

New Delhi Declaration at the Closing of the First Asian Buddhist Summit - 2024

Dhamma Setu "BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH BUDDHA DHAMMA" 6th November, 2024

The two day First Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 concluded successfully in New Delhi, highlighting the significance of sustaining the values of Dhamma in the modern world and for future generations. The Hon'ble President of India inaugurated the Summit. She emphasised the need for a support system for the very existence of the World and especially the entire region of Asia which had a long – long deep connection with Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. She emphasised on the role of Buddha Dhamma, involving all, especially the youth which will help in strengthening and nurturing a new value-based Asian Society based on the universal Concept of Dhamma and its practice.

This gathering shaped the following New Delhi Declaration:

It is an honor to reflect on the insightful discussions and shared aspirations that emerged from the assembly of Venerable Sangha leaders, scholars, experts, and practitioners from diverse Buddhist traditions across Asia. This Summit, centred on “The Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia,” aimed to address the relevance of Buddha Dhamma in fostering a compassionate, harmonious, and inclusive Asia.

There has been general agreement that the basic fundamental which can provide inspiration and guidance in the light of Buddha's message of Peace, Well-being, Harmony and Compassion for Universal Peace need to be highlighted and worked upon for future as follows:

1. **The 21st Century as Asia's Century:** We believe in strengthening ties among Asian nations based on the principles of Buddha Dhamma – Śīla (ethical conduct), Samādhi (concentration) and Prajñā (insight or wisdom).

2. **Buddhist Literature, especially Pāli Literature that contains the original words of the Buddha, Philosophy and its Practice:** We recognise these texts and teachings which continue to inspire the wisdom, compassion, well-being and ethical living in the 21st century.
3. **Exposition of Holy Buddhist Relics:** We accept that their veneration strengthens faith, cultural identity, and the spiritual continuity of the Buddhist community and promotes a common bond amongst each other, which is the need of the time.
4. **Engaging the Youth:** We identify that the role of Dhamma is pivotal in cultivating a new, value-based society, involving all, especially the youth which will help in strengthening and nurturing a new value-based Asian Society based on the universal Concept of Dhamma and its practice.
5. **Buddhist Art and Heritage:** We acknowledge that the evolution and development of rich Buddhist Art and Architecture that originated in India serves as enduring representations of our shared values and historical journey, fostering cultural appreciation and spiritual growth.
6. **Buddhist Pilgrimage as Living Heritage connecting Asian Buddhist Circuit:** We recognize the significance of Buddhist pilgrimage as a living heritage that promotes spiritual growth, cultural understanding and social harmony. We call upon governments to preserve and protect the sacred sites of Buddha Dhamma and promote their accessibility to people of all backgrounds. This will lead to historical spread of Dhamma, promoting community and compassion across borders throughout Asia.
7. **Scientific Relevance of Buddha Dhamma:** We acknowledge that the Buddha Dhamma is deeply rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, offer profound insights into the realms of modern medicine, scientific research and well-being. By examining the scientific and medical aspects of the Buddha Dhamma, especially concerning psychosomatic illnesses and the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions, we discover a treasure-trove of knowledge that bridges the gap between traditional wisdom and contemporary health-care practices.
8. **Contemporary Relevance:** We very much recognise that the Buddha emphasised the importance of his teachings in uniting and binding us together, when he said in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* that whatever *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* I have pointed out and formulated for

you, that will be your teacher when I am gone. This statement is significant for several reasons and plays a crucial role in building peaceful and harmonious societies:

- i). It establishes the *Dhamma Vinaya* as the supreme authority after passing away of the Buddha;
- ii). It prevents the rise of personality cults;
- c). It emphasises self-reliability on spiritual practice and
- d). It ensures the continuity of the teaching.

As we move forward, this Summit reaffirms the role of Buddha Dhamma as a guiding framework for ethical governance, compassionate action, and sustainable development with Mindfulness. The collective commitment of Buddhist nations and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) will ensure that the enduring message of Buddha Dhamma continues to inspire and support Asia's journey towards a harmonious and prosperous future.
