given us spiritual strength and encouragement to continue together until now—for this immeasurable and incomparable kindness, we express our gratitude. We have great confidence that His Holiness will continue to flourish.

In conclusion, we offer our single-pointed prayers and aspirations that Your activities and enlightened deeds may pervade in all directions.

ABCP President, Gabju Dembereliin Choijamts,
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. 5 July 2025”

English translation courtesy of the CTA National Center of ABCP.

ABCP welcomes the Statement Affirming the Continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama reading out the statement affirming the continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama, during the 90th birthday celebrations held in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India on 3 July 2025. (Photo: Department of Religion and Culture, CTA)

ABCP welcomed the statement affirming the continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama, which once again confirmed the firm position of ABCP on the matter, which was supported by the overwhelming majority of delegates to the 12th ABCP General Assembly held in New Delhi, India on 17-18 January 2024. The 12th General Assembly of ABCP also confirmed the commitment of ABCP to stick to the three-point resolution on the future status of the Dalai Lama institution, adopted at the 13th meeting of the Executive Council of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace, which was held in Colombo Sri Lanka on 14 January 2021

The ABCP Colombo 2021 Resolution, adopted by the Executive Council meeting: ABCP Executive Council meeting supported the statement made by Ven. Karma Gelek, President, National Center, Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamshala, India with regard to the following 3-point resolution on the future of the Dalai Lama institute:

1. To continue the Institution and Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the future;
2. The incumbent 14th Dalai Lama to be the sole authority of how the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should return, and the Tibetan people never to recognize any Dalai Lama reincarnation candidate chosen and installed by the Chinese government; and,
3. To employ the eight centuries old unique Tibetan traditional method in searching and recognizing the next Dalai Lama.

The Statement Affirming the Continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama



THE DALAI LAMA

༄༅། །ཀུན་གྱིས་སྒོ་མང་འབཛེན། ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༠༡༡ ལྷ་ ༤ ཚེས་ ༢༤ ལ་པོད་བརྒྱད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཆ་ཆེན་ཁག་གི་
ཆོགས་འདུར་གོ་བསྟར་དང་འབྲེལ། གཞིས་ཁྱིམ་པོད་མིས་མཆོན་པོད་བརྒྱད་ནང་བསྟན་གྱི་ཆེས་འཇུག་ཀུན་དང་།
པོད་དང་པོད་མིར་འབྲེལ་ཆགས་འཇིག་རྟེན་སྤེལ་འོས་ལ་བསྒྲིབ་པའི་ངོས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱགས་གཏམ་གྱི་ནང་ "འབྲུང་
འབྱུར་དུ་ལའི་ཆ་མའི་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་རྒྱན་མཐུད་དགོས་མིན་དང་ལྷན་མང་ཆོགས་ཀྱིས་ཐག་གཅོད་དགོས་པའི་གསལ་
བསྐྱགས་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ཚེས་ནས་བྱས་ཆེན" རྒྱུ་དང་། ཡང་ "ངོས་རང་རྩེ་དགེ་འདུན་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་དགྲ་བྱེད་ས་
ཅས་དུ་མོན་སྐབས་ཆོས་བརྒྱད་ཆ་ཆེན་ཁག་དང་པོད་མིས་མཆོན་པོད་ལ་ཡོད་དང་ལྷན་མང་ཆོགས་ལ་གོ་བསྟར་
གྱིས་ལྷུལ་དབང་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་རྒྱན་མཐུད་དགོས་མིན་བསྟར་ཞིབ་དང་ཐག་གཅོད་བྱེད་འཆར་ཡིན།" ཞེས་གསལ་བ་
ལྟར། བར་སྐབས་འདི་ནས་དང་ལྷན་མང་ཆོགས་ལ་དམིགས་བསལ་གོ་བསྟར་བྱ་རྒྱུ་མ་བྱུང་བྱུང་། འདས་པའི་ལོ་ངོ་
བཅུ་བཞི་ལོ་ངོ་ཆོས་བརྒྱད་ཁག་གི་དབུ་འཇུག་ཆ་ཆེན་རྣམས་པ་དང་། པོད་མའི་སྤྱི་གཞུང་གསལ་གྱི་འཇུག་ཆོགས་དང་
དམིགས་བསལ་ཆོགས་ཆེན། འཛིན་སྲོད་དང་གཞུང་འབྲེལ་མིན་པའི་ཆོགས་པ་ཁག་ ཉི་མ་ལ་ཡའི་རི་རྒྱུད། ཆེན་པོ་
ཉོར་དང་བུ་སྤེལ་ཁོངས་ཀྱི་ནང་པའི་ལུལ་དགོན། རྒྱ་ནག་སྐྱམ་ས་མོགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་རིགས་དང་ཨེ་ཤ་ཡའི་ནང་པའི་
རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཁག་གི་དང་ལྷན་མི་མང་བཅས་ནས་དང་ཆ་ཆེན་ལ་ལྷུལ་དབང་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་རྒྱན་མཐུད་དགོས་པའི་མཛོན་
འདོད་རྒྱུ་མཆོན་དང་སྐྱགས་ཉི་ལྷག་ཐོག་ནས་ཞུ་སྤྱོད་ནན་པོ་བྱུང་བ་དང་། ལྷག་བར་དུ་གཞིས་ཁྱིམ་པོད་མི་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་
མང་པོས་ཐབས་ལམ་སྤྱོད་ཆོགས་བརྒྱད་དེ་ཡིག་ངག་གཉིས་ཐོག་ནས་རེ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་པ་ལྟར། ལྷུལ་དབང་
སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་རྒྱན་མཐུད་དགོས་པ་འབྲེལ་ཡོད་མང་ཆོགས་ཀྱི་མཛོན་འདོད་བཅས་མིན་གྱི་ལམ་ནས་ཐག་གཅོད་བྱས་པར་
ངོས་འཛིན་གྱིས་དེ་དོན་ཡོང་བའི་མོས་མཐུན་བྱེད། ལྷུལ་དབང་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་ན་རིམ་ངོས་འཛིན་བྱེད་ཚུགས་ཐང་
བསྐྱགས་གཏམ་སྒོན་མའི་ནང་གསལ་བཞིན། ཡང་མིང་ངོས་འཛིན་གྱི་བྱེད་སྤྱོད་འགན་འཁུར་གཅོད་པོ་དུ་ལའི་
ཆ་མའི་ཆ་བྱེད་དགའ་ལྷན་པོ་བྱེད་ཡིད་ཆེས་དགེ་འདུན་ལྷན་འགན་འཛིན་རྣམས་ལ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཁོ་ཆོས་
པོད་བརྒྱད་ནང་བསྟན་ཆོས་བརྒྱད་ཁག་གི་དབུ་འཇུག་ཆ་ཆེན་རྣམས་པ་དང་། ལྷུལ་དབང་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་ན་རིམ་དང་ལུས་
དང་གི་བ་བཞིན་འཇུགས་པའི་དམ་ལྷན་ཆོས་སྤྱང་ཁག་ལ་སྐབས་བསྟན་ལམ་སྤྱོད་ཞུས་ཉི་ཡང་སྤྱོད་ཅད་གཅོད་
ངོས་འཛིན་སྤྱོད་སྤེལ་བཞིན་བྱ་རྒྱུ་ལས། གཞན་སྤྱི་ཁྱེད་ཐེ་བྱས་མི་ཆོག་པའི་གནས་བབས་ལ་འབྱུར་བ་གང་ཡང་
མེད་པ་བཅས་ཀུན་གྱིས་ཡིད་འཇགས་གིས། རྒྱ་རམ་ས་ལ་ནས་ཤུག་པའི་དགེ་སྤྱོད་ཆོས་སྤྱོད་དུ་ལའི་ཆ་མ་
བསྟན་འཛིན་རྒྱ་མཆོས་པོད་རྒྱལ་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ རབ་བྱུང་བཅུ་བདུན་པའི་ཤིང་སྤྱི་ལྷ་ ༣ ཚེས་ ༢༤ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩
ལྷ་ ༥ ཚེས་ ༢༡ ལ་བྱས་པ་དགེ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག །།

Handwritten signature in Tibetan script.



The Statement Affirming the Continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama

(Translated from the original Tibetan)

On 24 September 2011, at a meeting of the heads of Tibetan spiritual traditions, I made a statement to fellow Tibetans in and outside Tibet, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, and those who have a connection with Tibet and Tibetans, regarding whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue. I stated, “As far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama’s reincarnations should continue in the future.”

I also said, “When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, to re-evaluate whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue.”

Although I have had no public discussions on this issue, over the last 14 years leaders of Tibet’s spiritual traditions, members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, participants in a Special General Body Meeting, members of the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs, Buddhists from the Himalayan region, Mongolia, Buddhist republics of the Russian Federation and Buddhists in Asia including mainland China, have written to me with reasons, earnestly requesting that the institution of

the Dalai Lama continue. In particular, I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet making the same appeal. In accordance with all these requests, I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.

The process by which a future Dalai Lama is to be recognized has been clearly established in the 24 September 2011 statement which states that responsibility for doing so will rest exclusively with members of the Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should accordingly carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition.

I hereby reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter.

Dalai Lama
Dharamshala, 21 May 2025

Historic Homecoming of the Sacred Piprahwa Relics: A Civilisational Repatriation Orchestrated by India's Cultural Diplomacy



Photo above: The sacred Piprahwa Relics on display after repatriation

*By Prof. Arvind Kumar Singh,
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(Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, India)*

In a moment of deep civilisational significance and cultural resurgence, the Sacred Relics of the Buddha, originally excavated from Piprahwa, present situated in Siddharth Nagar District of Uttar Pradesh, in 1898, have been brought back to India after 127 years. This momentous repatriation marks a watershed in India's efforts to reclaim and preserve its spiritual and cultural heritage. The return of the relics was facilitated through a high-level diplomatic effort led by the Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with coordinated initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the International Buddhist

Confederation (IBC).

The Sacred Relics were discovered in 1898 by British civil engineer William Claxton Peppe, who undertook an excavation at the Piprahwa stupa in the Basti district near the Indo-Nepal border, Mahabhiniskramana (Leaving the palace in search of truth). Among the discoveries were a stone coffer and a series of smaller reliquaries that held crystalline caskets, gold and garnet jewellery, and charred human remains. The Piprahwa relic casket bears an important Brahmi inscription in early Prakrit, not in classical Pāli which says, “*Sukiti bhatinika-sa bhagavato sakiyanam sa-puta-dalanam iyam salila-nidhane bhagavato saki-*

A Historic Event



The bringing of the sacred Piprahwa Relics

yanam” translated as “This relic-depository of the Lord (Bhagavā) is that of the Śākyas, the brothers, the sons, the relatives of the Blessed One.” However, it is also rendered as “*Ayaṃ Bhagavato dhātunidhānaṃ Śākiyānaṃ bhātūnaṃ, puttānaṃ ca ñātīnaṃ*” as per Pāli version it means “This is a relic depository of the Blessed One, belonging to the Śākyas, his brothers, sons, and relatives.” Most significantly widely interpreted to refer to the relics of the Śākyas, the kinsmen of the Buddha. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence pointed to these relics being among the earliest and most authentic remains associated with the Buddha’s mortal body, enshrined by the Śākyas themselves. The discovery established Piprahwa as one of the earliest known Buddhist stupa sites in the Indian subcontinent and marked it as a cornerstone of the Buddha’s post-parinirvana legacy.

Following the discovery, a significant portion of the relics and accompanying objects were shipped to Britain under colonial auspices. Over the decades, these sacred artefacts found their way into private collections and museums, far removed from the cultural and spiritual geography of their origin. For many decades, the relics remained outside public and religious access in India, symbolizing a broader narrative of colonial era displacement of sacred heritage. In a recent and startling development, Sotheby’s auction house in Hong Kong announced the auctioning of the Piprahwa relic jewellery, including intricately crafted gold, garnet, and crystal ornaments from the 1898 ex-

cavation. The proposed auction, which was to include some of the most historically significant devotional offerings, triggered a wave of concern among Buddhist communities and cultural heritage scholars across the globe. This development served as a clarion call for India to act decisively and reclaim its sacred treasures before they were scattered into private hands once more. In response to this urgent situation, the Government of India swiftly mobilized its diplomatic and cultural channels. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a multi-pronged effort was launched to halt the sale and secure the return of the relics. The Ministry of Culture, in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs and India’s diplomatic missions in Hong Kong and London, entered into dialogue with Sotheby’s, heritage custodians, and private holders. These efforts were diplomatically sensitive, as they involved tracing provenance, asserting cultural ownership, and appealing to moral and ethical standards of heritage repatriation.

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), an autonomous and grantee body under the Ministry of Culture, played a crucial role in this initiative with its global network of Buddhist organizations, scholars, and monastic leaders, the IBC acted as a spiritual and cultural bridge. It facilitated dialogues, brought moral and international Buddhist pressure against the sale of the relics, and worked hand-in-hand with government agencies to ensure a respectful and dignified homecoming. Abhijit Halder, Director General of IBC and a former diplomat, stated: “The return of the Piprahwa relics is not just a matter of archaeology or heritage, it is the return of a living faith’s most sacred memory. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India has shown how diplomacy can be rooted in dharma.” The relics were officially brought back to India today (July 30, 2025), following successful negotiations that avoided the public auction and ensured a dignified transfer. The return was commemorated in a formal reception organized by the Ministry of Culture, attended by Buddhist monks, heritage officials, diplomats, and scholars. It was a moment of solemn reverence and national pride. In a symbolic gesture, the relics are placed at the National Museum, New Delhi, for public veneration and educational exhibitions before their likely enshrinement at a prominent Buddhist site, possibly Sarnath, Kushinagar, or Lumbini-Kapilavastu Corridor, reinforcing India’s role as the custodian of the Buddha’s legacy.

This repatriation is emblematic of the Indian

A Historic Event



Photos on this page: Paying respects to the sacred Piprahwa Relics



government's broader vision of "*Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi*", a commitment to development that honors civilisational values. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has emerged as a proactive agent in heritage diplomacy, securing the return of stolen idols, manuscripts, and sacred relics from across the globe. India's Buddhist diplomacy, particularly since 2014, has strategically focused on restoring ancient linkages with Buddhist-majority countries, organizing global relic exhibitions, and fostering academic, spiritual, and tourism initiatives across the Buddhist Circuit. The return of the Piprahwa relics now stands as a testament to this vision. The homecoming of the Piprahwa relics is not just about correcting a historical wrong, it is about re-establishing sacred connections that were violently disrupted by colonialism. It is about re-invigorating India's spiritual leadership in the Buddhist world and reinforcing its position as the birthplace of the Buddha and cradle of his teachings. It is not wrong to say that "This is not just a return of sacred relics, but it is the return of India's soul." India calls upon the global community to join in celebrating this spiritual and cultural milestone and to recognize the ethical imperative of returning sacred heritage to its rightful cultural and geographical context. ■

Text and photos: Courtesy of the International Buddhist Confederation, India

ABCP Congratulates Nihon Hidankyo – the 2024 Nobel Peace Laureate

Japan Religious Persons Council for Peace, the parent organization of the ABCP Japan National Center, has maintained a cooperative relationship for years with Nihon Hidankyo, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2024.

Founded in 1956, the local association of survivors of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, also known as Hibakusha in Japanese, along with victims of nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific formed The Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, shortened in Japanese to Nihon Hidankyo. This grassroots movement soon became the largest and most widely representative Hibakusha organization in Japan.

Two American atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, which killed approximately 120 000 people. A comparable number died later of burn and radiation injuries. It is estimated that 650 000 people survived the attacks and their fate was long concealed and ignored until the foundation Nihon Hidankyo.

The Japan ABCP National Center has been conducting movements for nuclear disarmament and the pursuit of peace in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and New York and Ven. Kyokey Ono, the center's International Relations Officer and Chief Priest of Fujisan Daijobou, from Nichiren-shu in Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa, Japan.

The “Nihon Hidankyo is receiving the Peace Prize for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again” according

to the official Press Release of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

ABCP since its foundation in June 1970, through its National Centers, has been raising its voice for nuclear disarmament, against the arms race and for world peace and security.

Most Ven. D. Choijamts, ABCP President, on 14 October 2024, sent a message to Nihon Hidankyo soon after the announcement that it has been awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize “for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weap-

ABCP President for the congratulatory message, further noting “We have translated it (the congratulatory message) into Japanese and already distributed it to all members of the ABCP Japan Center. Additionally, it will be featured in our monthly publication along with a copy of the original PDF”

Mukunda Bista, Secretary of the Nepal ABCP National Center in his mail noted “Thank you for sharing this inspiring news. It is a profound pleasure to learn that Nihon Hidankyo has been honored with the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize in recogni-



Ven. Kyokey Ono in Oslo during the Nobel Peace prize awarding ceremony, (Photo courtesy of Ven. Kyokey Ono)

ons must never be used again.”

The ABCP HQ received a reply message from Nihon Hidankyo thanking ABCP for the message. It also received reaction from ABCP National Centers.

The Japan ABCP National Center in its mail thanked the

tion of their noble efforts toward a world free of nuclear weapons. The ABCP Nepal Chapter joins in celebrating this extraordinary achievement,” and this feeling was joined also by the Bhutan, Bangladesh and India ABCP National Centers. ■



ASIAN BUDDHISTS CONFERENCE FOR PEACE

Ref. No. 25

Date: 14 October 2024

Congratulatory Message to Nihon Hidankyo for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024

On behalf of the members – National Centers and the Headquarters of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace (ABCP), I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations to Nihon Hidankyo for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2024.

ABCP is an international organization of Asian Buddhists, on roster with the UN ECOSOC, which was founded in 1970 to strengthening universal peace, unity, justice and human dignity, and protecting the environment and nature.

It has 20 member National Centers in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Central Tibetan Administration in India, India, Japan (Japan Religious Persons Council for Peace), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.


ABCP, since its inception, through its National centers, has been making continuous efforts to promote peace and security, and to advance disarmament and prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

ABCP took part in the UN General Assembly Special Session of Disarmament held in 1982, and its member, specifically, the Japan National Center for ABCP has been holding meetings and events to advance disarmament and put an end to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Article 1.2.7 of the Charter of the ABCP states that "It will support efforts for peaceful co-existence of countries of the world without wars and conflicts, it will advance disarmament and work towards the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons."

Today, when global peace and security are faced with the continuous threat of nuclear outbreak, ABCP expresses its solidarity with and support to Nihon Hidankyo in its work, and joins in the appraisal of the Nobel Committee, which commended Nihon Hidankyo "for its work to "achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again."



Most Ven. Gabju Demberel Chojamts, 
President of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace

ABCP, Ulaanbaatar 38, Mongolia 16040, email: abcpqhqs@gmail.com, website: <https://www.abcp.mn>

Bangladesh Celebrates the 90th Birthday of ABCP Patron, HH the Dalai Lama



Photo top: Members of the Executive Committee of ABCP Bangladesh National Center (Chapter II) present on the occasion of celebrating the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at International Buddhist Monastery Merul Badda in Dhaka.

ABCP Bangladesh National Center celebrated the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama with due respect and prayer highlighting Universal Day of Compassion, the main theme of the birthday celebration.

Mr. Jibananda Barua, President, Mr. Dibbendu Bikash Chowdhury Barua, Mr. Shakya Prio Barua, Vice President, Mr.

Goutam Arindam Barua, Secretary General and other Executives of the Center spoke on the occasion. The celebration was held in the International Buddhist Monastery Merul Badda Dhaka. Residential monks and Most Venerables also took part in the discussion and prayed for World Peace and disarmament. The speakers highlighted the

commitment of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to peace and non-violence.

Professor Mrs. Jharna Barua, Social Welfare Secretary and Mrs. Sangeeta Barua, Women and Children Welfare Secretary also spoke on the occasion. ABCP Bangladesh National Center also prayed for His Holiness's long life. ■

ABCP National Centers - Bangladesh



Photo top left: Jibanananda Barua, President of ABCP Bangladesh National Center speaking on the occasion. Photo top right: Goutam Arindam Barua, Secretary General of the ABCP Bangladesh National Center speaking on the occasion. Photo below: Residential Monks and Most Venerables of the International Buddhist Monastery



World Peace Conference



A three-day World Peace Conference 2025, held in Leh, Ladakh from August 23–25, was organised by the Mahabodhi International Meditation Center (MIMC), Leh, in collaboration with the Ladakh Shanti Stupa, the ABCP-Indian National Center, and several partner organisations. This was for the first time that such a gathering was organised in Leh, Ladakh, a Himalayan region of India. The conference was convened to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



The inaugural session was held at MIMC with delegates from India and abroad, including participants from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka and it began by holding interfaith prayers. Ven. Bhikkhu Sanghaseena, President of MIMC (Photo top left) made the keynote address and extended a hearty welcome to all the delegates. The opening featured the unveiling of statues symbolizing peace, a gift from Japan, followed by special prayers for global peace. The dedication ceremony was led by Ven. Koya Matsuoka of Susuno Komyoji Temple, Japan. Mr. Tashi Gyalson, Chairman & CEC, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh was the Chief Guest.



Special messages from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and ABCP President Khensur Gabju Demberel Choijamts were read out by Shri Sonam Wangchuk Shaksपो, both of which deeply inspired the audience.

The second day's deliberations took place at the Thiksey Monastery, where participants presented papers on world peace

and environmental conservation. In the evening, a World Peace March (photo right) was organised in Leh. Beginning at Leh Gate and concluding at the Main Mosque, the march brought together delegates and hundreds of local citizens. At the public gathering, speakers from socio-religious organisations reflected on the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and called for global peace, unity, and social harmony.

The closing ceremony was planned outdoors at the Shanti Stupa, but due to unprecedented rainfall it was shifted indoors. The valedictory session was graced by Mr. Abhijeet Haldar, Director General of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), New Delhi, (opposite page, photo below third) who was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Blessings were also offered by Khensur Rinpoche Lobzang Tsetan. Among the dignitaries present were Shri Ghulam Mehd, Hon'ble Executive Councillor, LAHDC Leh (opposite page, photo second), Ms. Halena Dolma, Ambassador Deepak Vohra, Dr. P.R. Trivedi, Dr. Vijay Dhasmana, Dr. Markandey Rai, Shri C. Phuntsog, Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo, and Shri Tsering Samphel, along with international delegation.

The ceremony began with prayers led by Most Venerable Gyomo Nakamura, Chief Patron of the Ladakh Shanti Stupa in the Japanese tradition, joined by members of the All Ladakh Gonpa Association. These collective prayers embodied the spirit of interfaith harmony and global solidarity that defined the entire conference.

In his valedictory speech, Ven. Bhikkhu Sanghasena expressed deep gratitude to the delegates and organisations, and stressed the urgent need for humanity to embrace compas-



sion, dialogue, and cooperation as the foundations of peace. He also presented the official report, highlighting outcomes such as: the call for global unity and interfaith collaboration, promotion of sustainable peace-building initiatives and environmental conservation, especially among the youth. Shri Abhijeet Haldar, in his address, praised the collaborative spirit of the event and reminded the gathering about the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He also recalled the pivotal role of Ven. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in the establishment of the Ladakh Shanti Stupa, his lifelong contributions to peace, and his involvement in founding ABCP. Dr. P.R. Trivedi and Dr. Vijay Dhasmana also expressed satisfaction with the deliberations.

The conference concluded with the adoption of a unanimous "Ladakh Peace Declaration", read by Shri Tsering Samphel, Secretary, Ladakh Shanti Stupa, Leh marking a historic milestone for the gathering.

The closing ceremony also featured devotional performances by Shri Tundup Dorje Stakmo, Ms. Padma Dolkar, and their troupe, which enriched the spiritual atmosphere of the event. The final highlight was a soulful flute recital by Japanese maestro Okano Hiroki, leaving participants with a sense of serenity and renewed hope for a compassionate and peaceful world. ■

A Report by Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo, Deputy Secretary General of ABCP, Secretary, ABCP Indian National Center

The Gandhi of Ladakh

By Sonam Wangchuk, Indian National Center for ABCP



The newly unveiled statue of HH the late Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in Leh, Ladakh, India

A grand ceremony was held in Leh, Ladakh, on 19th May 2025, to unveil a 12-foot bronze statue of His Holiness Kushok Bakula Rinpoche.

The event was graced by the presence of several distinguished dignitaries, including Shri Kiren Rijju, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Government of India; Hon'ble Brig. (Dr.) B.D. Mishra (Retd), Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh; Kyabje Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche, Venerable Head Lama of Pethub Monastery; and Adv. Tashi Gyalson, the Chief Executive Councillor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh.

His Holiness Kushok Bakula Rinpoche (1917–2003) was a towering spiritual figure, statesman, and social reformer—widely revered not only in

Ladakh but across the Buddhist world. Recognised as the 19th incarnation of Arhat Bakula, one of the sixteen great disciples of the Buddha, Rinpoche dedicated his life to the service of humanity through the paths of spirituality, public life, and education.

Born into the royal family of Matho in Ladakh in 1917, he was recognised by the 13th Dalai Lama as the 19th reincarnation of Bakula Arhat, and from a young age, he embodied deep spiritual wisdom and compassion.

Rinpoche's life was a rare synthesis of spiritual depth, social reform, and public service. Ordained as a monk, he received rigorous training in Buddhist philosophy and was widely respected as a scholar and teacher. Yet, he went far beyond the traditional monastic role, devoting himself to the upliftment of Ladakh—particularly in the fields of education, social reform, and political empowerment.

As a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), and later as India's Ambassador to Mongolia, Rinpoche championed the rights of the people of Ladakh and played a pivotal role in reconnecting Mongolia with its lost Buddhist heritage after decades of suppression. His contributions were nationally recognised with the Padma Bhushan in 1988, one of India's highest civilian honours.

A guiding light in the rebuilding of Ladakh after India's independence, Rinpoche laid the foundation of many institutions—schools, and monasteries. He was a strong advocate for education, especially for girls and children from disadvantaged communities, and played a key role in revitalising the Buddhist Sangha across the Himalayan region.

Rinpoche was deeply committed to non-violence, interfaith harmony, and moral integrity, inspiring generations of Ladakhis and Buddhists across the Himalayan and Central Asian regions. His life was marked by humility, wisdom, and tireless service, and his legacy continues to shape the spiritual and social fabric of Ladakh and beyond.

In recognition of his lifelong commitment to unity, the preservation of Ladakh's unique iden-



High-ranking Indian government dignitaries at the unveiling of the statue of HH the Late Kushok Bakula Rinpoche. Photos by Sonam Wangchuk

tity, and the development of the region, His Holiness the Dalai Lama once described him as the “Gandhi of Ladakh.”

Rinpoche was an outspoken advocate for inter-religious harmony, world peace, and environmental protection. He was a founding member of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, headquartered in Mongolia—one of the oldest international Buddhist organisations. Actively engaged with Mongolia and the Buddhist regions of Russia, he

spearheaded efforts to revive Buddhism across these lands. In recognition of his service, the President of Mongolia awarded him the prestigious ‘Polar Star’ in 2001.

As part of the unveiling ceremony, the book “Kushok Bakula Rinpoche: The Architect of Modern Ladakh – Life and Times”, authored by Mr. Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo, was formally launched.

The occasion was further honoured by the presence of

H.E. Ambassador Ganbold Dambajav, who addressed the gathering and delivered the official message of H.E. Mr. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, President of Mongolia.

Goodwill messages were also received from Most Venerable Geshe Lharampa Jebtsundorj, Nomun Khan and Khambo lama of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery, the center of Mongolian Buddhists; Most Venerable Damba Ayushyev, Pandito Khambo lama of Russia, and the Most Ven. Demberel Chojamts, President, Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace.

Throughout his life, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche remained a beacon of moral integrity, humility, and service. His enduring commitment to non-violence, interfaith understanding, and universal compassion continues to inspire people across the Himalayan and Central Asian regions.

Even today, his memory lives on—not only through monuments and institutions—but in the hearts of all those whose lives he touched through his wisdom, actions, and selfless example. ■

Footnote: His Holiness Kushok Bakula Rinpoche served as the Ambassador of the Republic of India in Mongolia from 1989 to 2000. He was the only foreign Ambassador who served the longest in Mongolia, during which period, he played an instrumental role in helping revive Buddhism, the religion of the Mongols over centuries, which had been repressed and outlawed in the early 1930's by the then communist rulers under the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. He also served as the President of ABCP.

ABCP Nepal Activities - in Photos



UN Meditation Day celebration;

As December 21 was declared the UN Meditation Day, ABCP Nepal organised a meditation session on 21 December 2024 in Kathmandu to mark the day. A total of 120 persons, people of all ages, men and women and also monks, took part in the two-hour meditation sessions.



Helping cancer patients (Photo left)

Recently financial help was provided to a very poor cancer patient from a remote village Mr. Dilli Raj Dangi. 23 December 2024.

Several other such patients were also financially supported last year.

Providing warm blankets to the extremely poor (Photos below)

Every winter lots of extremely poor people die due to harsh cold waves in the Terai region of Nepal, especially the poor Dalit families who are still treated as untouchables by the upper caste rich people. Every year, the Nepal National Center for ABCP, distributes warm blankets to save their lives. This year also 800 blankets were distributed to the poor Dalit families in Rautahat district. 28 December 2024 to 8 January 2025.





Basic Buddhist Teaching

A one-day teaching session on basic Buddhism was organised in Kathmandu on September 5, 2024. There were 250 participants in total. Photo left



Seminar

A one-day development and opportunity of Bhot Buddhist studies was conducted in collaboration with Lumbini Buddhist University on 26 August 2024. Total participants included 150 teachers and professors. (Photo left)



Opportunities and challenges in Himalayan Buddhist Education

A one-day discussion program on opportunities and challenges in Himalayan Buddhist Education was organised on 9 November 2024. Total participants 50. (Photo left)

Children meditation class

A basic meditation class for children was conducted on 1 May 2025. 50 children took part in the meditation class. (photo right).



General Convention of Nepal Buddhist federation

A paper on the Development of Buddhist Education school and Universities of Nepal was discussed during the Seventh General Convention of Nepal Buddhist Federation, which was held on 5 September 2024. A total of 220 participants took part in the Convention. (Photo right)

(Photos: Courtesy of the
Nepal National Center for
ABCP)



THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK





Photos on opposite page, top left: Guests and participants to the 20th UN Day of Vesak being greeted and welcomed at the entrance; opposite page, photo top right: The Vesak decorations; Opposite page, photo below: Guests and participants in the Vesak celebration. Photos on this page: Top left and right: Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav, Secretary General of ABCP presented a gift, a hand-drawn "Thangka" painting of Amitabha Buddha to Most Ven. Thich Thien Nhon, Executive President of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and President of National Organising Committee for UNDV 2025, and photo top right below: Participants from Mongolia in the UN Day of Vesak celebrations.

The ABCP HQ and the ABCP National Centers took part in the 20th UN Day of Vesak, which was held in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam on 6-8 May 2025, organised by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and the International Council for Day of Vesak (ICDV).

It was a grand event attended by participants from 85 countries and hundreds of monks, nuns and lay people from Vietnam.

The ABCP HQ was represented by its Secretary General, Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav, who read out the message of greetings of the ABCP Presi-

dent, Khensur Khambo, Most Ven. Gabju D. Chojamts.

Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav also presented to His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon, Executive President of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and President of National Organising Committee for UNDV 2025 a Thangka depicting the Amitābha Buddha (Vietnamese: Phật A Di Đà). The thangka was painted by a Mongolian thangka master Enkhtaivan from the Zanabazar Buddhist University of the Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, one of the 20 National Centers of ABCP.

ABCP HQ on behalf of the ABCP National Centers thanks the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and the International Council for Day of Vesak (ICDV) for the opportunity to take part in the preparations of the UNDV and also take part in the UNDV in Ho Chi Minh city, which was a grand success and we would also like to congratulate both the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and the International Council for Day of Vesak (ICDV) great work they had done to celebrate Vesak in such a grand manner. ■

ABCP National Centers - Bangladesh

New Executive Committee members of Bangladesh ABCP National Center One Elected

Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha (BBKPS), the National Center One of ABCP in Bangladesh has informed that new 65 (sixty-five) Office Bearers or the Members of the Executive Committee of the organisation - Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha were elected at the Sangha's last Annual General Convention and Election, which were held on 10 January, 2025. The new members of the Executive Committee have been elected for three years. This was informed by Ven. Buddhapriya Mahathero, Vice-President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB), Thailand, and President of the Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha – National Center One.

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BANGLADESH BOUDDHA KRISTI PRACHAR SANGHA

ESTD: 1949, Regd. No. 974

BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

(Regional Centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Bangladesh & Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, Bangladesh Centre)

HEAD QUARTERS: Dharmarajika Maha Vihar, Atisha Dipankar Road, Sabujbag, Dhaka-1214, BANGLADESH

Ref:

Date:

10.08.2025

**Senior most position of running new Central Committee of
Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha (BBKPS), Dhaka, Bangladesh
(Period from 10th January, 2025 to 9th January, 2028)**

No.	Name	Designation
1.	Most Ven. Buddhapriya Mahathero	President
2.	Ven. Abhayananda Mahathero	Senior Vice-President
3.	Mr. Deva Priya Barua	Senior Vice-President
4.	Mr. Ranjit Kumar Barua	Vice-President
5.	Ven. Swarupananda Bhikkhu	Vice-President
6.	Ven. Sumittananda Mahathero	Vice-President
7.	Prof. Dr. Suman Kanti Barua	Secretary General
8.	Mr. Anupam Barua	Joint Secretary General
9.	Mr. Bishwajit Barua	Joint Secretary General
10.	Mr. Pritish Ranjan Barua	Finance Secretary
11.	Prof. Dr. Subrata Baran Barua	Organizing Secretary

(Ven. Buddhapriya Mahathero)

Vice-President

The World Fellowship of Buddhists(WFB), Thailand,

President, Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha

(WFB Regional Centre & ABCP National Centre of Bangladesh)

Vice-President, Bangladesh Bouddha Bhikkhu Mahasabha

and

Chief Priest

Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery

Atisha Dipankar Road(Sanghanayaka Suddhananda Road)

Basabo, Sabujbagh

Dhaka-1214, Bangladesh.



"HUMAN RIGHTS – A CULTURAL HERITAGE"



An event called “Human Rights – A Cultural Heritage” was held on 4 October 2024 as a side event of the on-going UN Human Rights Council 57th Session in Geneva. It was initiated by the Ulaanbaatar-based Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace (ABCP) in collaboration with Geneva-based “Dharma Alliance.”

This was the first time an NGO, especially a Buddhist NGO from Asia organised such an event during the UN Human Rights Council Regular Session.

The side event panel included and which was addressed by Most Ven. Khunkhur Byambajav, Secretary General of ABCP, H.E. Mr. David Puyana, Ambassador and Permanent Observer, UN University of Peace, Dr. Lkhagvademchig Jadamba, Senior Researcher from Mongolia, Dr. Jasdev Rai, Director of the Sikh Human Rights Group based in London, Ms. Sumedha Verma Ohja, Author and historian from India and Prof. Nicolas Levrat, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

The side event was inaugurated with a video message from Most Ven. Khen-sur Khambo, Gabju Demberel Chojamts, President of ABCP and a video message of human rights and cultural heritage was delivered by Prof. Kusum Jain from India, an advisor with Dharma Alliance.


Dharma cultures have contemplated upon human rights obligations for thousands of years and have translated this wisdom into a vast array of individual and social practices. The esteemed panel at the side event



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Eightieth session

Item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

Report of the Secretary-General


Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/180, in which the Assembly called upon States to take actions to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief. In the report, the Secretary-General highlights steps taken in that regard during the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 while observing that individuals and communities, in particular of religious or belief minorities, continue being targeted with intolerance, discrimination and violence. The Secretary-General calls upon all stakeholders to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and respect in order to create a world in which everyone, regardless of their religion or beliefs, can live free from fear, stigma and persecution.

* A/80/150.

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A report has been submitted to the UN Secretary General entitled “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief” pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/180, in which the Assembly called upon States to take actions to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to

violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief. In the report, the Secretary-General highlights steps taken in that regard during the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 while observing that individuals and communities, in particular of religious or belief minorities, continue being targeted with intolerance, discrimination and violence. The Secretary-General calls upon all stakeholders to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and respect in or-

der to create a world in which everyone, regardless of their religion or beliefs, can live free from fear, stigma and persecution.

The report called “Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms” on page 10, item 31, mentions about the side event organised jointly by ABCP HQ and Dharma Alliance. The report, in this connection, notes: “The non-governmental organisation Dharma Alliance stated that, in partnership with the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace, it had organized a side event on the theme “Human rights, a cultural heritage” during the fifty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council in October 2024. Panelists included representatives of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace, the Dharma Alliance, the National University of Mongolia, the Sikh Human Rights Group, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the University for Peace, as well as Hindu and Jain scholars. The panel shared perspectives on how Dharma cultures had contemplated human rights obligations for thousands of years and had translated that wisdom into a vast array of individual and social practices. The panel also highlighted how global norms on human rights could be enriched through key Dharma principles of harmony, mutual respect, shared prosperity and the interconnectedness of all life.”

For seeing the UN document, do to this link <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/287> and see page 10, item 31.

ABCP Headquarters

shared perspectives of how global norms on human rights can be enriched through key Dharma principles of harmony, mutual respect, shared prosperity and the interconnectedness of life.

It had a good attendance with scholars, experts and diplomats based in Geneva, including Ms. Ts. Navchaa, Councillor of the Embassy and Permanent Mission of Mongolia in Geneva.

The 4 October side event was live streamed and it was moderated by Dr. Prashant Sharma, Co-Founder of Dharma Alliance.

Most Ven. Khunkhur Byamjav, Secretary General of ABCP gave a lecture at the International center reform John Knox in Geneva on 8 October on the topic of “Right to Development vs Right to Environment.”

Drawing concrete examples, the ABCP Secretary General spoke about the teachings of Lord Buddha on how nature and environment can and must be protected. He said that there has to be inner peace in an individual to begin with and through compassion, love and harmony we can overcome anger, greed and attachment, as these three vices often lead to excessive consumerism, resulting in imbalances in the nature and environment. Greed, for example, makes people want more without thinking twice how that is going to negatively impact the nature and environment.

The ABCP delegation, during its visit to Geneva, met with officials from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN peace University, WHO Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) Unit, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, UNAOC-UN Alliance of Civilisations and "Faith for Rights" Framework of OHCHR.



80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVIVAL OF GANDAN TEGCHENLING MONASTERY



Photos top to bottom: ABCP President D. Choijamts with the Khambo Lama of Gandan Monastery, Lharanpa D. Javzandorj; Former ABCP Secretary General Ven. Bulgan lama and third photo bottom: Dashi-choiling Monastery Khambo Lama Ch. Dambajav receiving special awards and certificates of the Gandan Monastery.

Gandan Tegchenling Monastery - the Center of Mongolian Buddhists, today celebrated the 80th anniversary of its reinstatement.

Established in 1838 by the Fifth Bogd Jebzumdamba Khutuktu, the Gandan monastery was shut down in 1938 during the height of political repression and suppression of Buddhist religion in Mongolia.

It was reinstated in 1944 as a “House of Worship” and since it has functioned as the center of Mongolian Buddhists, contributing to the revival of Buddhism in the country.

The 29th Nomun Khan, Khensur Khambo of Gandan Monastery and President of ABCP, Most Ven. Gabju D Choijamts was conferred with the title of “Номч мэргэн” (Nomch Mergen) “The Learned”.

This title was also conferred on Ven. Prof. T. Bulgan, the former Secretary General of ABCP.

Khambo lama of Dashichoiling Monastery, President of National Center II of ABCP - Dashichoiling Monastery, Most Ven. Ch. Dambajav was conferred the title of “Хичээнгүй зүтгэлт” - Khicheengui Zutgelt (The Diligent).

ABCP HQ on behalf of the ABCP National Centers congratulates the Gandan Tegchenling Monastery on its 80th anniversary of revival and congratulates the recipients of the high Buddhist titles. ■

Photos from Gandan TV

FUTURE PLANS FOR ABCP DISCUSSED

ABCP President Most Ven. Khensur Khambo, Gabju D. Chojamts and Secretary General, Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav on 25 December had an informal meeting with senior Mongolian diplomats experts and scholars.

Member of Parliament and former Foreign Minister D. Tsgotbaatar, former Foreign Minister L. Erdenechuluun, Dr. D. Mönkhbat, Director, College of Politics and International Relations, Dr. D. Zolboo, Director, and Dr. D. Batsaikhan, Senior Fellow of the Institute of International Studies, Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Ven. D. Niamsambuu and Ven. M. Gankhuyag of Gandan Monastery, Political scientist D. Bayarkhüü, Buddhist scholar Ts. Tsedendamba and Scholar R. Bold took part in the informal meeting.

ABCP President, Most Ven. Gabju D. Chojamts made a brief remark covering the past, present and future of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace, an international NGO, with consultative statues with ECOSOC, and ABCP Secretary General made a presentation on ABCP and its activities from 2017 to today, when the ABCP Executive Council met in Delhi and decided to rejuvenate and revive the activities of the organisation that had slowed down considerably.

The speakers in the informal meeting noted the contribution of ABCP to global peace and security, and pointed out that it should be more pro-active in issuing statements and appeals in relation to critical international situations that arise, especially today when the threat of a global conflagration has become much more imminent. Some of the



speakers expressed their interest in collaborating with ABCP, while some others noted the importance of the organisation from the standpoint of Mongolia's foreign policy, especially in terms of promoting soft power.

ABCP HQ thanked the Gandan Tegchenling Monastery -

Mongolia National Center I of ABCP, for the opportunity to use the Gandan monastery facility for the holding of the informal meeting, and the 20-some senior diplomats, experts and scholars in sparing their time to share their views and thoughts on the future of ABCP. ■

55 YEARS OF THE ASIAN BUDDHISTS CONFERENCE FOR PEACE

55 years ago on 11-13 June 1970 the first Constituent meeting of the Asian Buddhists Conference for Peace was held.

Representatives of Buddhists from India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Singapore, the USSR and Vietnam (Both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of South Vietnam), met in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in mid-June 1970 where they agreed to set up the Asian Buddhists Committee for Promoting Peace – ABCPP, the predecessor of today's ABCP.

The ABCP HQ is planning to develop and run a three 20-minute program each with a Mongolian national TV "Süld" to commemorate the 55 years of ABCP, which today has grown to become a prestigious international NGO on roster with the UN ECOSOC and 20 member National Centers in 14 countries of Asia - in North Asia, Pacific, South Asia and South East Asia.

Most Ven. Gabju D. Choijamts, President of ABCP was interviewed by the "Süld" TV on 15 May 2025, where he spoke about the significance and the role of this Asian peace organization, and on 27 July Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav, General Secretary of ABCP was interviewed by the "Süld" TV who spoke about the 55 years of history of ABCP.

This is the first time that a Mongolian TV is going to run programs on ABCP, its past and future. ■



Photo top, Most Ven. Gabju D. Choijamts, President, and photo below; Most Ven. Da Lama Kh. Byambajav, General Secretary of ABCP and the crew from "Süld" TV during the interview.



DHARAMSHALA: THE KARMABHŪMI OF THE DALAI LAMA

Prof. (Dr.) Arvind Kumar Singh

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Lumbini Buddhist University, Lumbini, Nepal & School of Buddhist Studies and
Civilization Gautam Buddha University, India
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Introduction

Nestled in the foothills of the Dhauladhar mountain range in Himachal Pradesh, India, Dharamshala is more than just a picturesque hill station. Since 1960, it has become the spiritual and political center of the Tibetan diaspora and the residence of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Often referred to as Little Lhasa, this small Himalayan town has been transformed into a sacred Karmabhūmi, a field of virtuous action, by His Holiness, who turned a refugee settlement into a global epicenter of Buddhist learning, interfaith dialogue, and cultural resilience. Dharamshala is located in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, in the district of Kangra. Perched at an elevation ranging from 1,250 to 2,000 meters, the town is divided into Lower Dharamshala, the administrative and commercial hub, and Upper Dharamshala, or McLeod Ganj, which hosts the Tibetan community and the residence of the Dalai Lama. The region is surrounded by dense coniferous forests, snow-capped mountains, and pristine valleys, offering a serene environment conducive to spiritual retreat and meditation (Kapadia 104). Historically, Dharamshala was part of the ancient Trigarta kingdom

and later came under the influence of the British colonial administration. It became a military cantonment in the mid-19th century. The devastating Kangra earthquake of 1905 significantly damaged the town, leading to a period of decline (Bansal 45). However, it was not until the arrival of the Dalai Lama in the late 1950s that Dharamshala would assume its modern identity as a global center of Tibetan Buddhism and intercultural diplomacy. This article explores the geographical setting and historical roots of Dharamshala, the Dalai Lama's arrival and transformative impact, the major institutions he established, and its significance as a moral and spiritual center not only for Tibetans but also for Buddhists and peace advocates worldwide along with his contribution in reinvigorating sacred heritage and Nalanda Tradition.

The Dalai Lama's Arrival and the Birth of Little Lhasa

Following the brutal Chinese suppression of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India with approximately 80,000 Tibetan refugees. He was granted political asylum by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and in 1960, the Indian

government offered Dharamshala as the site for the Tibetan government-in-exile, officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) (Thurman 68). Since then, Dharamshala has served as the de facto capital of the Tibetan diaspora. The Dalai Lama's arrival marked the beginning of a profound transformation. In a town that had been relatively obscure on the global stage, His Holiness established both the seat of political resistance and the heart of spiritual resilience. Tibetan settlements, schools, temples, and monasteries began to spring up around McLeod Ganj, earning it the nickname "Little Lhasa", a poignant reference to the lost homeland of Tibet (Lopez 172). From this modest Himalayan outpost, the Dalai Lama not only rebuilt a scattered and traumatized community but also redefined Tibetan identity in exile. His leadership was rooted in the principles of non-violence (*ahimsa*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and universal responsibility (*spyi'i drang ba*), which soon resonated beyond the Tibetan borders.

His Holiness understood that for the Tibetan people to survive as a distinct culture, education and spiritual training had to be prioritized. Under his leadership, a host of institutions emerged, focusing not only on traditional monastic training but also on

secular education, interreligious dialogue, and international cooperation. The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), established in 1970, stands as one of the most important repositories of Tibetan culture and Buddhist knowledge outside of Tibet. Housing thousands of manuscripts, sacred texts, artworks, and oral histories, the LTWA plays a pivotal role in the preservation of the Tibetan language, heritage, and religious tradition (Gyatso, *The Heart of the Buddha's Path* 121). Complementing the LTWA is the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics (IBD), founded in 1973, which trains monks and lay scholars in rigorous debate, logic, Madhyamaka philosophy, and ethics, continuing the Nālandā tradition of Buddhist scholasticism. The IBD provides a curriculum that integrates classical Tibetan teachings with modern subjects, enabling scholars to engage with contemporary global thought (Samuel 213). In addition to these academic centers, numerous monasteries such as Namgyal Monastery (the personal monastery of the Dalai Lama), Gyuto Tantric Monastery, and Nechung Monastery were re-established in Dharamshala, creating a thriving spiritual environment. These institutions serve as both centers of learning and symbols of Tibetan resilience in exile.

Dharamshala is not merely a physical refuge; it is a moral landscape. The town has become a center of global activism grounded in Buddhist ethics. It is from here that the Dalai Lama has carried his message of compassion, dialogue, and non-violence to over sixty nations. He has participated in interfaith forums, scientific conferences, and political summits, meeting world leaders such as Barack Obama, Angela Merkel, and Pope John Paul II. These engagements illustrate his transformation into a transnational moral authority, unbound by territory but rooted in tradition. His teachings consistently emphasize “universal responsibility”, the idea that personal happiness and global peace are inseparably linked. As he explains, “We need to think of humanity as a whole. If we are to meet the challenges of our time, we must cultivate a sense of universal responsibility” (Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* 28). Dharamshala, therefore, serves not only as the spiritual nerve center of the Tibetan diaspora but also as a philosophical staging ground for a new global ethics. The Dalai Lama’s initiative in promoting secular ethics, which transcends religious boundaries, is now being incorporated into school curriculums in India and abroad. Institutions like the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT are directly inspired by this vision (Thurman 93). These programs often draw on Buddhist ideas of



On 30 April 1990, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama arrived in Dharamshala, which subsequently became his government residence in exile. File photo

mindfulness, empathy, and interdependence, but they are framed in universal human terms to appeal to a wider audience.

A less discussed but equally critical aspect of the Dalai Lama’s vision for Dharamshala is ecological stewardship. His concern for environmental balance is rooted in Buddhist principles of *pratītyasamutpāda* (theory of dependent origination) and *ahiṃsā* (non-harming). “Taking care of our environment is like taking care of ourselves,” he has repeatedly stated (Dalai Lama, *Our Only Home* 44). Several initiatives, including forest preservation, waste management programs, and sustainable tourism, have taken root in the region as a result of this ethos. Culturally, the preservation of Tibetan art, music, dance, and medicine is actively encouraged through institutions such as the Norbulingka Institute, which trains artisans and preserves endangered forms of Tibetan expression. It complements the spiritual infrastructure of Dharamshala by reinforcing Tibetan identity through culture and craftsmanship (Kapstein 204).

Reinvigorating Indian

Sacred Heritage and Nālandā Tradition

Although the Dalai Lama is a Tibetan spiritual leader, his role in revitalizing Indian Buddhism is monumental. After arriving in India in 1959, he found a land where Buddhism, once flourishing under emperors like Aśoka and Harṣa, had largely vanished as a living tradition. Recognizing this loss, he took it upon himself to reintroduce the Buddha’s teachings to the Indian public, not merely as an ancient legacy but as a living path. His presence in India has reawakened national interest

in the Buddha's heritage. His Holiness reminded Indians of their deep historical connection with the Buddha, Nālandā University, and the legacy of great philosophers like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Dharmakīrti. Repeatedly emphasizing that "India is the guru, Tibet the disciple, but today, the disciple has kept the teachings alive, while the guru has forgotten them", he has initiated translation projects, established monasteries and cultural centers, and encouraged young Indians to study Buddhist philosophy (Dalai Lama, *The Heart of the Buddha's Path* 134). His teachings in Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and other pilgrimage sites have drawn not only monastics but also lay Indian followers, rekindling the relevance of Buddhism in Indian spiritual life. His solidarity with India's neo-Buddhist communities, especially Dalits inspired by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, has also helped Buddhist identity grow among marginalised populations seeking dignity, empowerment, and spiritual meaning. His visits to Nagpur, Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, and other sacred sites reinforce the message that Buddhism is a shared spiritual heritage of the Indian subcontinent. His regular teachings at these pilgrimage sites have drawn thousands of Indian devotees, monastics, and international followers.

In response, His Holiness has encouraged the study of Nālandā texts, the revival of monastic education, and the translation of Tibetan scriptures into Sanskrit and Hindi (Gyatso, *The Heart of the Buddha's Path* 134). He further established institutions in India viz. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, which at present serve as centers for academic and spiritual training, are instrumental in preserving and propagating the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition rooted in the Nālandā lineage, including the works of Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti (Thurman 122). By rekindling interest in Indian Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and soteriology, His Holiness has reconnected India with its ancient spiritual wisdom and shown that the message of the Buddha still speaks powerfully to modern challenges.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is globally known as the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, a Nobel laureate, and a global advocate for non-violence and universal ethics. What is less widely acknowledged, but of profound significance, is his enduring commitment to the Nālandā tradition, the ancient Indian monastic university that became the cradle of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna philosophy. For the Dalai Lama, Nālandā is not merely a historical institution but a living tradition that forms the backbone of Ti-

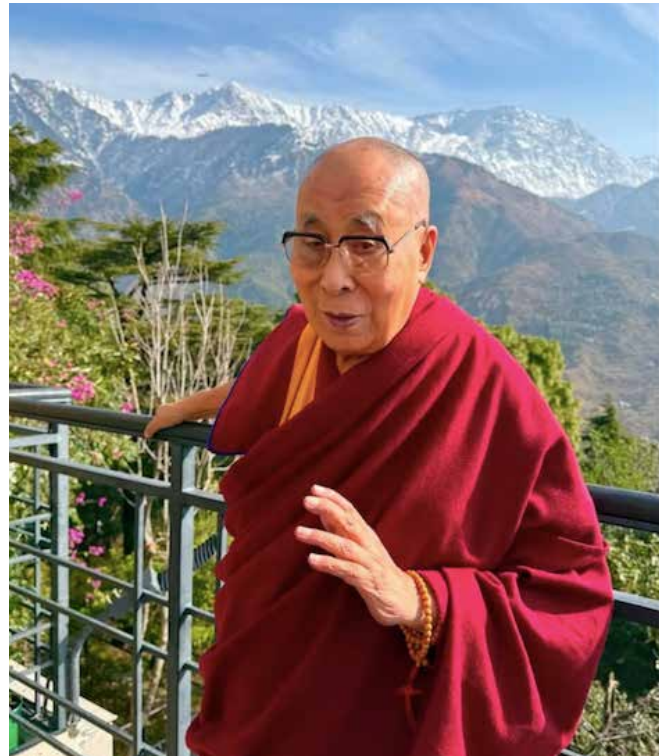
betan Buddhism and provides a rational, analytical framework for both personal liberation and global harmony. Nālandā University flourished between the 5th and 12th centuries CE in present-day Bihar, India. It attracted students from across Asia, China, Tibet, Korea, and beyond. At its peak, it was home to thousands of monks and scholars who studied not only Buddhist philosophy and logic but also medicine, linguistics, and the arts. Its most revered masters, including Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Candrakīrti, authored texts that remain foundational in Buddhist scholasticism (Samuel 65). The curriculum at Nālandā emphasised rigorous dialectical reasoning (*pramāṇa*), debate, and ethical conduct, an approach His Holiness considers vital for the survival of Buddhism in the modern world. In his view, these methods are compatible with scientific inquiry and human rationality. "We follow the tradition of Nālandā," the Dalai Lama asserts, "which is based on reasoning and investigation, not blind faith" (Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom* 37).

When the Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959 after fleeing Tibet, one of his foremost concerns was the preservation of the Nālandā-based Tibetan scholastic tradition. The Chinese invasion of Tibet had resulted in the destruction of numerous monasteries, and with them, centuries of transmission. Dharamshala, the seat of the Central Tibetan Administration, became the new ground where this legacy would be revived and re-contextualised. He supported the re-establishment of monastic universities such as Sera, Drepung, and Ganden in South India, which continued the Nālandā curriculum with its emphasis on *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way), *Yogācāra* (Mind-Only), epistemology, and logic. Meanwhile, the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamshala was established to train a new generation of scholars grounded in Nālandā principles (Gyatso 122). To this day, Tibetan monks undergo 15-20 years of study in these monastic institutions, culminating in the Geshe degree, equivalent to a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy. Their training includes the study of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*, and Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*. His Holiness regularly emphasises the necessity of understanding these texts through debate and logic, rather than devotion alone (Lopez 198).

A defining aspect of the Dalai Lama's promotion of the Nālandā tradition is his effort to extract its universal components, ethics, logic, and psychology, for secular application. In his works

such as *Beyond Religion and Ethics for the New Millennium*, he underscores the value of compassion, altruism, and interdependence as human, not exclusively religious, values. He advocates for an “education of the heart,” where analytical meditation (*vipāśyanā*) and contemplative science derived from Nālandā are integrated into modern education systems (Dalai Lama, *Beyond Religion* 45). The framework of secular ethics is influenced directly by the Nālandā view that mental afflictions can be eradicated through reasoning and practice. “Just as Nālandā masters taught, we can change the mind through training,” he notes (Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness* 52). These teachings have inspired educational institutions like the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics at MIT and programs on contemplative studies in universities across the globe. By rooting ethics in Nālandā logic rather than in divine authority, the Dalai Lama makes moral development accessible across cultures and beliefs. His Holiness’s interest in science, especially neuroscience, quantum physics, and cosmology, also springs from the Nālandā emphasis on critical inquiry. He frequently states that Buddhism must evolve by assimilating scientific discoveries, and if any aspect of Buddhist cosmology contradicts evidence, it must be reconsidered (Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom* 7). This approach led to the founding of the Mind and Life Institute, which brings together scientists and contemplatives in dialogue. Buddhist models of consciousness, developed by Nālandā thinkers like Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, have proven especially fertile ground for scientific study of attention, emotion, and mental training (Davidson and Goleman 84). The integration of Nālandā psychology with contemporary science has helped build a new language for understanding the mind, one that honors both rational insight and inner experience.

The Dalai Lama’s invocation of Nālandā is not limited to religious or academic settings. It has become a symbol of India’s Buddhist past and its potential for spiritual leadership. He often reminds Indian audiences: “India is the guru; Tibet is the disciple. We Tibetans preserved your knowledge; now it is time to bring it home” (Thurman 116). His call has resonated with Indian policymakers, leading to increased efforts to revive Buddhist scholarship and pilgrimage infrastructure, including the restoration of Nālandā University. For Tibetans, the Nālandā tradition represents cultural continuity and intellectual autonomy. For the global audience, it signifies a fusion of science, ethics, and spirituality. For Indians, it is a reclaiming of a luminous chapter in their philosophical heritage.



*His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamshala.
Tibet Post International*

For the 14th Dalai Lama, the Nālandā tradition is not a relic of the past but a timeless resource for the future of humanity. It embodies an approach to spirituality grounded in logic, ethical clarity, and psychological transformation. Whether through rigorous scholasticism, compassionate ethics, or scientific inquiry, His Holiness continues to keep the Nālandā flame alive, not only in monasteries but in classrooms, parliaments, laboratories, and public discourse. In a world fragmented by dogma and division, the Dalai Lama’s commitment to the Nālandā ideal offers a vision of unity grounded in shared humanity and rational compassion.

Concluding Remark

As we mark the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we do not merely celebrate a personal milestone, we celebrate a global legacy. From the snow-covered peaks of Tibet to the halls of the United Nations, from monasteries in Dharamshala to neuroscience labs in California, his life has bridged the ancient and the modern, the mystical and the rational. His teachings have touched countless lives, emphasizing that true change begins from within and that compassion, when practiced sincerely, has the power to reshape our world. As he often reminds his followers, “Our prime purpose in this life is to help oth-

ers. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.” In a world increasingly defined by division, His Holiness remains a unifying presence, a living legend who speaks not only for the Tibetan people but for all of humanity. The legacy is vast and enduring and in the face of adversity, he has embodied the transformative power of compassion and resilience. As the world looks to uncertain times, the Dalai Lama remains a beacon of hope and moral clarity, a living legend whose light continues to shine across borders, faiths, and generations. His Holiness's greatest gift to the modern world may be his ability to universalize the teachings of Buddhism. Grounded in the Four Noble Truths, the Bodhisattva ideal, and Nālandā traditions of logic and reason, his interpretation of Buddhism is deeply rational, accessible, and ethically grounded. “My religion is very simple,” he once remarked. “My religion is kindness” (Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness* 19). His books, including *Ethics for the New Millennium*, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, and *The Art of Happiness*, are not merely spiritual manuals but moral compasses. They offer profound insights into how individuals and societies might foster peace, develop resilience, and cultivate compassion in an increasingly polarised world. His global appeal is evident in the flourishing of Tibetan Buddhist centers across North America, Europe, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Lay practitioners and scholars alike find resonance in his vision of inner transformation as a basis for social reform.

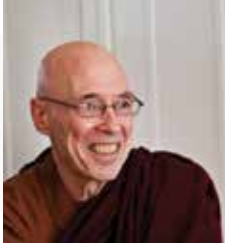
Dharamshala's importance extends well beyond the Tibetan refugee community. For followers of Buddhism around the world, especially in the West, it has become a pilgrimage site and a place of spiritual renewal. Visitors from countries such as the United States, Japan, Germany, and Brazil come to study meditation, engage in dialogues, or attend public teachings by His Holiness. These events are often conducted in open settings, with thousands gathered in the Tsuglagkhang Complex, the main temple adjacent to the Dalai Lama's residence. Translated simultaneously into multiple languages, these teachings exemplify the democratization of sacred knowledge and the Dalai Lama's commitment to global education (Lopez 189). Dharamshala is also home to non-Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who have become ordained under the Tibetan tradition. Notable figures such as Pema Chödrön, Matthieu Ricard, and Thubten Chodron have studied and taught here, bridging East-West spirituality and ensuring that Tibetan Buddhism continues to evolve while remaining grounded in its core tenets (Davidson and Goleman 72). Addi-

tionally, Dharamshala has become a global symbol of peaceful resistance. The CTA functions not only as a governmental body in exile but also as a model for non-violent struggle. Its democratic structure, transparent electoral processes, and emphasis on dialogue over confrontation have garnered international respect (Tibetan Government in Exile 12). Dharamshala, under the spiritual and ethical guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has evolved from a colonial-era cantonment into a living mandala, a sacred geography where exiled traditions, global dialogue, and spiritual renewal converge. It serves as both a sanctuary and a platform, where Tibetan culture is preserved, Buddhist teachings are propagated, and universal values are promoted on the world stage. More than just a refuge for displaced people, Dharamshala has become a model of how spiritual resilience can foster cultural rebirth and moral leadership. It is a place where the past is honored, the present is engaged, and the future is envisioned with compassion and courage. For Buddhists, peace advocates, and seekers worldwide, Dharamshala stands as a luminous karmabhūmi, sanctified not by conquest but by compassion. ■

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'PROTECTING HUMAN DIGNITY FROM THE THREAT OF MORAL NIHILISM



By Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi,
President of the Buddhist Association of the United States

The Meaning of Human Dignity

It's hard to lay down a simple definition of human dignity that everyone would agree with. Human dignity is an idea we seem to understand intuitively rather than through a formal definition. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens with the statement that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." In the following articles it spells out the rights that flow from the idea of human dignity, above all the right to life, liberty, and personal security; to freedom of thought and expression; and many more. Violations of human dignity comprise such actions as exploiting and oppressing others, inflicting torture and degrading punishment on them, and humiliating them because of their social status, race, religion, or gender identity.

The idea of human dignity implies that every person possesses inherent worth and therefore deserves respect and consideration. Even prisoners have certain rights that the authorities must recognise.

The Buddhist texts do not explicitly bring up the idea of human dignity, but I would say that the idea lies implicit in the Buddhist precepts. The precepts tell us that we should treat others in the same way that we expect them to treat us. We shouldn't kill them, steal their belongings, slander them, or injure them in any way because each person cherishes their own life, security, and well-being. The virtues of loving-kindness and compassion central to Buddhist ethics also reinforce a commitment to human dignity.

The Drift toward Moral Nihilism

Now I come to the second part of my talk, on the factors at work in today's world that threaten human dignity and are pushing us toward moral nihilism. These are types of behavior which presuppose that human beings have no inherent worth and thus can be debased, exploited, tortured, and even killed without pangs of conscience.

I will briefly mention four factors pushing us toward moral nihilism, but there are still others that I won't have time to dis-

cuss.

(1) The first factor pushing us toward moral nihilism is the transnational economic system driven by unregulated predatory capitalism. This system operates on the premise that the aim of a corporation is to maximise profits. The paradigm treats all non-monetary assets—land and rivers, minerals and trees, animals and human beings—as a mere means to generate financial gain. The huge profits enrich executives and investors but bring misery and despair to many outside their privileged circles.

Oil and chemical companies pollute our environment and push Indigenous people off their ancestral lands. Fast-food chains exploit workers without adequate pay and fire them when they can no longer work at peak efficiency. Pharmaceutical companies drive up drug prices beyond people's ability to pay for the drugs they need to remain alive.

Corporate capitalism creates a wide rift between the super-rich and everyone else. Today the top 1% owns 43% of the world's wealth; the bottom 50%

owns around 1%. This extreme inequality has a harmful impact on physical and mental health. Those at the low end of the scale lose their sense of self-respect, and many succumb to “deaths of despair” from alcoholism, drug use, poor health, and suicide.

(2) A second factor contributing to moral nihilism is the invasive role that computer technology now plays in our lives. While the internet has brought us immense benefits, it also poses serious threats to human dignity. Those who master these systems can sweep up billions of pieces of personal data about us in just a few seconds. They can use this information to influence our political views, change our consumer choices, harm our employment prospects, and destroy our legal status. Computer technology itself is a precious asset, but if we don’t properly regulate electronic media, they will turn back and bite us, even becoming tools of totalitarian control.

The internet also offers aspiring autocrats an easy pathway to power. Tweets and other instant messages can stir up angry crowds, ignite violence, and destroy a rival politician’s chances. Lies echo through the internet, repeated so often that we swallow them up as facts.

(3) In recent years, several major democracies have been mutating into right-wing autocracies dominated by authoritarian leaders. Autocrats often rise to power by pitting their base, those they call “the real people,” against those they treat as scapegoats: immigrants, gay and trans people, those of a different race, and followers of the “wrong religion.” If the aspiring autocrats gain power, they might imprison, deport, or “disappear” their victims. After hiding underground for decades, fascism has been making a comeback,



Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi is seen at Vesak flower lantern ceremony at the Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Ho Chi Minh City, in May 2025.

Photo by Nhat Trinh,

now using softer language but seeking to win followers with the same old appeals to racial resentment, economic anxiety, and the obsessive need to punish perceived enemies.

Numerous commentators have pointed out that democracy is fragile and must be vigilantly defended. If we aren’t careful, we may find ourselves living in an upside-down world, where we applaud our tormentors as our saviors.

(4) The fourth factor leading to moral nihilism is the contemporary conduct of warfare. While all war violates human dignity, the conduct of war today oversteps the most basic standards of decency. Nations at war deliberately destroy hospitals, schools, churches, and power plants. They abduct children and torture prisoners. They slaughter civilians and post photos of their victims on social media. They blandly dismiss civilian casualties as “collateral damage.” The international agreements drawn up

after World War II define the boundaries of legitimate conduct in war, yet today governments trample on these rules, twisting the guardrails that sustain the global moral order.

This completes my brief survey of four threats to human dignity. What makes these four trends qualify as types of moral nihilism is a shared project of dehumanisation. To exploit low-wage workers, you have to pretend they don’t have human needs. To sweep up the personal data of others, you have to ignore the real people behind the data. To rise to power by attacking the vulnerable, you have to treat them as legitimate targets of hate. To kill civilians and torture prisoners, you first have to dehumanise them.

From this it follows that the key to combating moral nihilism is the affirmation of human dignity. We have to shine a spotlight on the humanity of those at risk. We have to see ourselves in others, embrace them in our hearts, and act boldly in their defense.

What Does a Dignified Society Look Like?

I now come to the third part of my talk, raising the question: “What kind of society, consistent with Buddhist teachings, can sustain and enhance human dignity in today’s world?” To counter the forces hostile to human dignity today, it’s not enough just to point out the dangers we face. We also have to advance an alternative vision to our present system, the model of a social order that affirms human dignity, a world where everyone wins.

To provide such a vision, I suggest six pillars of a social order that embodies the ideal of human dignity.

(1) The first requirement is a world with a safe, beautiful, flourishing natural environment - one where we avoid the dangers triggered by runaway climate change and industrial pollution. To realise such a world, we have to curb toxic waste and make a rapid transition to clean and renewable sources of energy, sharing their benefits with everyone on this planet. We also have to make determined efforts to protect other species besides human beings, to make sure we preserve the forests, jungles, and lakes and a thriving animal kingdom.

(2) A safe world would also be a world of peace, where we no longer resort to war to resolve tensions. Conflicts between nations should be settled through discussion, mediation, and compromise, with the UN as the proper platform for such negotiations. We must aim at the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

(3) In the social domain, we should aspire toward a world with more genuine democratic

governance, where citizens have the power to shape the crucial decisions that affect their lives. A healthy democracy would adopt strict laws preventing corporations and super-wealthy donors from influencing elections through campaign donations and pressure groups. Government should reflect the will of the people, not of gigantic corporations and billionaires keen on more wealth and power.

(4) A just social order also requires a fairly equal standard of living for all its residents, including non-citizens. Perfect equality of wealth and income is an impossible ideal, but all residents of a country should be able to satisfy their basic material needs: for a home, nutritious food, clothing, and health care. Researchers have noted that the most equal societies are also the happiest; the most unequal, the most violent and stressful.

(5) In a vibrant democracy, citizens must receive a well-rounded education that will prepare them for fulfilling their civil duties. Schools should offer required courses in the humanities and social sciences, in ethics and civics, and should train students how to exercise critical thought. Governments should generously support higher education, granting scholarships to poorer students so that all can benefit from advanced studies.

(6) We must ensure that gender equality prevails at all levels of society, so that women can realize their full potential. In relation to the Buddhist monastic order, monastic leaders should grant full recognition to the Bhikkhuni Sangha and take steps to authorize bhikkhuni ordination in their respective lineages. There are means in the Vinaya to legitimate bhikkhuni ordination, and with an open and flexible mind, we can adopt such means.

Realising Human Dignity Today

Next, I want to briefly lay out a set of values we need to realize a social order that fully affirms human dignity. I call this set of values, rooted in Buddhist ethics, “conscientious compassion.” Conscientious compassion is not a mere passive sympathy with the suffering of others, but an active commitment to stand up against systems of oppression and to pursue alternatives conducive to the general good.

The core value of conscientious compassion is solidarity, the ability to identify with others. Solidarity flows from a recognition of the essential unity of all people, the understanding that all human beings wish to be well, happy, and safe; that we all seek to be free from violence and suffering. Solidarity gives rise to love and compassion: love as an active concern to promote the well-being of others; compassion as the aspiration to liberate people and other sentient beings from suffering.

“As Buddhist leaders we shouldn’t stand silently on the sidelines. We have to seize the demands of the moment, find our voices, and use them to call for peace and justice.”

For conscientious compassion to succeed, we need still another quality, namely, courage, which corresponds to the paramitas of energy (*virīya*) and determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*). In the work of conscientious compassion, courage means the readiness to follow the call of conscience, to act boldly, without fear, on behalf of all those whose lives and dignity are under threat. Conscientious compassion is not just being nice, not just being kindful. It requires the courage to fight, gently and

non-violently, for the principles consistent with love and compassion. It requires the willingness to act even at great personal risk to oneself.

Concluding Remarks

I should first say that in these remarks I will be stating my own personal point of view. I am not representing the UN Vesak Day Committee, the Government of Vietnam, or any other organisation.

I want to end by throwing a spotlight on a region of the world that might be called the epicenter of the contest between the forces of moral nihilism and our obligation to protect human dignity. I refer to the Gaza Strip, where, right now, a terrible genocide is underway, a brutal campaign of extermination visible to us in real time on our TVs and computer screens. This is the convergence point where our commitment to human dignity should engage us in a relentless struggle against the forces of moral nihilism, which wage their campaign of devastation with smooth diplomacy and arsenals stocked with the most lethal weapons.

Israel's response to the horrific Hamas attack of 2023 has broken all ethical boundaries, threatening to shred the global rules-based order rooted in international law and human rights. In just eighteen months, Israel has killed over 55,000 people in Gaza, almost 70 percent of them women and children. Its bombs have reduced homes, hospitals, relief centers, and universities to dust; its forces have executed teachers, doctors, journalists, and relief workers in cold blood. For the past two months, Israel has imposed a complete blockade on Gaza. A complete blockade means, literally: no food, no clean drinking water, no electricity, no medical equipment.

Vietnamese of an older generation know what it's like to face daily bombardments, when you don't know whether you or your loved ones will be alive tomorrow. The people of Gaza now face a similar ordeal. In Gaza, you might see twenty members of your family wiped out by a single rocket strike. Your children may have lost their arms and legs. You have no access to medical care, and your whole family is being deliberately starved. How can we tolerate this?

Please bear in mind that I am not looking at this crisis primarily as a political issue. I am looking at it as an issue of humanitarian ethics. We are facing a campaign of annihilation that has opened the doors to moral chaos and shattered the very idea of human dignity. The genocide in Gaza

should burn our conscience and move us to act - to stand in defense of a people whose humanity is being degraded and violently crushed. I know these are strong words, but I speak as a person of Jewish origins, born and raised in a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York.

I've noticed that Buddhist leaders speak endlessly of compassion, peace, justice, and human dignity, but when it comes to criticising Israel's genocide against the Palestinians, they seem to lose their voices. I don't know whether this is due to fear or indifference, but we need to be courageous. As Buddhist leaders we shouldn't stand silently on the sidelines. We have to seize the demands of the moment, find our voices, and use them to call for peace and justice. We must insist that Israel ends its violence against the people of Gaza, and we must support the aspiration of the Palestinian people for an autonomous sovereign state of their own, with full representation at the United Nations.

We should remember that an attack on the human dignity of one community is an attack on the dignity of all. By standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people, we demonstrate our compassion, our courage, and our commitment to humanity.

May the Triple Gem be with you all.

Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American Buddhist monk, president of the Buddhist Association of the United States, and the founder and chair of Buddhist Global Relief, as well as the former editor and president of the Buddhist Publication Society in Kandy, Sri Lanka. His extensive translations of the Pali canon have informed dharma practice in the English-speaking world for decades. The above adapted article is from the keynote address Ven. Bikkhu Bodhi made in Vietnam for the UN International Day of Vesak in Ho Chi Minh City from May 5-8., 2025. The "Dhammaduta" is carrying this article with the permission of Ven. Bhikku Bodhi.

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BUDDHISM AND ECOSYSTEM IN PRESENT-DAY LIFE

By Mukunda Bista, Secretary, ABCP Nepal chapter

The Bhagavan Buddha once taught that trees should not be cut down, and if it becomes absolutely necessary to do so, one must plant five trees in place of every single tree removed.

Numerous accounts from the life of Buddha Śākyamuni illustrate his deep commitment to protecting the natural ecosystem. These stories are preserved in sacred texts such as the Jātaka tales, the Lalitavistara Sūtra, and the Avadānaśataka Sūtra, among others.

Among the Five Precepts (*Pañcaśīla*), the Buddha placed great emphasis on non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). Accordingly, Buddhist practitioners, as well as anyone who has faith in the Buddha's teachings, should refrain from harming or killing any living creature. The life of Buddha Śākyamuni is replete with instances where he saved wild animals and birds. One well-known story from his youth recounts how, as a prince, he rescued a wounded swan that had been struck by an arrow shot by his cousin Devadatta. The bird, bleeding and near death, was nursed back to health by the compassionate prince.

In another of his past lives, as Prince Mahāsattva, son of King Mahāratha, he selflessly offered his own flesh and blood to save a starving tigress and her five newly born cubs. In honor of this supreme act of compassion, a stūpa was later consecrated at Namo Buddha, a revered pilgrimage site located approximately fifty kilometers east of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal.

Many Jātaka tales recount the Buddha's previous lifetimes as various animals, during which he demonstrated boundless compassion. In one such account, he was born as a noble deer and sacrificed himself to save his herd from a hungry croc-

odile. These narratives underscore the Buddha's unwavering dedication to safeguarding all sentient beings, whether as a Bodhisattva or after attaining full enlightenment as Śākyamuni Buddha.

The reciprocity of the Buddha's kindness is also illustrated in various accounts of wild animals and birds offering their own forms of gratitude. Monkeys and elephants are said to have brought him fruits from the forest while he meditated in solitude, displaying their reverence for his compassionate presence.

These examples represent only a fraction of the Buddha's immense concern for the well-being of animals, birds, and all sentient beings. His teachings emphasize the delicate balance necessary for the harmonious coexistence of humans and wildlife. The essence of the Five Precepts aligns with the principle of non-harm, which inherently supports the preservation and flourishing of our planet's ecosystems, a natural equilibrium that has endured for millions of years.

The Buddha instructed his lay disciples (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*) to cultivate compassion and actively contribute to the protection of all life and the environment. Engaging in harmful actions that endanger animals and disrupt the ecosystem generates negative karma, which inevitably returns to us in due course. Thus, mindfulness in our actions is crucial, as is avoiding unwholesome deeds that bring harm to the natural world.

From this perspective, a follower of the Buddha's teachings must introspect on whether their intentions and actions contribute to the degradation of the environment or help in its preservation. It is the moral responsibility of every Buddhist to encourage empathy toward all living beings and

to uphold the harmony of the ecosystem, which is home to innumerable forms of life.

However, the situation has drastically changed since the mahāparinirvāṇa of Sākyamuni Buddha nearly 2,600 years ago. Modern society, driven by relentless busyness and material pursuits, rarely contemplates the ecological consequences of its actions. Consumed by the three poisons—desire (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and ignorance (*moha*)—human behavior is often dictated by selfish motives, with little regard for the welfare of animals or the environment.

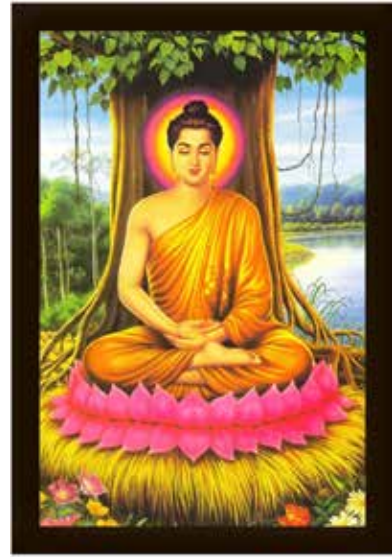
For example, the extensive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture has led to the depletion of natural soil elements, rendering farmlands increasingly infertile. These toxic chemicals indiscriminately kill beneficial insects that enhance soil fertility, thereby weakening the agricultural ecosystem over time.

Similarly, the rising demand for meat has led to the expansion of industrial animal farming, where animals are confined in cramped, unsanitary conditions, often behind iron bars. Young animals are separated from their mothers at birth, while machines are used to extract milk or slaughter them for meat. Hormonal injections and chemical additives are administered to accelerate unnatural growth and maximize production. This exploitation extends to poultry and other birds, which are force-fed substances high in arsenic to artificially enhance their size and appearance.

The consumption of such meat products has dire consequences on human health. Studies indicate that meat contains more pesticides than vegetables, and a non-vegetarian mother passes nearly 50% more pesticides to her child through breastfeeding compared to a vegetarian mother.

Likewise, the marine ecosystem is suffering due to overfishing, which threatens aquatic biodiversity. Research has revealed that 84% of fish today contain dangerously high levels of mercury, posing severe health risks to consumers.

The environmental damage caused by human activities is vast and undeniable. Studies have shown that the meat industry generates more greenhouse gas emissions than the combined output of all motor vehicles and airplanes worldwide. As a result, global warming has accelerated, causing rapid ice melt in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. The loss of sea ice is driving species such as polar bears, sea lions, and penguins toward extinction. Furthermore, sea levels have risen by approximately eight inches, while the thawing of ancient permafrost layers has released long-dormant



Gautam Buddha in meditation

viruses and bacteria, potentially exposing humanity to new and lethal diseases.

In high-altitude regions such as Nepal, glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalayan range are melting at an alarming rate. Many rivers that once provided a perennial source of water for drinking and irrigation are now drying up, forcing entire villages to relocate. Areas that previously experienced only snowfall are now facing unprecedented heavy rainfall and floods.

In summary, the natural world and its inhabitants were well cared for during the Buddha's time and continued to be protected up until the 13th and 14th centuries CE, when Buddhist teachings flourished across South Asia and even extended to regions such as Syria, Iran, and Eastern Europe. However, with the complete destruction of prominent Buddhist universities - including Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Takṣaśīlā, Somapura, Odantapurī, and Jagaddala - the influence of the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness and compassion gradually waned across the Indian subcontinent. Consequently, the understanding and practice of key Buddhist principles such as non-self (*anattā*), impermanence (*anicca*), and suffering (*dukkha*) diminished, leading to an era of ecological neglect and destruction.

Today, the urgent need to restore and embrace the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness and compassion has never been greater. As stewards of this planet, we must strive to protect and preserve the delicate ecosystems that sustain all forms of life. By rekindling the wisdom of the Buddha, we can foster a more harmonious relationship with nature and work collectively to heal the damage inflicted upon our Mother Earth before it is too late. ■

BUDDHISM IN THE MONGOL EMPIRE

By Ambassador Oidov Nyamdavaa

During their rule over half the world, the Mongol khans displayed a high level of tolerance towards most of the religions. They even allowed conversions from Buddhism to Christianity and Islam.

Under the leadership of Great Chinggis Khan, an institution was established to ensure complete religious freedom, despite the fact that he himself was a tenggerist. Throughout his reign, about half of the world religious leaders of all religions were exempted from taxation in the Mongol Empire, as documented by Weatherford (2004, page 69).

When Chinggis Khan's his sons and grandsons assumed power over the Golden Horde, Chagatai Ulus, Il Khanid dynasty, and Yuan dynasty, they brought along Mongol Aimaks (such as the Barlas, Naiman, Jalair, Nukus, Arluad, Khongirad) and their belongings, including animal husbandry, ger (yurta) and other properties. This was done to establish Mongol communities in the countries where they ruled. Local taxes were used for their palace and building, bridges in own ruling countries.

The ruling elite court – khan, khatan and their relatives and also accompanied by Mongol Aimaks and serving military people were carried their own religion, nomadic way of life, military discipline, hunting system and nomadic food, culture, as well as other traditions.

Over the time, a new mixed culture and tradition, as well as art, architecture, astronomy, the introduction of paper money, monetary system emerged among the members of the Mongol Empire. This has given a new opportunity to bring people closer to understand each other and live friendly.

Additionally, the World postal system and “Ge-rege” (Paiza) were created by the Mongol Empires. They also established Mongolian peace, known as “Pax Mongolica”, and also introduced the Yassa, Chinggis Khan's Constitution which were spread and welcomed under in their ruled countries.

The Mongol khans also successfully implemented a firm and powerful security system to protect caravan traders on the Silk Road, the Tea Road and steppe Road for promotion trade relations between Asia and Europe.

These aforementioned facts were approved by remaining monuments, traveler's accounts, manuscripts, and archaeological findings. For instance, there are notable places and cities are still exist or existed only in papers. These are: Chagatai darvaza (Tashkent), Chagatai district (Afghanistan), city Nukus, capital of Republic of Kalakalpakstan, Uzbekistan also Khongireid town, Naiman town (Uzbekistan), Jalair (Khojente, Tajikstan), Qarsh (Uzbekistan), Buyan Kuli Mausoleum (Bukhara, Uzbekistan) Bulgar, Ukek (Tatarstan, Russia) and Almalik (Xianjing Uighur), Qonqor Olong (Iran).

Mongolian scholars have made efforts to compile and introduce the contributions of Great Chinggis Khan and his successors to the world. In this context Dr. O. Nyamdavaa compiled a list of 37 contributions of Great Chinggis Khan and his successors to the world. It is available in Mongolian, Russian, and English languages (Cultural heritage of Chagatai Khan in the Central Asia, 2022, Ulaanbaatar).

Let us go the religion: Tenggerism and Shamanism. According to Dr. Sh Bira and general Mongol feelings on Tengerism was elaborated

on the basis of the worship of Tenggeri which is fundamental concept of Shamanism, the old folk religion of the Mongolian nomadic peoples. Tenggeri is something like God, representing alone the supreme masculine power in the universe, ruling all natural and social phenomena on earth. And in relation to Tenggeri, the Earth represents a subordinate feminine force. Hence, the expression; Et-sege Tenggeri (Father Tenggeri) and Ekhe Gazar (Mother Earth).

Most contemporary foreign travelers observed that the Mongols “believed in one God – Tenggeri who is considered to be the creator of all visible and invisible beings. And he is also considered to be the creator of happiness and sufferings in the world”. Tenggerism developed several elementary concepts, such as those of the divine origin of khanship, the dualistic nature of the khan’s power, his charisma and other related points. While the theory of divine origin of khanship was well known among nomadic peoples, it was the Mongols who not only kept the oldest version without interruption but beyond of more advanced civilisation.

Mönkh khan said “ We – Mongols believe there is one God - Tenggeri, through whom we have life and through whom we die and towards whom we direct our hearts”. From historical sources, it is clear that Chinggis khan firmly believed in shamanism and exploited, better than anyone else in his time, the Tenggeri worship of the Mongols in the interest of his political ambitious and great deeds. In this respect, he could be considered to have been a real founder of Mongolian Tenggerism as the official political ideology of the Great Mongolian State.

In this connection, I quote Dr. Teresa Fitzherbert “ ... For Mongols , birds of prey represented the link with the all-powerful sky god Tengri, and their ability to soar to the heavens they also represented the flight of the spirit at the moment of death. Power of flight attribute to the Mongol shaman was often signified by feathers attracted to their shoulders. Chinggis khan claimed descent from Tenggeri”.

Juwani quotes the Shaman, Teb-Tenggeri, as pronouncing that “God has spoken with me and has said: I have given all the face of earth to Temüjin and his children and named him Chinggis khan... The Armenian monk-chronicler Grigor of Akanc's records a tradition that the Chinggisid law code, the Yassa, was delivered by an eagle with power of speech and golden feathers... Budge notes that the Il khan Geikhatu (1291-1295) conferred a golden paiza (Gerege) of sunqur (gyrfa-

con) class on the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Yahbh, when he visited him at Magaha”. This may give additional explanation on Tenggerism of Mongolian concept.

Khubilai khan knew well his own nomadic civilization, as well as all other civilisation, including the Confucianism, Buddhism, Arab-Islamic and European – Christian civilisation, and he did his best to exploit their achievements successfully and selectively in conformity with his on policy of Tenggerism

Khubilai Khan explained his religious policy to Marco Polo as follow;” There are four Gods that are worshipped by everybody. Jesus Christ of the Christians, Muhammed of the Iranians, Moses of the Jews, and Buddha Chandamani. As regards to myself, I respect all of those four religions, but whosoever is the greatest and most honest in heaven, I wish to have bless me.

Buddhism. According to Indian scholars, Buddhism spread in the Indo-Gangetic valley during the life time of Buddha. King Ashoka deputed a group monks to Gandhara to propagate the dharma. The first Missionary who brought Buddhism to Central Asia was Vairochana who was a Kashmiri Buddhist scholar, built the first monastery at Khotan.

Chronicles of Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hien (5th century AD), Hiuen Tsiang (during 620-645 AD travelled to India) and I-tsing (spent 10 years in India, from 675-685 AD) are most important sources. Both Hiuen-tsiang and I-tsing saw among the students at Nalanda, foreign scholars hailing from far off countries like Korea, Mongolia, Tokhara, China, Tibet. I-tsing counts 56 foreign scholars residing in Nalanda in his days . It shows that Mongols studied in Nalanda University during 7th to 8th centuries. There are big remains of a Buddhist monastery, which is situated 20 km from Kashkar (see photo below).



In Karakorum, capital of Great Mongolian State, Ogedei (Өгөөдэй) khan built houses of worship for Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and Taoist followers, along with palaces. The dominant religions of that time were Shamanism, Tenggerism and Buddhism. There are remains of ancient Buddhist temple in Qashkar (20 km from Qashkar) in Xianjiang Uighur, China showing spread of Buddhism through the Central Asia into Mongolia. Later on Buddhism flourished second time in Mongolia during the 17th century. This time Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism was introduced into Mongolia. Altan Khan of Tümed (Southern Mongolia) invited the spiritual leader of Tibet, Sodnamjamtso, in 1577 and adopted the Yellow Faith. At the Grand ceremony held in connection with the assumption of the new Faith, Altan Khan elevated Sodnamjamtso to be the head of the entire Yellow Faith and bestowed on him the Title of Dalai which is the Mongol word, in English is “ocean” and so the name Dalai Lama.

Buddhism in Il khanid Dynasty

The Iranian authority made a formal request to Möngkh khan in Karakorum, capital of the Great Mongolian State, to destroy the disestablishing forces (Ismailis) in the Alamut castle, Alborz, Qarvin, presently it is Mazandarun province, Iran for establishing peaceful life (Pax Mongolica) for the local people as well as international trader. So considering their request Möngkh khan sent his brother Hülegü to Alamut Castle to establish Pax-Mongolica, 1256. After fulfillment the request, Hülegü further moved to Baghdad. These countries were Islamic. In 1258, after Hülegü's victory over Baghdad, Möngkh khan has awarded Hülegü as “Il khan”. So Il khanid dynasty has appeared on world map.

So Buddhist “Il khanid dynasty”, as political and cultural phenomenon has suddenly became a visible on Eurasian world. There are several scholars who wrote on Il khanid Buddhism. These are Roxan Prazniak, Allsen Thomas, Reuven Amitai Pieiss, A. Pausani, Donald N. Weilber, Devin De Weese, David Jacoby, Tomoko Maskya, Samuel M. Crupper, Shiela S. Blair, Jonathan M. Bloom, Landa Komaroff, Paul D. Buell, Sh. Bira and Nicholas Roerich, Khazanov. B. Ya. Vladimirtsov.

A mapping of physical presence of Il khanid Buddhism reveals Buddhist communities as far west as Anatolia where they coexisted within Christian, Muslim communities. Within this era of Buddhist revival, the story of Il khanid Buddhism begins in East Turkestan and North China as prelude to its distinctive development in the social environment of 13th century Iran. Uighur families

who practiced Buddhism were early supporters of the Chinggisid claims to world leadership and continued to serve as valued military and political advisors to the Khans throughout their rule within the Han Chinese domains, one eminent Buddhist monk, master Xingxiu- (Hsing hsiu, 1166-1246), responded to the political uncertainties of early Mongol rule by retiring to write.

For all schools of Buddhism, the sudden reality of Mongol dominance offered competitive opportunities. As waves of Tibetan, Kashmiri priests found audience with the khan at Karakorum, Chan Buddhist groups experienced a gradual eclipse of their authority. Court issued invitations to Dharmaśvamin and other Tibetan monks familiar with Nepalese Buddhist teachings popular in this period increased in frequency.

Hülegü's contacts with Kashmiri Buddhist communities began early in his career and would continue to feed currents of Il khanid Buddhism. Kashmiri masters were well known for preserving a highly refined form of Buddhism that incorporated “both the speculative and logical tradition and practice of Tantra and ritual”. Buddhist communities historically sustained extensive fiscal and commercial networks, and there is no reason this pattern would not have continued into the Mongol era.

Iranian Buddhist temple construction:

Khurgsan to Azerbaijan

During Il khanate, Mongol rulers built a corridor of Buddhist temples between the Black sea and the area South of Caspian sea, along routes that linked Anatolia to the Indus river valley and Uighurstan. After the construction of Labnasa-gut, Hülegü sponsored a second Buddhist complex of comparable quality in Southern Azarbaijan at Khoi.

The Rasatkhanh Hill caves near Maragaha, west of Tabriz, were possibly another elaborate example of Buddhist cave structure, as were the varjuvi caves just 6 km to the south. There is need to make joint study of the two countries to explore it to the world.

Sultaniyya, founded by Arghun and completed by his son Öljaitu, had a castle built of cut-stone and known for its beauty. It is called locally Dash Kasan, built in 1290 with Dragon picture, carved on it. There is second explanation that Dash Kasan was constructed by Öljaitu and his sister who used to go there and make daily pray as a Buddhist with her followers.

Arghun and other Il khans regularly used the site Qonqor Olong, near Sultaniyya for religious

ceremonies supervised by Kashmiri “bakhshi”, and there the archeological evidence is richer. According to some scholar, the area of Qonqor Olong used to be falcon hunting area and the Falcon is the State bird of Mongolia.

The village that sits on the plain of extensive palatial ruins is today named viyar, a possible cognate of Vihara, Sanskrit for Buddhist monastery. Rashid ad-Din indicates in one place that Argunkhan ‘built a temple [in Tebriz] and pictured his images on the walls.

The Uighur artisans were particularly respectable and influential as masters of miniature and architectural decoration. The Uyghur artists Kutlug Buga, Altun Buga, Toktimur, Ayas and others took part in the formation of the Tebriz miniature school in the 13th-14th centuries. No doubt, Uyghur architects we do not know yet anything about played a leading part in the building of a number of constructions in the territory of Azerbaijan, such as Buddhist temples, kumirs, Mongolian ovoos and others architectural forms characteristic of Central Asian architecture. According to Nizari, a 13th century Iranian poet and traveler, 30 dragons were depicted on the Hülegü khan castle on Shakhu-tell Island. As images of a lion or dragon, symbolising power and protection, were widely used in the architectural decoration of buildings of Karakorum.

The Kashan tiles of Takht-E Sulaiman are decorated with specially Buddhist motifs, such as an array of lotus flower designs. The complex built at Takht-E Sulaiman by Il khan Abaga (1265-1281) was summer palace of the Ilkhans with residence, a treasury, and halls for Imperial audiences. Because rulers held religious ceremonies at their seasonal location, Takht-E Sulaiman would have had such buildings and they would have been Buddhist, in keeping with Abaga Khan’s preferences, and possibly also Nestorian to accommodate his wife’s beliefs. A specific large four-columned structure at Takht-E Sulaiman has been identified as a likely location of Buddhist temple.

Archeologists have also identified the remains of a Buddhist temples near Merv that incorporated local architectural features into a Buddhist design. It is also needed joint research study by the scholars of the two countries.

Merv, Khoi, Tabriz all had sizeable Buddhist populations and Buddhist priests arrived from India, Kashmir, Uighuristan as well as Khitay, North China. So these cities have own role and place in Il khanid Buddhist sites.

The next Buddhist influence in Ilkhanid dynas-

ty mentioned by Rashid al-Din as follows;

Arghun Khan was highly devoted to the Bakhshi and followed their path. Arghun Khan constantly patronised and favoured them. One Bakhshi came from India and claimed to have lived a long time. In order to show his favor, Arghun Khan built lofty idol temple at Khabushan in Kharasan, and he performed his duties in such way that all the bakhshis and monks were astonished by his degree of asceticism and rigor. The full extent of Buddhist temple building in Iran under the Mongols is lost to us. Historical records, however, documents a contemporary perception of a culturally prosperous, politically active Iranian Buddhism.

According to the Dr. Reuven Amitain Preiss and Dr. Charles Melville, Islamisation of the Mongols may have been well advanced even before Ghazan’s conversion”. Allamah al-Hilli was able to convert Öljaitu, the eight ruler of the Il khanid dynasty, into Shi’ism which led to proclaiming Shia Islam as the state religion.

According to some European scholars, conversion of Mongol khans into Islam was good for Muslim and as well as for Mongols to promote Shia Islam to the State religion of Iran and to continue Il khans’s power for long lasting period of time. Regarding the nature of Persian invasion, by Hülegü, Il khan, was different than others. Hülegü’s invasion was intended to stay for good in Persian countries. That is why, all collected tax and wealth of Il Khanate dynasty devoted for development of economic reform and science achievement and new art, architecture of Il khanate Dynasty.

There is certainly, some impacts on other religious community when there were the Mongol Il khans’ conversion into Islam. In this connection I wish to refer to Donald N. Wilber who mentioned in his book “... Öljeitu (Өлзийт) named his son Abu Sa’Id to be Governor of Khurasan, the latter having reached the ripe age of 9 years. In the same year, the situation of Nestorian community became increasingly precarious; for a year or two the Moslem nobles would burn churches and monasteries and then the ruler would halt these abuses and give presents and protection to the bishops. Tolerance, a Mongol virtue, was fading fast; it was the twilight period for Christianity in Iran and all the results of centuries of devotion, sacrifice and toil were to be swept away in the course of a few years”.

Cultural mapping; Buddhism in the Jami al-Tavarikh of Rashid al Din

The Jami al-Tavarikh, compiled by Rashid al-Din, was a unique product from the period of Ilkhanid Buddhism. Its first part, known as the “History of the Mongols”, was commissioned by Il Khan Ghazan after his conversion to Islam in 1295. Ghazan Khan himself was raised in Mongol Buddhist traditions shaped by teachers who hailed from Western Tibetan Region. It was Ghazan’s successor Il Khan Öljaitu (1304-1316) who commissioned the next volumes of Jami al-Tavarikh, which were produced in the Tabriz workshop, first in 1304 and extended the work to the world history.

Il Khanid ruling was not easy and it faced with many problems. So some people put questions to public and one of them is as follows; How could the facts of the Mongol rule, with its cultivation of Buddhist teaching, a diverse Iranian Muslim elite, Diplomatic opportunities in Christian Western Europe, and military challenges from Mamluk Egypt be woven into a coherent world view under Il Khanid rule?

Initially, Öljaitu, sponsor of the project, became Buddhist, then a Sunni Muslim who eventually moved toward Shiism. When he contended that Il Khan Ghazan’s Islam was superior to that of the Mamluks, he pointed to the Mongol’s assumed Buddhist genealogy as evidence of pedigree higher than that of the slave ruler of Egypt. Learned Buddhist monks of Chinese and Kashmiri origin served as his consultants on scholarly, agricultural, and medical projects. Buddhist monks employed as historians at the Imperial library in Dadu maintained the “Archives of the Court” known as the Dafartir-I Divan to Rashid al-Din through the assistance of Bolad, emissary from the court of Khubilai Khan to Il Khanate Dynasty. The western scholars call him as the Cultural messenger and informant to Rashid al-Din. Marco Polo himself passed through Tabriz around 1290, travelling sea and land routes from India during a time when Il Khanid Buddhism was at its height under Il Khan Arghun (1284-1291). The inventory of Polo’s and his uncle’s possessions at the time of their deaths list four Large golden tablet of authority, “Gerege”, received at Ilkhanid court. During that time Marco Polo used the Mongol term Burkhan, meaning “Divine” when referring to the Buddha as Sakyamuni Burkhan.

Il Khanid Buddhist concept of kingship and Karma (merit) offend a potent framework for organising disparate histories. This would not be the first time that Buddhist-inspired concepts were put into Secular political service without direct acknowledgement.

Leo Jungoon Oh has noted numerous detailed examples of Buddhist iconography in Il Khanid pictorial language found in “The Great Mongol

Shahnama” the Diez Albums, and the Jami al-Tavarikh”.

Reuven Amitai Pieiss had made the case that Ghazan’s Islam was a syncretistic faith that remained loyal to many of basic beliefs and customs of the Mongols and their Buddhist education even when these principles ran contrary to the faith of Islam. Legal matters, rituals, marriage customs, and other practices continued to be governed by Mongol law, the Yassa.

It is interesting that after Ghazan’s conversion, when he gave orders to build or refurbish mosques in every village in his domain, he also ordered the endowment of fund at each location for maintenances of bird shelter, a practice that at that time was associated primarily with, Hindu and Buddhist attitude toward animals.

The Buddha in the land of 13th century, central Eurasia was a Mongol phenomenon of the Il Khanid court; For almost 40 years Il Khanid Buddhism had noteworthy levels of support through political and scholarly connections and functioned as the primary ideology of an Empire of exchange with transcontinental reach. I should note that Buddhist ideology was essential to Il Khanid political and cultural reach.

Under the Mongol Il Khans, Buddhism in Iran constituted a unique passage in both the history of Buddhism and Buddhism in making of an emergent modern world.

Regarding general attitude of Il Khans religious policy, it was very secular and very equal to every religion which were approved by world scholars and scientists and politicians. ■



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The views expressed in this article are that of Prof. Dr. O. Nyamdavaa.

THE BUDDHA ERA AND THE DATE/YEAR OF MAHĀPARINIRVANA

By Er. Sonam Morup (Retd. SE)

Gautama was born at Lumbini - park (presently Nepal), achieved Enlightenment (Buddhahood) at Bodh Gaya (Bihar) and attained Mahāparinirvana at Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh).

Nowadays, we commemorate Buddha Purnima Day in the month of April-May (April 28th to May 28th), on the basis of Nirvāna Year of 544 BC. After analysis it has been found that this date contains an excess period of 57 years and the revised exact date/year has now been found as 487 BC. As per the ancient tradition the Buddha Jayanti should be celebrated in April (instead of May); (See last page for Purnima month)

Till now, over thirty varying dates have been suggested by the scholars of South-Asian Buddhist countries, Tibet, China and experts from Europe / the West. Among them, the most popular dates are, 544 BC by the historians of South-Asian Buddhist countries, 881 BC by Tibetans, and 487 BC/483 BC by Indian/ European scholars and historians.

After a detailed comparative studies and analysis based on literatures of Sri Lanka, China, Indian/Greek; inscriptions and solar eclipse data; it has been found that only 487 BC can be fixed as the actual date for the Sakya Muni Buddha's

Mahāparinirvana.

The main points of evidence in favor of the date of 487 BC are as under:

i. Dhamma- Aśoka was coronated 2181 years after Mahāparinirvana of the Lord and his (Aśoka) date of coronation has been confirmed as 2692 BC. On this basis the Nirvāna date is found as $218+269 = 487\text{BC}$.

ii. Dhamma- Aśoka's son, Arahant Mahinda, arrived Sri Lanka in the year of 18th regnal year³ of Aśoka. This event took place after completion of the Great Third Buddhist Council in 252/251 BC. Arahant Mahinda converted King Divanampya Tissa, the sixth king of Sri Lanka, to Buddhism. The first king, Vijaya, arrived on the island of Lanka on the day of Mahāparinirvāna³ of the Great Teacher of the World. The elapsing period from the arrival of King Vijaya to 251BC is two hundred thirty-six (236) years. On the basis of this data, the date of Nirvāna is worked out as $236 + 251 = 487\text{BC}$.

vi. The Dotted record of the Canton⁴, China, states that since Nirvāna of the Buddha, 975 years elapsed up to the year of 489 AD; 975 dots were counted before the rainy season of 489AD i.e., up to 488AD. Sanghabhadra (Indian Senior Monk)

spent the rainy season of 489AD and put the last dot of 976th resulting, $BE = 976 - 489 = 487BC$.

vii. Dharma Aśhoka visited the birth place of the Lord after the great sun eclipse⁵ of 249 BC (i.e., visit in 248 BC) or 20 years after his coronation. This was 240th years after Mahāparinirvana of the Lord. This data also gives 487/488 BC as the date of Nirvāna.

viii. Buddha attained Mahāparinirvana in the 8th year of the reign of King Ajātasatru and on the same day, Prince Vijaya, son of the Prince Sinha landed in Ceylone and became the first King of Ceylone. King Ajātasatru ruled from 495 BC to 463 BC.

a. Date of Nirvāna = $495 - 8 = 487$ BC (Refer: - Samanta Prasadika, a Vinaya commentary by Buddhaghosa and other texts on Vinaya).

ix. The Second Great Buddhist Council was held, hundred years (100yrs) after the Nirvāna

a. of Lord or in the 10th Year of King Kālaśoka (397 BC-369 BC), Date of Nirvāna = $(397-10) + 100 = 487$ BC

x. As per the Jain literatures, Chandragupta Maurya, started his struggle and acceded to throne one hundred sixty-two (162 Yrs) years after the Nirvāna of Lord Buddha. Chandragupta Maurya acceded to throne during 325-322 BC. Nirvāna Date = $162+325= 487$ BC.

The above-mentioned date/data related to the Mahāparinirvana are explained in detail as under:

1) 269 BC as the coronation year of Aśoka.

1. According to the research carried out by Fazy and Sidersky, Aśoka visited Lumbini after the sun eclipse of 4th May, 249 BC. This was his 20th regnal year; thus, his coronation ceremony falls in the year $249+20 = 269$ BC.

2. The 13th Rock Edict was issued by Aśoka in his 14th regnal year. It contains a reference to Five Hellenic King's (Greek Kings) who were his contemporaries. The Last Greek King Alexander of Epirus died in the year 255 BC. This date again confirms the coronation year as 269 BC ($=255 + 14$).

2) Prediction Regarding Dhamma-Aśoka's Coronation 218 years after Mahāparinirvana.

The Second Buddhist Council took place exactly one hundred (100) years after the passing away of the Master. Seven hundred Arahants and 1.2 million Bhikkhus took part in the council. It lasted for eight months. After having finished rehearsing at the Second Recital, those Elders who were investigating "whether a calamity of this nature, would in the future befall the Dispensation, foresaw thus"; In the hundred and eighteenth (118th)

year from now (i.e., $100 + 118 = 218$) the King named Dhamma-Aśoka will appear in Pāṭaliputra and reign over the whole of Jambudipa (vide the Inception of Discipline by N.A. Jayawickrama, p. 39).

3) The Actually Observed Era of 218 years as Preserved by the Ceylonese Buddhists.

One of the fixed dates, which was established in an especially early period and which evidently forms the cornerstone of the whole system, is the number 218 for the consecration (Abhiseka) of Aśoka. The Dipavamsa (6.1) says

"dve satani ca vassani attharas vassnica Sambuddhe parinibbute aābhisitti piyadasiino"

218 years after the Sambuddha had passed into the Nirvāna Piyaddassi (Aśoka) was consecrated and the Mahāvamsa also (5.21) says-

"Jinanibbanato Paccha pura tassa bhisekato, Sattharasam Vassasatadvayam evam vidaniyam"

After the Nirvāna of the Conqueror (Buddha) and before his (Aśoka's) Consecration, there were 218 years this should be known; the date is supported by the best testimony and has nothing in it to produce suspicion. (vide MAHAVAMSA OR GREAT CHRONICLE OF CEYLON P. XXIII).

4) Arahant Mahinda's Arrival in Ceylon and Coronation of the King Devanampiya Tissa

The third Buddhist Great Council was held at Pāṭaliputra in the 17th regnal year of Aśoka (i.e., 235 Buddha Era/BE). Thereafter the great Bhikkhus were sent to the border countries to propagate Buddha's teachings.

The Elder Mahinda was sent to Sri Lanka in the 18th year of King Aśoka or in 236 BE. He landed at the Island on the Fullmoon day of the third month, i.e. Jyeshtha, King Devanampiya Tissa was appointed as king, one month prior to the arrival of Arahant Mahinda in Sri Lanka.

His second consecration was performed on the full moon day of the month of Vesakha. This event took place in the 18th regnal year of Aśoka or 251 BC (236 BE).

According to the Sri Lanka's Chronology, King Devanampiya Tissa was coronated 236 years after the Landing of Vijaya, the first King of Sri Lanka. Thus, on the basis of the date, the First king landed at the Island in the year $251 BC + 236 \text{ year} = 487 BC$. (See Annexure A & B).

According to the prediction of Lord Buddha, the first king of Sri Lanka landed on that very day, when Lord Buddha entered into the Mahāparinirvana.

The extract from Mahavamsa p.55 about the consecration of King Vijaya says – "When the Guide of the world, having accomplished the sal-

vation of the whole world and having reached the utmost stage of blissful rest, was lying on the bed of his Nirvāna, in the midst of the great assembly of gods, he, the great sage, the greatest of those who have speech, spoke to Sakkala who stood there near him, Vijaya, son of Lala, together with seven hundred followers. In Lanka, Lord of Gods, will my dhamma be established, therefore carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka".

The above statement confirms the fact that the Lord entered Nirvāna in the 487 BC as the Mahāparinirvana, very well fits with the chronology of the ancient India, Ceylone and Greek kings.

5) 881 BC (Iron-Male-Dragon-Year) adopted by the Tibetans for the Mahāparinirvana.

881 BC: This year as based on Phug-Lugs (Tibetan) and also supposed to be based on Kālacakra, accepted and made use of by the scholars of Tibet, around 1300 AD to 1500 AD, for the Mahāparinirvana of Lord Buddha. In Tibet, the composition of astrological works continued from the beginning of the 11th century to the beginning of the 19th century. The date of 881 BC (Iron-male-Dragon year) is also commonly adopted by the Buddhists of Northern India.

If the year 881 BC is compared with the year 487 BC of the Chronology of the ancient Indian Kings, who were the contemporaries of Lord Buddha, it makes a difference of 394 years.

The limitation in this regard is clear. Unless various dates tally with the Chronology of contemporary Kings in India as well as with those of the neighbouring countries like Ceylon, Greece, etc., no Buddhist or Indian history can be written in the current perspective. Apart from the difference of 394 years as worked out above, even a difference of 3 years cannot be accommodated in history in view of the latest available research works based on archaeological excavations, Sun-Moon eclipses and rock/stone pillar Inscriptions. The modern scholars unanimously agree that the Mahāparinirvana date should fall during the period between 480 BC and 490 BC. Thus, how a difference of about 400 years crept into Tibetan Chronological system needs to be ascertained.

6) 544 BC adopted by Southern Buddhists for Mahāparinirvana.

544/543 BC: Actually, the bases of these two dates are same. 543 BC is the year worked out by astronomical/ mathematical calculations and to convert it into the actual BC date, one year is added.

Based on a Burmese inscription found at Bodh Gaya, 544 BC is agreed to at the international Buddhist level. The same year is commonly ac-

cepted these days in Sri Lanka and other countries, where the Theravadda System is being followed. It is also adopted as the year of Nirvāna in some parts of India, China and Japan.

This date also makes a difference of 57 years. It also upsets the whole Chronology of the contemporary Kings of Lord Buddha, as it does not tally with the history and chronology of events of the Kings of the period in other countries like Greece and Sri Lanka.

Based on the Greek history as interpreted by the modern scholars, the coronation years of Chandragupta Maurya and Dhamma-Aśoka are generally accepted to be 322 BC and 269 BC respectively. The accepted difference of years between the year of Nirvāna and coronation of Dhamma-Aśoka is precisely 218 years. This is the only figure accepted and established at the very early stage and mentioned in all the books of Pali scriptures and there are no two opinions about this figure of 218 years (Two hundred and eighteen years). If 544 or 543 BC is taken as the Mahāparinirvana year, Aśoka's year will be 326/325 BC, which is the starting year of the battles of Chandragupta against the Greek ruler, Alexander the Great and the Nanda dynasty in Magadha. The total years elapsed between Aśoka and Chandragupta is 53 to 56 years and the date of Chandragupta works out to 378 to 381 BC which is not possible and incorrect as compared to the ancient chronology. The confirmed dates of 269 for Aśoka and 322 for Chandragupta cannot be changed even for 2 years. To sum up, the date of 544 BC contains an error of about 57 years, which requires further investigation and correction.

Secondly, the 544 BC date is based on the Burmese inscription found at Bodh Gaya. This inscription was written and installed by Burmese Scholars during 11th century AD. In Burma, intensive Buddhist activities started around 11th Century after the arrival of literatures and Scholars from Sri Lanka. It is natural that the source of this date 544 in Burma is from Ceylon, where the actual date was already changed during the military operation and during the reign of Chola Kings (from South India).

It is also found that the date of 325 BC (of Chandra Gupta Maurya) has been adopted mistakenly for Dharma-Ashoka (instead of 269 BC) for fixing the Buddha Era of 544 BC by the historians of Shri Lanka/South-East experts.

J. M. Seneviratne states, 544 BC of Sri Lanka was adopted in the world conference as a midway solution between the 10th century BC of Chinese/

Japanese and 5th century BC of the West.

The early History of Ceylon by G.C. Mendis with a foreword by Wilhelm Geiger (pp. 4- 5) presents the following extract:

“The difference of about 60 years (i.e. 544 - 483) which must have been occurred due to an alteration made by someone, if it did not occur owing to wrong reckoning of fraction of years. Professor W. Geiger thinks that the mistake was due to an adjustment made in the dates at the beginning of the first part of the Culavansa, around the end of 4th century AD and he corrects the error by deducting about sixty years from the reigns of Kīṭ Sri Meghavana, Detu Tissa – II (Jettha Tissa) and Buddhadasa”.

7) 483 BC adopted by the Western scholars for the Mahāparinirvana

483 BC: The Majority of the Western scholars concur that the year 483 BC is the year of Nirvāṇa. On the basis of this date, the year of coronation of Aśoka (Dhammāsoka) works out to 265 BC. The same date, however, does not tally with the Lumbini visit year of Aśoka.

According to Aśoka’s pillar inscription installed at Lumbini, Aśoka visited Lumbini after 20 years of his coronation. Fu-her categorically states that Aśoka visited the blessed spot Lumbini

in his 21st regnal year. In Divyavadana (History of Aśoka preserved in China, and Tibet as well), Aśoka is stated to have visited Lumbini after the great sun eclipse and during the reign of Aśoka three full sun eclipse occurred i.e. on 4th May 249 BC, 15 June, 242 BC and 19 November, 232 BC. Out of these, the eclipse of 4 May 249 BC alone can be treated as only one which took place before the King’s visit to Lumbini. On the basis of this sun eclipse, the coronation year of Aśoka falls in 269 BC, (249 + 20 year). Aśoka seems to have visited Lumbini a few months later then this date of eclipse, i.e. in 248 BC. Hence the date of 265 BC cannot be treated as the year of coronation (vide Aśoka by Romila Thapar), and the date of 483 BC has also to be changed backward by 4 years.

8) Radio Carbon Dating Method

Another alternative, to find out the past date, is by the method of “Radio Carbon (C-14) Dating Method,” but the weakness of this scientific method, is the minimum percentage of error which ranges about from + 2% to + 8%. For the period of 2500 years, the variation may amount to +/-, 50 years to 200 years. The requirement of accuracy related to Buddha Era is up to + 5 years. As such, this method is not suitable for a period of accuracy less than five years and carbon dating

(continued on page 53)

ANNEXURE-A

No	Name of the Indian King	Regnal years	Common Era BC	No	Names of the contemporary Ceylonese Kings	Regnal Years
1	<i>Ajātasatru</i>	8 24	487 BC. = 471 =	1	<i>Vijaya</i>	1 16
2	<i>Udayabhadda</i>	14 15	449 = 448 =	2	<i>Panduvāsudeva</i>	38 1
3	<i>Nagadasaka</i>	10 21	429 = 418 =	3	<i>Abhaya</i>	19 1
4	<i>Sasunāga</i>	17	398 =	4	<i>Pandukabhaya (a)</i>	20 1
5	<i>Kāl-Asoka</i>	16	381 =	5	<i>Mutasiva (b)</i>	58 1
6	<i>Chandagupta (Maury)</i>	2 14	323 = 311 =	6	<i>Devanampiya Tissa. = Mahinda Established in the Island</i>	48 59 1
7	<i>Dhammāsoka</i>	6 17 18 18	263 = 252 = 251 = 251 BC. =			

ANNEXURE-B CHRONOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT KINGS OF INDIA

No	Name of the Kings	Length of Reign	Common Era in BC year	Buddha Era w.r.t. 487 BC
1	<i>Bimbisara</i>	52	547 – 495	60/61 – 8 BB
2	<i>Ajātasattu</i>	32	495 – 463	8/9 – 0 BB 0/1 – 24 BE

Lord Buddha entered Mahāparinirvana in the 8th year of Ajātasattu i.e. 487 BC.

FIRST COUNCIL. The first Buddhist Council took place at Rajagriha within four months after the Mahāparinirvana i.e. (5th month/Sravana)

3	<i>Udayabhadda</i>	16	463 – 447	24/25 – 40
4	<i>Anuraddha's Son Munda</i>	8	447 – 439	40/41 – 48
5	<i>Nagadasaka</i>	24	430 – 415	48/49 – 72
6	<i>Sisunaga</i>	18	415 – 397	72/73 – 90
7	<i>Kāl-Aśoka</i>	28	397 – 369	90/91 – 118

SECOND COUNCIL

The Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaishali in the tenth year of King Kāl-Aśoka i.e. in 387 BC (100 BE)

8	Ten Sons of <i>Kāl-Aśoka</i>	22	369 – 347	118/119 – 140
9	Nine <i>Nandas</i>	22	347 – 325	140/141 – 162
10	Interregnum period <i>Chandragupta's</i> Struggle and downfall of <i>Nandas</i>	3	325 – 322	162 /163 – 165
11	<i>Chandragupta (Maurya)</i>	24	322 – 298	165/166 – 189
12	<i>Bindusara</i>	25	298 – 273	189/190 – 214
13	Interregnum period	4	273 – 269	214 – 218
14	<i>Dhammāsoka (Maurya)</i>	37	269 – 232 BC	218/219 – 255 BE

THIRD COUNCIL

The third Buddhist Council was held at Pātaliputra in the 17th year of Dhammāsoka, i.e. in 252 BC (235 BE)

15	<i>Kaniska</i>	23	78 – 101 AD	565 – 588 BE
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FOURTH COUNCIL.

The Fourth Buddhist Council (Vibhasa Sangiti) was held at Kundalagrama (Srinagar-Kashmir) during Kaniska's period, i.e. around 100 ADS (587/588 BE)

ANNEXURE - C

The confirmed year of the Kings of Sri-Lanka (Ceylon) are as under: -

S. No	Name of the Kings/ (S.No. of Kings)	Regnal Yr.	* = years checked	
			Common Era - BC/AD	Buddha Era (BE) w.r.t 487 BC
1	<i>Vijaya</i> , the first King Landed Sri Lanka		487 BC	The year of Lord's <i>Nirvāna</i>
2	<i>Devanampiya - Tissa</i> ascended to throne the (sixth king)/(6 th)	40	251-211 BC	236* year after <i>Nirvāna</i> BE 237*-276
3	<i>Dutthagamani</i> (14 th king)	24	105-81 BC	383-406
4	<i>Vttagamani</i> (19 th king) 2 nd time	10	33-21 BC	455*-466
5	<i>Kutakannatissa</i> (33 rd king)	23	12-35 AD	499-522
6	<i>Voharikatissa</i> (53)	22	265-287 AD	752*-774
7	<i>Gothakabhaya</i> (59)	13	308-321	795*-808
8	<i>Mehsana</i> (61)	27	321-348 AD or (331-358)	808-835 or (818-845) *
9	<i>Kirti Siri Meghavana</i> (62)	27	348-375*	835-862
10	<i>Jethatissa</i> (63) and <i>Buddhadasa</i> (64)	23	375-398	862-885
11	<i>Upatissa - I</i> (65)	11	398-409	885-896
12	<i>Mahánama</i> (66)	22	409-431*	896-918
13	<i>Dhatusena</i> (76)	18	460-478*	947-965
14	<i>Kassapa</i> (77) [Dotted Record. = 975yr in 88/489AD] *	20	478-496	965-983
15	<i>Moggallana-I</i> (78)	17	496-513*	983-1000
16	<i>Kumaradassa</i> (79)	8	513-521*	1000-1008
17	<i>Moggallana-II</i> (85)	20	536-556	1023-1043

18	<i>Aggabodhi-I</i> (88)	33	568-601*	1055-1088
19	<i>Aggabodhi-II</i> (89)	18	611-629	1088-1098
20	<i>Dathopa Tissa</i> (90) [Royal Saka Era of Burma starts 638 AD]	12	629-641 *	1116-1128
21	<i>Kassapa-II</i> (96)	9	641-650 *	1128-1137
22	<i>Aggabodhi-IV</i> (99)	16	658-674 *	1145-1161
23	<i>Manavama</i> (102)	35	676-711 *	1163-1198
24	<i>Kassapa-III</i> (104)	7	717-724 *	1204-1211
25	<i>Mahinda-III</i> (110)	4	797-801 *	1284-1288
26	<i>Kassapa-IV</i> (117)	17	896-913 *	1383-1400
27	<i>Dappula-V</i> (120)	11	923-934 *	1410-1411
28	<i>Udaya-III</i> (123)	8	945-953	1432-1440
29	<i>Prakrama Pandiya-I</i> (132)	2	1051-1053 *	1538-1540
30	<i>Vijaya Bahu-I</i> (134)	55	1054-1109 *	1540-1596
31	<i>Prakrama Bahu-I</i> (138)	33	1153-1186 *	1640-1673
32	<i>Sahasa Malla</i> (146)	2	1200-1202 * (Reconfirmed year)	1687-1689
33	<i>Parakrama Bahu VI</i> (167)	52	1401-1414	1888-1901
34	<i>Dharma Parakrama Bahu IX</i> (169)	22	1505-1527 *	1992-2014
35	<i>Raja Sinha-I</i> (171/177)	11	1581-1592	2068-2079
36	<i>Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha</i> (180/86)	17	1798-1815 * AD	2285-2302 BE

method may be useful for a longer period of more than 5000 years and up to a variation of + 100 to + 300 years which can be tolerated comfortably. However, Archaeological Survey of India, conducted many tests at various Buddhist sites and

found that the Buddha's period was not earlier than 6th to 5th century BC and not later than 5th to 4th century BC.

Vaiśākha Full Moon//Buddha Purnima (Orig-

nal Month)

The Vaiśākha full moon / Buddha Purnima used to be commemorated around March 21st to April 20th (Gregorian dates) during the period from Buddha's time to Dhamma-Aśoka.

The position of Vaiśākha Purnima was later got shifted from its original date to March 26th to April 25th, during the period of about 500 years or upto first century A.D.

These days, i.e. during 2000 AD to 2010 AD, the Vaiśākha Purnima falls between April 28th to May 28th as per the present Indian Hindu calendar. The total shift since 500 BC to 2000 AD has been worked out as about 41 days.

This change of position of the Vaiśākha Month / Purnima is mainly due to the different year length adopted by the ancient Indian astronomers / astrologers (i.e. 1 year = 365.258 756 484 days against the Tropical year of 365.242 20//365.24250 days) and Sidereal year (1 year = 365.256363 days)

The rate of change was one day in a period of 114.201 090 year during 500 BC to 300 AD based on Julian system and the rate of change increases to one day in a period of about 60.40 years around 1752 AD to 2000 AD w.r.t, Gregorian Dates.

Ancient Buddhist festivals, annual Buddhist monastery schedules and summer rain retreat (Vassa)/Varsha were mainly related with the seasons. A luni-solar calendar based on the tropical year should have been adopted by Buddhist communities instead of an Indian Hindu (Anomalistic) calendar which is based on the anomalistic year (1 year = 365.258 756 484 days) Reformation of the calendar system is needed to correct the shifted period of about 40 days and to adjust the position of the Vaiśākha Purnima to its original dates/position.

The correct position of Vaiśākha Purnima should fall between March 21st/Vernal Equinox to about May 13th of the Gregorian calendar, and these were the dates that Buddhists used to commemorate Buddha Jayanti from about 500 BC to 100 AD.

An intercalary month (one extra Lunar month) is needed after every two to three years, to keep the lunar month in line with the solar tropical months. The existing system for intercalary months can also be modified for simple calculation and for tropical Luni - Solar system.

In summary, a luni-solar calendar, based on the tropical solar year (Gregorian system) is required for the observation of Buddhist religious months. The full moon from March 21st/ /Spring Equi-

nox to May 13th or (April 7 to May 7) should be considered as Buddha Purnima / Vaiśākha Purnima month. Intercalary month will occur with the condition that whenever fullmoon falls between March 26 and April 6, The Vaishaka lunar month will be in intercalary i.e., as Vaiśākha - 1 and Vaiśākha - 2.

In this modified system, being a luni-solar calendar based on tropical year, there is no chance of drifting or shifting of dates with the passage of time in future. ■

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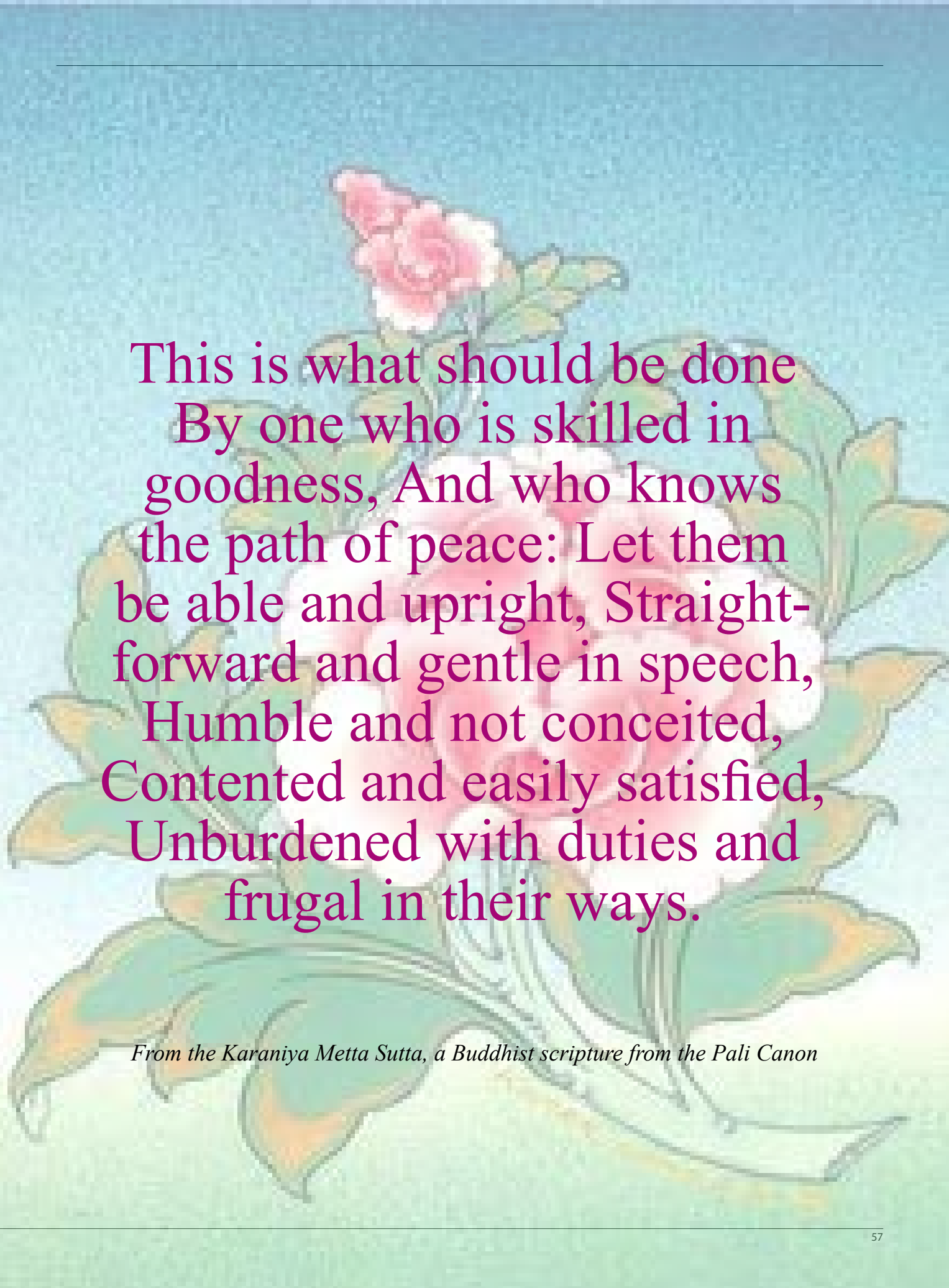


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This is what should be done
By one who is skilled in
goodness, And who knows
the path of peace: Let them
be able and upright, Straight-
forward and gentle in speech,
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied,
Unburdened with duties and
frugal in their ways.

From the Karaniya Metta Sutta, a Buddhist scripture from the Pali Canon



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