



Compendium
**Seminar on Buddhism in
Modern India: Navigating
Cultural and Social Pathways**

27th February, 2026 | New Delhi





Preface

This compendium brings together the key deliberations, insights, and recommendations emerging from the seminar on “Buddhism in Modern India: Navigating Cultural and Social Pathways,” organized by National Commission for Minorities. The discussions reflected a rich confluence of perspectives from policymakers, scholars, monastics, and students, all united by a shared commitment to understanding and advancing the role of Buddhist thought in modern society.

The proceedings reaffirmed that the teachings of Gautama Buddha that are rooted in compassion, non-violence, mindfulness, and ethical conduct. These values continue to offer profound guidance in addressing present-day challenges. From strengthening constitutional values and promoting social justice to fostering environmental responsibility and global harmony, Buddhism emerges not merely as a historical legacy but as a living and evolving framework for collective well-being.

A recurring theme across the sessions was the importance of bridging tradition with innovation. The need for preserving manuscripts, revitalizing the Pali language, and strengthening academic institutions was complemented by calls for digital outreach, artificial intelligence-based preservation, and inclusive development of heritage zones. The active participation of students and international scholars further enriched the dialogue, bringing fresh ideas and reinforcing the importance of research-driven engagement. This volume seeks to document these multifaceted discussions while also serving as a reference for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. It reflects a forward-looking vision, where heritage conservation, technological advancement and community empowerment go hand in hand. This compendium will contribute to deeper understanding, inspire and inform policy frameworks that uphold the timeless values of Buddhism while addressing the aspirations of a modern, diverse, and dynamic India.



Inaugural session

Welcome Address by Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities

Dr. Atya Nand, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities (NCM), extended a warm welcome to the esteemed dignitaries, scholars, monks, nuns, students, and participants. In his address, he highlighted that the NCM serves not merely as a grievance redressal mechanism, but as a vital institutional bridge connecting constitutional safeguards with the lived realities of minority communities. He underscored the Commission's proactive role in fostering inclusion, dialogue, and empowerment. Reflecting on the theme, he noted that Buddhism in modern India embodies a meaningful convergence of spiritual wisdom, social justice, cultural continuity, and constitutional morality. He emphasized that such engagements strengthen collective understanding and reaffirm the nation's commitment to pluralism, harmony, and equitable development.



- *Dr. Atya Nand, Joint Secretary,
National Commission for
Minorities (NCM)*



Screening of Short Film



A thoughtfully curated short film depicting the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha was screened for the audience. The film effectively presented the core principles of Buddhist philosophy, including the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the doctrine of the Middle Way. It further highlighted the enduring values of compassion, non-violence, and mindfulness as guiding tenets for individual conduct and social harmony. Through a compelling narrative and visual storytelling, the film provided both historical insight and contemporary relevance. It successfully set an appropriate philosophical and reflective tone for the subsequent deliberations, encouraging participants to engage with the discussions in a spirit of introspection, balance, and ethical awareness.



Opening Remarks by Secretary, NCM



Smt. Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, National Commission for Minorities delivered the opening remarks, underscoring India's unique distinction as the birthplace of Buddhism and emphasizing that the preservation of Buddhist heritage is intrinsically linked to safeguarding the nation's civilizational ethos. She noted that the values propagated by the Buddha, including of compassion, non-violence, and ethical living, etc. continue to hold deep relevance in contemporary society and align closely with constitutional ideals. Highlighting the proactive role of the National Commission for Minorities, she outlined its recent engagements with Buddhist community leaders across the country. These include addressing concerns related to land allocation for Buddha Viharas, promoting the study and preservation of the Pali language, and ensuring the protection and conservation of significant heritage sites associated with Buddhism. She further elaborated on cultural initiatives undertaken to strengthen awareness and scholarship, such as organizing Pali Literature Conferences and facilitating the repatriation of sacred relics to India. In conclusion, she announced that the deliberations and insights emerging from the seminar would be consolidated into a structured, policy-oriented framework to guide future interventions. She also encouraged students and young scholars to actively contribute by submitting research papers, with provisions for recognition and cash awards for outstanding entries, the details of which would be made available on the Commission's official website.

**- Smt. Alka Upadhyaya,
Secretary, National Commission
for Minorities (NCM)**



Address by Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs



Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs delivered an insightful address, emphasizing the enduring global relevance of the teachings of Gautama Buddha in addressing contemporary challenges. He noted that the principles of compassion, moderation, and ethical conduct resonate across cultures and offer a framework for fostering peace and sustainable development in today's interconnected world. Highlighting key initiatives of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, he spoke about sustained efforts to strengthen Buddhist Studies departments in universities and academic institutions, thereby promoting research, scholarship, and intellectual engagement with Buddhist philosophy. He further elaborated on the digitization of ancient manuscripts and the use of artificial intelligence for the preservation and promotion of classical languages, including Pali, ensuring that invaluable knowledge traditions are safeguarded for future generations. Dr. Kumar also referred to ongoing support for Buddhist development projects and the expansion of the Buddhist Circuit, aimed at enhancing cultural tourism while preserving heritage sites of national and international significance. Concluding his address, he stressed the importance of integrating the principles of the Eightfold Path into daily governance and public life, advocating for a value-based approach that promotes transparency, inclusivity, and ethical decision-making.

**- Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar,
Secretary, Ministry of Minority
Affairs**



Address by Secretary General, International Buddhist Confederation



Shartse Khensur Rinpoche Jangchup Choeden, Secretary General, International Buddhist Confederation delivered a thoughtful address, emphasizing the constitutional safeguards available to minority communities under Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India. He highlighted the importance of awareness and effective utilization of these provisions to protect cultural and educational rights.

He underscored the critical role of digital literacy in ensuring last-mile delivery of government schemes, particularly for marginalized and remote Buddhist communities. Stressing the need for a data-driven approach, he advocated for robust mechanisms to monitor inclusion and diversity, enabling more targeted and impactful policy interventions. He also drew attention to the growing importance of digital peace-building initiatives to counter misinformation and hate speech, noting that technology must be harnessed responsibly to promote harmony and mutual understanding.

Further, he called for focused developmental efforts for Buddhist communities in North-West India, alongside ongoing initiatives in the North-East, to ensure balanced regional progress. He concluded by emphasizing that inclusive development, supported by constitutional values and technological advancement, is essential for strengthening social cohesion and national unity.

**- Shartse Khensur Rinpoche
Jangchup Choeden, Secretary
General, International Buddhist
Confederation**



Address by Minister of State for Minority Affairs



In his address, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Shri George Kurian underscored the growing importance of cultural diplomacy rooted in India's rich Buddhist heritage. He emphasized how Buddhist outreach serves as a powerful bridge connecting India with nations across Asia and beyond, fostering mutual respect, peace, and shared spiritual values. Highlighting initiatives such as the Global Buddhist Summit, he noted India's proactive role in facilitating international dialogue and collaboration on Buddhist thought and practice.

A significant milestone mentioned was the recognition of Pali as a classical language, reaffirming India's commitment to preserving and promoting ancient knowledge systems. The Minister articulated how Buddhist philosophy, centered on compassion, non-violence, and mindfulness, can guide modern governance and policymaking.

Linking these ideas to the vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047," the Hon'ble Minister of State, stressed that India's developmental journey must remain anchored in its civilizational wisdom. By integrating timeless ethical principles with contemporary governance frameworks, India can create a model of progress that is both inclusive and sustainable.

His address ultimately reflected a harmonious blending of heritage and modernity, positioning Buddhism as a cornerstone of India's global and domestic vision.

"India's path to Viksit Bharat 2047 lies in harmonizing ancient Buddhist wisdom with modern governance to build a compassionate, inclusive, and globally connected nation."

- Shri George Kurian
Hon'ble Minister of State for
Minority Affairs



Address by Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs



In his address, Hon'ble Union Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju presented Buddhism as a universal ethical framework that transcends religious boundaries and speaks to humanity at large. He highlighted that the teachings of the Buddha, grounded in compassion, mindfulness, and the pursuit of peace, offer timeless guidance in addressing contemporary global challenges. Emphasizing India's civilizational responsibility, he noted the country's renewed leadership in shaping global Buddhist discourse through dialogue, scholarship, and cultural exchange. The Hon'ble Minister also drew attention to the expansion of the Buddhist Circuit, which aims to enhance pilgrimage tourism while preserving sacred heritage sites. By improving infrastructure and accessibility, India seeks to welcome devotees and scholars from across the world, strengthening people-to-people ties.

The Hon'ble Minister further stressed the importance of spiritual connectivity as a cornerstone of international relations, suggesting that shared values can foster deeper trust and cooperation among nations.

- Shri Kiren Rijiju
Hon'ble Union Minister of
Minority Affairs



Vote of Thanks

Dr. Atya Nand, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing sincere gratitude to all dignitaries, scholars, monks, nuns, students, and participants for their valuable presence and meaningful contributions to the inaugural session. He acknowledged the insightful deliberations and thoughtful perspectives shared by the speakers, which greatly enriched the proceedings. He also appreciated the dedicated efforts of the organizing team, support staff, and volunteers whose meticulous planning ensured the smooth conduct of the event. Concluding his remarks, he conveyed optimism that the seminar would lead to constructive outcomes and continued engagement on the subject.



Panel Discussion

Theme: Buddhism in Modern India – Cultural and Social Pathways

This session brought together an eminent panel of monks, scholars, policymakers, and community representatives to deliberate on the evolving role of Buddhism in contemporary India. The discussion reflected a synthesis of spiritual insight, academic perspective, and policy-oriented thinking.

- *Shri Niraj Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region - Moderator*

Speakers :

- *Shri Testen Tashi Bhutia, Former Minister, Sikkim*
- *Acharya Shri Yeshe Phuntsok, Mahayana Senior Buddhist Monk, Delhi*
- *Ms. Jigme Youdron Lhamo, Incharge, Druk Drilburi Nunnery, Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh*
- *Shri Mahendra Bhante, Bhadant Gyaneshwar Buddha Vihar, Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh*
- *Dr. Manish Sinha, Professor (Ex-Head), Department of History, Magadh University, Bodhgaya*
- *Dr. Sanjeev Kumar H.M., Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi*



Key Deliberations

1. Social Justice and Constitutional Morality

The panel invoked the legacy of **B. R. Ambedkar**, highlighting his embrace of Buddhism as a transformative movement rooted in dignity, equality, and rational thought. Buddhism was discussed as a moral framework capable of fostering social reform and nurturing responsible, ethical citizenship aligned with constitutional values.

2. Himalayan Buddhist Communities: Challenges and Opportunities

Speakers drew attention to the unique challenges faced by Buddhist communities in regions such as Lahaul, Ladakh, and the North-East. Key concerns included:

- *Inadequate physical and digital infrastructure*
- *Financial constraints affecting monasteries and local institutions*
- *Ecological vulnerability of fragile mountain ecosystems*

The panel emphasized the need for targeted policy interventions, sustainable infrastructure development, and culturally sensitive governance models.

3. Balancing Heritage and Development

Using Bodh Gaya as a case study, the discussion explored the complexities of managing a global spiritual destination. While globalization has enhanced visibility and tourism, it has also created tensions with local livelihoods. The panel advocated for inclusive development strategies that prioritize community participation and equitable growth.

4. Women Empowerment in Buddhist Traditions

The growing role of Buddhist nuns in leadership, education, and social service was widely acknowledged. Particular reference was made to the Drukpa nuns, who exemplify a progressive model by combining spiritual practice with social activism, environmental stewardship, and self-defense training.

5. Technology, Youth, and Digital Outreach

Recognizing the importance of engaging younger generations, the panel highlighted:

- *The use of AI and digital archives for preservation of Buddhist texts*
- *3D virtual tours of heritage sites*
- *Development of mobile applications and short-format educational content*

Greater integration of Buddhist studies into school curricula and strategic use of social media were recommended to ensure wider outreach.

6. Academic and Research Imperatives

A significant gap identified was the lack of dedicated Indian journals for Buddhist Studies. The panel called for:

- *Establishment of peer-reviewed academic platforms*
- *Enhanced research funding and institutional support*
- *Promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship*

7. Tourism and International Facilitation

The panel underscored the importance of strengthening pilgrimage tourism through:

- *Simplified visa procedures for visitors from Buddhist-majority countries*
- *Upgradation of infrastructure across Buddhist circuits*
- *Improved connectivity and visitor services*

Such measures, it was noted, would reinforce India's position as a global hub of Buddhist heritage and spirituality.

Overall, the session presented a comprehensive roadmap for integrating Buddhist values with contemporary societal needs, emphasizing inclusivity, sustainability, and global engagement.

Student Participation

Students from University of Delhi actively contributed to the deliberations, enriching the discourse with diverse perspectives and innovative ideas. Their suggestions included the development of digital platforms and mobile applications to disseminate the teachings of Gautama Buddha to wider audiences, particularly younger generations.

Participants also emphasized the importance of research-driven policy recommendations to strengthen institutional support for Buddhist studies and community development. Additionally, they highlighted the need for systematic manuscript preservation initiatives and skill development programmes to safeguard and promote traditional knowledge systems.

The National Commission for Minorities encouraged students and scholars to submit structured research papers based on these themes. Outstanding contributions will be recognized through a formal evaluation process, with awards aimed at fostering academic excellence and continued engagement in this important field.



Key Outcomes & Way Forward

The seminar resulted in several significant outcomes and outlined a clear roadmap for future action. The National Commission for Minorities will prepare a comprehensive, policy-oriented outcome document incorporating the key insights and recommendations emerging from the deliberations. Emphasis was placed on encouraging research-based submissions from students and scholars to foster informed policymaking and academic engagement.

The participants highlighted the need to strengthen digital outreach for the dissemination of the teachings of Gautama Buddha, ensuring wider accessibility and relevance, particularly among younger generations. A focused approach toward inclusive development in Buddhist heritage zones was also recommended, integrating preservation with community welfare.

Further, the seminar underscored the importance of manuscript preservation and the revival of classical languages such as Pali, alongside promoting institutional collaboration between universities, research bodies, and Buddhist organizations to sustain long-term scholarly and cultural initiatives.



Conclusion

The seminar reaffirmed that Buddhism in modern India is not merely an archaeological legacy but a vibrant and living ethical framework, deeply aligned with constitutional values, social justice, gender equality, environmental consciousness, and global diplomacy. The event concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by Shri Harish Kumar, Deputy Secretary, NCM followed by a networking lunch, marking the successful culmination of the programme.







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