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Editorial Note

Naohito FUJIWARA
Director, Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures

We are pleased to publish the 8th issue of the academic journal *Journal of World Buddhist Cultures* (JWBC) edited by the Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures (RCWBC), Ryukoku University.

The RCWBC was established in April 2015, and will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2025. Based on the founding spirit of Ryukoku University, which is the significance of the establishment of the RCWBC, in order to fulfill its mission of contributing to society through academic research centered on Buddhism, many research projects connected to "Tradition and Innovation" were carried out this year as well.

We believe that the "World" in the name of the RCWBC means "for all Global Citizens." That is, the basic idea that underpins all research organized by the RCWBC is to investigate how "Buddhism" can contribute to all the people of the world.

The papers published in this journal are research results connecting to realize this idea. We hope you will look over.

We believe that to be able to publish the journal this year again is entirely due to the efforts of the researchers, the referees who reviewed the articles under their busy situation, and the assistance of the administrative staff. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all involved.

We will keep on making efforts to realize the significance of the establishment of the RCWBC.

We would appreciate your guidance and encouragement.

発 刊 の 辞

藤原　直仁
世界仏教文化研究センター長

龍谷大学世界仏教文化研究センターの学術誌「世界仏教文化研究」第 8 号をお届けします。

世界仏教文化研究センターは，2015（平成 27）年 4 月に設立され，2025 年度には 10 周年の節目を迎えます。センター設立の意義である，龍谷大学の建学の精神にもとづき，仏教を機軸とした学術研究を通した社会への貢献という使命を果たすべく，今年度も「進取と伝統」につながる多くの研究事業が展開されました。

センターの名称にある「世界」が意味するところは，「すべての地球市民のための」ということだと考えています。すなわち，「仏教」がすべての人たちにどのように貢献できるかを追究すること，それがセンターで行われるすべての研究に通底している基本的な考え方です。

掲載されている論文は，そうした考えの具現化につながる研究の成果をおまとめいただいたものです。ご高覧のほど，よろしくお願いいたします。

本誌を今年度も発行できましたのは，投稿いただいた研究者のみなさま，ご多忙のなか査読くださった先生方のご尽力と，事務局の方々のご助力によるものと考えております。関係各位には，この場をおかりして，改めて感謝申し上げます。

本センターでは，設立の意義を実現すべく，努力を重ねてまいります。

引き続き，みなさまのご指導，ご鞭撻をお願い申し上げます。

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1, 本誌は、英語を主言語とするが、日本語による投稿もさまたげない。したがって、目次、巻末執筆者等は、英語と日本語を併記する。

2, 漢字表記については、翻訳を含む日本語原稿の場合、一部の人名、書名を除き、原則、常用漢字に統一する。

3, 本誌中に使用されている図版の無断コピーは固く禁ずる。

Articles

Aspects of the Authenticity and Orthodoxy of the Sacred Site Bodh Gaya:

Focusing on the Bodhi tree, Mahabodhi temple, and Buddhapāda

Yasuko FUKUYAMA

Professor, Faculty of International Studies,
Ryukoku University

Abstract

In the late nineteenth century, Cunningham conducted excavations at Bodh Gaya, the site of Śakyamuni's enlightenment. The findings, along with the current temple complex, reveal that Bodh Gaya has undergone continuous expansion and restoration, since the reign of King Aśoka in the third century BCE. Therefore, the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya today bears little resemblance to its original form. Nevertheless, despite these transformations, Bodh Gaya has remained a sacred place for Buddhists for more than two millennia.

This study focuses on Bodh Gaya, a sacred pilgrimage site, during a period when Buddhism was declining in India. The study aimed to investigate the authenticity and orthodoxy of the Bodh Gaya site despite significant expansion and restoration efforts. Three key artifacts are analyzed to address this issue: the Bodhi tree, the Mahabodhi temple, and the Buddapāda. In addition, the study explores the connections between Bodh Gaya and other prominent Buddhist centers in neighboring countries, particularly Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Bagan). The analysis reveals that many regional characteristics seen in the sculptural representations were influenced by the patronage of foreign Buddhist patrons. These patrons played a crucial role in sustaining Bodh Gaya. Consequently, Bodh Gaya came to be recognised by pilgrims from neighbouring countries not only as a sacred site but also as being of great significance in affirming the authenticity and orthodoxy of Buddhism.

Aspects of the Authenticity and Orthodoxy of the Sacred Site Bodh Gaya:

Focusing on the Bodhi tree, Mahabodhi temple, and Buddhapāda

Yasuko FUKUYAMA

Keywords: Bodh Gaya, Bodhi tree, Mahabodhi temple, Model, Buddhapāda

1. Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, A. Cunningham (1814-1893) conducted excavations at Bodh Gaya, the site of Sakyamuni's enlightenment; [1] however, several issues have been observed with his records and restoration plans.[2] Regardless of the accuracy of the record, the excavated remains indicate repeated expansion and restoration of Bodh Gaya by patrons, from King Aśoka in the third century BCE to those in the present day. Therefore, it is evident that the current appearance of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya (figs. 1-1, 1-2, 1-3) bears little resemblance to its original form. Nevertheless, despite alterations in its appearance over time, it is irrefutable that Bodh Gaya has been regarded as a sacred place by Buddhists for more than two millennia.

Figure 1-1 The Mahabodhi temple, Bodh Gaya, Bihar, photograph by the author

Bodh Gaya has been discussed from a variety of perspectives:[3] beginning with iconographic studies of railing pillars, Buddhist images,

[1] Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report for the Year 1871-72*, *Archaeological Survey of India Report for the Year 1880-8*, and *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya*.

[2] Malandra, "The Mahabodhi Temple"; Barba, "The Brahmanical Temple of Bodh Gaya,"; Willis, "Bodh Gaya: From Tree to Temple."

[3] For travelogues, excavation reports, and scholarly literature on Bodh Gaya, including epigraphy, archaeology and art history, the bibliography in the *Precious Treasures from the Diamond Throne* by Schaik, S. van et al. is extensive. In addition, Sarao's *The History of Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya* does not make many references to archaeological materials, but it does comprehensively cover the historical changes in Bodh Gaya from ancient to modern times.

and the deciphering of inscriptions,[4] then in the context of the decline of Buddhism in medieval India,[5] Buddhist networks around Bodh Gaya and the Bay of Bengal, including Sri Lanka and Burma,[6] the evolution from the cult of the Bodhi tree to the temple complex in the process of site's development,[7] the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and Bodh Gaya,[8] as well as the study of Mon, Burmese and Chinese inscriptions excavated at the site.[9] This study concentrates on the sacred pilgrimage site, Bodh Gaya, during the period of Buddhism's decline in India. Specifically, it explores various measures to ensure the orthodoxy and authenticity of Bodh Gaya's sacredness during expansion and restoration efforts. Attention is drawn to the following three focal points: the Bodhi tree, Mahabodhi temple, and Buddhapāda. Analysis of antiquities also explores the links between Bodh Gaya and Buddhist centers in neighboring India, particularly Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Bagan dynasty).

Fig. 1-2 The Bodhi tree behind the Mahabodhi temple
Photograph by the author

Fig. 1-3 Two Buddhapadas next to the railings
Photograph by the author

Prior to moving to the main problem, it seems prudent to elucidate the rationale behind my decision to devote attention to the above-mentioned three items. During, and even after, the time Buddhist centers were declining in India, the Mahabodhi Phaya (fig. 2) was founded in 1255 in Bagan, which was, albeit on a small scale, based on the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya.

Fig. 2 The Mahabodhi Paya, Bagan, Myanmar
Photograph by the author

[4] Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bodhgayā*; Huntington, *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture*.

[5] Verardi and Barba, *Hardships and Downfall of Buddhism in India*; Amar, "The Buddhakṣetra of Bodh Gaya," and "Sacred Bodh Gaya: the Buddhakṣetra of Gotama."

[6] Dehejia, "Bodh Gaya and Sri Lanka"; Frasch, "A Buddhist Network in the Bay of Bengal."

[7] Willis, "Bodh Gaya: From Tree to Temple."

[8] Singer, "Tibetan Homage to Bodh Gaya," and "Homage to Bodh Gaya in Tibet."

[9] Gonkatsang and Willis, "Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese Inscriptions from Bodh Gaya in the British Museum"; Inamoto, "10th and 11th Century Chinese Inscriptions Found at Bodh Gaya and Donative Objects by Chinese Pilgrim Monks to India."

The Wat Chet Yot (also known as Maha Pho wihan aka Maha Chedi) was founded in 1453 in Chiang Mai. The Mahabauddha Baha was constructed in the fourteenth century and completed in 1601 in Patan, Nepal. While Bodh Gaya was experiencing various challenges and new pseudo-sacred sites were being established in Southeast Asia and other neighboring Buddhist countries, foreign Buddhists made intermittent endowments of various scales, ranging from architectural structures, such as shrines or monasteries, to smaller votive plaques. The numerous devotional activities, including the restoration of the temple complex at Bodh Gaya and the establishment of new sacred places abroad, indicate that the people wanted to retain the authenticity of Bodh Gaya. In other words, it could be said that Buddhism, which spread from India to various regions, has become largely localized for its believers. However, in order to prove the authenticity and orthodoxy of their Buddhism, the existence of the original home of Buddhism in India, and in particular Bodh Gaya, where Buddha attained enlightenment, was essential. They attached a special significance to this sacred place.

For instance, it is widely acknowledged in Sri Lanka that a branch of the Bodhi tree was transported from Bodh Gaya and replanted in Anuradhapura in the third century BCE. Over time, the site evolved from a simple enclosure around the Bodhi tree to a more elaborate structure that housed a statue of the Buddha, although there are some differences in the descriptions in the chronicles and Buddhist scriptures.[10] However, it is interesting that no evidence suggests the construction of a temple replicating the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, as seen in Bagan, nor are there any archaeological remains of such a structure.[11] In other words, it could be hypothesized that Sri Lankan Buddhists found the authenticity of their Buddhism not in the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, but in the Bodhi tree which took root in Sri Lanka.

Another object of worship in Sri Lanka, Buddhapāda, can also be considered as evidence of authenticity. The chronicles and Buddhist scriptures contain accounts of the Buddha's arrival on the island, as well as the episode of the Buddhapāda he left behind on that occasion. The *Sripada* is the most renowned and is frequently depicted in murals across Sri Lanka and other regions where Sinhala or Theravadin Buddhism has taken root. Furthermore, during ancient times, Buddhist art from the Andhra region in India was continuously introduced to Sri Lanka, and stone slabs depicting Buddhapāda in a style reminiscent of those found in Andhra were also unearthed in Sri Lanka.

In India, early Buddhist art provides examples of Buddhapāda in narrative reliefs, where they function as symbolic representations alluding to the Buddha, as well as on some stone slabs. However, no evidence of Buddhapāda depicted on stone slabs has been found for the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. In contrast, multiple Buddhapāda appear at Bodh Gaya in the Pala-Sena period (c. eighth-thirteenth century). The production of

[10] *Mhv*., chs.19; 35.89; 36.26, etc. (Geiger, *The Mahavamsa*, 128-35, 252, 257, etc); *Mhbv*., ch.12, Dumindāgamanakathā (Strong, *The Mahabodhivamsa*, 144-71).

[11] This is likely due to the establishment of a Buddhist monastic community from Sri Lanka during the Gupta dynasty in Bodh Gaya, which retained a degree of authority even during the Pala-Sena dynasty. A detailed analysis of this topic would require a separate article.

Buddhapāda was not observed in other regions during the Pala-Sena period; these sculpted objects were exclusively found in Bodh Gaya. Further, inconsistency is noted in style (single footprint or a pair of footprints) and iconography of Buddhapāda. A. M. Quagliotti discussed a limited number of examples of Buddhapāda from Bodh Gaya in her book,[12] but no comprehensive analysis was provided. This indicates the need for further consideration. We will now proceed to the next chapter, wherein we shall briefly trace the accounts that describe Bodh Gaya from the perspectives of Chinese and Tibetan monks.

2. Bodh Gaya in the Travelogues by Buddhist monks and in the Donative Inscriptions

2.1 *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* by Faxian

Prior to describing Bodh Gaya in the travelogue, Faxian (337-422) provides an account of the geographical features of the area, including Mount Pragbodhi,[13] where Śakyamuni is said to have halted before attaining enlightenment. This is followed by a series of episodes pertaining to his enlightenment and the subsequent seven weeks. He also notes the presence of stupas and images at each location where these events are believed to have occurred.[14] Subsequently, the text refers to the three monasteries of Bodh Gaya, recounting several episodes of King Aśoka.[15] Due to the monk's teachings, the king repented and continuously visited the Bodhi tree to atone for his misdeeds and receive the eight precepts. Aware and jealous of his veneration for the Bodhi tree, his wife had the tree felled. In response, the king constructed an enclosure around the stump of the tree, poured milk onto the remains, and vowed to regrow it. Furthermore, it is stated that the tree was alive at the time of Faxian.[16]

Thus, we may summarize that, by the fifth century, there were stupas and monasteries in Bodhgaya, and the episode of King Aśoka building an enclosure around the Bodhi tree was known. However, it should be noted that there is no mention of the Mahabodhi temple attached to the Bodhi tree or Buddhapāda at Bodh Gaya.[17]

2.2 *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* by Xuanzang

In Xuanzang's travelogue, dating back to the seventh century, Da Tang Xiyu Ji (or *the Great Tang dynasty record of the Western regions*) notes that the village of Gaya near

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[12] Quagliotti, *Buddhapadas*, pp.64-72.

[13] Buddhist scholar Junjiro Takakusu observed that the shadow cave, where the Buddha is said to have imprinted his shadow, had already been transformed into a Hindu shrine dedicated to Durga Devi. Additionally, he noted the presence of a large tamarind tree on the right side of the cave (Takakusu, *Photographs of Indo-Buddhist Sites*, Photo 6, Commentary, p. 4).

[14] T., vol. 51, 863a-b.

[15] Ibid., 863b-c.

[16] Ibid., 863c.

[17] Faxian's travelogue contains some episodes pertaining to Buddhapāda; one is the section of Udyāna in north-west India (T., vol. 51, 858a) and the other is observed in the episode of the Buddha leaving his footprints on a mountain peak known as Adam's peak to the north of Anuradhapura to convert a Nāga king (ibid., 864c). Regarding the Bodhi tree transported from Bodh Gaya to Sri Lanka, it is recorded that at the time of Faxian it had reached a height of 20 lengths and a shrine was constructed beneath it, containing an image of the sitting Buddha (ibid., 865a).

Bodh Gaya was sparsely populated, with only a thousand Brahmins residing there. It also mentions the Aśoka stupa on Mount Gaya, where the Buddha once preached the *Ratnamegha sutra*(宝雲経), as well as the Shadow Cave on Mount Pragbodhi.[18] Then it provides a description of Bodh Gaya . The temple complex comprised a series of sacred sites, as well as various structures, including stupas and shrines, erected by donors, including domestic and foreign monarchs, ministers, and local rulers.[19] Furthermore, he laments that the Vajrāsana is situated amidst the railings encircling the bodhi tree, yet it is obscured from view because of the decline of Buddhist law and the covering of earth and sand.[20]

The Bodhi tree reached a height of several hundred feet in the Buddha's time; however, it was frequently cut down to a height of four or five feet.[21] On the day of the Buddha's nirvana, monarchs, priests, and common people from various provinces would gather to make offerings. It is noteworthy that Xuanzang's account of King Aśoka's episode differed from that of Faxian's. He stated that King Aśoka, who had embraced non-Buddhism, felled the Bodhi tree and then proceeded to cut it into pieces. These were piled up a few dozen paces to the west of the tree and burnt by Brahmins to enshrine a deity. However, before the fire and smoke had fully dissipated, two new trees sprouted amid the raging flames. The king then regretted his action and poured frankincense on the trees, which resulted in the tree returning to its original state the following morning. The queen, who was non-Buddhist, had the trees cut at night. When King Aśoka prayed and offered frankincense once more, the tree resumed its growth, and the king constructed a stone hedge around it, which is said to have reached a height of over ten feet and still exists.[22]

Apart from King Aśoka's episode, it also mentions an incident concerning Śaiva King Śaśāṅka in the early seventh century. The text states that King Śaśāṅka attempted to fell the Bodhi tree in order to suppress Buddhism. However, he was unable to dig out the roots, upon which he set it afire to eradicate it.[23] A few months later, King Pūrvavarman of Magadha (a descendant of King Aśoka) poured milk from thousands of cows onto the tree, resulting in the tree growing to the height of a length the next morning. Subsequently, he constructed a stone wall surrounding the tree, measuring two lengths and four feet in height, to prevent it from getting cut in the future. Xuanzang additionally states that the Bodhi tree was concealed within the stone enclosure, with only the top of the tree visible

[18] T., vol. 51, 915a.
[19] Ibid., 915c. A monastic complex located outside the northern gate of the Bodhi tree is referenced in the *Records of the Western Regions*. This complex was constructed by the Sinhala king with permission from the Indian king (ibid., 918b-c). Similar accounts are also found in the records of Wang Xuance (fl. seventh century)(王玄索), who was dispatched as an ambassador to India by the Tang Emperor Taizong in the late seventh century (Zhong Tianzhuguo xingji『中天竺行記』; Fayuan zhulin, vol. 29『法苑珠林』29「王玄策行伝」). Both refer to this episode, believed to have occurred between the Sinhala King Sirimegavanna (尸迷佉抜摩) and the Indian King Samudragupta (三謨陀羅崛多王).
[20] T., vol. 51, 915b.
[21] Ibid., 915b.
[22] Ibid., 915c.
[23] Ibid., 915c.

at the time of his observation.[24]

Another notable anecdote is that the aforementioned king Śaśāṅka, who tried to burn the Bodhi tree, also ordered his minister to destroy the Buddha statue and install a statue of Śiva in its place. However, the minister assembled a group of devout individuals to construct a wall in front of the Buddha statue to conceal it, offering a lamp to it, and painting an image of Śiva on the wall.[25]

Xuanzang provides a comprehensive description of the Mahabodhi temple, situated east of the Bodhi tree. The temple was estimated to be 160–170 feet in height, with a base spanning more than 20 paces. It was plastered with lime and adorned with multiple tiers of niches containing golden statues. The eastern side of the structure featured a multistoried building with three-story eaves. The pillars, beams, and windows were embellished with gold and silver carvings and inlaid with jewels. Three doorways were set up for the entrance, and the statues of Avalokitesvara and Maitreya, both cast in white silver, were seen on either side of the outermost doorway. Xuanzang also refers to King Aśoka, who initially constructed a modest shrine, which was later expanded with the assistance of Brahmins.[26] Buddha's image enshrined in the temple, which is in *bhumisparśa mudrā*, was created by Maitreya, who disguised himself as Brahmin.[27] It should be noted that a large stupa was situated at each of the four corners of the railings surrounding the Bodhi tree, which Śakyamuni walked through before reaching the Vajrāsana. Additionally, there were numerous sacred sites within this hedge,[28] suggesting that the hedge surrounding the Bodhi tree covered a vast expanse.

2.3 A Biography of Dharmasvāmin (Tib., chag lo tsa ba)

During the thirteenth century, Muslims expanded their reach to eastern India. While Buddhist centers were destroyed, Bodh Gaya was still visited by Tibetan monks and common people,[29] as will be discussed in detail below. The record of Dharmasvāmin (Chag Lo-tsa-ba, 1197-1264), who stayed in Bihar from 1234 to 1236, is particularly

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[24] Ibid., 915c.

[25] Ibid., 916b.

[26] Xuanzang states that the elder brother constructed the temple structure, and the younger one dug the pond (T., vol. 51, 916b). However, the biography of Dharmasvāmin states that the youngest of the three brothers built the temple.

[27] The Brahmin requested that the monks refrain from opening the doorway for six months following his entrance into the shrine. However, upon opening the doorway with four days remaining, the monks discovered a seated image of the Buddha in *bhumisparśa mudrā* with the upper part of the right breast unpainted. The unfinished section was subsequently filled with various jewels, and the image was adorned with rare treasures, including beads set with precious gems and a crown (T., vol. 51, 916b).

[28] Ibid., 917a-b.

[29] See Mori, "The Sacred Sites and the Pilgrimage of Tantric Buddhism in India." Furthermore, it is notable that a considerable number of Tibetan monks visited Bodh Gaya during the same period. This is evidenced by the fact that 17 individuals, whose names have been identified, and an additional nine, whose names remain unknown, are documented to have visited the site (Vitali, "In the presence of the Diamond throne: Tibetans at rDo rje gdan," 161-3). Vitali notes that the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* lists the names of ten Tibetan monks who visited Bodh Gaya between the first and third quarters of the tenth century (ibid., 200-1). These include Tsa mi lo tsa ba Sangs brgyas grags and Rgwa Lo tsa ba Gzhon nu dpal. In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, even after Rin chen bzang po (958-1055), numerous pilgrims continued to visit this destination.

useful.[30] When he visited Vajrāsana at Bodh Gaya, he found no one at the Mahabodhi Temple,[31] and the inner doorways leading to the main image were concealed with brick walls. These walls had been plastered over to protect the main image from Islamic forces. Another image was installed in front of the temple. Furthermore, the outer doorways were coated with mud and plaster, and an image of Śiva was painted on them to prevent their destruction by pagans.[32]

It is especially noteworthy that the relics at the Vajrāsana include not only the Bodhi tree, but also a statue of Buddha, the gandhola (Tib., Dri'I gtsang khang; Skt., Gandha-kutī), a canine tooth of the Buddha, seat of the Śakyamuni image at the Turnang temple, pair of Buddhapāda, and railings by Nagarjuna and the Tārā shrines.[33] One particularly notable feature is the gandhola, a structure originally erected by King Aśoka. The structure's spire, visible from a distance of two days' journey, provides compelling evidence that it is the Mahabodhi Temple.[34] Dharmasvāmin also states that in front of the eastern gate of this *gandhola* is a three-aisled structure; behind it is the Bodhi tree, which is supported by two trunks. Underneath the tree is the Vajrāsana. Furthermore, King Aśoka constructed a fort-like structure with a spire to the east, and brick walls in the south, west, and north. Due to this peculiar structure, only the shimmering leaves at the tip of the Bodhi tree were visible; further, there was a large bowl-like object with a row of vajras at the base of the Bodhi tree, from which the tree appeared to grow.[35]

Dharmasvāmin states that King Ashoka as well as the youngest of the three Brahmin sons were responsible for the construction of the gandhola. What is particularly intriguing is the process by which Buddha's image, enshrined in the gandhola, was created. According to legend, the statue was created without a sculptor, with the son leaving the required material inside the shrine as instructed by his mother, who was an incarnation of Tārā. However, the son opened the doorway a day earlier than specified, resulting in the image remaining unfinished, without the little fingers.[36]

The most distinctive accounts in Dharmasvāmin's record pertain to the Buddhapāda at Bodh Gaya, which was not referred to by Faxian and Xuanzang. According to tradition, the Buddha left his footprints to provide tangible evidence of his existence to future generations. Dharmasvāmin explicitly describes a stone slab bearing a pair of footprints, as square in shape, white in color, and roughly textured. Further, he

[30] Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*; Tasaki, "The Buddha Gaya in the Early 13th Century: Translation of Chapters 4 and 5 of Dharmasvamin's Pilgrimage to India."

[31] The temple complex at Bodh Gaya is inhabited by 300 individuals following Sinhala Buddhism. There are 12 temple structures, with one situated in front of the north gate. Each of these temples houses about 10 monks, on average (Tasaki, "The Buddha Gaya in the Early 13th Century," 79).

[32] Tasaki, "The Buddha Gaya in the Early 13th Century," 73.

[33] Ibid., 74. It is also important to note that the term "Vajrāsana," as used by Dharmasvāmin, does not refer to the Vajrāsana structure itself, but rather to the larger temple area that surrounds it.

[34] Ibid., 75. Dharmasvāmin provides the following account: the Maha Bodhi temple was 35 elbows high (khru) and only the white, shimmering spire was visible even from a distance.

[35] Ibid., 75.

[36] Ibid., 76-7. With regard to the Buddha's image, it is recorded that both eyes were inlaid with emeralds, but these were removed by Turkish soldiers (ibid., 77).

states that the stone slab was placed in front of the votive stupa outside the eastern gate.[37] Additionally, he notes that there had been a proposal to build a shrine to preserve this Buddhapāda; however, it was ultimately left in the open, as constructing a shrine would have necessitated appointing caretakers and requiring offerings from worshippers. This, in turn, would have resulted in reducing the number of individuals able to view the site, thereby contravening the Buddha's original intention.[38] In a pen drawing from the late nineteenth century under the British Empire [British Library, WD2060f.68], a stone sculpture with a pair of footprints is depicted as enshrined in a four-pillared structure devoid of walls. It is noteworthy that votive stupas, the Buddhapāda, courtyard, and the Maha Bodhi image were all aligned at the temple complex during Dharmasvāmin's visit.[39]

Rwa lo tsa ba (1016 -?) of the eleventh century, some two centuries before Dharmasvāmin, also provided comprehensive documentation of Buddhist images enshrined in various temples at Bodh Gaya. He mentions that a temple was constructed by the Brahmin Sabhecakra in front of the Bodhi tree, with a statue of Śakyamuni Buddha at the age of thirty years enshrined inside it.[40]

2.4 The Sacred site Bodh Gaya and Donative Inscriptions

As previously observed, the records of Bodh Gaya by pilgrim monks mention numerous episodes pertaining to King Aśoka, the Bodhi tree, and dedicative donations, both domestic and from overseas, of the architectural structure and statues. Several inscriptions also indicate that Bodh Gaya received substantial support from individuals in foreign countries, including Sri Lanka, Tibet,[41] Myanmar, and China. Cunningham's 1892 report lists Burmese and Chinese inscriptions, while others in Bengali and Tibetan have also been identified. In recent years, some inscriptions have been revised and translated anew (Schaik et al. 2021),[42] which further elucidates the reality of the association of Bodh Gaya with neighboring Buddhist countries. Due to space constraints, we focus only on some of the inscriptions from the post-Gupta period to the decline of Buddhism in India.

Evidence of donations from Sri Lankan people, such as railings, can be observed even in the early antiquities.[43] In the post-Gupta period, during Xuanzang's visit, some inscriptions indicate that donations were also made by a monk from Lanka's royal family. Additionally, a shrine was constructed at the location of the Vajrāsana, and another building within the temple complex underwent restoration.[44] In the Pala period (the eight to the twelfth century), several gifts of seated Buddha statues were bestowed upon the

[37] Ibid., 78.

[38] Ibid., 78-9.

[39] Ibid., 79.

[40] Schaeffer, "Journey to the Seat of the Buddha," 228.

[41] Regarding the Tibetan inscriptions from Bodh Gaya, see Gonkatsang & Willis, Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese Inscriptions from Bodh Gaya in the British Museum." They have recently uncovered a donation of paving stones by six Tibetan laymen.

[42] Schaik et al., *Precious Treasures from the Diamond Throne: Finds from the Site of the Buddha's Enlightenment*.

[43] Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*, vol.1, 138.

[44] Ibid., 140-141, 147-149 [Bodh-Gaya15, 16, 31].

site by Sri Lankan donors, particularly between the nineth and tenth centuries.[45] Furthermore, some inscriptions confirm donations made to the sangha of Simhala based in Bodhgaya during the subsequent Sena period (the eleventh-thirteenth century).[46]

Sri Lankan Buddhists are not the only ones actively supporting Bodh Gaya. The Bagan dynasty (1044-1287), which espoused Buddhism, played a pivotal role in the preservation of the Mahabodhi temple. As is well known, an inscription on the Shwesandaw Paya indicates that King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1112) dispatched personnel to rehabilitate Bodh Gaya,[47] which was in a state of disrepair. His son continued this initiative. Strong support from Bagan is also evident in the chronicle of Sri Lanka. The *Cūḷavaṃsa* compiled in the thirteenth century states that Vijayabahu I (1058-1114), who ruled Polonnaruwa in the mid-1070s, invited Buddhist monks not from India, but from Rāmañña, to restore the lineage of the Bhikkhus on the island (*Cv*., ch.60.4-8).[48]

During the twelfth century, while the Pala dynasty, which had hitherto protected Buddhism, was weakened, image-making for both Buddhist and Hindu deities continued in Bihar, as evidenced by the artifacts. However, in the thirteenth century, the sacred site of Bodh Gaya required restoration, which was supported by the Bagan dynasty. Even during the Islamic invasions, pilgrims from Bagan continued to visit the sacred site and donate.

2. The Bodhi tree worship in Bodh Gaya: from early Buddhist art to votive plaque

2.1 Reliefs on the architrave of the stupa gateway and railing pillars

The sculptural representations of the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya in early Buddhist art can be observed mainly in the scenes of Śakyamuni's enlightenment and King Aśoka's visits. Countless examples of early Buddhist art depict these narrative contexts; therefore, we limit our discussion to a few representative cases.

Fig. 3 Śakyamuni's enlightenment, Bharhut, 1st century BCE, © Indian Museum, Kolkata

[45] Ibid., 142-143, 144 [Bodh-Gaya 19, 20, 24].
[46] Ibid., 150-152 [Bodh-Gaya 36].
[47] Blagden, "A third inscription found at the Shwesandaw Pagoda, Prome."
[48] Geiger, *The Culavamsa*, 214-5.

First, a relief (fig.3) of the so-called Prasenajit railing pillar from Bharhut depicts a Bodhi tree surrounded by an architectural structure, above which its branches spread with flourishing foliage. Two umbrellas with garlands can also be observed in the upper part of the tree. At the front, two male figures are worshipping with their heads and hands touching an elaborate throne on which flowers have been scattered. Additionally, behind the throne, on either side of the trunk of the Bodhi tree, is the *triratna* motif. The relief of the eastern gateway of Sānchi stupa 1 (Fig.4) portrays a nobleman worshipping the Bodhi tree. Although the tree trunk is not visible, branches grow vigorously upward from the chaitya window of the structure. As in the previous example, an umbrella with garlands is depicted at the top of the tree and a sacred throne, surmounted by a *triratna* motif, below the structure.

Fig. 4 Nobles worshipping Bodhi tree, Sanchi stupa 1, 1st century CE., in situ, Photograph by the author

There are several examples of relief from the Andhra region. As seen in the drum slab depicting the Bodhi tree and the five worshippers praying towards the empty throne under the tree, the Bodhi tree is enclosed by a balustrade (British Museum, Acc. no.1880,0709.79).[49] The relief from Kanaganahalli in Karnataka shows a Bodhi tree with flourishing branches and leaves growing above the structure.[50]

Fig. 5 Terracotta plaque depicting the temple complex, Bihar, Bihar Museum (inv.no.4419), Photograph courtesy of the Bihar Museum

2-2. Terracotta votive plaque

Particularly noteworthy in the later centuries is a terracotta plaque with a votive inscription from Kumlahar in the ancient city of Pataliputra (fig.5: Bihar Museum, inv.no.4419). It is interpreted as representing the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, and its surroundings.[51] Upon entering the main gate, one observes a high-rise, high-tower-style structure with a

[49] Knox, *Amaravati*,120/pl.60.

[50] See Zin, "Kannaganahalli in Sātavāhana Art and Buddhism," 2018a, *The Kannaganahalli Stupa: An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome*.2018b: 119, 193.

[51] The Kharosthi script, usually found in north-west India, is used in the dedicatory inscription, (Konow, "The Inscription on the So-Called Bodh Gaya Plaque"), and Ono Genmyo points out that it may represent the Kaniska stupa at Taxila (Ono, *Buddhist Art of Gandhara*, 215), while Murata Jiro suggests that it represents a temple with a tall tower at Bodh Gaya (Murata, *History of Asian Architecture*, 79-80). The person who discovered it, Spooner, also thought it was the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya (Spooner, "The Bodh Gaya Plaque"). The tablet is dated to around the third century AD, but there is no concrete evidence. For the dedicatory inscription, see below (Siddham, The Asia Inscriptions database, INBG00040).

Fig. 6 Terracotta votive plaque, Bodhgaya, Pala dynasty. © Indian Museum (Acc.no.B.G.153/A20570)

simplified chaitya window, multiple umbrellas of the superstructure, and flying celestial beings admiring it. The structure is also surrounded by a balustrade. Inside the structure is a seated Buddha, with standing Buddha images with halos on either side. In addition, a stone pillar crowned with an animal (elephant?) is situated between the seated Buddha and gate. Some mountains and buildings in the background may represent the seven weeks after Śakyamuni's enlightenment. However, the fact that the Buddha's image in the main structure does not demonstrate the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and no Bodhi tree is visible around the superstructure yields the possibility that this is not the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya.

Thousands of terracotta votive plaques, such as those shown in figs. 6 and 7, have been found not only in the interior of India, but also in Myanmar, Thailand, and other regions of Southeast Asia. The plaque (Fig. 6) excavated from Bodh Gaya depicts a seated image of Buddha in the main shrine with a Bodhi tree behind the structure. The votive tablet from Bagan (fig. 7) represents the eight great events of Sakyamuni Buddha and seven weeks after his enlightenment; again, the central Buddha with the right hand in *bhumisparsa mudra* is seated in the shrine with the Bodhi tree behind the structure,[52] suggesting that Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's attainment, was very significant for Bagan. As is well known, the composition of the main image of the Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*, with scenes depicting significant events of Śakyamuni around it, is found not only in the Pala dynasty but also in the temples at Bagan, which were influenced by Pala art. The terracotta plaques, depicting the Mahabodhi temple with the Bodhi tree, suggest that the architectural structure was built around the tree and developed into the towering structure with a spire, wherein a Buddha image was enshrined. However, no further information can be gleaned from them. Let us now turn to the models of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya.

Fig. 7 Terracotta votive plaque, Bagan period, Photograph ©The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

[52] The eight significant events in the life of Śakyamuni Buddha depicted on the plaques are: the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon, descent from Trāyastriṃśa heaven, miracles at Śrāvastī, taming of the elephant, monkey's offering of honey, and nirvana.

3. The Models of the Mahabodhi temple

Fig. 8-1 Model of the Mahabodhi temple [front, right], Bodhgaya, mid-11th century ©Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (Acc.no. EA1996.4)

Fig. 8-2 Model of the Mahabodhi temple [back, right], Bodhgaya, mid-11th century © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (Acc.no. EA1996.4)

J. Guy conducted a comprehensive study by of the models of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya,[53] but only the most significant examples are examined here. First, the basic structure of the models should be reviewed. The openings have a two-tiered structure with five towers, including the central tall tower on the second tier, and a Bodhi tree at the back, with a small shrine underneath. Most have a niche that may or may not be occupied by a seated Buddha image in the *bhūmisparśa mudrā*.

An example from the Ashmolean Museum collection (fig. 8-1/8-2, mid-eleventh century, no. EA1996.4) shows similar features, such as towers and a Bodhi tree, revealing a semicircular structure around the base. This is interesting because a similar structure can be observed in the ink drawing of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya from the first half of the nineteenth century (British Library, WD2060.f.71; WD2060 f.72). This similarity suggests two possibilities: one, the Burmese restoration in the early 1800s may have been based on such a model of the Mahabodhi temple, and two, the Bodhi tree was also surrounded by such a structure in the Bagan period. An example of such a semicircular structure surrounding a Bodhi tree can be found in a model of the Mahabodhi temple in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc.no. 2006.218). The image of Nirvana Buddha is represented in front of the central tower, while the front and sides of the ground floor section apparently depict scenes from the life of the historical Buddha.

[53] Guy, “The Mahābodhi Temple: Pilgrim Souvenirs of Buddhist India.”

Fig. 9-1 Model of Mahabodhi temple [front, right], Los Angels County Museum of Art

Fig. 9-2 Model of Mahabodhi temple front [rear], Los Angels County Museum of Art

Fig. 10-1 Model of Mahabodhi temple [front, left], Bodhgaya, 12th century
© The Trustees of the British Museum (1892,1103.1)

Fig. 10-2 Model of Mahabodhi temple [rear], Bodhgaya, 12th century
© The Trustees of the British Museum (1892,1103.1)

The model in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (fig. 9-1/9-2) portrays the structure with a Bodhi tree, but does not depict a tall tower or shorter ones around it. The Bodhi tree can also be observed in the Ashmolean example above.

Regarding architectural design and unique motifs, many temples built in Bagan have so-called flaming arches or flaming decorations on the facade. A similar decoration is noted in the example of the British Museum collection (fig.10-1), although it provides a rather crude impression. Further, the front entrance shows the Buddha's footprints, recalling Dharmasvāmin's earlier account of the presence of a pair of footprints of Buddha, at Mahabodhi temple; this implies the possibility of influence from Bagan, where Buddhapāda are painted on the ceiling at the entrance to Buddhist temples. Fig. 10-2 depicts a different angle of the British Museum model (fig. 10-1); although the back is badly damaged, a Bodhi tree is clearly visible, as well as a pair of footprints at the back entrance. Interestingly, both feet (not just one) are framed by lotus petals. Such a Buddhapāda, with a pair of footprints, can also be seen in Bodh Gaya.

The model of the Mahabodhi temple in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (fig. 11) also depicts some features of the flaming arch of the Bagan temple architecture and the Buddhapāda. The British Museum model mentioned above and the Victoria and Albert Museum collection are the only two examples wherein Buddhapāda can be seen, but it should be noted that both are associated with the architectural features of Bagan.[54]

[54] As evidenced in the plan of Bodh Gaya provided by Mitra and Cunningham, this Buddhapāda was initially identified and venerated as Viṣṇupada (Cunningham, *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya*, Pl.XI). Gaya is a site of great significance for ancestral worship (śrāddha) and the Viṣṇupada Temple, where a Viṣṇupada is enshrined in the garbhagṛha and many Hindus visit from all over the country. For further details of

Another model of the Mahabodhi temple in the British Museum collection (fig.12) lacks the other surrounding towers except for the central high tower, but demonstrates features of Bagan architecture, with a vajra engraved on the base.

Fig. 11 Model of Mahabodhi temple, Bihar, 12th century ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London (IS.21-1986)

The majority of the Mahabodhi temple models, although not exclusively excavated in Bihar, exhibit architectural characteristics associated with Bagan. It has been documented that the Narthang monastery in Tibet once housed both stone and wooden models of the Mahabodhi temple complex, which were discovered in 1936 and whose current whereabouts are unknown, with only a few photographs taken at the site in 1937.[55] The most significant aspect of these models is the extensive temple complex at Bodh Gaya, which encompasses not only the Mahabodhi temple as the primary shrine but also the surrounding smaller temples, which are further enclosed by walls. The wooden model[56] is inscribed with a date corresponding to the fifteenth century, during the reign of the Yongle Emperor (r. 1403-1425). Considering the photographic evidence of 1937, it can be discerned that the temple with the tallest tower exhibits flaming arches characteristic of the Bagan style. Notably, this example, which appears to have been produced in Tibet, also exhibits this Bagan feature. Moreover, the model of the entire complex, including the Mahabodhi temple, as well as temples dedicated to Tara and other esoteric Buddhist deities, is a testament to the importance of Bodh Gaya for Tibetan Buddhist monks.

Fig. 12 Model of Mahabodhi temple, Bodhgaya, 12th century
©The Trustees of the British Museum (1922,1215.7)

4. The iconographic features of Buddhapāda from Bodh Gaya and their significance

The preceding chapter presented a few models of the Mahabodhi Temple that included Buddhapāda. In this chapter, I examine stone slabs representing Buddhapāda from Bodh

Viṣṇupada at Gaya, see Debjani, "Antiquity of the Viṣṇupada at Gaya Tradition and Archaeology."

[55] See Guy, "The Mahābodhi Temple: Pilgrim Souvenirs of Buddhist India," figs.19, 22.

[56] The Victoria and Albert Museum also has a wooden model of the Mahabodhi temple without towers dating to the fifteenth century (IS.50-1995). The model of the Mahabodhi temple, which is near the center of the complex model kept by the Narthang temple, is notable, although the photograph is blur, in that it has a platform at the bottom with an ornamented border resembling inverted lotus petals, and the lower structure of the Mahabodhi temple above has a protruding section, as does the Victoria and Albert Museum's model. In the absence of photographs from any other angles, we should refrain from further surmize, but it is likely that both are very similar examples.

Gaya during the Pala-Sena dynasty. In early Indian Buddhist art, Buddhapāda were depicted in Buddhist narrative scenes as a symbolic representation of the Buddha.[57] Additionally, Buddhapāda can be viewed as a decorative motif on the gateway of the stupa. Even in Gandharan art, apart from their representation in narrative scenes, stone slabs depicting Buddhapāda with venerating worshippers are also known. In the Andhra region, not only do narrative scenes use Buddhapāda as symbolic motifs, but stone slabs depicting them with multiple motifs are engraved. India, with the exception of the Andhra region, demonstrated no evidence of stone slabs representing the footprints of the Buddha until the Pala-Sena period. However, some Buddhist images do bear motifs, such as the *dharmacakra* and *triratna* engraved on the soles of Buddha statues.[58] Furthermore, it is interesting to note that all the stone objects representing Buddhapāda dated to the Pala-Sena period were unearthed exclusively from Bodh Gaya. Although a total of eleven examples of Buddhapāda at Bodh Gaya are known, the following section will examine the characteristics of the motifs in ten examples.[59]

[57] Due to space restrictions, I will only provide an overview of the iconography of Buddhapāda in the early Indian art. As for Bhārhut, Buddhapāda are represented in the reliefs on the railing pillars depicting "Ajātashatru worshipping Buddha," "Descent from *Trāyastriṃśa* Heaven" (see Ito, *Ancient Buddhist sites of Sānchi & Bhārhut*, Pls.208, 209) and "Nāga king Mucalinda protecting the Buddha," and at Sanchi they are found on the "Great Departure" engraved on the architrave of the gateway at Sanchi, and also on the decorative relief on the gateway pillar, whose pattern seen on all the Buddhapāda is a wheel, *dharmacakra* only. In South India, Buddhapāda are depicted in narrative scenes, such as "The Seven Steps," "Worshipping the Yaksha Shrine," "Enlightenment," "The Buddha's Miracle of Crossing the Niranjana River" and "Descent from *Trāyastriṃśa* Heaven", as well as in the stone slab, which mainly depicts Buddhapāda. An example from Amaravati (1880.0709.42, circa second century, British Museum; as a similar example, 1880.0709.57, also in the British Museum collection) depicts a wheel in the center of the footprint surrounded by a *triratna*, a *swastika*, an hourglass-like object (perhaps a throne?), and a six-petalled floral design. The toes are inscribed with a *triratna* and a *swastika* (in the example from 1880.0709.42, a lotus bud is depicted on each toe). Two examples of Buddhapāda have also been excavated from Kanaganahalli. Conversely, examples from Phanigiri (circa fourth century, Hyderabad Archaeological Museum) and Nagarjunakonda (Sarkar, "Some Aspects of the Buddhist Monuments at Nagarjunakonda," Pl. 37-B, p.69 *excavated at Site 38), with two other examples in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, illustrate the footprint entirely decorated with a *dharmacakra*, a *triratna*, *swastikas*, twin fish, conch-shell, and *pūrnaghata*, and the toes decorated with *triratnas*. In Gandhara, apart from the narrative scene of "Descent from *Trāyastriṃśa* Heaven," the depictions of the Buddhapāda, with both feet (a stone slab depicting a single Buddhapāda in the collections of the Lahore and Chandigarh Museums is thought to have originally been a single slab [the iconography and carving characteristics are remarkably the same]) are also observed. Even in Gandhara, the composition and designs of the Buddhapāda(s) are extremely varied: a stone slab of Buddhapāda returned to Pakistan from the USA in 2016 and a slab of a single Buddhapāda from the MIHO MUSEUM, etc.

[58] The motifs of *dharmacakra* and *triratna* are depicted on the soles of a seated Buddha from Mathura, dating to the Kushan period. Furthermore, some of the seated Buddha images in the Ajanta murals also display the *dharmacakra* motif on the soles.

[59] The Indian Museum at Kolkata holds four Buddhapāda. However, the present essay discusses only three as the author has not seen the fourth.

(1) **Buddhapāda ①, beside the railings behind the Mahabodhi temple**

69.5 x 69.5 x 14.5 cm, in situ (figs.13-1/ 13-2)

This sculpture is one of the two examples placed beside the railings surrounding the Bodhi tree and *Vajrāsana* behind the temple. The Buddhapāda, with a single left footprint, is engraved on the reverse side of the dome-shaped stone, which is part of the superstructure of the votive stupa. The motifs depicted on the Buddhapāda by a relatively shallow line engraving are as follows: a *dharmacakra* in the center, above which are three fish with one head. A flower bud can also be seen in the lower right towards the *dharmacakra*, a form with upper and lower bulging at the left, and a double circular design in the lower part.[60] The joints in the toes are clearly visible, with a spiral pattern with projections on the top and bottom, extending from the thumb to the little finger. This is analogous to the fingertips depicted on the Buddha's Footprint in Mahant's residence, which will be discussed later. It is worth mentioning that the design resembles the conch shell design frequently observed on the toes of the Buddhapāda at Bagan.[61] In early Indian Buddhist art, the toes of the Buddhapāda are typically adorned with a *triratna* or *swastika*. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Buddhapāda at Bodh Gaya exhibits a markedly distinct iconographic tradition. Additionally, the motif of three fish with one head observed in this sculpture is not known to predate this example in India,[62] although one with two fish is often seen on the Buddhapāda from the Andhra region.

Fig. 13-1 Buddhapada①, Mahabodhi temple
Photograph by the author

Fig. 13-2 Detail of fig. 13-1,
Photograph by the author

[60] Regarding the double-circle design, Mr. Yoshihide Koizumi proffered the valuable opinion that the design was merely an unfinished one and that a swirling pattern with a double-circle engraved on the Buddhapāda in the collection of the Indian Museum, Kolkata (Acc. no. A-24214-BG2), described below, may have constituted the completed or final design. It is also noteworthy that the diameter of the two circles is almost identical.

[61] A comparable conch shell motif can be observed on the toes of the Buddhapāda at Loka-Hteik-Pan（เสมอชัย พูลสุวรรณ 2016 *จิตรกรรมพุทธศาสนาสมัยพุกาม 2 ภาพประกอบและคำอธิบาย*, pl.15). Additionally, several Buddhapāda, as observed at Let-put-kan, feature a conch shell at the center of the fingerprint（เสมอชัย พูลสุวรรณ 2016 *จิตรกรรมพุทธศาสนาสมัยพุกาม 2 ภาพประกอบและคำอธิบาย*, pl.16）.

[62] For further details regarding the motif of three fish and one head, see Gallop, “Three fish and one head (2).”

(2) Buddhapāda ②, beside the railings behind the Mahabodhi temple
81.0 x 79.8 x 28.0 cm (figs.14-1/ 14-2)


Fig. 14-1 Buddhapāda②, Mahabodhi temple, Bodhgaya, Photograph by the author


Fig. 14-2 Detail of fig. 14-1, Photograph by the author

As shown in fig.16-1, the reverse of the dome-shaped stone of the votive stupa is employed to represent a pair of Buddha's footprints. The architectural design on all four sides of the outer stone is not contemporaneous with the creation of the Buddhapāda but belongs to the original votive stupa. Only a floral motif, approximately 5 cm in diameter, is visible at the center of the footprints, which is simpler than the other examples described below. Many images of the seated Buddha in the Pala-Sena period have a double-circle pattern with a petal-like form on the foot; however, our Buddhapāda do not feature that. In addition, no motifs are engraved on the toes.

(3) Buddhapāda ③, at a small shrine in front of the Mahabodhi temple
109.5 x 109.0 x 43.0 cm (figs.15-1/ 15-2/ 15-3)


Fig. 15-1 Buddhapāda③, Mahabodhi temple, Bodh Gaya,
Photograph by the author

As observed from figs. 19-1 and 19-2, the reverse of the dome-shaped stone of the votive stupa is employed to represent a pair of footprints. When discovered in 1871, it was enshrined in a modest structure comprising four pillars and venerated as Viṣṇupāda.[63] This example differs from the preceding two in that the upper part of the stone is bordered by a row of lotus petals. A circle with a diameter of 7 cm is depicted at the center of the footprint; however, it is too distinct to determine whether it represents a *dharmacakra*. The footprints have an *aṅkuśa* (elephant goad) on the arch of the foot, and there are engraved conch shells, water bottles, and fish below the central circle. The stone bears a dedicatory inscription in two lines of Sanskrit and Prakrit on the side, noting the year Śaka 1230

[63] For the multivalency of Viṣṇupāda and Buddhapāda, see Kinnard, "The Polyvalent Pādas of Vishnu and the Buddha."

[A.D. 1308].[64] It is important to note that Buddhapāda was still donated in the early fourteenth century, a period during which Indian Buddhism experienced a rapid decline.

Fig. 15-3 Detail of fig. 15-1,
Photograph by the author

Fig. 15-2 Detail of fig. 15-1,
Photograph by the author

(4) Buddhapāda at the Mahant's compound ①

91.5 x 91.0 x 30.0 cm (figs.16-1, 16-2, 16-3)

Fig. 16-1 Buddhapāda①, Mahant's compound,
Bodhgaya, Photograph by the author

The Mahant residence houses a substantial collection of Buddhist and Hindu sculptures from Bodhgaya, including two examples of Buddhapāda. This example is of a similar size to the aforementioned examples (2) and (3) and employs the reverse of a dome-shaped stone of the votive stupa. A *dharmacakra* engraving, approximately 12.5 cm in diameter, is present at the center of both feet. The motifs on the left foot of the Buddhapāda include an aṅkuśa and a stick-like object (possibly an umbrella) on either side of the *dharmacakra*. The floral motif appearing below the *dharmacakra* is succeeded by a ribbon-like object with fine undulating wave-like carvings.[65] On the right foot, an eight-petalled floral design is observed immediately below the *dharmacakra*. Adjacent to this is a stick-

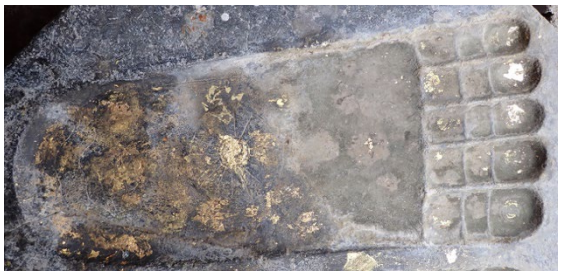

Fig. 16-2 Detail of fig. 16-1(left foot),
Photograph by the author

Fig. 16-3 Detail of fig. 16-1(right foot)
Photograph by the author

[64] Mitra, *Buddha Gayā: The Great Buddhist Temple*, no.12, p.201; Plate XLIII. fig.2/ Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*. Vol.1, 147 [Bodh-Gayā 30]). It is also noteworthy that the inscription refers to the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh-Gayā as the Aśoka deula.

[65] This unique motif could be a representation of the sea, a river or lake.

shaped object with a semi-circular shape on the right. Similar to the left foot, a horizontal ribbon-like object with fine engravings can be seen on the lower part. Additionally, a spiral pattern with triangular protrusions above and below (conch shell) is observed on all five toes. This pattern resembles a single footprint placed beside the Bodhi tree at the Mahabodhi temple (fig. 13).

(5) Buddhapāada at the Mahant's compound ②

43.5 x 42.5 x ? cm (fig.17)

Fig. 17 Buddhapāda(?), Mahant's compound, Bodhgaya, Bihar, Photograph by the author

This sculpture is considerably smaller than previous examples and has been partially buried in the floor; therefore, the shape of the substructure is unknown. However, the pattern of the lotus petals adorning the side edge is still visible. As shown in fig. 17, the form of the footprint is markedly distinct from that observed in the previous examples. It bears a striking resemblance to the natural shape of a human foot, measuring approximately 24 cm in length. A small double circular pattern, approximately 2.5 cm in diameter, is represented on each foot, although it is unclear whether this is also a *dharmacakra*. Given the realistic shape of the footprints, it seems plausible that they were intended to be Vishnupāda, rather than Buddhapāda.

(6) Buddhapāda ①, Bodhgaya, Indian Museum

Acc. no. A 24214-BG.1. 71.0 x 21.1 cm (fig.18)

Fig. 18 Line-drawing of the Buddhapāda ①, Indian Museum (Acc.no. A24214-BG.1.) Drawing by the Author

This example also employs the reverse of a dome-shaped stone of a votive stupa, and all four sides are adorned with architectural embellishments. The example is identical to (1) in that only the left foot is represented. A *dharmacakra* is visible at the center, as in many Buddhapāda, below which is a right-spinning swirl design with a double circle in which a snake is inscribed, and above which is a jeweled crown, which is more akin to the one from Bagan (fig.19) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection, rather than in the Pala-

Sena period. Two figures are depicted on either side of the crown, each holding a fly whisk. The figures are distinguished by their hairstyles and chest features, suggesting that they may be male and female, respectively. A water jar on a pedestal is depicted to the left of the *dharmacakra*, while a conch shell is placed on a differently-formed pedestal to the right. A spiral pattern with protrusions above and below the toes can be observed. This design is identical to that shown in examples (1) and (4).

Fig. 19 Head of the Buddha, Bagan period
Metropolitan Museum of Art (1992:382)

(7) Buddhapāda ②, Indian Museum

Acc. no. A 24214-BG.2. (fig.20)

Similar to the Buddhapadas (1) and (6), this one employs the reverse of the stone as a component of a votive stupa, with decoration on all four sides. The example depicted represents the right foot, whereas example (6) represents the left foot. A *dharmacakra* situated centrally on the foot is surmounted by a standing figure playing a conch shell. To the upper right of *dharmacakra* is an architectural structure with a flaming arch, a motif frequently observed in numerous temples in Bagan. A plate bearing offerings is depicted in the lower space; to the left of the *dharmacakra* is a banner erected on a jar, while below it is depicted a mountain with curling bracken patterns and a peacock perched at the summit. Such distinctive mountain representations can be observed in Bagan.[66] On either side of the peacock is a bird facing inward. The toes display spiral patterns with protrusions above and below, possibly representing conch shells, as shown in the Buddhapāda (6).

Fig. 20 Line-drawing of the Buddhapāda ②, Indian Museum (Acc.no. A 24214-BG.2.)
Drawing by the Author

(8) Buddhapāda ③, Indian Museum, Kolkata

no. 4213 (fig. 21)

Most Buddhapāda from Bodh Gaya, with the exception of the present example and a smaller one held in Mahant's compound, utilize the reverse of the stone used for the votive stupa. However, this example from Bihar employs a differently shaped stone slab. The motifs on the footprint display a distinctive and unconventional design: a *dharmacakra* with unique spokes is situated slightly above the center of the foot. The architectural structures shown on the upper left and right sides are more modest than that seen in the Buddhapāda (7). The engraving also includes a standing image of Brahma, depicted with three faces and four arms, holding a long handle

[66] Bautze-Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan*, 175, pl.223.

of an umbrella, as well as a Buddhist scripture and a rosary. Immediately below the *dharmacakra* is apparently a boat, with a peacock and peahen on either side of its prow. On the heel, a ribbon-like object with fine wavy line engravings and an eight-petalled floral motif can be observed. It is noteworthy that this ribbon-like motif is also found in the Buddhapāda (4) housed in the Mahant residence. On the toes, a conch shell motif similar to that in the Buddhapāda (6) can be seen.

Fig. 21 Line-drawing of the Buddhapāda ③, Indian Museum (Acc.no.4213)
Drawing by the Author

(9) Buddhapāda, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin ①
no. MIK-I-1154 (figs. 22-1, 22-2)

Fig. 22-1 Buddhapāda, Bodhgaya, Pala period, ©Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Ident. no. I-1154).

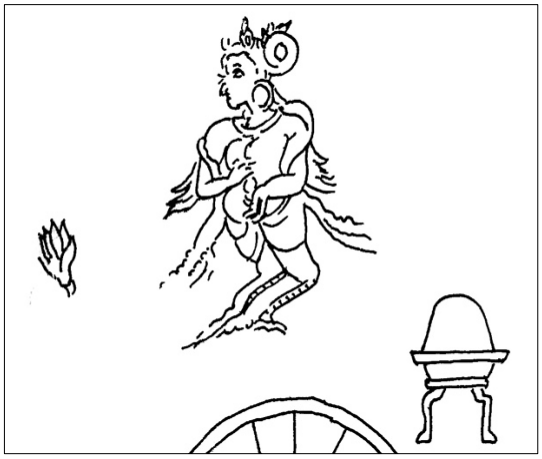

Fig. 22-2 Line-drawing of fig. 22-1
Drawing by the Author

This Buddhapāda also employs the reverse of the stone component of a votive stupa and represents the right foot in a manner analogous to that observed in the Buddhapāda (7). The *dharmacakra* is depicted in the center of the sole, above which is positioned a *kinnara* holding a musical instrument, probably *manjīrā* (a pair of small cymbals used for rituals). A bud-shaped flower and offering stand are discernible, respectively, in the upper-left and right quadrants, adjacent to the *dharmacakra*. The heel is carved with a motif resembling a basket attached to a stick. A conch shell-like motif, comparable to that observed in (6), is visible on the toes.

(10) Buddhapāda held in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin ②

no. MIK-I-17 (figs. 23-1, 23-2, 23-3)

Fig. 23-1 Buddhapāda, Bodhgaya, Pala period
©Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin (Ident. no.MIK-I-17)

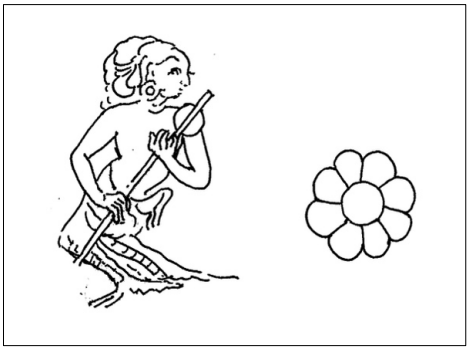

Fig. 23-2 Line-drawing of detail of fig. 23-1
Drawing by the Author

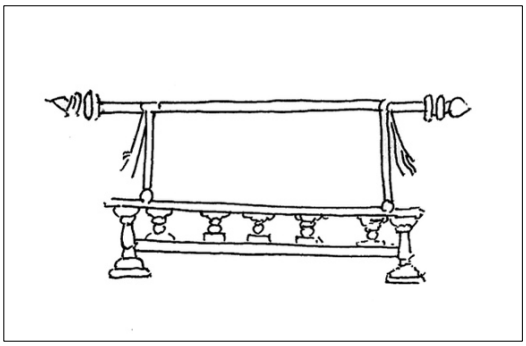

Fig. 23-3 Line-drawing of detail of fig. 23-1
Drawing by the Author

This example also employs the reverse of the stone component of a votive stupa, representing the right foot in a manner consistent with the aforementioned examples. The *dharmacakra* is depicted at the center of the sole, with a *kinnarī* holding a *vīnā* above it.[67] On the right side of the *kinnarī* is an eight-petalled floral motif, and below the *dharmacakra* is what appears to be a palanquin, the direction of which is unique as it is placed towards the heel rather than the toes. Given the variety of orientations in which the motifs of Buddhapāda are arranged in Southeast Asia, it seems plausible that this example might adopt a similar arrangement. The toes exhibit a conch shell-like motif, which is comparable to that observed in (6).

Thus, we may state that there are various types of Buddhapāda: a single footprint (right or left) and a pair of footprints. Regarding the motifs observed on the soles of our 10 Buddhapāda, there were no examples with the same motifs or settings. Some are decorated with a single or a few motifs, while others are elaborated with multiple motifs. Some motifs seen on the sole include traditional auspicious motifs, such as flower patterns, fish, *triratna*, and swastika, all of which can be found in the examples in the Andhra region in the early periods. Conversely, it is interesting to note that we can see several motifs, such as water jars (not *pūrnaghata*[vase of abundance]), a crown, *kinnara*, *kinnarī*, banners, and mountains, found in Bagan in the later period. Those motifs cannot be identified in ancient Buddhapāda. Indeed, among the sutras compiled around the tenth-thirteenth centuries, the *Anāgatavaṃsa*[68], *Mahāpadāna-sutta*, *Jinālaṅkāraṭīkā*, *Paṭhamasambodhi*,[69] and

[67] It is unclear whether they are depicted as winged or not.

[68] The *Anāgatavaṃsa* describes the iconography associated with Maitreya's footprints.

[69] Coedes, *Pathamasambodhi*.

Buddhapādamaṅgala have references to these motifs, with a few exceptions.[70] It is particularly noteworthy that the crown seen in the example (6) is similar to that of the Buddha image in Bagan from the twefth-thirteenth century. Additionally, architecture with a flaming arch, a mountain with a unique shape, a pair of kinnara and kinnari, a basket, and other iconographies, like boats and palanquins, can also be observed in Bagan. Quagliotti does not explicitly state that the intercultural relation between Bagan and Bodh Gaya would give rise to these similarities, while Di Crocco suggests an iconographic transmission from Bodh Gaya to Bagan. However, our evidence indicates that it is necessary to consider the possibility that the kinds and designs of motifs were brought from Bagan to Bodh Gaya.

Fig. 24 Buddhapāda, Amaravati, 2nd century CE
©The Trustees of the British Museum
(1880,0709.57)

Yet, some crucial differences exist between the Buddhapāda in Bodh Gaya and Bagan. Judging from the Buddhapāda painted on the ceilings of Bagan temples[71], the soles of the footprints are distinctly registered in a grid pattern to create auspicious motifs; however, the motifs observed in Bodh Gaya are scattered, although a *dharmacakra* is set in the center. Thus, the following question arises: Why does the setting of motifs in Bodh Gaya differ significantly from that of Bagan? Examples of setting various motifs around the central *dharmacakra* can be seen in the Buddhapāda (fig. 24) from Amaravati in ancient India and those (fig.25) from Sri Lanka in the Anuradhapura period. Almost all Buddhapāda from Sri Lanka are carved on square stone slabs and bear a pair of footprints, sometimes with an umbrella.[72] Further, even the *dharmacakra* are sometimes not represented on the

Fig. 25 Buddhapāda, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka,
Vavuniya Archaeological Museum
photograph by the author

[70] See Di Crocco, *Footprints of the Buddhas of This Era in Thailand and the Indian Subcontinent*; Cucizzo, *A Mirror Reflecting the Entire World*. The number of symbols represented on the soles of the footprints varies depending on the textual sources, with some sources indicating a total of 108 symbols and others indicating a total of 102, 100 or fewer symbols.

[71] See n.59.

[72] In some instances, a water lily is depicted between Buddhapāda and an umbrella (for example, a stone slab housed in the Abhayagiri Archaeological Museum).

soles, but there are very few examples with multiple patterns around them.[73] In general, most Sri Lankan Buddhapāda date back to the early Anuradhapura period, around the third century CE. Therefore, some may argue that it is not necessarily appropriate to compare the Buddhapāda of the Pala Sena dynasty with those of ancient Sri Lanka. However, as discussed in the travelogues and dedicative inscriptions in Chapter 1, it is known that various donations by Sri Lankans have been made at Bodh Gaya since BCE. We also know that a large Sri Lankan monastery already existed during the Gupta period and many Sri Lankan monks played a role in maintaining the sacred site even in the later times. Further, one more intriguing piece of evidence is the existence of the Sri Lankan Buddhapāda discovered in Bagan.[74] Based on the preceding evidence, a potential hypothesis can be posited—Sri Lankan monks in Bodh Gaya, who have a certain degree of authority in Bodh Gaya, might have been involved in creating Buddhapāda, during which they adopted some new motifs from Bagan, where Buddhism was flourishing, in contrast to Bihar.[75] The hypothe sis may also explain the discrepancy in the placing of Buddhapāda: in Bagan, Buddhapāda is depicted on the ceiling of the temple, whereas, in Bodh Gaya, it is placed in front of the temple, as illustrated in the model of the Mahabodhi temple.

Fig. 26-1 Seated Buddha, Bodhgaya, 10th century CE, ©Indian Museum (no.2673-2674/A24148)

[73] For example, there is one each from Koddaikeni (National Museum, Colombo; see Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, 72/6D-E), Anuradhapura (Anuradhapura Archaeological Museum), and Vavuniya (Vavuniya Archaeological Museum), and so forth (ibid., 73/6E). The stone slab of Buddhapāda from Vavuniya displays a prominent *dharmacakra* in the center of the sole, accompanied by the *triratna* below. To the left and right, above the *dharmacakra*, respectively, are an umbrella and *chauri*, the handles of which emerge from a round jar. The remaining elements are positioned in a vertical sequence below the aforementioned elements. On the left and right are an offering stand, resembling the hourglass motif observed in the slab from Amaravati, and a śrivasta, respectively. Below these are twin fish and a conch shell.

[74] See Poolsuwan, *Buddhist Murals of Pagan No.2*, fig.19(b).

[75] Dharmasvāmin recounts that he was advised by a Theravada Buddhist monk to discard the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra he had in his possession, claiming that the Mahayana teachings were not beneficial (Tasaki, “The Buddha Gaya in the Early 13th Century,” 80).

One more pair of soles must be referenced, i.e., the foot soles of seated Buddha images in the Pala dynasty, currently held in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. In general, a simplified *dharmacakra*—a tiny six- or eight-petalled floral design, or a small double-circular motif—is frequently carved on the soles of Buddha and Bodhisattva images in the Pala-Sena period. However, the soles of the Buddha image in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* recovered from Bodh Gaya,[76] bear four motifs—two fish, a swastika, *triratna,* and a *dharmacakra* (figs.26-1, 26-2). The *triratna* is set at the center of the sole, with the swastika and two fish, respectively, on the left and right sides above the *triratna*, and the *dharmacakra*, on the heel.[77] The elements constituting the *triratna* are also distinctive: the ω-motif is not in the form of a common ω, but a conch shell is protruding from between the ω-motif and the *dharmacakra*, and a lotus flower is depicted below the *dharmacakra*. The swastika is a common motif in the Buddhapāda excavated from the Andhra region, but the one on the soles of our Buddha image is the only example from the Pala-Sena period. It is also noteworthy that each of the four tips of the swastika is decorated with bead-like ornaments. As a supplementary point, the setting of the *dharmacakra* on the heel and the *triratna* in the center of the sole can also be seen in Buddha and Bodhisattva statues from Mathura in the Kushan period and on one of the Buddhapāda in the Abhayagiri Archaeological Museum, suggesting intercultural communication between India and Sri Lanka. While there is no definitive evidence to ascertain whether the donor of the Buddha statue was a Sinhalese individual, given the robust historical and cultural connections between Bodh Gaya and the Sinhalese Buddhist community, it is plausible that Sri Lankan Buddhists may have played a role in the statue's background.

Fig. 26-2 Line-drawing of the right foot of fig. 26-1

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we focused especially on the travelogues by monks, who visited Bodh Gaya, donative inscriptions, sculptural representations of the models of the Mahabodhi temple, and Buddhapāda discovered at Bodh Gaya, to analyze some aspects of the development

[76] The inscription on the Buddha image comprises two lines and states that Bodhisena from Dantagalla donated the image (Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*. Vol.1, 142-3; Indraji, "Buddha Gayā, the Hermitage of Śakya Muni, by Rajendralala Mitra (Book Review)," 143).

[77] Some of the Buddha and Bodhisattva statues from Mathura, dating to the Kushan period, bear a *triratna* in the upper part of the sole and a dharmacakra on the heel. Regarding the Buddha images from Gandhara, the only example of a dharmacakra on the heel is found on the sole of a Buddha image in the Bharat Kala Bhavan collection (Acc. No. 743), which is notably scarce. The heel has a dharmacakra with a serration pattern on its outer edge and a large *triratna*, extending from the center to the top of the sole (Quagliotti, *Buddhapadas*, 62-3, Figs. 39-40).

and management of Bodh Gaya. The analysis undertaken here leads to the following three observations.

First, the Bagan dynasty restored the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya. Even in the thirteenth century, when the major Buddhist centers in Eastern India were declining, Buddhist monks from neighboring countries still made pilgrimages to the site, as a sacred place, and donated intermittently. Second, despite variations in the details of the votive tablets, which have been found in abundance not only in Eastern India but also in Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand, a seated Buddha image in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* in the Mahabodhi temple and a Bodhi tree behind the structure are always represented. In other words, these icons indicate that Theravadin Buddhists from the neighboring countries recognized Bodh Gaya not only as sacred but also necessary to prove the orthodoxy of their Buddhism. For this reason, a pseudo-holy site modeled on Bodh Gaya was built in a neighboring country, and their devotion led to the production of pilgrimage souvenirs in the form of models of the Mahabodhi temple. Third, it is crucial to note that they added their regionalized taste of Buddhist art rooted in their region to the model of the Mahabodhi temple. Even though Buddhapāda had not been produced in India for a considerable time, it is remarkable that despite the decline of Buddhism, Buddhapāda, containing many motifs of Bagan and Sri Lanka, was produced in Bodh Gaya.

To conclude this paper, we will revisit the initial question posed: how was the authenticity and orthodoxy of the sacred site, Bodh Gaya, sustained when Buddhism was declining? This is related to how the Buddhists of neighboring countries sought to prove the authenticity and orthodoxy of their forms of Buddhism. The antiquities discussed in this paper validate that Buddhists in neighboring countries not only recognized Bodh Gaya as the sacred place where the Buddha attained enlightenment but also as an essential site for the verification of the authenticity and orthodoxy of their own beliefs, even as the Buddhism in India faced rapid decline. For them, inserting their unique elements into Bodh Gaya as the original sacred site, ensured that their regional Buddhist art was no longer peripheral and that they were able to acquire authenticity and orthodoxy. Additionally, the many regional characteristics observed in the sculptural representations examined in this paper were made possible by the support of neighboring Buddhist patrons, who facilitated the continued survival of Bodh Gaya.

This paper has only provided a cursory overview of the sculpted Buddhapādas in Sri Lanka when discussing the Buddhapādas from Bodh Gaya. In the upcoming research, I aim to delve more deeply into the dissemination and evolution of the Buddha's Footprint faith in Sri Lanka and its neighboring countries.

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Abbreviation

Cv. *Cūḷavaṃsa*

Mhbv. *Mahābodhivaṃsa*

Mhv. *Mahāvaṃsa*

T. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* （大正新脩大藏経）

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fig.8-2 Model of the Mahabodhi temple [rear], mid-11th century, Bodhgaya, Ashmolean Museum, (EA1996.4), © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

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fig.9-2 Model of the Mahabodhi Temple [rear], Gaya District, 12th century, LACMA (no. M.91.62) in: https://collections.lacma.org/node/172028, Photo: Los Angeles County Museum of Art [accessed: 12 January 2025].

fig.10-1 Model of the Mahabodhi temple [front], Bodhgaya, circa 12th century, British Museum, (Acc.no. 1892,1103.1.) © The Trustees of the British Museum.

fig.10-2 Model of the Mahabodhi temple [rear], Bodhgaya, circa 12th century, British Museum, (Acc.no. 1892,1103.1.) © The Trustees of the British Museum.

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Wisdom and Ethics:

A Buddhist Framework for Ecological Conservation

Athira VYSAKHAM

Research Scholar,
Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies
Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan

Abstract

This article explores the potential of Buddhist philosophy to address contemporary ecological challenges, particularly climate change. It investigates the concept of interdependent origination, one of the fundamental principles in Buddhism that emphasizes the interconnected nature of all phenomena. By examining the root causes of suffering and the potential of Buddhist ethics to foster environmental consciousness, the paper argues that Buddhist wisdom, particularly as articulated through engaged Buddhism, offers a valuable framework for ecological conservation efforts.

The study delves into the interconnectedness between inner and outer ecology, suggesting that human actions, driven by self-grasping ignorance and its subsequent afflictions, contribute to environmental degradation. It explores Buddhist ethical practices such as the four immeasurables, patience, and generosity, which can cultivate a more compassionate and sustainable mindset. A case study of Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim, India, demonstrates the practical application of engaged Buddhism in conservation efforts. The park's unique blend of cultural and natural heritage reflects the deep-rooted Buddhist influence on local communities.

The paper discusses the role of Buddhist institutions and initiatives in promoting sustainable practices and raising awareness about environmental issues. While acknowledging the limitations and challenges in implementing Buddhist wisdom on a large scale, the paper proposes strategies for integrating Buddhist principles into broader conservation efforts. These include interfaith dialogue, policy engagement, community-based initiatives, and integrating sustainable practices within monastic settings. By cementing a deeper connection between humans and nature, Buddhist principles offer a valuable perspective for addressing the urgent ecological crises of our time.

Wisdom and Ethics:

A Buddhist Framework for Ecological Conservation

Athira VYSAKHAM

Keywords: Climate Change, Ethics, Engaged Buddhism, Interdependent Origination, Khangchendzonga National Park

Introduction

We live in a world where everything is interconnected and every moment is intricately linked to its past and future counterparts. When the crown prince of the Sakya clan, Siddharta Gotama (563 BCE-483 BCE), left his palace in the dead of the night to find the truth of the world, no ordinary man could have expected that he would discover the reality of the cyclic world. Little did anyone anticipate that his journey would lead to such profound insights into the nature of existence? Through his practices and deep meditation, Siddharta became Buddha, discovering the wisdom of emptiness and interdependent origination.[1] His realization emphasized that nothing possesses inherent existence; rather, everything is devoid of independent existence. The genesis of every phenomenon is intricately connected to causes and conditions, illustrating their nature of dependent origination. After the attainment of Buddhahood, he imparted the dharma rooted in these principles for forty-five years before passing into *Mahaparinirvana* at the age of eighty.

The records state that, after attaining full awakening, Buddha Shakyamuni seated himself beneath the Bodhi tree, immersed in the bliss of omniscience through Samadhi. Seven days later, he emerged from this state, and during the initial watch of night; he pondered the concept of interdependent origination, contemplating how things come into existence. In the middle watch of the night, his reflections shifted to the cessation of phenomena, and in the final watch, he contemplated both the arising and ceasing of things within the framework of interdependent origination.

In the *Culasakuludayi Sutta* (*MajjimaNikaya*), it states,

> When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not

[1] The term "interdependent origination" acknowledges all three levels of dependent origination, which will be discussed in the later in the paper. Throughout the paper, "interdependent origination," "dependent origination," and "dependent arising" are used interchangeably.

exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."[2]

No phenomena escape the filter of interdependent origination. If anything has come into existence, it must have arisen due to certain factors. When something comes into being in such manner, it indicates that it lacks independent, inherent, or true existence. This aligns with the concept of Emptiness, wherein the Wisdom of Emptiness asserts that every phenomenon is devoid of independent existence, rendering the two concepts synonymous. This, avoiding both extremes, falls into the Middle Way.

Interdependent origination is a concept that is not only confined to sentient beings. As mentioned above, all phenomena or all that exist are dependently originated, hence having wider applicability even in today's world. As Buddha Dharma is based on logic and valid reasoning, it maintains a profound significance across the eras. Buddhist philosophy has been having productive discourses with various academic, social and scientific disciplines for a very long time and it is noteworthy that engaged Buddhism is a major tool through which we can address contemporary global issues as well. In particular, amid the escalating ecological crises and climate change driven by anthropogenic activities, Buddhist ideals offer more than just a tool for exploring these issues.

As the world grapples with environmental crises[3], climate change, driven by anthropocentric activities occupies the centre stage. From untimely rain to severe famine, these occurrences have become increasingly prevalent today. Thanks to us humans, through our destructive activities, the death clock of the earth is ticking much faster. But climate change and its danger are often overlooked as something that does not affect us. Unless this issue is seen as a personal one, everyone tries to pass it off as something that should be dealt with by the authorities, not individually. While discussions on mitigating these perils are widespread and various measures are being implemented, the pressing need of the hour is to adopt an ethical and sustainable perspective to address this serious threat.

This paper aims to delve into addressing the root problem of ecological crises-ignorance, through the lens of the Buddhist concept of interdependent origination. This profound philosophy addresses the genesis of the problem as it recognizes the complex interconnection of all phenomena. Through this framework, the research will seek the efficacy of applying Buddhist ethics in addressing the issue and devising a sustainable solution for the escalating environmental threat by citing an example of a successful conservation effort from Khangchendzonga National Park, India. The study will also critically examine the challenges in applying Buddhist wisdom and ethics, while also exploring how these principles can be integrated by assessing the contributions of various Buddhist groups in India to ecological conservation.

[2] Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, 1995.

[3] Environmental crises include over population, biodiversity loss, lack of adequate resources and pollution.

Interdependent origination

Interdependent origination (*Pratityasamutpada*, *rten 'brel du 'bjungba*) is the foundation of Buddhist philosophy, representing the fundamental reality governing the entire world. Phenomena arise, exist, and decline through the interplay of multiple factors. Dependent origination elucidates how all phenomena emerge based on various conditions, primarily explaining the chain of causation that leads to the cycle of birth, death, rebirth, and the perpetuation of suffering. According to the *Prasangika Madhyamaka* (The Middle Way Consequentialist, *dbu ma thalgyurba*) Buddhist philosophical school, it is not necessary that phenomena only exist on dependence on cause and effect but can be understood in three levels:

1. Interdependent origination of effect dependent on the cause or the causal interdependent origination
2. Interdependent origination of wholes dependent on parts
3. Interdependent origination of mental imputation

Interdependent origination of effect dependent on the cause or the causal interdependent origination

It is the interdependent origination of all impermanent things. This level of interdependent origination states that phenomena come into existence (effect) due to certain causes and conditions. There cannot be a production if cause and effect are independent. It is just like the conducive conditions such as proper climate, water, nurturing and so on for an apple seed to give rise to apple trees and bear fruits. This level of interdependent origination is easily perceivable (even without the understanding of emptiness) and is accepted by all four Buddhist schools.[4] This causal dependent origination is explored in the twelve links of dependent origination that will be discussed later.

Interdependent origination of wholes dependent on parts

Interdependent origination of wholes dependent on parts addresses that any phenomenon comes into being only with the integration of multiple parts that are mutually dependent. This permeates to all existent phenomena, be it impermanent or permanent.

For example, a table is a whole that consists of different parts such as legs and a top plank. It is through the integration of these parts that a table comes into being. This level of interdependent origination is subtler than the first level, but the understanding of emptiness is not crucial for its comprehension.[5]

Interdependent origination of mental imputation

Subjecting the phenomena under ultimate analysis (through the Four Essentials or other means of reasoning) results in the emptiness of the objective existence of any

[4] The four Buddhist schools are: Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra (Yogacara) and Madhyamaka.

[5] Gyatso and Chodron, *Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions*, 2017, pp. 214-215.

phenomena. It forms the basic crux of this deepest level of interdependent origination.

This level states that every phenomenon merely exists by its designated identity. For example, a table can be taken as a designated or nominal object. Its parts, the legs, and the top plank form the basis of designation. But if we try to find out which part of the table is the exact table, we cannot find anything substantial. Because the actual table is neither its parts nor its collection of parts hence devoid of any objective existence. So all these conventionally existent phenomena exist by mere imputation of mind that provides a certain designation but lack any true essence ultimately. Acknowledgment of this level is specific to the Prasangika Madhyamaka.[6]

Elucidation of dependent origination in Sutra

Interdependent origination is elucidated in many major Mahayana Sutras, one of is the *Salistambha Sutra* or *The Rice Seedling Sutra*. This Sutra provides a detailed exposition of the principles of interdependent origination and the nature of reality, utilizing the analogy of a rice seedling. It is revered for its profound teaching of outer and inner dependent origination and the twelve links of interdependent origination.

It was when the Buddha Shakyamuni was residing in the Vulture's Peak (*Griddhrakūta*) in Rajgir with the sangha of 1250 bhikkhus and many noble beings, the Venerable Śāriputra asked Arya[7] Maitreya for the meaning of the statement made by Buddha Shakyamuni in the morning while gazing at the rice seedlings. The statement made by the Buddha was,

> "Bhikṣus, whoever sees dependent arising sees the
> Dharma. Whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha." (1.3)[8]

Having said this, the Bhagavān fell silent. Following the request of Ven Śāriputra, Arya Maitreya to elucidates the meaning of these Noble words of the blessed one which was rejoiced and praised by all the beings of higher realms and is revered as the noble Mahayana sutra "The Rice Seedling".

The sutra outlines the twelve links of dependent origination, while Arya Maitreya elucidates dependent arising, explaining that something arises because something else already exists, and something is born due to the birth of another thing. This means that ignorance gives rise to the formation, expounding the cycle of samsara through the twelve links of interdependent origination. These links, in order, are: ignorance, formation, consciousness, name and form, six sense sources, contact, feeling, attachment, grasping, becoming, birth, and aging and death. Each link gives rise to the next, and the cessation of these links starts with the cessation of ignorance, leading to the end of suffering.

Further, the sutra expounds the meaning of Dharma. Dharma refers to the

[6] Gyatso and Chodron, *Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions*, 2017, p. 215.

[7] The term 'Arya' refers to Noble being.

[8] Dharmasagara Translation Group, *The Noble Mahayana Sutra The Rice Seedling*, 2018.

eightfold noble path, the noble truth of the path that leads to the cessation of all suffering, namely; Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

The Sutra states,

"The eightfold path of the noble ones,
combined with the attainment of its results and Nirvāṇa[9],
is what the Bhagavān[10] has called the Dharma." (1.6)[11]

The Buddha is one who comprehends all Dharma (all phenomena) and is endowed with the noble Dharmakaya, perceiving the dharma of those on the path and those who have transcended it. The Buddha said that one who sees interdependent origination can also see the ultimate Dharma—the wisdom of emptiness.

The sutra further elucidates the twofold classification of interdependent origination: outer interdependent origination and inner interdependent origination. This is followed by a further explanation of it through the principles of causal relation and the conditional relation of the classification. Causal outer interdependent origination describes the sequential process of natural growth where a seed leads to a sprout, which then develops into a leaf, stem, pedicel, pistil, flower, and finally a fruit. Each stage depends on the previous one but without conscious intention at any stage.

The conditional relation in outer interdependent origination is explained through the coming together of six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space, and season. Each element plays a crucial role, such as the earth supports the seed, water moistens it, fire ripens it, wind opens it, space allows it room to grow, and season transforms it. None of these elements consciously perform their functions, yet their combined presence enables the sprout to form as the seed ceases. The sprout's formation is not self-created, nor created by another or without cause rather it arises due to the specific conditions provided by these elements. This illustrates how the interdependence of these conditions leads to the natural process of growth and transformation.

Causal relation in inner interdependent origination begins with ignorance causing formations, leading through a sequence until birth causes aging and death. If ignorance does not arise, formations and the subsequent links in the chain do not manifest, preventing aging and death. The process unfolds without any element consciously producing or being produced by another, yet each stage arises from the existence of the preceding one.

The conditional relation in inner interdependent origination involves the coming together of six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. The earth element provides solidity, water provides cohesion, fire digests food, wind manages inhalation and exhalation, space creates hollow areas, and consciousness generates name and form. These elements function without conscious intention, yet their combined presence leads to the formation of the body. None of these elements possess a self or individual identity; they are not beings, life forces, or personal entities. The body

[9] Enlightenment.
[10] Bhagavān refers to Buddha.
[11] Dharmasagara Translation Group, *The Noble Mahayana Sutra The Rice Seedling*, 2018.

arises from these interdependent conditions, without any element being inherently a self or belonging to anyone.

Thereafter the Sutra elucidates the twelve links of dependent origination namely,
(1) Ignorance (2) Formation (3) Consciousness (4) Name and form (5) Six senses
(6) Contact (7) Feeling (8) Craving (9) Clinging (10) Becoming (11) Birth
(12) Old age and death

Ignorance gives rise to three types of formations: meritorious, unmeritorious, and immovable, which respectively lead to corresponding types of consciousness. Consciousness, in turn, conditions name and form, which enable actions through the six sense sources. These sense sources lead to contact, which produces sensation. Sensation conditions craving, leading to clinging and appropriation, which drive actions that result in becoming and rebirth. The process continues with birth leading to aging and death, illustrating the twelvefold dependent arising. This cycle, driven by various causes and conditions, is continuous and without an inherent self, reflecting the impermanent and interconnected nature of existence.

Arya Maitreya concludes the discourse by mentioning that, understanding Interdependent Origination with perfect wisdom leads to the realization of its true nature: unborn, uncreated, imperceptible, and devoid of inherent existence. One who comprehends this sees existence as unreal, impermanent, and selfless, abandoning reflections on past, future, and present states. All doctrines and beliefs in self, being, or ceremonies are relinquished as false and futile. Such understanding is prophesied to lead to an unexcelled awakening as a perfect Buddha.

The Buddha uses the analogy of a rice seedling, which gives rise to production depending on various conditions such as soil, water, sunlight, and appropriate nurturing. This simple yet effective metaphor serves to illustrate the principle that all phenomena arise in dependence on a complex web of causes and conditions. Just as rice seedlings cannot bring forth further production independently of these conditions, all phenomena similarly exist in dependence.

Elucidation of interdependent origination in treatises

The interdependent origination is widely explained in later treatises of several masters. One among them is the Nalanda master Arya Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In the treatise, he states:

> "Whatever is dependently co-arisen,
> That is explained to be emptiness.
> That, being a dependent designation,
> Is itself the middle way. (24.18)
>
> "Something that is not dependently arisen
> Such a thing does not exist.
> Therefore a nonempty thing

Does not exist." (24.19)[12]

Here, Arya Nagarjuna makes his point that Interdependent Origination and Emptiness are synonymous. Garfield in his commentary on *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* observes that the Emptiness and the phenomenal world are not two distinct things rather they are the two characterizations of the same thing.[13]

Arya Nagarjuna further states that this dependent designation is itself the middle way. This verse that states emptiness to be synonymous with interdependent origination and them being the middle can be proven by certain steps.

The first set of steps proves how emptiness is dependent origination, the second proves how dependent origination is middle and the last proves how emptiness means middle way.

i) To establish emptiness means dependent origination, one should reflect upon a set of five points:

1. Emptiness
2. Emptiness does not mean nothingness. It is the short form of the emptiness of independent existence.
3. The Emptiness of independent existence means nothing exists independently.
4. Nothing exists independently means everything exists by dependence.
5. Everything exists by dependence means everything is dependently originated.

Therefore emptiness means dependent origination.

ii) Dependent origination means the middle way.

To understand why dependent origination signifies the Middle Way, it is essential to examine the term itself, which comprises the words "Dependent" and "Origination."

The term "Dependent" negates the notion of independence, thus rejecting the extreme of absolutism. Absolutism posits that phenomena exist independently and inherently, which dependent origination refutes.

The term "Origination," on the other hand, rejects non-existence or nihilism. Nihilism suggests that phenomena do not exist at all, which is also contrary to the concept of dependent origination.

The combination of these two rejects the possibilities of both the extremes of nihilism and absolutism.

The rejection of these two extremes demonstrates that dependent origination falls into the middle way.

iii) Emptiness means middle way

Since emptiness is synonymous with dependent origination, and dependent origination is defined as the middle way, it logically follows that emptiness itself embodies the principles of the middle way.[14]

Emptiness, interdependent origination, and the middle way are interconnected

[12] Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakarika*, 1995, p. 69.
[13] Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakarika*, 1995, p. 305.
[14] Jinpa, *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics: Vol 4,* 2023 pp. 351-353.

concepts that are central to understanding the ultimate truth (*Paramārtha Satya*). While they are not identical, they are synonymous in their implications.

Another significant literary work that vividly explains the interdependent origination is In Praise of Dependent Origination composed by the Tibetan master Lama Je Tsongkhapa. The text is dedicated to praising Buddha Shakyamuni for imparting the immaculate Dharma, which inspired Tsongkhapa to practice and finally experience the profound wisdom of emptiness. Recognizing the immense value of the teaching of dependent origination, the entire work extols its virtues, as the title suggests.

> "Inherent existence, unmade and non-dependent;
> Dependently- related, made and dependent;
> How can these two states be combined
> On one base, without contradiction? (26)
>
> "Therefore, whatever arises dependently
> Though always free of inherent existence,
> Appears to exist from its own side;
> So you said this is like an illusion." (27)[15]

The idea of inherent existence is considered non-existent because it suggests independence, which is inherently impossible. All phenomena lack intrinsic existence and are instead dependently originated. Without the wisdom of emptiness, ordinary beings perceive objects as independently existing, like an illusion. While ordinary beings see phenomena as objectively real, in reality, they are akin to the nature of a dream. Every phenomenon is revealed to lack intrinsic nature only when subjected to ultimate analysis. As Arya Nagarjuna's work *Ratnavali* (*The Precious Garland*) says,

> "A form seen from a distance
> Is seen clearly by those nearby.
> If a mirage were water,
> Why is water not seen by those nearby?" (52)
>
> "The way this world is seen
> As real by those afar
> Is not so seen by those nearby
> For whom it is signless like a mirage." (53)[16]

The ultimate reality of any phenomenon is revealed only through close analysis that goes beyond conventional norms. Each phenomenon is like a mirage that disappears upon close examination. However, this does not mean that phenomena are non-existent; rather, they do not exist as ordinary beings perceive them, as objectively real.

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[15] Gyatso, *The Harmony of Emptiness and Dependent-Arising,* 1992, p. 117.

[16] Hopkins, *Nagarjuna's Precious Garland*, 2007, p. 100.

Ecological Crises: A Scientific Perspective

In recent years, the world has become increasingly aware of environmental issues and the urgent need to tackle the ecological crises threatening our planet. Ecology, the study of relationships between organisms and their environments[17], offers crucial insights into the complex and interdependent nature of natural systems. The term ecology comes from the Greek words "oikos" (house) and "logos" (study)[18], highlighting the interconnectedness of life and the environment. It provides a framework for understanding how living organisms, including humans, interact with each other and the physical world. Ecology is a dynamic and multifaceted field, examining the complex web of interactions between organisms and their surroundings, from the smallest ecosystems like ponds to the largest, such as oceans. These studies help us comprehend the natural world, its processes, and the effects of human activities on ecosystems.

The importance of ecology has grown in the face of global environmental challenges. Problems like climate change, deforestation, pollution, and the overuse of natural resources pose significant threat to ecological balance. Ecologists play a vital role in conservation efforts by offering scientific knowledge essential for protecting endangered species, restoring degraded ecosystems, and managing natural resources sustainably.

Understanding climate change

The United Nations defines climate change as long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. While such shifts can be natural since 1800s the human activities have been the major driver for climate change, primarily due to the emission of greenhouse gases. The climate change 2023 synthesis report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850–1900 in 2011–2020. It also states that the emissions have continued to increase from 2010–2019, with unequal historical and ongoing contributions arising from unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles, and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and between individuals.[19]

Origin of climate change

The Earth's climate has always been dynamic, influenced by natural factors such as

[17] Begon, Townsend and Harper, *Ecology: From Individuals to Ecosystem*, 2006, p. xi.
[18] Schwarz and Jax, *Etymology and Original Sources of the term Ecology*, 2011, p. 145.
[19] Ed. Lee and Romero, *Climate Change 2023, 2023*, p. 4. Also refer to "IPCC, 2023: Sections." In *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 42.

volcanic eruptions, variations in solar radiation, and natural greenhouse gas concentrations. These factors have caused periods of warming and cooling throughout the planet's history, including ice ages.

However, the current phase of rapid climate change is primarily attributed to anthropocentric activities. The Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century marked the beginning of significant human impact on the climate. The widespread use of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) for energy, deforestation for agriculture and urbanization, and industrial processes has led to an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.

Latest Studies and Reports on Anthropogenic Ecological Challenges

The IPCC Synthesis Report of 2023 states that human activities resulting in the uncontrolled emission of greenhouse gases accelerated global warming to increase the global temperature by 1.1 degrees Celsius by 2011-2020 compared to 1850-1900.

The Emission Gap Report 2023: Broken Record – Temperatures hit new highs, yet world fails to cut emissions (again) published by UNEP stated that the Global Green House Gas emissions have reached a record high of 57.4 GtCO2e in 2022, growing by 1.2 percent from the previous year, the major (two third) of the contribution due to the fossil C02 emission which has the potential of global warming up to 100 years.

Chapter 10 of the IPCC report examines Asia's climate, noting a general rise in surface temperatures across the region since the 20th century. It highlights significant climate changes throughout Asia, affecting various ecosystems such as terrestrial, coastal, and glacial habitats. The report indicates that Asian countries are facing hotter summers, rapidly growing energy demands for cooling, and increasing population growth with high confidence.[20]

A latest report published by the Ministry of Family Welfare, Government of India, cases of more than 110 heatstroke deaths have been reported in India this summer, between March 1st and June 8th and more than 40000 individuals were injured due to the same.[21]

An Assessment of Long-Term Changes in Mortalities Due to Extreme Weather Events in India: A Study of 50 Years' Data, 1970–2019, an article published in 2021 on Weather and Climate Extremes has stated that the annual extreme weather events have been reported in Northern India in the past few decades by putting forward the evidence of 50-yeardata from 1970- 2019. Due to this extreme change in the weather and climate pattern, the anticipation of heat waves in Northern India has increased 100 times than before in summer. This has been seen apparently as the temperature has been soaring more than 50 degrees Celsius in many parts of the country this year. While many regions of India were facing extreme heat, some other areas were struggling with unexpected rains and the subsequent calamities including floods and landslides.[22]

[20] IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, 2022

[21] *The Times of India*, 2024

[22] Ray, K., (et al). "An assessment of long-term changes in mortalities due to extreme weather events in India," 2021.

Ecological crises: Buddhist philosophical perspective

We have discussed the scientific origins of ecological crises and climate change above; however, it is necessary to examine their roots from a philosophical perspective as well. It is well known that scientific solutions alone, whether implemented by individuals or society, will not fully address these escalating challenges. Humans, as the **"**highest and most intelligent beings**"** in the animal kingdom, are not just rational but also emotional beings. Human attitudes play a major role in solving any kind of problem. Therefore, science and philosophy need to work together to tackle contemporary global challenges. Buddhist philosophy is arguably the most scientifically aligned and compatible philosophy. Addressing a scientific issue from a Buddhist perspective is significant for several reasons, as it introduces unique philosophical, ethical, and practical dimensions that can complement and enrich scientific understanding.

Nature has always been a kind witness to the major life events of Buddha Shakyamuni, from his birth under the Sala tree, his meditation under the Jamba tree in his palace garden, his attainment of Buddhahood under the Bodhi tree in Uruvela, the first turning of the wheel of Dharma in the deer park at Sarnath, to his Mahaparinirvana between two *Sala* trees in Kushinagar. It is also noteworthy that Buddha often delivered teachings in natural settings such as forests, gardens, and mountains, highlighting the importance of the natural environment in spiritual practices. Buddha consistently showed reverence to nature, recognizing that all life within nature significantly contributes to spiritual practices as well. The significance of nature in spiritual practices is also explained in the eighth century Nalanda master Bodhisattva[23] Śāntideva's text *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*:

> "When shall I come to dwell in forests
> Amongst the deers, the birds and the trees,
> They say nothing unpleasant
> And are delightful to associate with?" (8.25)
>
> "When dwelling in caves,
> In empty shrines and at the feet of trees,
> Never look back-
> Cultivate detachment." (8.26) [24]

These verses illustrate how nature can support one's spiritual practice, particularly meditation. Bodhisattva Śāntideva advises that the practitioner (Bodhisattva) should distance themselves from difficult, unreliable, and childish beings, and instead seek refuge in nature. (Verse 21-24) Nature, being free from all kinds of restraints, can

[23] Bodhisattva is one who has cultivated Bodhicitta or the Awakening mind which is a spontaneous altruistic intention to become Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings. In this context, Bodhisattva is an epithet given to Śāntideva in Nalanda tradition. According to the tradition, all the seventeen Nalanda Mahapanditas (Masters), incuding Śāntideva are also given the epithet of Acharya.

[24] Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life,* (trans), Batchelor, 1979, p. 93.

positively contribute to the spirit of meditation. It helps the practitioner detach from their attachment to possessions. What is the root cause of ecological crises or any kind of suffering?

The second noble truth addresses the origin of suffering, which arises from ignorance, specifically self-grasping ignorance. This form of ignorance perceives an independent and inherent nature of existence, distorting the view of reality. It is the inherent view of self or "I" that leads to the accumulation of negative karma due to unwholesome thoughts and actions, ultimately causing suffering. Arya[25] Nagarjuna, the second-third century Nalanda Master and prominent figure of Mahayana Buddhism explains this in his work *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Chapter 18, Verse 5:

> "Action and misery having ceased, there is nirvana.
> Action and misery come from conceptual thought.
> This comes from mental fabrication.
> Fabrication ceases through emptiness"[26]

Arya Nagarjuna's explanation of the rise and cessation of samsara is also known as the Five-fold Profundity, where he elaborates on this mechanism through five steps.

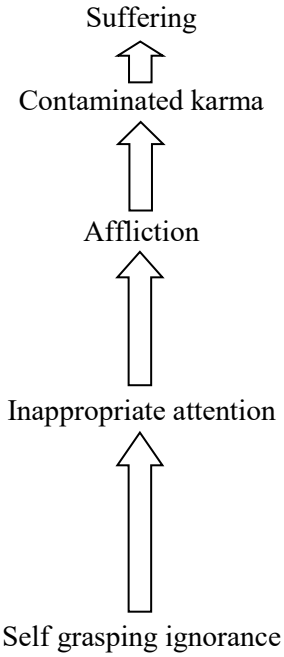

Figure1: Five-fold Profundity of Arya Nagarjuna

Self-grasping ignorance, the root of all sufferings, distorts one's view to perceive

[25] Nagarjuna is given the epithet of Arya according to the Nalanda tradition as he is considered to be one of the greatest Buddhist philosophers of all time.

[26] Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakarika*, 1995, p. 67.

oneself as inherently real and objectively existent. This leads to inappropriate attention, exaggerating the perceived qualities of objects. Consequently, this gives rise to afflictions, which fall into three categories: attachment, aversion, and ignorance. Attachment involves an involuntary pull, aversion involves an involuntary push, and ignorance is a mind whose apprehension does not align with reality. These afflictions lead to contaminated karma, the unwholesome karma that manifests through the three doors: body, speech, and mind. As it is known that "the karma one accumulates will not go to waste (whether positive or negative)," its repercussions ultimately trap one in the cycle of samsara.

To understand human-led ecological degradation and climate change, this mechanism of samsara must be viewed in a broader sense. By recognizing the interconnectedness of nature, ecology in a philosophical sense can be seen as two-dimensional: internal ecology and external ecology, or inner ecology and outer ecology. Inner ecology refers to one's internal state, which can be wholesome, unwholesome, or a mixture of both. External ecology refers to the external environment of the being. This external ecology is always a reflection of the internal ecology, meaning that a person's thoughts are manifested through their physical and verbal actions, which then impact their immediate environment. When one is under the influence of self-grasping ignorance and its subsequent build-ups, they tend to act negatively towards the outer world, which ultimately bears the consequences of these actions such as ecological crises. The unwholesome nature of one's mind can lead to apathy towards the external environment, resulting in its degradation through various actions such as contributing to different forms of pollution, felling trees, and clearing forests.

Interdependent Origination and Ecology

It has been explained in detail in above that how interdependent origination pertains to every single phenomenon by elucidating its three levels. Similarly, interconnectedness is evident in ecology, emphasizing the interdependence of all forms of life within an ecosystem. Ecology, the scientific study of interactions between organisms and their environment, echoes the principle of interdependent origination. An ecosystem is a complex web where organisms, including humans and animals, interact with each other and their surroundings, coexisting in a way that is crucial for their survival.

When it comes to the concept of ecology or any global issue, we must see it deeper from the light of the two truths- the conventional (relative) and ultimate truth. Any kind of mundane realities can be categorized under conventional truth while the emptiness of every such phenomenon is the ultimate truth. Thus ecology is categorized under the conventional reality. Scholar S R Bhatt on his article *Buddhism and Ecology* mentions that the concern for the well being of mental and physical world an important element throughout the history of Buddhism.[27] We can consider the 'well being mental world' as the wisdom that leads one ultimately to the attainment of Nirvana and

[27] Bhatt, *Buddhism and Ecology*, 2008, p. 107.

Buddhahood, while the physical world can be considered as the conventional reality. Buddhism is never about acceptance of ultimate reality by rejecting the existence of mundane reality, because the conventional reality is the medium through which one can reach the ultimate. Hence the well being of the physical world is equally important as the mental well being for the achievement of the ultimate goal. In *Bodhicittavivarana*, Arya Nagarajuna quotes,

> "Those who understand this emptiness of phenomena,
> Yet (also) conform to the law of karma and its results.
> This is more amazing than amazing!
> This is more wondrous than wondrous!" (88)[28]

This verse highlights the importance of acknowledging the law of karma and other conventional realities, even while being aware of the ultimate nature of the world. This is often quoted as the marking of understanding the emptiness of objective existence by the Prasangika Madhyamaka School.

Geshe Lobsang Khenrab and Geshe Tenzin Choephel in their article The Dependent Origination and Ecology connect the wisdom aspect and the practice (merit) with the ecology. They say that the core teaching of Buddhism is the view of dependent origination and the character of compassion and non-violence that one engages in his day to day life. It is from these strong roots of view and character that one exists and coexists in harmony with the environment and puts forth other virtues.[29]

Interdependent origination can be seen on a much larger canvas as it pervades the whole of the universe where every phenomenon is interconnected. This is illustrated in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* with the metaphor of the infinite jeweled net of *Indra*. This distinctive teaching forms the basis of the Hua-yan school of Buddhism, which advocates the principle of "all in one, one in all."[30]

Interestingly, parallels can be drawn between this concept and smaller ecosystems discussed in the scientific world. For instance, a small pond is considered an entire universe of ecosystems, abundant with millions of organisms (both micro and macro) that coexist in remarkable ways. Applying this perspective to a plate of cooked rice on the table, we can discern the innumerable factors contributing to its presence in its current state. From the initial rice seedling, the farmer who planted it, and the nurturing climatic conditions, to the soil and water supporting its growth, and the individuals involved in harvesting and processing—the entire chain of events unfolds in interconnected dependency, each step reliant on those preceding and succeeding it.

From the above examples we can derive how complex the web of phenomena is, and how crucial it is to co-exist for the survival of oneself and that of the other. This opens up oneself to the need to practice ethical conduct and virtues.

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[28] Nagarjuna*, A Commentary on the Awakening Mind*, (trans), Jinpa, 2007, p. 9.
[29] Khenrab and Choephel, *The Dependent Origination and Ecology*, 2008, pp. 131-133.
[30] Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, 1993, p. 41.

Buddhist Ethics for Ecological Conservation

Given that it is due to the harmful actions of humans that ecological balance has been disrupted and the world is rapidly moving towards destruction, it becomes our responsibility as humans to restore this balance and ensure the well-being of the entire planet. Recognizing the interconnected relationship between oneself and the environment, the next crucial step involves cultivating virtues. Ethical practices in Buddhism form the foundational principles alongside wisdom. These practices are diligently followed by the highest practitioners, the Bodhisattvas, over eons as they strive towards their ultimate goal of Buddhahood, combining meditation with the wisdom of emptiness. While Bodhisattvas engage in these practices at a profound level, their fundamental essence can be embraced by anyone, regardless of gender, race, or religious background. Some of them include the practice of:

- Four Immeasurables
- Patience
- Generosity

Four Immeasurables

The four immeasurable or *Chatvari Brahmavihara* are those four virtues a practitioner cultivates on their journey to their desired goal of Nirvana and Buddhahood. However, this can be practiced by any ordinary person and it can bring forth immense amount of merit. They are:

a. Immeasurable loving kindness- a mental state of love which wishes the immeasurable beings to be endowed with happiness and its causes.
b. Immeasurable compassion- a mental state of love that wishes immeasurable beings to be freed of suffering and its causes.
c. Immeasurable joy- a mental state of love which wishes the immeasurable beings not to be separated from the happiness that they are endowed with.
d. Immeasurable equanimity- a mental state of love that wishes immeasurable beings to be freed of the biased attitude of being excessively attached to some and aversion towards others.

These mental activities of wishing others to be freed of different kinds of suffering can bring forth a reformation from within.

Patience

The practice of patience offers profound benefits, as evidenced by its practitioners. These benefits extend both internally and externally. Patience has multiple connotations in Buddhism. They include the patience with regard to time; forbearance with regard to enduring pain and the fortitude that gives the one to face adversities. It is the mental unhappiness that fuels anger- the opposite of patience, which can destroy goodness in one. This can lead one to harm others and his environment which can lead to further undesirable consequences. Hence cultivating patience stands significant.

Generosity

Generosity is a virtue that acts as the direct antidote to stinginess. A self-centered attitude, which values oneself over others, leads to stinginess and the drive to amass material wealth. In this pursuit, one often neglects the importance of conserving the immediate environment. Over time, this neglect can result in ecological crises, endangering both one and others. Thus, practicing generosity is important for fostering a selfless mindset and ensuring environmental preservation.

Generosity, the first of the *Paramita*[31], is classified into four:

1. Generosity of material resource
2. Generosity of love
3. Generosity of protection
4. Generosity of Dharma

Out of the four, the first three can be practiced from the perspective of ecological conservation.

For instance, providing essential resources for forest preservation, demonstrating loving kindness and care towards all living organisms including animals and plants, and safeguarding endangered species or conserving near-extinct plant or animal species.

Conservation of Khangchendzonga National Park

We have discussed above how Buddhist wisdom and practices are closely intertwined with ecology. The foundational principle of Interdependent Origination illustrates that the world's existence hinges on interdependence, emphasizing the necessity of coexistence for sustaining the world. While Buddhist wisdom elucidates the reality of existence, ethical practices such as compassion, loving-kindness, and altruism empower individuals to contribute to the well-being of the world.

However, doubts may arise regarding the practicality and feasibility of these ideas. An example of successful conservation effort with the immense contribution of Buddhist ideology and ethics is the Khangchendzonga National Park of Sikkim, India. Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) in Sikkim, nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, represents a unique blend of nature and culture, earning it the status of India's only UNESCO Mixed Heritage Site in 2016. Spanning 1,784 square kilometers, the park includes diverse ecosystems across various elevations, such as Eastern Himalayan Alpine Meadows, Broadleaf and Conifer Forests, and the Tibetan Plateau Steppe.[32] The park's designation as a mixed heritage site reflects its deep cultural and natural significance, rooted in Sikkim's animistic traditions and later enriched by the inception of Buddhism.

Buddhism was introduced in Sikkim in three phases. The first phase occurred in the eighth century when the great Buddhist Master Guru Padmasambhava who is also revered as Guru Rinpoche According to tradition, Guru Rinpoche traveled to Sikkim on

[31] Paramita refers to Perfection. The ten paramita are the practices one in Buddhist path follow in order to attain the desired goal of Nirvana and Buddhahood.

[32] Denjongpa and Lachungpa, *Khangchendzonga National Park UNESCO World Heritage Site,* 2016, p. 8.

his way to Tibet, where he subdued the local spirits, transforming them into protectors of the land and elevating *Dzonga*[33] as the supreme deity of Sikkim and named the land as *Beyul Demojong*, meaning "the valley of rice". He then set this land apart from the rest of the mundane world as a worldly paradise for the practice of Buddhism when it is in threat elsewhere.[34]

The second phase of Buddhism's spread in Sikkim took place in the early fifteenth century with the arrival of *terton*[35] Rigzin Godem Chen in fourteenth century. He is believed to have discovered several *terma*[36] that were left hidden by Guru Rinpoche before him closing the gates of *Beyul Demojong*, which became the foundation of the *Jang Ter*[37] tradition.

The third and the most significant diffusion occurred in the seventeenth century when three monks from Tibet- Khatsum Namkha Jigme, Kathod Kuntu Zangpo, and Ngadag Sempa Rigzin Phuntshog converged in Sikkim from different directions. After meeting at Yuksom, they established the Namgyal Dynasty by crowning Phuntsog Namgyal as the first king, with Khangchendzonga as a witness.[38]

These three stages of diffusion vividly reflect the principal of dependent origination, particularly in its deep interconnection between nature, human society, and spiritual practice. From the very first phase, Guru Rinpoche's recognition of Sikkim as *Beyul Demojong*, underscores the intrinsic link between ecological sanctity and the well-being of sentient beings. His act of subduing local spirits and consecrating the land highlights the view that nature is not separate from human existence but is integral to the spiritual and social fabric of life. The second diffusion, marked by Rigzin Godem Chen's rediscovery of Guru Rinpoche's hidden treasures, further emphasizes the sanctity of the environment as a space where Dharma flourishes, reinforcing the responsibility to protect it. The third and most significant diffusion, led by Lhatsun Chenpo and other two other monks, illustrates this principle through rituals dedicated to Khangchendzonga and the land's deities upon opening the *Beyul Demojong*, affirming the mutual dependence between humans and the natural world.

This rich cultural and religious history continues to hold deep significance in Sikkim's cultural identity as it acknowledges and venerates the environment as a living entity essential for societal harmony. Thus, Buddhist ideology and ethical practices have profoundly shaped Sikkimese society for generations and are deeply ingrained in the people of Sikkim.

The principle of interdependent origination has strongly influenced the conservation ethos in Sikkim highlighting the interconnectedness of all life forms and

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[33] *Dzonga* is believed to be a deity who resides on of Khangchendzonga Peak. He was one of the major fierce local spirits who was subdued and transformed into the protector deity of land by Guru Rincpoche.

[34] Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land,* 2011, p. 9.

[35] *Terton* refers to treasure revealer. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche has concealed several Dharma treasures, as in teachings, in many parts of the Himalayan region in various forms. Terton are the chosen ones who can reveal these precious treasures.

[36] *Terma* or *ter* refers to treasure

[37] Northern treasure

[38] Wangchuk and Zulca, *Khangchendzonga: Sacred Summit*, 2007, pp. 85-87.

the importance of ethical practices such as compassion, loving-kindness, and generosity in environmental conservation.

Sikkim's cultural practices not only celebrate their sacred landscape but also embody a deep sense of responsibility to preserve it for future generations. It includes the recitation of the Nye sol in every monastery of Sikkim ona daily basis. This prayer codified by Lhatsun Chenpo—one of the three monks believed to have opened the gates of *Beyul Demojong*- originated from a significant thanksgiving ritual dedicated to the land's deities, particularly the protector deity *Dzonga*. *Nye sol* holds special significance for ecological conservation because it includes the acknowledgment and apology for environmental transgressions like deforestation, pollution of lakes, and the degradation of hills and mountains and also serves as a guide to prevent such mistakes in the future.[39]

A significant and unique cultural tradition in Sikkim is the annual celebration of the *Pang Lhabsol* festival, dedicated to honoring the guardian deity of *Beyul Demojong, Dzonga*.

On this festival, the mountain deity is invoked and prayed to for continued protection over Sikkim, highlighted by the vibrant display of the *pangtoed cham*- a distinctive masked dance performed exclusively for this occasion.[40]

In addition to cultural traditions, there are also genuine efforts from stakeholders to protect their land. Some notable examples are the Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee and the HimalRakshak Volunteer system.

Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC)

Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee is a non-government organization working from the small town of Yuksom East Sikkim. Formed in 1996, the NGO actively engages among the stakeholders promoting conservation of the nature and sustainable income generation practices. In an interview with the president of Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee, Tsering Uden Bhutia,[41] she explained that the organization was founded in response to the tourism boom in Yuksom, foreseeing the potential negative environmental impacts. Their goal was to promote sustainable and eco-friendly tourism. They advocate for responsible tourism by raising awareness among visitors about the importance of preserving natural environments and consistently collaborate with schools, local communities, the forest and other governmental departments, and monasteries on conservation efforts.

Tsering Uden Bhutia mentioned that the organization collaborated with Pemayangtse monastery[42] in 2016- 17 in implementing a zero-waste policy, which was

[39] Denjongpa & Lachungpa, 2016, p. 184.

[40] Cham is a masked dance commonly performed throughout the Tibetan Buddhist culture but the pangtoedcham is unique and specific to the Pang Lhabsol festival.

[41] Tsering Uden Bhutia, President, Khanchendzonga Conservation Committee, Yuksom, age, 45 years, interviewed via phone call, 18th June, 2024.

[42] Pemayangtse monastery, located in Gyashing, West Sikkim, is one of the oldest and most important monasteries of Sikkim. It was founded by Lhatsun Chenpo.

successfully materialized later. Notably, Yuksom had banned single-use plastic as early as 1998, even before the global outcry against plastic pollution began. The success of KCC's efforts has extended beyond Yuksom, as they have collaborated with numerous state, national, and international organizations to promote ecological conservation and sustainable development. They also played a significant role in KNP being awarded the title of UNESCO Mixed Heritage Site in 2016.

Additionally, the waste management and recycling facility established in Yuksom exemplifies a prudent, well-coordinated, and environmentally responsible conservation initiative.

Bhutia, a Buddhist, explained that the people of Sikkim in general and Yuksom in particular, consider their land sacred. They view Khangchendzonga National Park not just as a sacred site, but as a sacred landscape. Every tree, flower, insect, and lake is considered sacred, and they feel a deep responsibility to conserve the land. She believes her ability to work for the well-being of the community and the environment is due to her past good karmas. This deeply ingrained belief in the law of karma fosters a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others and the environment.

Himal Rakshak Volunteers

Himal Rakshaks are community-based volunteers appointed for monitoring the high-altitude areas of the Khangchendzonga National Park. This system was introduced in 2006 by the Department of Forest, Environment, and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim, in association with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)[43]. Himal Rakshaks are residents of Sikkim, primarily from Yuksom, who have a genuine concern for wildlife conservation. With traditional livelihoods that rely on nature, they have worked closely with the environment for generations.[44]

In an interview with one of the Himal Rakshak volunteers, Hissey Tsering Bhutia[45], he mentioned that there are more than 35 volunteers currently working. These volunteers primarily serve as porters, guides, and cooks for trekkers visiting Dzongri and Goechala summits.

Hissey Tsering Bhutia noted that since the inception of their system, the volunteers have collaborated with forest department officers for the conservation of the park. This includes conducting bi-annual patrolling and installing cameras in various high-altitude regions.

Coming from a monastic background, Bhutia believes that deeply ingrained Buddhist principles and values play a significant role in the conservation efforts of KNP stakeholders. He stated, "We believe in the value system of karma: if we do good deeds, we will get good results. So, keeping that in mind, we do good works so that we and our environment will stay safe and sustainable."

[43] The system came in force in 2008 under the leadership of WWF- Information collected from HisseyTseringBhutia during the interview.

[44] Government of Sikkim, *Guidelines for the Appointment of Himal Rakshak*, 2006.

[45] Hissey Tsering Bhutia, HimalRakshak Volunteer, Yuksom, age, 37, interviewed via phone call, 17th June, 2024.

Limitation and way forward

Buddhist wisdom and practices can contribute effectively to tackling the escalating global ecological challenges, complementing scientific and technological methods. The concept of dependent origination is central to understanding the interconnectedness and impermanence of all phenomena. In the modern world, where ecological crises like climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation are urgent concerns, this principle can highlight the interdependence of all living beings and natural systems.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that while these principles are promising; their practical application on such a large and increasingly uncontrollable scale is a formidable task. The successful implementation of Buddhist wisdom and practices largely depends on the attitudinal transformation of individuals. This transformation must come from within, highlighting that the real challenge is to inspire broad internal change.

Buddhist philosophy does not seek to achieve short-term, mundane goals. Instead, it offers a comprehensive way of life that guides practitioners toward permanent liberation from suffering. The journey towards this ultimate goal is gradual, spanning eons of consistent practice and profound personal transformation. Therefore, expecting immediate results from applying Buddhist principles to address urgent ecological issues is unrealistic. The nature of Buddhist practice inherently involves a long-term commitment, and significant changes may only become apparent over extended periods.

Ecological crises are inherently global, affecting diverse populations with varied cultural backgrounds. For those unfamiliar with Buddhism, the relevance of its principles to environmental issues might not be immediately apparent. This cultural diversity poses a significant challenge in raising awareness and educating such people on Buddhist wisdom as an approach to ecological sustainability.

To effectively integrate the Buddhist wisdom of Interdependent Origination and ethical practices, to combat ecological degradation, it is essential to address these limitations through strategic actions and initiatives. The application of this wisdom should emphasize the necessity for collective action in addressing environmental issues, while promoting mindfulness and incorporating ethical practices.

Promoting interfaith and interdisciplinary dialogue on a larger scale can raise awareness among people. Encouraging dialogue between Buddhism and other religious, philosophical, and scientific traditions can create a more inclusive and holistic approach to environmental issues. These discourses can help translate Buddhist insights into universally applicable principles and practices, making them more accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. National and international conferences and seminars on interfaith and interdisciplinary dialogues, conducted by many Buddhist organizations like Tibet House in New Delhi have successfully demonstrated how this system of sharing knowledge can be embraced for the greater good.

Advocacy and policy engagement by Buddhist communities and leaders is another effective approach. Buddhist communities and leaders can engage in advocacy and policy-making to influence environmental regulations and practices. By

participating in public discourse and collaborating with governments and organizations, they can help shape policies that reflect ethical considerations and promote sustainability. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has consistently advocated for nature conservation globally, voicing against the exploitation of nature and animals and underscoring the interdependent nature of the world. Another significant example is the establishment and activities of 'Khoryug,' the environmental protection association founded under the patronage of His Holiness the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje. Under this initiative, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries in the Himalayas carry out projects focused on environmental protection, sustainability, and climate change resilience.[46]

Community-based initiatives inspired by Buddhist principles can also have significant local impacts. For instance, Tsering Uden Bhutia mentioned efforts of Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee to encourage people to use cotton and recyclable *lungta*[47](Wyl: *klungrta*) and *khadag*[48]in Khangchendzonga National Park, as synthetic cloth offerings, are popular due to their low cost but contribute to pollution. By promoting the use of cotton, even if slightly more expensive, conservation efforts are prioritized. Integrating sustainable practices within monastic settings is an effective way to initiate conservation and provide a model for the lay community. Similar to the Khoryug initiative, the Pemayangtse monastery has been proactive in raising awareness about environmental degradation. It has been declared the first zero-waste monastery in Sikkim, banning offerings wrapped in plastics. Tsering Uden Bhutia noted that people listen to the words of monks and *tulkus* with great reverence, and the monks of Pemayangtse have consistently tried to raise awareness about environmental conservation. Several other monasteries in Sikkim, such as the Guru Kubum Taklung Sang-Ngag Choekhorling located in Deorali, East Sikkim, have also banned the use of plastic on their premises and also following several conservation activities.[49]

Conclusion

Ecological degradation and the resultant climate change are the most pressing issues humanity faces today. At the heart of these crises lies the impact of human activities, which have significantly altered the planet's natural systems. Human activities have led to significant ecological degradation through deforestation, pollution, overexploitation of resources, and the emission of greenhouse gases. Industrialization and urbanization have accelerated the consumption of natural resources, leading to habitat destruction and the extinction of numerous species. The consequences of these are profound, ranging from global warming and biodiversity loss to extreme weather events like flash floods and sea-level rise. A significant barrier to addressing ecological degradation and climate change is the widespread apathy towards nature. Many people fail to recognize

[46] See 8th Khoryug Conference, Kagyu Office of His Holiness the 17th Karmapa.
[47] Wind horse prayer flags.
[48] Ceremonial scarf made of silk used widely among Himalayan Buddhist cultures.
[49] *The Sikkim Chronicle*, 2023.

the interdependent nature of the entire world; they rather view nature primarily as a resource to be exploited for economic gain. This anthropocentric mindset prioritizes short-term benefits over long-term sustainability, leading to policies and practices that harm the environment. This apathy is reflected in the lack of urgency in addressing climate change. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence, political and public responses have been slow and inadequate. The challenges of climate change are often viewed as distant problems that do not require immediate action, leading to procrastination and inaction.

Science and technology have been advancing rapidly, presenting numerous innovations that could help address the worsening challenges of ecological degradation and climate change. Technological solutions such as renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, and sustainable agricultural practices are vital for reducing environmental damage and are receiving significant attention. However, to effectively combat ecological degradation and climate change, a combined approach that integrates technological advancements with attitudinal and behavioral reforms is essential. Technology alone cannot solve these issues; there must be a fundamental shift in how humans perceive and interact with nature. This shift requires a deep understanding of the interdependent relationship between humans and the natural world. People must recognize the critical importance of conserving nature for the sustenance of both the environment and humanity.

While these philosophical and ethical frameworks offered by Buddhism, provide a robust foundation for fostering empathy and sustainable interaction with nature, their practical implementation faces significant challenges. These include the necessity for widespread internal attitudinal transformation and the cultural diversity that can hinder the immediate acceptance of Buddhist principles in environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, strategic actions such as promoting interfaith and interdisciplinary dialogues, engaging in advocacy and policy-making, initiating community-based projects, and integrating sustainable practices within monastic settings, offer promising pathways forward. By embracing these approaches and taking inspiration from several successful conservation efforts like the Khangchendzonga National Park and many other models, there is potential to create a more inclusive, holistic, and effective global response to ecological degradation, ultimately nurturing a deeper connection and responsibility towards the environment.

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Book Reviews

Book Review

Jørn Borup,
Decolonising the Study of Religion: Who Owns Buddhism?
London & New York: Routledge, 2023, 220 pages
ISBN:9781032593395, $180.00 (hardcover) | ISBN:9781003454274, $43.99 (ebook),

Nobuya DAKE

(Part-time Lecturer,
Ryukoku University)

Jørn Borup's *Decolonising the Study of Religion: Who Owns Buddhism?* is a provocative and timely monograph that tackles the complex intersection of decolonization and identity politics in religious studies. This work offers a critical examination of the decolonial turn in academia, with a particular focus on its implications for the study of religion and Buddhism.

Borup begins by situating the decolonial movement within its historical context. He traces the legacy of European colonialism, which for two centuries "dominated the world politically, economically and culturally." This domination, Borup argues, was not merely political and economic, but also epistemological, shaping how knowledge itself was produced and validated. The author then delves into the concept of decolonization, distinguishing it from postcolonialism. He defines decolonization as "responses to colonial effects and restoration through new epistemologies and practices," emphasizing that it views colonialism as an ongoing process rather than a concluded historical period.

One of the book's strengths is its nuanced exploration of the "decolonial turn" in academia. Borup describes this as "a move within ethnic, area, and cultural studies that recognizes the colonial nature of Western thought and scholarly inquiry and attempts to transcend it." He critically examines how this turn challenges traditional academic ideals, particularly the notion of objective scholarship.

A significant portion of the book is devoted to the role of identity in decolonial thought. Borup argues that "decolonial thought requires positionality to be expressed openly and engaged performatively." He provides a thoughtful analysis of how concepts of race, gender, and religion intersect with decolonial critiques, noting how "race has regained its essentialist status" in recent discourse. Borup outlines three key aspects of decolonization in academia: deconstruction, reconstruction, and activism. This framework provides a useful lens through which to understand the diverse efforts at decolonizing knowledge production.

The author's expertise in religious studies shines through in his discussion of how decolonial critiques particularly challenge this field. He argues that religious studies, especially non-confessional Religionswissenschaft, faces unique challenges due to its

"origin in the matrix of Enlightenment, modernity, and colonialism." This section provides valuable insights for scholars grappling with these issues in their own work.

While Borup acknowledges the importance of decolonial critiques, he also offers a balanced perspective, warning against the risks of "identitarian exclusivism and subjectivism." He advocates for "alternative approaches based on analogies, genealogies, and transculturality," suggesting a middle path that acknowledges colonial legacies without entirely rejecting Western academic traditions. This book organizes nine chapters related to the decolonization of Buddhism.

Chapter one examines how decolonization and identity politics are reshaping the academic study of religion, with a specific focus on Buddhist studies in both Western and Japanese contexts. It analyzes cultural appropriation critiques and the concept of "white Buddhism" while exploring how colonial legacies have shaped religious scholarship. The author acknowledges the value of decolonial perspectives while cautioning against extreme identity-based approaches that could fragment academic discourse. The book compares Western and Japanese Buddhist studies traditions to provide a broader perspective on these issues. It advocates for maintaining scholarly rigor while incorporating diverse viewpoints and new critical approaches to religious studies.

Chapter two introduces how Western colonialism evolved from the 15th century, transforming Europe from a marginal position to a global dominator through political, economic, and cultural means. The chapter explores how colonialism was legitimized through narratives of Western exceptionalism and civilizational progress, while actually operating through force and exploitation. It examines how this colonial legacy persists beyond formal independence through structural inequalities and cultural dominance. The text discusses the emergence of decolonization movements aimed at dismantling these persistent colonial structures, both in material terms (economic redistribution) and epistemological terms (challenging Western knowledge systems). The chapter concludes by analyzing how decolonial critique has entered academia, particularly through identity politics and calls for institutional reform of universities seen as perpetuating colonial power structures.

Chapter three analyzes Christianity's historical role in colonialism, beginning with Pope Francis's 2022 apology to indigenous peoples in Canada. It explores how Christianity served as both an instrument and active agent of colonization through concepts like the "Doctrine of Christian Discovery" and missionary work. The chapter analyzes how Western academic study of religion emerged from this colonial context, with figures like Friedrich Max Müller exemplifying how religious scholarship was often directly tied to colonial administration. The text discusses how this colonial legacy continues to influence religious studies through Protestant biases, Western-centric methodologies, and assumptions about objectivity. Finally, it examines various contemporary responses to this colonial heritage, including attempts to "decolonize" religious studies through new methodologies and perspectives that acknowledge colonialism's ongoing influence.

Chapter four discusses how Buddhism has been appropriated in Western contexts, starting with Henry Steel Olcott's colonial-era attempts to "reform" Buddhism through a

Western lens in Sri Lanka. It discusses how Theosophy served as an early channel for Buddhism's introduction to the West, though this process involved problematic racial and colonial dynamics. The text analyzes modern forms of Buddhist appropriation, including the commercialization of concepts like "Zen" and mindfulness, and debates over cultural authenticity. Contemporary criticism, especially in America, focuses on "white Buddhism" and its privileging of individualistic practice over traditional communal aspects. The chapter concludes by examining emerging decolonial approaches to Buddhism, including efforts to create more inclusive spaces and recognize diverse Buddhist identities.

Chapter five investigates the evolution of Buddhist studies in the West, starting with how Buddhism was first studied academically in Europe through Eugène Burnouf's groundbreaking 1844 work which established the modern Western understanding of Buddhism. Early Western Buddhist scholarship was influenced by Protestant Christian frameworks and colonial power dynamics, leading to a focus on texts and doctrine while often dismissing ritual practices and lived religion. The 1990s saw a "postcolonial turn" in Buddhist studies that critically examined the field's colonial and Protestant biases, leading to new approaches that emphasized studying Buddhism as practiced rather than just as documented in texts. The concept of "intercultural mimesis" showed how Buddhist knowledge was shaped through complex exchanges between Western scholars and Asian Buddhists, rather than just being a one-way colonial imposition. Modern Buddhist studies has evolved to embrace heterogeneity and multiple approaches, including anthropological perspectives on lived religion, while continuing to grapple with questions of representation and authority in studying Buddhism.

Chapter six considers decolonial approaches to Buddhist studies, which emerged as a critique of Western scholarship's colonial legacy and issues of representation, particularly focusing on how Buddhism has been studied through white, male, Western perspectives. It discusses the shift from "global Buddhism" to "post-global Buddhism," where scholars increasingly challenge universalist interpretations and emphasize particular identities and experiences, especially in North American Buddhist studies. The chapter analyzes how the "Two Buddhisms" model (contrasting Asian/immigrant vs. Western/convert Buddhism) has been criticized for reinforcing racial hierarchies and privileging white, Western interpretations of Buddhism. A key debate emerges between traditional academic objectivist approaches and newer subjective, experience-based methods that emphasize the scholar-practitioner perspective and identity-based knowledge production. The chapter highlights how decolonial Buddhist studies, particularly in North America, has moved toward incorporating intersectional perspectives and activist approaches, challenging traditional academic hierarchies while advocating for more diverse and inclusive scholarship.

Chapter seven presents how Japan, during the Meiji period (1868-1912), negotiated Buddhist modernization through interactions with Western concepts, particularly in establishing "shūkyō" as the Japanese term for "religion" and adapting Buddhism to modern frameworks. Early modernizers like Henry Steel Olcott and Japanese Buddhist reformers worked to present Buddhism as a rational, scientific religion compatible with modern thought, while maintaining its distinct Japanese character. Under the concept of

"New Buddhism," Japanese reformers sought to modernize Buddhism by emphasizing rational and philosophical aspects while criticizing "old Buddhism" as superstitious, leading to significant changes in how Buddhism was practiced and understood. Japan developed its own form of "export Buddhism," both through missionaries sent to Japanese immigrant communities abroad and through figures like D.T. Suzuki who interpreted Zen Buddhism for Western audiences. The chapter also examines Japan's role as a colonial power, showing how Japanese Buddhism was used as a tool of colonial control in Korea and other territories, creating a complex dynamic where Japan was both colonized (by Western influences) and colonizer (in Asia). The chapter incorporates reviewer Dake's research findings to support its broader argument about how Japanese Buddhism navigated between Western influences and its own traditions during the modernization period, highlighting the complex dynamics of cultural and religious exchange. As a reviewer, I am grateful to be placed in this context.

Chapter eight delves into the development of religious and Buddhist studies in Japan, exploring how Japanese scholars both adopted and resisted Western academic approaches while maintaining their own intellectual traditions. It analyzes how post-colonial critique entered Japanese academia in the 1980s-90s, particularly focusing on scholars who questioned Western-centric approaches to studying religion. The text discusses the concept of "reverse Orientalism," exemplified by figures like D.T. Suzuki, who positioned Japanese Buddhism as both universal and uniquely Japanese. The study explores how Japanese religious scholarship has evolved to address contemporary issues while maintaining traditional approaches, particularly in Buddhist studies. Finally, it examines the complexities of "decolonizing" Japanese religious studies, given Japan's unique position as both influenced by Western colonialism and being a colonial power itself.

Chapter nine offers an analysis of decolonial critiques in Buddhist and religious studies. While acknowledging the value of challenging Eurocentric approaches to studying Buddhism and religion, the author identifies problems with identity-based decolonial perspectives that may replace one form of essentialism with another. The traditional representation of "Buddha as a blue-eyed, rational Victorian gentleman" has been rightfully criticized, but the author argues that the epistemological stance of "I am, therefore I know" is problematic. The author advocates for understanding religion through "transcultural circulation" rather than identity-based segregation, recognizing how religions develop through complex interactions and hybridization instead of as pure, separate traditions. The chapter warns against replacing Western ethnocentrism with equally problematic identity-based essentialism that prevents comparative understanding of religious phenomena.

In conclusion, the author uses Buddhist metaphors of elephants and pointing at the moon to explore tensions between direct experience and mediated knowledge in religious studies. It discusses how colonialism, Western academic frameworks, and identity politics have shaped Buddhist studies historically. The text advocates for a balanced approach to decolonization - acknowledging colonial legacies and power structures in academia while avoiding extreme positions that would reject all Western scholarly

methods. It suggests incorporating more diverse perspectives and knowledge systems while maintaining rigorous academic standards. The author argues for retaining useful analytical models and comparative approaches rather than abandoning them entirely in favor of purely localized or identity-based scholarship. The goal is to enrich rather than fragment the field. A key theme is navigating between universalist claims of objective knowledge and particularist emphasis on situated perspectives, seeking ways to acknowledge both scholarly distance and engaged understanding. The conclusion emphasizes that decolonial critique should enhance rather than dismantle academic religious and Buddhist studies, aiming for greater inclusivity and self-reflection while preserving valuable scholarly tools and insights.

The book's title question - "Who Owns Buddhism?" - serves as a thought-provoking thread throughout the work. Borup uses this question to illustrate the complexities of cultural ownership, representation, and the politics of knowledge production in religious studies. Borup's writing is clear and engaging, making complex theoretical concepts accessible without oversimplifying them. He draws on a wide range of sources, from classic postcolonial theorists to contemporary decolonial scholars, providing a comprehensive overview of the field. However, some readers might find that the book raises more questions than it answers. Borup is more interested in exploring the nuances and contradictions of decolonial thought than in providing definitive solutions. While this approach reflects the complexity of the subject matter, those seeking clear-cut guidelines for decolonizing their own research may be left wanting more.

"Decolonising the Study of Religion: Who Owns Buddhism?" is an important contribution to ongoing debates about knowledge production, cultural representation, and the legacy of colonialism in academia. It offers a thoughtful and balanced examination of decolonial critiques while also highlighting their limitations. This book is essential reading for scholars of religion, particularly those working in Buddhist studies, especially *Kindai Bukkyo Gaku* 近代仏教学 as well as anyone interested in the broader implications of the decolonial turn in academia. Borup's work challenges us to think critically about our own positionality and the frameworks we use to understand and study religion, without losing sight of the value of rigorous, scholarly inquiry.

Journal of
World Buddhist Cultures

Purpose of the Journal

The Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures at the Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan was established with the aim of forming an international research institute for Buddhism, which could respond to the serious challenges facing the modern world. An important mission of the center is to accomplish a wide variety of academic projects on Buddhism and thereby contribute to an increasingly globalized society. All knowledge is expected to be transformed into information in a globalized society. Thus, at its inauguration last year, the center also decided to publish an electronic journal to disseminate the center's research results more widely in order to fulfill its main purpose—in line with global trends of internationalization and informatization. Electronic journals have become indispensable platforms to interact with researchers, Buddhists, and adherents of other religious traditions outside Japan, and to cooperate with foreign universities and research institutes.

The Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures has started a new electronic journal, *Journal of World Buddhist Cultures*. In its long history, the Ryukoku University has accumulated a large body of knowledge on Buddhism. The center hopes to develop this knowledge further and actively disseminate it all over the world by means of this electronic journal, through which the center will also attempt to encourage international intellectual exchange and seek solutions to various problems facing people in contemporary society.

In contemporary society, people's values are significantly diversified and complicated, and we are indeed hardly able to recognize what is "true." *Journal of World Buddhist Cultures* will include not only scholarly articles on Buddhism, but also articles that respond as a guide to urgent problems that arise in every part of the world. Buddhism has been practiced all over the world for more than 2 500 years. The journal will invite submissions in which this universal religion is discussed from a global perspective.

In addition, *Journal of World Buddhist Culture* will also include reviews of books on Buddhism, records of lectures organized by the center, and a wide variety of translated works. It especially welcomes papers written in English. Through this electronic journal, the center hopes to establish an international platform for Buddhist studies and contribute to Buddhism's further development.

Objective of the Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures at Ryukoku University

1. Comprehensive Academic Research of Buddhism

Our objective is to contribute to the advancement of academic research on Buddhist philosophy, history, culture, and other relevant fields while searching for ways to respond to the challenges facing our modern world. By using effective and appropriate research methodologies, we aim to explore Buddhist topics that meet the needs and concerns of our modern world.

2. Interdisciplinary Research that Combines the Fields of Humanity, Science, and Religion and the Creation of New Wisdom

By combining the three fields of humanity, science, and religion, we will explore the prospects of creating a new wisdom for the 21st century. We will aim to become a global research hub where scholars from both Japan and abroad can converse and interact in order to provide guidelines that can help address social issues and global crises from a Buddhist perspective.

3. Building a Global Platform for Buddhist Studies

By collaborating with universities and research institutions in Asia, the Americas, and Europe, we will carry out projects with overseas scholars, Buddhist priests, and academics of religion. We will publish our research results through our website and publications and provide them in English and other languages. Also, by using information and communication technology (ICT), we will collaborate with overseas universities and research institutions in real time in both the graduate and undergraduate programs. In addition, we will build a system that can quickly respond to requests from overseas research institutions who may ask for information about local historical sites by employing various views from across the university.

4. Research Results that will Benefit the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools

By collaborating on the curriculum for each academic area, we aim to build an integrated program that spans across all the departments. We will also promote participation in educational collaboration programs—not only within our university, but with other educational institutions as well. We will recruit short-term research fellows from graduate and post-graduate programs in and outside of our university, by providing research grants (scholarships) and publishing their findings online or on print.

Significance of the Publication of *Journal of World Buddhist Cultures*

The Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures consists of following three research divisions: Basic Research, Applied Research, and International Research. Among them, the International Research Division plays a central role in the publication of the electronic journal.

International Research Division

The International Research Division will be responsible for sharing information about the activities of the center with the international community while continuing the project of translating and publishing Buddhist canons and texts that was originally carried out by the Research Institute for Buddhist Culture. In addition to the publication of the e-journal and the management of the center's website, the division will also promote exchanges with overseas scholars, other Buddhists, and religious specialists through ICT. The division will encourage collaboration with universities and research institutes in different parts of the world, and sponsor international symposiums and invite scholars from overseas to attend them.

As religion becomes more global and multi-dimensional in contemporary society, there has been a growing awareness of a need for inter-religious dialogue. The division will encourage these conversations and interactions by collaborating with various religious research institutions abroad. Under the theme "Inter-Faith Education" the division will carry out research at institutions of higher education.

In the international context of inter-religious dialogue, this division will explore how Japanese Buddhist ideology is viewed by the outside world and what Japanese Buddhism can do to contribute further to inter-religious education. Through these activities, the division's core focus will be to develop young scholars' understanding of the importance of having an international mindset and to facilitate global interaction between scholars.

Contributors

Yasuko FUKUYAMA	Professor, Faculty of International Studies, Ryukoku University	Indian Art History, Buddhist Studies
Athira VYSAKHAM	Research Scholar, Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan	Indian Buddhism, Buddhist Studies
Nobuya DAKE	Part-time Lecturer, Ryukoku University	Shin Buddhist Studies, Religious Studies

執 筆 者 一 覧

福山 泰子	龍谷大学国際学部教授	インド美術史、仏教研究
Athira VYSAKHAM	Research Scholar, Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan	Indian Buddhism, Buddhist Studies
嵩 宣也	龍谷大学非常勤講師	真宗学、宗教学

Editorial Board

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Higashi-iru, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto 600-8268
Hakuakan (Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures)
Phone Number：075-343-3812 (domestic)
International：+81-75-343-3812
E-mail: rcwbc-ejournal@ad.ryukoku.ac.jp
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❖ 論 文 ❖

❖ 書 評 ❖

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