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IBC celebrates Buddha Jayanti

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) observed the thrice blessed day of Vesak, May 18, 2019, (celebrating the birth, enlightenment, and passing on of Shakyamuni Buddha) with prayers – reciting the sutras, meditation and discourse on Dhamma. A documentary on the significance of the Vesak Day was also shown. Monks, lay persons, students, members of the diplomatic community and others participated in the event.

EDUCATING THE HEART AND THE MIND

Ethics in Education to Promote Basic Human Values



Photos: Tenzin Choejor

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's keynote address at the global launch of Social, Emotional and Ethical learning (SEE Learning) in New Delhi

Based on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's far – reaching vision of the need to educate both the heart and the mind, Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia- USA) in collaboration with the Dalai Lama Trust and Vana Foundation held the Global Launch of its academic programme in Social, Emotional and Ethical learning- SEE Learning in New

Delhi, India in early April 2019.

The SEE learning is the culmination of a decades-long collaboration by the University and His Holiness, "... we've worked together to equip students and faculty with the social, emotional and ethical tools to create true well-being for themselves and others in a rapidly

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Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Bodhgaya

With the patronage and support of the Mahabodhi Society of India Bodhgaya, the International All Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination was held early this year in Bodhgaya, the site of the Buddha's Great Awakening more than 2600 years ago.

Twenty-four women novices (*samaneri, sikkhamana*) from various countries were granted higher ordination and fully accepted as Bhikkhunis by the Dual Sangha of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis.

Bhikkhunis (nuns) are one of the four-

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Ethics in Education to Promote Basic Human Values

changing world,” said Mr Claire E Sterk, President Emory University in his message on the occasion.

“Today, we’re working on a shared dream – to develop an educational programme for worldwide use that cultivates evidence – based compassion, kindness and altruism into daily learning practices,” he explained, adding that he hoped that the faculty will find inspiration and ideas that they use to transform their classrooms around the world.”

After more than three decades of talks, discussions with scientists and educators for the need to bring compassion and ethics into kindergarten to 12th grade and higher education, His Holiness asked

Emory University to create a programme in ethics to promote basic human values.

As Presidential distinguished Professor, His Holiness on his various visits to Emory University, he emphasized for an education, what he referred to as ‘secular ethics in education.’ His approach to compassion-based ethics is grounded in common sense, common experiences and scientific evidence. Besides, any secular ethics curriculum should be equally acceptable to those of religious faith and those without, is the basic belief.

Says Dr Daniel Goleman, author of emotional intelligence, co-founder of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, that his book of

mid-90s on Emotional Intelligence made an argument for what could be called “emotional literacy,” educating children about their own emotions, how to handle them well, and how to empathize with other—and how to use that human skill set to have harmonious relationships and make sound social decisions.

Since those days this view has been spreading, now schools around the world reflect the understanding that a full education goes beyond the bare academics to educate students in these ways. That movement is called “social/emotional learning,” or SEL. The best curricula are based on state-of-the-art scientific findings about emotions and the brain.

Some of this became apparent to Dr Goleman when he worked with His Holiness, A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama’s Vision for our world. Of this,

Delhi government set to integrate the SEE curriculum in Schools

His Holiness the Dalai Lama presided over the launch along with Dr. Daniele Goleman, Miss Linda Lantieri, and Dr. Kimberly Schonet-Reichl and Mr. Brandon Ozawa De Silva, the associate director of SEE learning centre at Emory University.

After launching the Happiness Curriculum in state-run schools for students up to 8th last year, the Delhi government is set to integrate the SEE curriculum which aims to bring the ‘secular ethics’ in the classroom for the students of Kindergarten to class 12th.

“Delhi’s Education Minister and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia went through the SEE Learning Curriculum and was keen to adopt some of the activities practised in the program, to enrich their existing (Happiness) Curriculum,” said Geshe Lhakdor, the director of Library of Tibetans Works and Archives (LTWA) and one of the

key forces behind the initiative.

At the launch, His Holiness remarked, ‘a happy world cannot exist without human compassion, therefore, the education system should include the education of warm-heartedness.”

The program emphasizes the cultivation of compassion for self and others, resilience skills based on trauma-informed care, system thinking and ethical discernment.

The launch was followed by a ‘secular ethics’ workshop for students from SAARC and a few other countries.

Initiated in 2015, SEE Learning has established partnerships in North and South America, South and East Asia and Europe.

Children’s rights activist and Nobel Peace Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi and a large number of education and policy leaders, National and international experts from across the world took part in the conference.



educating the heart forms a key part of his vision for a better world, helping students gain an ethical compass based on compassion, and acting from that sense throughout their lives, is integral to our moving in the positive direction, explains Dr Goldman.

As His Holiness puts it, the people of the 21st century, have created the global problems—a growing gap between the rich and the poor, increasing “us-versus-them” battles, and the heating of our planet----- that the “people of the 21st Century” will have to solve.

Education is key. As His Holiness has been saying for decades, we need to incorporate basic human values and a sense of universal responsibility in education. In short teaching compassion is an essential.

Therefore, it makes great sense that His Holiness called for, and now

enthusiastically supports, the SEE Learning curriculum developed at Emory University. The SEE learning embodies the key points the H H Dalai lama has long advocated as part of every students’ education. His writings in books like Beyond Religion, Ethics for a New Millennium, and others have been key source for the SEE Learning Framework.

The new approach to education calls for an education that includes compassion, as well as one that sharpens attention on the one hand, and opens students’ focus to understand the larger systems, from economics to earth science, that shape our lives.

“SEE learning has been brilliant in finding ways to integrate all these pedagogic innovations into the classroom, showing the way to the future direction for this critically important educational approach, explained Dr Goldman.

Towards a compassionate orientation

The existing CBCT (Cognitively-based Compassion Training) programme brings to the centre a wealth of experience in community and institutional outreach and evidence-based research. Originally developed as a protocol for the rigorous study of compassion meditation, CBCT is a system of progressive contemplative exercises that strengthen and sustain a compassionate orientation towards others.

The practice begins with improving attentional stability and increasing emotional awareness, followed by targeted analytical reflections to understand better one’s relationship with self and others. The intended outcome is increased insight into how inner reactions and attitudes can shift to increase personal resiliency, foster a more inclusive and accurate understanding of others, and intensify altruistic motivations.

Currently CBCT programme is working with Spiritual Healthcare at Emory Healthcare to train chaplain residents. It also offer CBCT to students and faculty at the Emory School of Medicine and has created a course for nurses.

CBCT has research partners based in Europe, South America, and at American universities, among them Harvard and the University of California. These relationships form a base from which the new centre can build to become a leading programme in contemplative research.



Dr Brendon Ozawa-de Silva speaking at the panel discussion with His Holiness. On the left is Dr Kimberly Schonert-Reichl and on the far right is Dr Lobsang Tenzin Negi



The ‘Why’ behind this centre

For three decades, I have had the privilege of observing and participating in dialogue that His Holiness the XIV Dalai lama has had with educators, medical and mental health professionals, and scientists—exploring how to enrich quality of life for individuals and society as a whole. Along with a growing body of research in evolutionary biology, psychology, neuroscience, and other fields, these dialogues demonstrate that compassion is not only part of our biology, it can be intentionally cultivated; these explorations have given rise to the emerging field of contemplative science and a major educational movement known as social and emotional learnings (SEL).

What the Dalai Lama refers to as “secular education,” or education of the heart and mind, shares an affinity with the skills promoted by SEL. His Holiness makes a strong case for why education cannot neglect the heart (and deal with only developing the mind), and how it can be informed by compassion-based ethics. Relying on common sense, common experience, and scientific evidence, this holistic approach to education focuses on fundamental human values and is not dependent upon the beliefs of any particular value system.

It was this shared vision for education that led to a fruitful relationship between Emory University and the Dalai Lama and, now, to establishing the Centre for Contemplative Science and Compassion-based Ethics. The launch of a centre devoted to fostering these basic human skills is incredibly timely. Given the increasing complexity of our human condition, managing our emotions, interacting rationally with others, and showing

kindness is more important than ever.

The centre has four major areas of focus. The first is the creation of a framework and accompanying curricula for social, emotional, and ethical learning from kindergarten through high school (SEE Learning). Next are strides in higher education, including the development of undergraduate coursework in secular ethics and the incorporation of secular ethics and contemplative practice into existing graduate and professional programs. Through the CBCT (Cognitively-Based Compassion Training), the centre aspires to help health care practitioners, educators, and the general public to expand and sustain a compassionate orientation towards others while facilitating research around contemplative practice.

Last, the Robert A. Paul Emory-Tibet Science Initiative (ETSI) is a unique educational endeavour integrating modern science education into the core curriculum of Tibetan monastic institutions. By providing an additional set of tools for investigating our inner and outer worlds, ETSI prepares monastics to engage with scientists, enabling them to examine our human condition through a new lens—and to find new ways to address our most pressing problems.

The guiding intention of the Centre for Contemplative and Compassion-Based Ethics is to create true global citizens able to find peaceful and equitable solutions to our century’s most pressing problems—thus creating the conditions that will allow each of us to thrive.

— By **Dr Lobsang Tenzin Negi**,
Executive Director
Center for Contemplative Science and
Compassion-based Ethics, Emory University



Dr Lobsang Tenzin Negi of Emory University introducing the programme during the launch

Dr Negi, is a Professor of Practice in Emory University’s Department of Religion and the founder and spiritual director of Drepung Loseling Monastery, INC., in Atlanta, Georgia.

In 2004 He developed CBCT based on Tibetan Buddhist mind training practices. He oversees several other programmes. Prof. Negi was born in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, India. A former monk, he began his monastic training at The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, and continues his education at Drepung Loseling Monastery in south India, where in 1994 he received the Geshe Lharampa degree.

Prof Negi completed his PhD at Emory University in 1999; his interdisciplinary dissertation cantered on traditional Buddhist and Contemporary Western approaches to emotions and their impact on wellness.

Cross-cultural collaboration

Michael A. Elliot, the dean of Emory College of Arts and Sciences (ECAS) said the compassion-based ethics curriculum represents the culmination of more than two decades of academic cross-cultural collaboration between Emory and the Dalai Lama's institutions.

The Dalai Lama's relationship with Emory University spans more than three decades. He had received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree, had given a commencement address and was named the Presidential Distinguished Professor.

"The Dalai Lama invited Emory to create a program in ethics and basic human values that would be grounded in common sense, common experience, and scientific evidence, and that would be equally acceptable to those of any religious faith and those without," says Lobsang Tenzin Negi, executive director of the new center and professor of practice in the Emory Department of Religion. "Scientific research has shown that ethical development, alongside social and emotional learning, contribute to a student's physical, psychological, and social well-being, helping them to succeed not just academically, but in life."

Negi and his colleagues collaborated with internationally recognized experts in developmental psychology, education, neuroscience and trauma-informed care in developing the program. "There is a growing awareness of the effects of stress on young people and the need to incorporate social, emotional and ethical learning into standard K-12 academic curricula to address the needs of the whole child," says Negi.

This innovative program, known as SEE Learning (Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning), includes important new topics such as attention training, the cultivation of compassion for self and others, resilience skills based on trauma-informed care, systems thinking and ethical discernment.

Initiated as a pilot program in 2015, SEE Learning has met with interest in the United States and worldwide, with partnerships to date in North and South America, South Asia, East Asia and Europe. More than 600 educators in various countries have attended SEE Learning workshops, many of them providing ongoing feedback in evaluating, enhancing and refining the pedagogical framework for the program and contributing to the development of curricula designed for early elementary, late elementary and middle schools. A high school curriculum is planned for 2020. Following the global launch, an online platform will be available for educator preparation, and the curriculum is currently being translated into fourteen languages.



Ancient Reclining Buddha in Tajik museum

7th century statue found in the ruins of Ajina-Tepa

The destruction of the 1800-year-old Bamiyan Buddha statues and other historical relics by the Taliban in Afghanistan caused irreversible loss to the heritage of the Afghan people and also to the world's Buddhist heritage. The world's largest Buddha statues destroyed in Bamiyan had towered at heights of 175 feet and 120 feet and were carved out of the mountain cliffs during the 3rd and 4th centuries. Chinese pilgrims, Fahien (Faxian) and Hsuan Tsang (Xuan Zang) had passed through Bamiyan falling on the famous ancient Silk Route around 400 AD and 630 AD, respectively. They had described a thriving Buddhist centre with many hundreds of monks living in the caves dotted around the statues in Bamiyan.

Buddhism was first introduced in Afghanistan and Central Asia by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC and subsequently by the Kushans. During Emperor Harshvarhan's empire, Buddhism was widely practised in Kabul and Vaksh valleys and further spread up to eastern Xinjiang in China. The Arab conquests of the region in the middle of the 8th century caused the final destruction and abandonment of Buddhism in the region.

While the Taliban soldiers in Afghanistan destroyed the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, archaeologists and historians in neighbouring Tajikistan in Central Asia meticulously restored their prominent Buddhist heritage in the form of a huge reclining Buddha figure found from AjinaTepa ruins belonging to the same era. This magnificent effort by Tajikistan was greatly welcomed by the world, especially by the Buddhist world.



History of Ajina-Tepa

The Ajina-Tepa Buddhist monastery and temple complex dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries is located near the modern Kurgan-Tyube town in south Tajikistan, just 300 km north of Bamiyan. It is the second most important cave monastery complex, after the Bamiyan. The monastery was found by archaeologists excavating ruins in the region.

In 1947, the famous Soviet archaeologist A.M. Belenitsky carried out a detailed study of the monuments in the Vaksh river valley. His account of work provided for the first time valuable basis for further research work on historical and archaeological study of the valley. Later in 1953, B.A. Litvinsky, Head of the Archaeology and Numismatics Department, Tajik Academy of Sciences, carried out large-scale excavations in the valley. Six years later, in 1959, his efforts led him to find a 1600-year old terracotta Buddha figure in Nirvana pose from the ruins of Ajina-Tepa. By 1966, most of the excavation works in Vaksh valley were completed. As a result of these excavations, archaeologists and historians could get a treasure trove of ideas about the overall planning of the complex, and were also able to ascertain the purpose and origin of the structures.

The Ajina-Tepa complex was built according to the four-ayvan courtyard

plan. The centre of the courtyard was occupied by a terraced style stupa with railings around it. The walls of the complex were entirely covered with murals, bas-reliefs and paintings depicting scenes of Buddha's life. Sculptures of the Buddha were installed in deep niches around the complex.

The Reclining Buddha Figure

In one of the corridors, archaeologists found a 12.85 metre (42 feet) clay statue of Buddha in reclining nirvana posture, which dates back to the 7th century, a period of Buddhist dominance across the high mountains and deep valleys of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The figure was then divided into 44 pieces and transferred from the excavation site to Dushanbe, the capital city of Tajikistan. There it was kept in storage rooms at the Tajik Museum of Antiquities for safe custody for nearly 30 years. The restoration and assembly work of the figure started only after the independence of Tajikistan from Soviet Union in 1991. After painstaking work spread over ten years, Tajik archaeologists finally completed the restoration and assembly of the figure in the year 2000. The figure was then unveiled for the first time to the outside world in September 2001 and kept at the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan in Dushanbe. The Soviets, despite their discovery of this and other archaeological treasures, had never allowed Tajikistan to show its pre-Islamic, Buddhist and Islamic archaeological heritage, including the Buddha statue.

Today, the Buddha in Nirvana statue is the most valuable and popular exhibit in the Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan. It is viewed by a large number of visitors from around the world, including heads of state of many Buddhist countries of South East Asia. It is now considered as the largest and most ancient reclining Buddha figure in the world.

The writer is Govind S Khampa (left), a retired Indian Foreign Service Officer. During his long career, he served in Indian Diplomatic Missions in Bhutan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, USA, Guyana, France and Tajikistan. He is currently with the IBC as its Executive Director.



16th International Sakyadhita Conference

THE FEMALE VOICE



The 16th International Sakyadhita Conference will take place on June 23-28, 2019 in the Blue Mountains of Australia, near Sydney. There has been a huge response to the conference and registrations had already closed at the time of writing.

The theme, 'New Horizons in Buddhism', explores changes within Buddhist circles worldwide, in response to current global concerns. What has Buddhism to offer in the face of our shared challenges? And in particular, what are the particular qualities which the female voice can bring in facing these concerns? Australia can well illustrate these challenges as it is a melting pot of many diverse cultures, including many Buddhist traditions.

The keynote speech at the Opening Ceremony will be given by Roshi Susan Murphy after the official welcome by Sakyadhita International President, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. This will be followed with performances by local Wagana Aboriginal Dancers and the Healing Chorus from South Korea.

This conference will include talks, workshops, meditations and discussions led by women from across the world, engaged in Buddhist practice, learning and service. There will also be Post Conference Temple Tour and Sydney city to visit the iconic Opera House and Harbour Bridge. People of all genders, lay and ordained of all ages, nationalities and perspectives are expected to attend.

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VAJRAYĀNA BUDDHISM

Relevance of Vajrayana techniques in today's world

The Third International Conference on Vajrayāna Buddhism addressed issues of continuity and changes within Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions with a special emphasis on body-mind practices that have been shown to bring significant improvements to human health and wellbeing—as well as extending human-kind's spiritual and cognitive capacities.

With the theme, 'Techniques in Vajrayana Buddhism', the two-day conference in Thimphu was organised by the Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies (CBS) in collaboration with the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan. More than a hundred participants from over 15 countries attended the conference.

The conference held on April 19-20, 2019 also explored diverse ways in which the techniques of Vajrayāna Buddhism can be adapted and made relevant. It included sessions on the path of skillful means, philosophical basis of Vajrayāna Buddhism, and mind-body practices in Vajrayana.

Panelists ranged from religious leaders to neuroscientists, academics, and prominent international scholars and practitioners who have adapted Vajrayāna Buddhist methods of individual and collective transformation to the priorities and concerns of the 21st century.

Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lotay Tshering at the opening of the conference

said, "Over the years as I embraced the profession of a medical practitioner, my comprehension of the religion narrowed to one aspect – of being motivated by compassion in everything I do. Today, at the helm of governance, this is the same principle that I apply." He said that compassion for him is religion and that for an ordinary Bhutanese, life is defined by the ambience of spirituality.

Opening the proceedings earlier, Dasho Karma Ura, president of the organizer, CBS—a social science research institute that conducts inter-disciplinary studies for advancing Bhutan's social, cultural, economic, and political well-being—underscored the intent and objectives



PM graces the opening ceremony of the Vajrayana conference in Zhichenkhar

Photos: Craig Lewis



Dignitaries, delegates, guests, and participants of the Third International Vajrayana Conference in Thimphu

behind the conference, which is also one of the first pre-consecration events to be held in the country's new Library of Mind, Body, and Sound, established to fill the needs of those searching for spiritual and intellectual sustenance.

"As you all know very well, the human body is the very foundation of our experience, and it can be potentialized through various mind-body practices. Both transformation and liberation occur only through mind-body practices in Vajrayana Buddhism," Dasho Karma Ura noted in his opening remarks. "In terms of the mind as the gateway of experience, the vision is to experience some kind of Dharmakaya or Buddha-nature, which is a state of thoughtlessness—of course I don't use the word 'thoughtlessness' in the English sense; I use it in the Buddhist sense. And we hope that at a deeper level, this library will help all of us follow through the vision of Vajrayana to strengthen human potential through the three dimensions of human experience."

"As his majesty the king always reiterates in his public speeches, Bhutan has been a hidden land blessed by Guru Rinpoche," Dasho Karma Ura explained.

"And that is why Bhutan could be a place to facilitate the cultivation of many things, such as Dharma practice, Buddhist economics, Gross National Happiness, well-being, and so forth."

Ven. Choten Dorji, a scholar from Mahidol University in Thailand, discussed meditation in early Vajrayana Buddhism discussed the major types of early meditation and different techniques from several perspectives of sutras to striking insight of Milerepa. He said that Vajrayana Buddhism has come a long way whose views regarding the universe and enlightenment are developed from ritual practice and mediation.

His session sought to illustrate the extent to which people can understand the profound insight and techniques laid down in the Vajrayana Buddhism with written records dating back to at least 400C.E. "The steps to enlightenment, including various meditation practices were clearly laid out by great Indian sages and Tibetan masters," he writes.

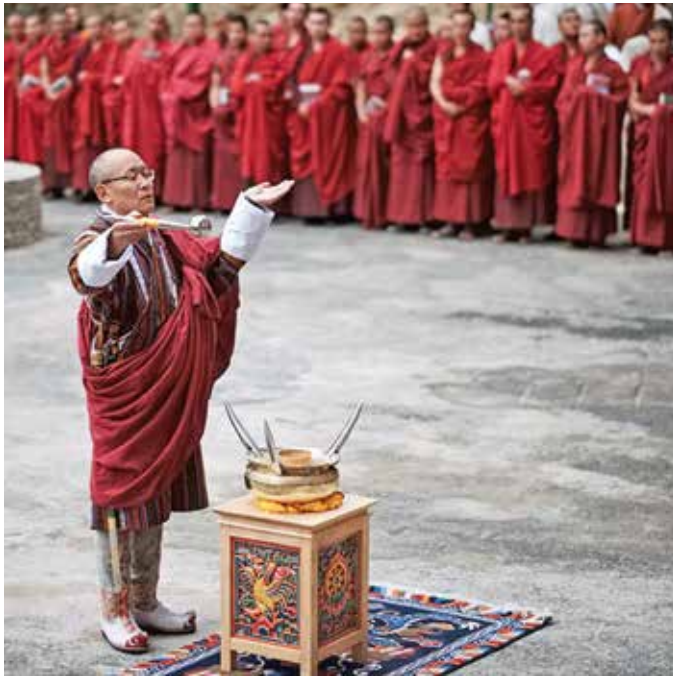
Addressing the need of Vajrayana practice, Co-founder and Medical Director of Sorig Khang International and Co-founder of the International Ngakmang

Institute, Italy, Dr Nida Chenagtsang said, "I always see the miserable world and our planet are suffering because of the human conflict, desire, greed, and the world really need Vajrayana."

His talk provided an overview of the relationship between Sutric and Tantric orientations in Tibetan Buddhism, Tantric vows, initiations, and subtle anatomy, and the bio-medical and traditional Tibetan ideas about sexual health and well-being. Based on special Karmamudra teachings found in the Yuthok Nyingthig tradition, Dr. Nida Chenagtsang shared simple methods through which one can work with the raw energy of desire and transform it into a source of blessings and benefit in our everyday lives.

Khentrul Rinpoche Jamphel Lodro shed light on "seizing the extraordinary opportunities of the profound path." Rinpoche discussed on the unique features of the Vajrayana which make it increasingly relevant for the world at this particular moment in time, as well as the unique opportunities that are available right now.

Professor of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara,



Center for Bhutan & GNH Studies president Dashed Karma Ura during the conference opening ceremony



Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering offers a keynote speech during the conference opening

Vesna A. Wallace talked about the early evidence of Kalachakra tantric tradition among the Mongols, and forming of tantric tradition in Mongol territories.

She first discussed the social, economic and political changes in the early twentieth century that brought a sense of urgency to connect Mongolia to the Kalachakra and Śambhala. This was a period when many new, Kalachakra tantric rituals, meditations, and 'pho ba practices were composed by Mongolian lamas. She then analysed some of these practices that are closely related to the destruction of Mongolian Buddhism.

Founder of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine Asa Hershoff (Lama Jinpa) outlined the interface of Vajrayāna and the relevant scientific discoveries regarding the body of light. It offers a sound theory for the structural nature of a fully operational five-element light or rainbow body.

An anthropologist, art curator, and cultural historian, Centre for the Social History of Health and Health Care, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, Ian Baker talked about how the methods and techniques of Vajrayana Buddhism, while committed to the optimisation of human consciousness,

engage subtle aspects of human physiology as the vehicle of transformation. "Mind is the ultimate Buddha," he said.

Head of Department, of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna, Austria, Klaus-Dieter Mathes talked about the four signs of Mahamudra meditation—mindfulness, beyond mindfulness, non-arising, and transcending the intellect.

Professor of Japanese Buddhist Studies, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, Richard K. Payne explained tantric Buddhist praxis as the relation between ritual practice and Yogachara conceptions of the transformation of consciousness.

A lecturer with Tango Buddhist University, Khenpo Sakya Singye talked about the advent of Vajrayana tradition that Vajrayana attempts to recapture the enlightenment experience of the historical Buddha.

Biophysical anthropologist affiliated with MIT, and Director of Research & Academic Liaison of ISHAR, Dr. William C. Bushell, discussed how leading physicists are suggesting the extraordinarily radical idea that the human perception of entanglement may be key to the next phase in the development of quantum physics and cosmology. He suggested that

one of the key next phases in research into the foundations of physics and cosmology should be an integrative, East-West collaborative one by including adept Vajrayana practitioners.

The conference was held at Zhichenkhar, the newly constructed six-storied landmark building called the Library of Mind, Body, and Sound.

Compared with the broader scope of the two previous forums in this series, this year's conference, presented a much more focused and in-depth collection of talks and discussions by lay and monastic experts, who examined Vajrayana practices and the philosophies and sciences behind them in the contemporary context. The conference brought together scholars from around the world to discuss and deliberate on Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, and sandwiched between India and China, Bhutan is the world's last remaining Vajrayana Buddhist country. The ancient spiritual tradition is embedded in the very consciousness and culture of this remote land, where it has flourished with an unbroken history that dates back to its introduction from Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, in the eighth century.

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Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Bodhgaya

fold assembly of the Buddha's followers in early Buddhism and in what it later became known as, the Theravada. The other members of the four-fold assembly are bhikkhus (monks), upasakas (lay men), and upasikas (lay women).

This time was the first time to offer such an ordination fully based upon the Canonical Pali-text Vinaya Ordination Procedure in Bodhgaya, while also including traditional Sri Lankan cultural expressions, in honor of the Sri Lankan teachers and preceptors who led the revival of the Bhikkhuni Upasampada. It was also historic for another reason: three samaneri students from mainland China of Sambodhi Sangha's founder Ven. Vupasama Mahathero and Sambodhi Sangha teacher Ven. Tissara Bhikkhuni received full bhikkhuni ordination. This means that the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha in Mainland China has been [re] established and is a living lineage.

The ordinations began on the first day before dawn, with bhikkhuni teachers and

novices gathering from various monastic lodgings and pilgrims' guesthouses around Bodhgaya. In accordance with Sri Lankan tradition, the candidates were dressed in white, and received anew the Pabbajja ("Going Forth") and Samaneri Precepts at the vihara of the Maha Bodhi Society, with the blessings and instruction of the Venerable P. Seewali Mahathero, the General Secretary of the Mahabodhi Society of India. Then, all the bhikkhunis and samaneri candidates went to the established *sima* of Wat Lao Buddhagaya International, where bhikkhu and bhikkhuni ordinations can legally be held.

For this Bhikkhuni Ordination, Venerable Vijithananda Theri of Sri Lanka served as the Bhikkhuni Preceptor (*Pavattini/Upajjhaya*) for the candidates from mainland China, who were first due to their seniority in monastic life. She also served as preceptor for bhikkhuni students from Khemarama (also known as Tịnh An Lan Nhã in Vietnam). Venerable Lieu Phap Viditadhamma Theri served as Bhikkhuni

Preceptor for her students from Suññata Bhikkhuni Arama (also known as Ni Viện Viên Không in Vietnam), and Venerable Dhammananda Theri from Thailand served as Bhikkhuni Preceptor for her own students from Songdhammakalayani Bhikkhuni Arama and other locations where she serves as mentor in Thailand.

These three venerable Bhikkhuni Preceptors led the Bhikkhuni Sangha, which included senior bhikkhuni preceptors of five countries and bhikkhuni teachers and leaders of ten countries, gathered in Bodhgaya harmoniously together for this historical ordination. These bhikkhunis included Ven Tathaloka Mahatheri of North America, Ven Santini Theri of Indonesia, Ven Adhimutti from New Zealand, Ven Tissara from Taiwan ROC, Ven Dhammakamala from Thailand, Ven Sumangala from Malaysia, and many more. Bhikkhuni Kammavacacarini officiants Ven Vijithananda Theri and Ven Vinayadharini Theri from Sri Lanka led and conducted the aspiring candidates' examinations and



Candidates gather in front of images of the Buddha, Mahinda Thero and Sanghamitta Theri, while bhikkhuni preceptors instruct them in mindfulness training.

Photo courtesy: Bhikkhuni Lieu Phap



Fully accepted, fully ordained. New bhikkhunis with their teachers, preceptors and their ordaining Dual Sangha upon the completion of two full days of bhikkhuni ordinations.

Photo courtesy: Kanjana Suthikul

the formal Acts of the Bhikkhuni Sangha (*Sanghakamma*) which are essential to Full Bhikkhu/ni Ordination.

As there were twenty-four candidates, and the Buddha only allowed the ordination of three or fewer candidates at one time, the new bhikkhunis received their ordinations with their preceptors in eight groups of three, going three by three, from morning and afternoon over two days time. At the conclusion of all the ordinations, how joyfully the Sangha chanted blessings] all together for the large gathering of newly ordained bhikkhunis filling the center of the hall, surrounded by supportive Sangha. A great mood of rejoicing, happiness and relief spread through the environment, made all the more blessed by the offerings of flowers and Sangha Dana (gifts of useful monastic requisites) made by generous people to the whole Sangha after the ordination.

This was not the first International

Bhikkhuni Ordination to be held in Buddhagaya. The historic Bhikkhuni Ordination (which is credited by many with making the greatest strides towards the revival of the Bhikkhuni Sangha in Theravada Buddhism) was held in Bodhgaya just over twenty years ago in 1998. At that time, the Sri Lanka bhikkhunis ordained received Dual Ordination first from the Chinese Dharmaguptaka tradition, and then subsequently were reordained by *dahikamma* with the Sri Lankan Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha to change their tradition to Theravada. Since 1998, full Theravada Dual Sangha Bhikkhuni Ordinations have been offered in Sri Lanka. They began to be offered for foreign nationals in Sri Lanka from 2002, to Westerners in Sri Lanka since 2003, for Indians in Nagpur in 2009, in the West itself (Australia and the US) since 2009 and 2010, for foreign nationals in Vaishali in 2012, and in both Germany and Indonesia since 2015.

First, the preceptors, teachers and new Sangha members joined the Global Conference on "Buddhism and Women's Liberation" hosted by the Mahabodhi Society of India in Bodhgaya, with Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi giving the keynote address, and Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda from Thailand receiving a special award for her lifetime service to the Sasana.

Second, during the conference, the idea was proposed that the gathered bhikkhuni preceptors, teachers and leaders of ten countries form a World Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha Council in order to support the harmonious collaboration and cooperation of the growing transnational Bhikkhuni Sangha, to guide training and ordinations of samaneras and bhikkhunis, and to altogether support the renaissance of the Bhikkhuni Sangha in its homeland of India as well as around the world.

By Shyamal Sinha with input from Ven. Tathaloka Theri



GREAT BUDDHIST MASTERS: GURU PADMASABHAVA

The Lotus-born One

Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche is known all over the Himalayan region as the Sage of Himalayas. He lived in the 8th century and is credited with having spread the message of Lord Buddha to the countries and regions located in the Himalayan belt, including Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. He is a most revered and iconic figure in the Buddhist world today and to many Buddhists, he is the Second Buddha.

According to legend, as Buddha approached *mahaparinirvana* at Kushinagar, he told his weeping disciples of a great teacher who would one day come from Uddiyana in the north-west. In fulfillment of this prophecy, Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, was born to the royal family of Uddiyana in Swat, in present day Pakistan.

Credited with reviving Buddhism in Tibet and the founding of the Nyingma sect, Padmasambhava truly bestrode the Himalayan region like a colossus, leaving behind countless accounts of his presence



Guru Rinpoche Thangka

Kunchok Chidu of the Gatherings of all precious jewels

Hand painted by Tashi Wangchuk, Thangka artist from Tashi Jong, Himachal Pradesh

and achievements. He first appears as the guest of King Trison Detsen of Tibet who was trying to revive Buddhism in Tibet. The king wanted to build a monastery at Samye. However, construction of the monastery was violently interrupted by a demoness and no progress could be made. King Trison Detsen was advised that only Padmasambhava could solve the problem.

Through his spiritual powers Padmasambhava found that the repeated

destruction was being caused by the demoness Srin Mo, who operated from Lo Gekar in what is today Upper Mustang in Nepal. Padmasambhava slew the demoness and even today the hillsides in the valley below Lo Gekar are vividly tinged with her blood, and chortens mark her body parts. The famed monastery of Samye could now be built, though it remains predated by the monastery at Lo Gekar built by Guru Rinpoche to celebrate

his victory over the demoness.

Yeshe Tsogyal, the queen of Tibet, became Padmasambhava's consort. Later, taking the form of a flying tigress, she carried Padmasambhava to what became known as Taktsang, or Tiger's nest, monastery in Bhutan where the Guru meditated for long.

The most authentic and vivid account of Guru Rinpoche's legacy comes from the writings of Ippolito Desideri a Jesuit priest who traversed Tibet on his way to Lhasa from India in 1715. Its importance lies not only in the description but in coming not from an acolyte but from a possibly skeptical man of another faith, recording what he saw and heard a full millennium after the Guru's death.

Sikkim reveres Padmasambhava who had halted here on his way to Tibet and blessed the mountains, leaving his footprint behind at Chungthang. The Hemis Monastery in Ladakh honours Guru Rinpoche annually with its renowned festival celebrating his birthday.

This is the first in a series on the Great Masters

Padmasambhava, "lotus-born," is said to have been miraculously born in a lotus flower, and is credited with taming the forces opposed to Buddhism in Tibet, such as indigenous gods, which he transformed into Buddhist protectors. It is also said that Padmasambhava concealed his teachings, known as treasure teachings, throughout the Himalayan landscape to be discovered by foretold disciples at opportune times in the future. Revered by Tibetans as the Second Buddha, Padmasambhava can be recognized by his lotus hat and elaborate dress, which combines secular, Tantric, and monastic elements (boots, long sleeves, and outer robe).

Padmasambhava and his eight major manifestations embody the principles of the three *kayas* or essential ways in which

Eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava

Embodiment of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra manifest from the heart of Buddha of limitless light invoke by immeasurable compassion from the divine lotus at Lake Dhanakosha in the kingdom of Uddiyana. He is PADMA VAJRA.

In the kingdom of Uddiyana, he liberated the beings and fulfilled the noble wishes of the King Indrabhuti. He is PADMA RAJA.

In the holy place of Bodhgaya at Vajrasana and surrounding holy places, he manifests as the second Buddha. He is SHAKYA SIMHA.

In the sacred cemeteries of Mahasukha and the land of Beta, he surrounded by dharmapalas. He is SURYA PRABHA.

At the charnel ground of Kashmir and many sacred places around Arya bhumi, he is surrounded by Mahasiddhas. He is DHIMANVARUCHI.

In Magadha and south of India, he transformed all evil forces and enlightened all confusion at the stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal. He is SIMHA NADU.

In the Kingdom of Sahora, he transformed the conflagrating fire into lotus lake and liberated the king and all the beings of the kingdom. He is PADMASAMBHAVA.

At the sacred places of the Paro



Padmasambhava: Eight Forms

The eight special forms representing eight different time periods and locations in the life story of Padmasambhava. Here the Eight Forms are surrounded by the famous Eighty-four Indian Adepts (Mahasiddha) of the Abhyadatta System. The depictions of these Eighty-four Mahasiddha are based on the documented descriptions of Jonang Taranata (1575-1635) as commissioned and painted as murals in the Ganden Puntsogling Monastery, Tibet.

Taktsang, in the kingdom of Bhutan, he tamed all the gods of the locality, blessed all the mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers as sacred realm. He is VAJRA DROLO.

Buddha energy manifests.

Simply put, we can say that the *dharmakaya* is a spacious and open state in which confusion has never existed like an ocean, the *sambhogakaya* is continuous spontaneous energy perceivable only by exalted beings, almost like waves on the surface of the ocean and the *nirmanakaya* is the body that relates with all manner of ordinary beings, likened to a ship on

the ocean that ferries beings safely to the shore. Like Padmasambhava we can also actualise these three *kayas*, if we practise well, beginning with his key instructions:

"don't conceptualize your experience, as it just makes you attached or angry. Day and night, look into your mind. If your stream of mind contains any non virtue, renounce it from the core of your heart and pursue virtue."



CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava

A conference on the 'Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava' was organised by India International Centre, Centre for Escalation of Peace, and Sahapedia on January 29-30, 2019. The conference was slated as one of the events celebrating the 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan. The conference was accompanied by an exhibition of rare and precious thangkas, paintings, sculptures and photographs.

At the inaugural session, speakers extended their appreciation for the vision and efforts of the three organisations in conceptualizing and planning the event. In his address, Mr. Arun Kapur contextualised the extensive impact of Guru

Rinpoche on the evolution of spiritualism and culture of the trans-Himalayan region. He also emphasised on the importance of studying the great Guru's universal message and finding connections in our current context.

In his keynote address, Dasho Karma Ura skillfully traced the journey of tantric Buddhism northwards from the Indian plains, as well as the process by which it took root in the trans-Himalayan region. He also outlined the impact of Buddhism on religious and philosophical teachings in the region, and the lasting lexicological impact of translations from Sanskrit to Tibetan on language and grammar. Then, the keynote speaker gave the audience

an exposition of hidden lands, terma literature and tertons and their relevance in reviving Buddhism, even under the very different conditions that apply across the world today.

The conference was conducted through various thematic sessions dealing with various aspects of Guru's life, such as Life and Teachings, Local Contexts, Texts and Commentaries, Iconography, and Rituals and Mandala Drawings. The thoughtful and textured discussions in these sessions benefited from the important contributions of the high Lamas and eminent practitioners. These included Neten Chockling Rinpoche, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, Hungtrampa Sey Namkha Dorje, Khenpo



A glimpse of the conference proceedings

Pema, Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche and Khenpo Lobsang Tsultrim Bhutia.

The conference also benefited greatly from the papers presented by academics and experts on various facets of the life and work of Guru Padmasambhava. This included the scholarly works of Shri Lokesh Chandra, Thupten Tenzing, Nawang Tsering Shakspo, Ian Baker, Wangchuk Dorjee Negi, Lobzang Tsewang, Tsering Norboo Martse & Tashi Morup, Tashi Lhendup, Karma Phuntsho and Pranshu Samdarshi.

The valedictory address was delivered by the Most Venerable Samten Dorji. He explained the form and legacy of Guru Rinpoche as a Nirmankaya manifestation, and emphasized on how the Guru's teachings continue to shape the sensibilities and philosophy of the trans-Himalayan region, especially Bhutan.

The concluding message emanating from the conference was that the Guru Rinpoche and his work remain timeless. Indeed, the universality of the Guru's message makes his teachings particularly relevant for the world we live in today.

There are ritual practices, symbolic images, mandalas and iconography which are associated with the Guru Padmasambhava tradition, which are rich in meaning and spiritual messaging. There are the 8 manifestations of the Guru, which have been represented through paintings, sculpture and murals, all very rich in symbolism but also being high art in themselves. The exhibition presented rare thangkas, paintings, sculptures and photographs which have been contributed by His Majesty's Secretariat, Bhutan; Tsurphu Labrang Office of H.H. Gyalwang Karmapa, Dharamshala; Palpung Sherabling Monastic seat of H.E. 12th Tai Situ Rinpoche; Tibet House, New Delhi; Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamshala; and photographs by Deb Mukharji and Tashi Lhendup.

The Royal Bhutanese Embassy gave generous support to the conference and organised a spectacular dinner featuring authentic Bhutanese cuisine for all participants.

Vesak Celebrations 2019 in Vietnam

The United Nations (UN) Day of Vesak 2019 is being celebrated in Vietnam's northern Ha Nam province, with the participation of more than 1,650 international delegates from over 100 countries and regions.

A high level delegation from the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) led by Secretary General Ven. Dr Dhammapiya, and including member of the Governing Council, President Ven. Lama Lobzang, is attending the Vesak celebrations in Vietnam.

Every year, since the passing of the resolution by the United Nations General Assembly on 15th December 1999, the thrice-sacred day of Vesak (celebrating the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of the Buddha Gautama) has been celebrated internationally.

The International Day of Vesak was celebrated at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for the first time in 2000. This had inspired annual celebrations of the United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) by international Buddhist communities.

So far, since 2004, UNDV has been celebrated fifteen times, with twelve celebrations hosted by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Thailand, one in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and two in Vietnam.

Vietnam hosted the UNDV celebrations



VESAK 2019
VIỆT NAM

at the National Convention Center, Hanoi in 2008 and Bai Dinh International Convention Center, NinhBinh Province in 2014 respectively. Now, the 16th UNDV is being hosted in Vietnam by the National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (NVBS), at the Tam Chuc International Buddhist Convention Center in Ha Nam Province from 12th-14th May 2019.

The International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV) has held a Special Consultative Status to the UN Economic and Social Council since 2013.

The main theme for the UNDV 2019 Celebrations and Academic Conference will be **"Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies."** Its program includes opening and closing ceremonies and five international workshops as well as a domestic one. Sub-themes will cover the following topics:

- (i) Mindful Leadership for Sustainable Peace
- (ii) Buddhist Approach to Harmonious Families, Healthcare, and Sustainable Societies
- (iii) Buddhist Approach to Global Education in Ethics
- (iv) Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution
- (v) Buddhist Approach to Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Development.

This international conference aims to foster co-operation among Buddhist communities and Institutions, and to develop Buddhist solutions to global crises.





Maha Bodhi Temple, Bodhi Gaya

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) is a Buddhist umbrella body that serves as a common platform for Buddhists worldwide. It currently has a membership comprising more than 300 organisations, both monastic and lay, in 39 countries.

Headquartered in New Delhi, the IBC is the outcome of the historic Global Buddhist Congregation held in November 2011 in New Delhi, wherein 900 delegates from all over the world, representing the entire Buddhist world, resolved to form an umbrella Buddhist world body based in India, the land of Buddha's enlightened awakening and origins of Buddha dharma. The leadership of the IBC comprises the supreme religious Buddhist hierarchy of all traditions and countries as Patrons and members of our Supreme Dhamma Council.

As per its motto, "Collective Wisdom, United Voice", the IBC provides a common platform to all followers of the Buddha Dharma worldwide to address issues that are of both Buddhist and global concerns.

Mission

To gather the collective wisdom of Buddhists around the world to speak with a united Buddhist voice; to make Buddhist values part of global engagement while working to preserve and promote Buddhist heritage, traditions and practices.



INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFEDERATION

Collective Wisdom United Voice

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