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Nalanda declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO



Excavated site of Nalanda, Bihar

Nalanda Mahavihara, one of the oldest study centres in India, was declared a World Heritage Site, by the UNESCO, in July 2016.

“Nalanda stands out as the most ancient university of the Indian Subcontinent. It engaged in the organized transmission of knowledge over an uninterrupted period of 800 years. The historical development of the site testifies to the development of Buddhism into a religion and the flourishing of monastic and educational traditions,” UNESCO said on its website.

Nalanda was an important center of Buddhist higher learning between 5th to 1200 AD with scholars from many regions of the world, including China, Tibet, Korea, and Central Asia gathering here for acquiring knowledge. The university flourished

under the kingdom of Magadha but was destroyed in 1193 AD during the invasion of Turkish army led by its commander Bakhtiar Khilji (as cited by UNESCO).

The site was abandoned since its destruction. The remains of the university were recovered by The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) that started an excavation of the site in 1915. It includes 11 monasteries and six brick temples spread across an area of 12 hectares. Many sculptures, coins, seals, and inscriptions have also been recovered from the site.

Situated about 98 km. away from Patna, the state capital of Bihar, Nalanda is considered as one of the prominent Buddhist monasteries in ancient India.

See Nalanda: Insatiable in Offering on Page 2

TRIBUTE

KING OF THAILAND



IBC pays rich tributes to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, one of the longest-reigning monarchs in history who died on October 13, 2016 at the age of 88. IBC shares the grief of the people of Thailand. The Buddhist fraternity has lost an eminent patron and a devout Buddhist. The recent IBC Executive Committee meeting adopted a condolence resolution.



Nalanda: Insatiable in Offering

In recent years, efforts are being made to revive the legacy of ancient Nalanda University. Ever since translations of 7th CE Chinese monk scholar Xuanzang's (Hieun Hsang) travelogues became available in the mid-1800s, his detailed descriptions painted a beautiful picture of Nalanda University. This has generated curiosity and led to the discovery and subsequent excavations of Nalanda which have complimented Xuanzang's description. Literary and archaeological evidence suggest that the remains of ancient Nalanda University was truly one of its kind as a center of learning and practice of the true teachings of the Buddha which lasted around a millennia (5th CE to 13th CE). It is truly a sacred and historical legacy of the world, which got UNESCO World Heritage Status (WHS) in 2016.

According to 7th CE Chinese monk scholar Xuanzang (Hieun Hstang), who visited Nalanda University in 638CE, Buddha led the life of *Bodhisattva* in one of his previous births, and reigned as king of Nalanda. Out of compassion and pity for the people, he would always relieve them from their sufferings. Hence, the place Nalanda came to acquire its name, which meant 'Insatiable in Offering.'

The site of the ancient Nalanda University was originally an *Amra* garden (mango grove). Xuanzang mentioned that five hundred merchants had bought the site and offered it to the Buddha (6th BCE). The Buddha used to stay there during his sojourn to Nalanda. According to Pali sources (ancient Buddhist literature), the Buddha stayed at Nalanda on many occasion and gave some very important sermons. Pali texts also mention that the Buddha and the Mahavira (founder of Jainism) were contemporaries and had many disciples in Nalanda. Lord Mahavira spent 14 *Vassa* (rainy season retreats) in Nalanda and had many conversations with the Buddha through his disciples. Nalanda is also fortunate that on his last journey (*Mahaparinirvana* journey) from Griddhakuta (Vulture's peak) to Kusinagara, Buddha made a brief stay here. Many monk scholars who studied at

this university has mentioned about many temples and stupas to mark the presence of the Buddha at Nalanda. Korean monk-scholar Hwui-Lun (7th CE) mentions about the presence of a huge stupa in Nalanda to mark the *Mulgandhakuti* (the place of the Buddha's hut). Xuanzang and I-Tsing (7th century) have also made references to this stupa. Xuanzang mentions another stupa south of that, which contained the shaven hair and nails of the Buddha from the *vassa* period. The devotees who paid *padaksina* (circumambulation) to this stupa were cured of their ailments. Remains of these stupas may still be seen at Nalanda.

At the time of the Buddha, the *sangha* (community of Buddhist monks and nuns) stayed in temporary dwellings made up of bamboo, wood or mud dwellings. With the passage of time and spread of the *Dharma* (the teachings of the Buddha) new circumstances necessitated permanent brick structures and Buddhist

monasteries graduated from the times of the Buddha into permanent brick structures. Excavations suggest that the first brick monasteries were constructed at Nalanda by the Gupta king, Kumaragupta (Sri-Sakraditya) a fact also corroborated by Xuanzang and Hwui Lun. According to Xuanzang's documented visit in the mid 7th century CE, the University here in Nalanda was already 700 years old. Most likely for many centuries there existed a temporary makeshift monastery and later a brick monastery was built by the Gupta king, Sri-Sakraditya (5th CE) that was followed by the subsequent Gupta kings, Buddhagupta, Tathagatagupta, Baladitya and Vajra, who are credited with following a pattern for the planned development of the Nalanda University. The plan broadly consisted of a monastery row to lodge venerable monks and scholars and a parallel *cetiya* (temple) row over the sacred traces of the Buddha, for offering prayers. One of the



Aerial view of the excavated remains of ancient Nalanda University, only 10 per cent of the original site

major revelations of the excavations was that all subsequent structures were raised either by encasing the old one or over the debris of the previous, following the same original ground plan.

These permanent brick monasteries shaped art and architecture as the walls of monasteries and temples became canvases to display stories related to the Buddha. The evolution of Buddhist iconography was a result of interaction by monks with the local culture. Art and architecture were then carried to different lands by the visiting monk-scholars and pilgrims. All studies suggest that the monasteries of Magadha, in general, and Nalanda, in particular, played an important role in the development and dissemination of art and iconography. Brick monasteries, as permanent structures and places of learning also led to a paradigm shift as was seen in the organizing, systematizing, and institutionalizing the *Dharma* and *Sangha* and its interaction with community.

In the eighth century, the 37th king of Tibet, Khri-sron-lde-tsan, invited

Santaraksita, an eminent *acharya* (teacher) from Nalanda University, to propagate Buddhism in Tibet. In recognition for his work, he was conferred the honorable title of 'Acarya Bodhisattva' by the Tibetan followers. Later two more *acharya*-s, Kamalasila and Padmasambhava, were also invited by the king of Tibet. According to legend, Padmasambhava pacified the bon demons and made them protectors of the *Dharma*. For his contributions to Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasambhava is remembered as *Guru Rinpoche* meaning the 'Precious Master.' Many teachers from Nalanda University became well known in Tibet. They were later known to establish great academic credentials in Tibet and their influence in that region was wielded widely through their works. It was because

The Buddha would always relieve the people from their sufferings. Hence, the place Nalanda came to acquire its name, which meant 'Insatiable in Offering.'

of this association that 'Tibetan Buddhism' is sometimes also referred as 'Nalanda Buddhism.'

Nalanda University started to decline in 11th CE. In the 11th century, the Turks began invading the Gangetic plain repeatedly plunging the entire region into fear and chaos. Yet even in this volatile atmosphere, the sacredness and importance of Nalanda University attracted Buddhist devotees, who risked their lives to reach Nalanda University and collect the Buddhist manuscripts. One such monk-scholar who under such difficult times risked his life was the Tibetan monk-scholar Dharmaswamin (13th CE). Dharmaswamin found that scholastic activities at Nalanda did continue, despite the constant perils of time. Seventy monk students and the chief monk, Rahula-Sri-Bhadra, hoped that the chaos and onslaught would pass and they would see the day

when things improved.

During this time, Nalanda University received patronage from the Magadha king, King Buddhasena, who ruled from Vajrasana, and patronage also from lay *Brahmin*, Jayasena, from Odantapuri (now Bihar Sharif). Jayasena, the lay-supporter of *Guru Rahula-Sri-Bhadra*, was summoned and detained by the *Turkusha*-s stationed at Odantapuri for supporting the monk community of Nalanda. From prison he managed to pass a message to *Guru Rahula-Sri-Bhadra*. On receipt of the *Brahmana*'s message, the entire monk community decided to flee, except for 90-year-old Rahula-Sri-Bhadra who declined. After many request from Dharmaswamin, Rahula-Sri-Bhadra finally agreed to flee. Dharmaswamin took the *guru* on his shoulders and carried a small basket of sugar, some rice and his favourite books. They hid at the temple of Jnananatha, just a short distance southwest of Nalanda. While they were hiding, about three hundred *Turushka* soldiers suddenly appeared armed and ready for a battle. Though they were sure to kill Dharmaswamin and *Guru Rahula-Sri-Bhadra*, they did not find the monk and teacher, and the soldiers left. This hide and seek probably continued for a few more decades, but the new settlers came and occupied these magnificent centers of learning, which all had resources to support an army.

Remains of ancient Nalanda University are spread over a large area. Only a small fraction (roughly 10 per cent) of the ancient university has been excavated and many villages are settled over the rest of the area. The community has been living with this heritage for centuries. It is imperative to sensitize the community towards the heritage and facilitate sustainable livelihood initiatives. The challenge lies in creating an interpretation integrating the community living in the villages that are settled over the unexcavated remains. The WHS status to Nalanda may be used as a catalyst for developing sustainable livelihood and as a gateway for channeling Buddhist pilgrims to other important Buddhist sites like Indrasailaguha, Jethian, Silao, etc., in the vicinity of Nalanda University.

Text: Deepak Anand





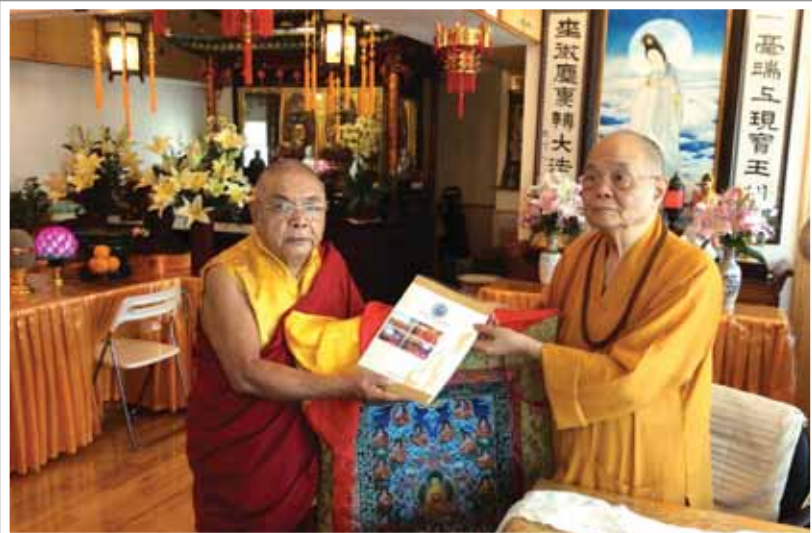
IBC reaches out to East Asia

To inform and acquaint the distinguished Governing Council members of the International Buddhist Confederations in East Asia and Far East on IBC's various activities during the past one year and to discuss matters related to the next General Assembly Meeting, Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang, accompanied by Deputy Secretary General Ven. Dr. Dhammapala called upon the Buddhist Patriarchs and leading Buddhist luminaries in Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Mongolia. The IBC representatives held discussions and conferred on various future activities of IBC.

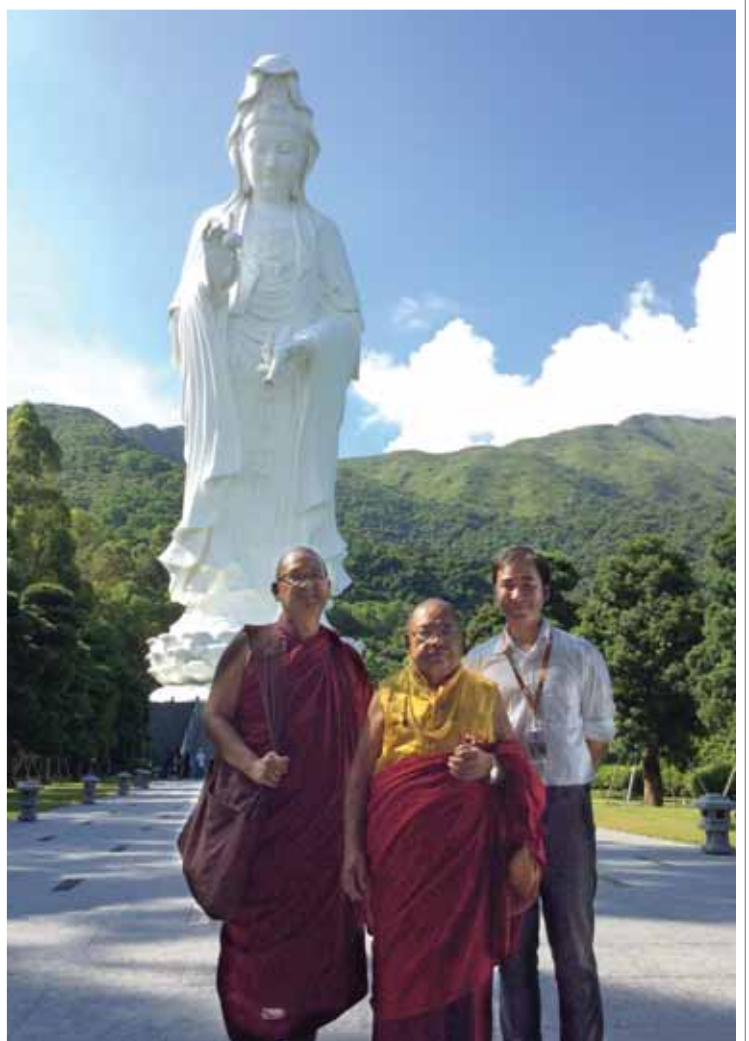
HONG KONG



Meeting with renowned Buddhist scholar, Venerable Professor KL Dhammajoti, the Founder and President of the Buddha-dharma Centre of Hong Kong



Paying respect to the Most Venerable Siu Kun, who is President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Sangha Association. He is also one of the Presidents of IBC



Visiting the Tsz Shan Monastery (top and right) and meeting with Most Venerable Thong Hong, the Abbot of Tsz Shan Monastery



Meeting with Most Venerable Shi Kuan-Yun, the Abbot of Western Monastery, Hong Kong (above), and Ven. Lobzang offering prayers at the monastery (top right). A group photograph of the Abbott, Ven. Dhammapala, Lama Lobzang and other team members (above right)

TAIWAN



Attending the AGM of the Taipei Buddhist Association



Meeting with masters at the Taipei Buddhist Association



Meeting with Ms Christie Yu-Ling Chang, President of Sakyadhita Taiwan



Meeting with Bro. Hung Chi-Sung, the Earth Zen Person of Enlightening Earth (2nd from right), and Prof. Yo Hsiang-Chou (1st from left) among others



Visiting the World-wide Buddhist Development Association (above) and meeting The Most Venerable Shih Lien Hai (1st from left), President of the Association, and Ven. Shi Jian-ying (1st from right)





Meeting with The Most Venerable Shi Jing-Yao, the Director in-charge of International Affairs of Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC)



Meeting with The Most Venerable Ming Kuang, Vice President of Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC), and President of Buddhist Association of Taiwan. He is also one of the Vice Presidents of IBC



Meeting with The Most Venerable Liao Chung Mahathera, the President of World Buddhist Sangha Council



Meeting with Bro. Her Rey-sheng, Spokesman of Tzu Chi Foundation (above left) and other foundation members (above right)





Visit to Linju Mountain Monastery (top left) and meeting with The Most Venerable Dharma Master Hsin Tao, the Founder of Museum of World Religions and Abbot of Linju Mountain Monastery (left). Also seen are some other group photographs (above)



Meeting with The Most Venerable Guodong, the Abbot and President of Dharma Drum Mountain



Meeting with Dr. iur. Chu, Wu-Hsien, President of the Taiwan Interfaith Foundation

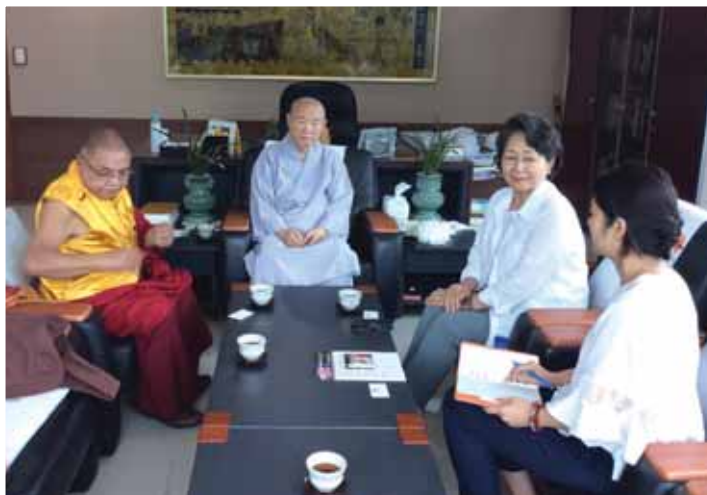


Meeting with The Most Venerable Yuan Tsung, the President of Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC)

SOUTH KOREA



Visiting the offices of the Buddhist True Network



Meeting with The Most Venerable Sung-Woo Suk, the Chairman of Buddhist True Network (above left) and other members (above right)



Meeting with The Most Venerable Bang Joo Suk (Bhikkhuni Sangwon) (above left), the Chief Abbess of Bo Myung Sa Temple, and other senior Bhikkuni



Meeting with The Most Venerable Jung-Moon, the Director of Social & International Affairs Department, The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. Also seen is Ven, Dhammapala (above left). Group photograph at the Jogye Order office



Meeting with Junghee Min, Coordinator, Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE)



Meeting with The Most Venerable Eui Hyun Seo Mahathera, the Vice President of World Buddhist Sangha Council



MONGOLIA



Visit to Dashicholing Monastery and meeting with His Eminence Khamba Lama Dambajav Chojijjav, the Abbot of Dashicholing Monastery, Rector of Zuun Khuree College and IBC Vice-President



Visit to Ganden Thegchenling Monastery and meeting with His Eminence Rev. Khamba Lama Gabju Chojjants Demberel, The Supreme Head of Mongolian Buddhists and IBC Patron



Meeting with the Great Masters and Rinpoche at Ganden Thegchening Monastery



Visit to Tarvaling Monastery and meeting with The Most Venerable Abbot Lama Ariunbold.T., Abbot of the Tarvaling Monastery (above)



Remembering Sariputta's legacy

Venerable Sariputta is one of the most prominent disciples of the Buddha, who was considered the right hand of the Buddha. For centuries, the followers of the teachings of the Buddha inspired by the contributions of Sariputta to the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha* paid tribute to the stupas built

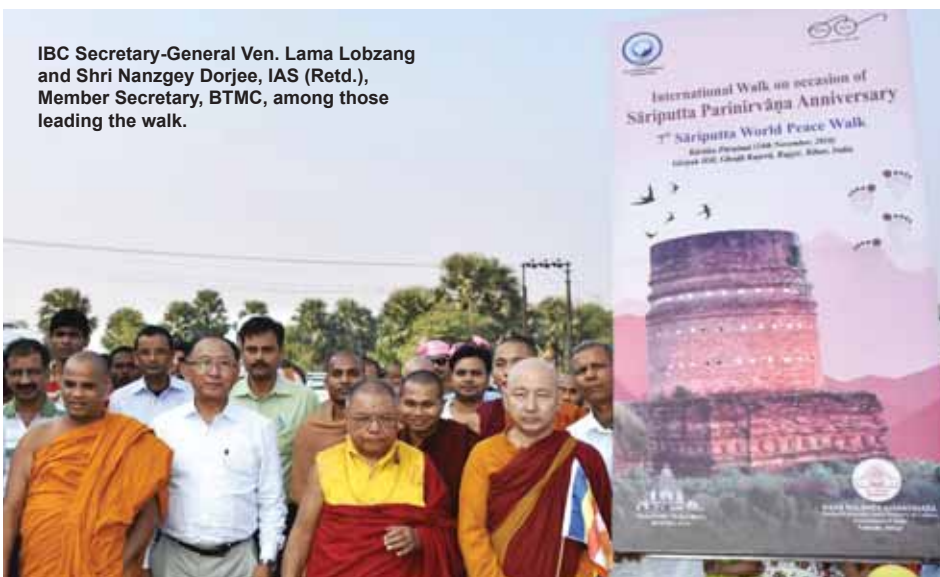
in his native village.

To mark his legacy, the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) with the support of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara (Deemed University), Nalanda and Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) success-fully organized the 7th Sariputta World Peace Walk at the

base of Giriya Hill, Rajgir on 14th November, 2016. Venerable *Bhikkhu Sangha*, important dignitaries, community of Nalanda and staff and students of NNM assembled at the start point of the Walk at 2.30 pm. Following the walk to the base of the hill, Venerable *Bhikkhu Sangha* chanted *Sammaditthi Sutta*. The chanting was followed by the speeches by the distinguished guests who spoke about contributions of *Arhat* Sariputta. Objective of the event was to pay rich tributes and to generate awareness towards the legacy of Sariputta on occasion of his *parinirvana* anniversary on *Kartika Purnima* (full moon day of Oct-Nov).

Tradition maintains that Sariputta attained *parinirvana* six months before the *Mahaparinirvana* of the Buddha. Sariputta was born and he attained *parinirvana* in a village near Rajgir and Nalanda. Pali literature mentions the village Nalaka (also Nala, Nalaka, Upatissagama and Nalagama), where Sariputta attained *parinirvana*. 5th CE Chinese monk-scholar Faxian (Fahein) corroborates this by mentioning the name of the village Nala, while 7th CE

IBC Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang and Shri Nanzgey Dorjee, IAS (Retd.), Member Secretary, BTMC, among those leading the walk.



Chinese monk Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang) mentions the name, Kalapinaka. Identification of Sariputta's village based on Xuanzang and Faxian's descriptions has led to village Nanand, both in the proximity of Giriyaik Hill. Our effort is to promote the whole area consisting of Chandimau, Nanand and Giriyaik as Sariputta *Parinirvana* Zone.

Large stupas were built at the native village of Sariputta by King Ashoka and the place was part of the Buddhist pilgrimage as mentioned by Faxian and Xuanzang. Illustrations from life and contributions of Sariputta were discovered in numerous frescos from the Tang Period (7th-9th CE) at Dunhuang Caves in China. Sariputta is also depicted in ancient Thangka paintings

from Tibet. Sariputta is often seen flanking the right of the Buddha in many Buddhist temples around the world.

The Government of Bihar has marked the day of the *parinirvana* of Sariputtaas "Sariputta Divas". This Day is in line with the *Vesak Purnima*, celebrated as "Vesak", to mark the day on which the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and also his *Mahaparinirvana*. Speaking on the occasion, Ven. Lama Lobzang, Secretary-General of the IBC thanked Government of Bihar for declaring the *parinirvana* day of Sariputta as State day. He said he will now urge the Government of India and Government of other Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand, etc., to mark the *parinirvana* day of Sariputta as

National Day. He further added that from coming year the event should also take place in the probable villages of Sariputta, i.e. Nanand and Chandimau.

Dignitaries present on the occasion

- Venerable Lama Lobzang, Secretary General, International Buddhist Confederation.
- Shri Chandrasen Kumar, Hon'ble MLA, Islampur.
- Shri Nanzgey Dorjee, IAS (Retd.), Member Secretary, BTMC.
- Shri S P Sinha, Registrar, NNM.
- Ms. Wangmo Dixey, Executive Director, LBDFI.
- Shri Subodh Kumar, DCLR, Nalanda.
- Shri Rajiv Ranjan, Dy Collector, Rajgir.

Text: Deepak Anand

PictureSpeak



IBC Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang attending the 3rd International Conference on Pali & Buddhism, held to mark 125 years of the Mahabodhi Society of India, in Sarnath on November 11-12, 2016

IBC Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang meeting His Excellency Bihar Governor Ram Nath Kovind in Patna. Also seen is Dr. Ravindra Panth, IBC Sr. Executive Director (Academics & Research) (left)





IBC discusses future events, activities



Members at the Executive Committee meeting in October 2016 (above and below)

The Executive Committee of the IBC held a one-day meeting at the Asoka Mission, Mehrauli on 21st October 2016, which was chaired by Ven. Lama Lobzang, Secretary General and attended by Ven. Khenpo Chimed, Ven. Bhikkhu Sanghasena, Treasurer, Dr. Bhalchandra Mungekar, Dy. Secy General, Mrs. Ang Dawa Sherpa, Hon. Secretary, and Dr. Damenda Porage, Executive Member.

Ven. Lama Lobzang, Secretary General, introduced a new colleague, Dr. Ravindra Panth, a former Director of Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, Bihar. The IBC Secretary General stated that Dr Panth brings with him over 30-years' experience of academic and research work on Buddhism. This expertise will enrich IBC as Dr Panth will oversee the implementation of the research and academic programme of the confederation.

At the Executive Meeting of IBC, held in October 2016, the Secretary General reported on his recent tour to four countries – Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Mongolia – adding that these exchanges were very good and fruitful.

The meeting discussed the future programmes of IBC, events and activities to be taken up during 2016-17 and 2017-18.



Revised minutes of Ayutthaya meet approved

The IBC Executive Committee held in July 2016 was opened by Secretary General, Ven. Lama Lobzang. The meeting discussed major programmes held in 2015-16. It also discussed the revised minutes of the Governing Council held in Ayutthaya, Thailand (March 1-3, 2016), which were approved by the members present.

A copy of the receipts and payment account for the financial year 2015-16 was placed before the Executive Committee. Events and programmes to be held in 2016-17 were also discussed.

The meeting was attended by: Ven. Lama Lobzang (Secretary General), Chairman; Mr. Jamie Cresswell (Vice President), Member; Prof. B. Mungekar (Deputy Secretary General), Member; Dr. Harsha Kumara Navaratne (Deputy Secretary General), Member; Mrs. Ang Dawa Sherpa (Honorary Secretary), Member; Dr. Gregory Kruglak (Honorary Secretary), Member; Ven. Bhikku Sanghasena Mahathera (Treasurer), Member; Dr. Damenda Porage (Executive Member, Governing Council), Member; Mr. Seshadri Chari, Advisor; Mr. Lalit Mansingh (Chairperson, Global Outreach



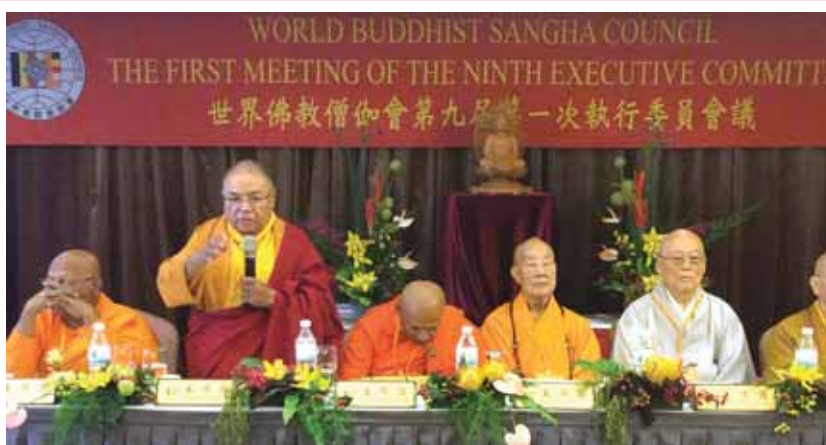
Members at the Executive Committee meeting in July 2016

Committee, Invitee and Chairperson, Election Committee); Ven. Dr. Dhammapala Bhikkhu (Deputy Secretary General), Invitee; Ven. Thubten Jikdol (President, IBC Nepal), Invitee; and Mr. Maling Gombu, Invitee.

Picturespeak

IBC Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang speaking at the First Meeting of the Ninth Executive Committee meeting of the World Buddhist Sangha Council in Taiwan (right). He was accompanied by Most Ven. Sanghasena Mahathera, Honorary Treasurer, IBC, and President, Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, Leh (Ladakh)

Group photograph of dignitaries attending the World Buddhist Sangha Council (below)





JETHIAN TO RAJGIR

3rd International Dhamma Walk

13th December, 2016

One of the important initiatives of IBC is to organize Dhamma Walks along the Buddha trails to revive the ancient tradition of *Cetiya Carika* (a walking pilgrimage). The path through the valley connecting Rajgir with Jethian (Latthivana, Yasthivana) was once an important pilgrimage path connecting sacred Buddhist places like Indrasailaguha (Parwati), Rajagriha, Jethian, Tapovana and *Sambodhi* (Bodhgaya). The IBC in collaboration with the Light of the Buddha Dhamma Foundation International and other like minded institutions organized the 3rd International Dhamma Walk from Jethian to Rajgir on 13th December, 2016. More than 1,500 venerable monks, nuns and laity from 15 countries participated in the Dhamma Walk.

Significance of the Jethian Valley

Jethian in ancient times was called Latthivana (Yasthivana), meaning Bamboo

forest. Jethian village is surrounded by hills from three sides and this serene valley has a very deep connection with the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*.

In the 6th century BCE, Siddhartha the prince of Kapilavastu, set out to find the truth related to the phenomenon of life. In search of the truth, Siddhartha passed through Vaisali to Rajagriha (Rajgir). By word of mouth the news of his presence in the area reached King Bimbisara. Bimbisara was very impressed with Siddhartha's stately presence and his calm and composed manner. Bimbisara did everything in his power to keep Siddhartha in his state, even offered half his kingdom, but Siddhartha eloquently declined each offer explaining that these were the very things that he wanted to break free from in his search for a cure from the miseries of life. Before leaving Rajagriha in search of the truth, Bodhisattava Siddhartha promised king Bimbisara to share his experience

once he attained enlightenment.

After his enlightenment, keeping his promise the Buddha, along with the *Sangha*, left Gayasisa (Brahmayoni) for Rajagriha. Walking 25 miles north-east along the hills they reached a beautiful bamboo forest, Latthivana (Latthivanuyyana, Yasthivana, Jethian), surrounded by hills on three sides. 7th CE Chinese monk-scholar Xuanzang (Hieun Tsang) mentioned an interesting legend where a man made a failed attempt to measure the height of the Buddha with a bamboo stick (*latthi*) and he threw the bamboo on ground. His bamboo took root and the place became Yasthivana (Bamboo Forest). In the heart of Bamboo Forest was Supatittha Cetiya (Supratishtha Chatiya), and this is where the Buddha stayed during his maiden journey to Rajagriha after his enlightenment.

The Buddha's pious steps in Supatittha Cetiya caused a rush of people anxious to hear him speak and receive his blessings.

Monks and nuns from different countries and traditions along with many lay persons come together to retrace the footsteps of the Buddha from Jethian to Rajgir





Sanghadana at the Dhamma Walk, where monks and nuns collect food from Buddhist devotees at the village of Jethian (left); IBC Secretary-General Ven. Lama Lobzang among those on the dais addressing the participants of the walk (right)

King Bimbisara gathered news of the Buddha's presence; at this point in time, king Bimbisara most likely was unaware of the connection between the recluse prince Siddhartha whom he had met at Rajagriha six years ago and the Buddha. King Bimbisara along with his retinue of ministers and a myriad of followers from the town of Rajagriha came to greet this Enlightened One at Supatittha Cetiya, about 7 miles west, along the Rajagriha hills.

King Bimbisara was very happy to see Siddhartha again, who now was the Buddha. He approached the Buddha and paid his respects. The Buddha found the assembly eager to absorb his words of wisdom and offered insights, such as, saying that ego or self is nothing but a deception. The life that exists is nothing but transitory and dwelling in desires of the senses is the cause for all suffering. He explained that once a human being let go of the self and realized the transitoriness of all that exists, that person would be on the path that ensures happiness.

The following day, Buddha and the *Sangha*, escorted by King Bimbisara and myriads of people from Rajagriha then took this route through Jethian-Rajgir Valley to reach Rajagriha, where the King Bimbisara offered the Buddha and the *Sangha* his favourite pleasure garden, the Veluvana (Bamboo Grove).

Xuanzang paid pilgrimage to Yasthivana and stayed here for two years to study under Upasaka Jaysena. He left a detailed description of the events and places associated with the Buddha. Xuanzang reached Yasthivana travelling 100 Li

north-east from Kukkutapada Mountains (Gurpa) to Buddhavana Mountain and 30 Li eastward from Buddhavana through a valley to Yasthivana, a dense bamboo forest. He mentions an Ashokan Stupa to mark the presence of the Buddha here.

In 13th CE, when Buddhism came to its ebb in Indian subcontinent, Yasthivana monastery and other vestiges of Buddhism in this valley fell into ruins. The name Yasthivana got corrupted and became Jethian. In 17th CE, the new population from neighboring places came and settled over the ancient Buddhist remains in this valley. In 20th CE, it was revealed that Jethian was the ancient Yasthivana monastery mentioned by Xuanzang. Since then the community of this valley have been making efforts to preserve the place and create awareness locally and internationally about the significance of the place. They have even formed a committee named 'Bhagwan Buddha Gram Vikas Samiti' (BBGVS). The objective of the committee is to protect and preserve this sacred heritage and also facilitate safe and successful pilgrimage for the pilgrims coming from different countries.

Revitalisation of the tradition of Sanghadana

An important highlight of the Dhamma Walk event was *Sanghadana*. More than 200 Venerable monks and nuns from Thailand, Srilanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan with their alms bowl in their hands walked in the streets of the village Jethian and collected food.

The tradition of collecting food by

begging was instituted by the Buddha himself. Every day in the morning, the Buddha and the monks and nuns of the *Sangha* took their begging bowls and go out into the community to seek food (Pali: *Pindapata*). That is why the Buddhist monks and nuns are ceremoniously called *Bhiksu* and *Bhiksuni*, one who begs. The Buddha saw this interdependence between the *Sangha* and the community as a spiritual connection. Lay people have a responsibility to support the monks physically, and the monks have a responsibility to support the community spiritually. Also, according to the Buddha, to be able to feel the true nature of self, one needed to give up one's ego. The Buddha advised monks to go seeking alms to eradicate their egos.

In the words of Shri Sadhu Saran Singh, the president of the BBGVS, "The very thought that the Buddha might have walked on the streets of Jethian to collect food is inspiring."

The Jethian valley which was dense forest at the time of the Buddha is now a barren land. IBC and LBDFI in collaboration with other like minded institutions like Earth Day Network plan to recreate the Jethian valley as it was during the time of the Buddha. An important objective of the Dhamma Walk is also to motivate people to save trees and plant more trees in the Valley by spreading the importance of trees among people as well as reduce deforestation and cut down of trees. Earth Day Network distributed saplings of Tulsi tree among the people of Jethian to promote.

Text: Deepak Anand



Maha Bodhi Temple, Bodh 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.

"Promoting inter-faith understanding is among the main areas of focus of the IBC, and it therefore endeavours to promote the universal nature of the basic goodness of all religions, interdependence and universal responsibilities," says Ven. Lama Lobzang, Secretary General, IBC.

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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