

The Sacred Link: Buddhism Connecting India and the World



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India's Buddhist connections represent important historical, spiritual and people- level ties with various countries, which foster India's external relations. Apart from the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path enunciated by Lord Buddha, these Buddhist linkages are part of folklore and legends in these countries, the history

of monasteries and pagodas (temples), their art and culture, associated with exchanges with Indian monks and travellers for more than a millenia or two. India is often viewed by people as the Land of Lord Buddha and the Sacred Relics from India become an embodiment of the connection with Lord Buddha and India for the people across countries.

The exposition of Sacred Buddha Relics from India visited Vietnam from 2nd May – 2nd June, 2025 on the request of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the Government of Vietnam. These visiting Relics were found by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1929 in a large Stupa at Nagarjunakonda, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. In December 1932, these Relics were presented to Maha Bodhi Society of India to be enshrined at Sarnath, which is revered widely as the

site of the first sermon by Lord Budha after his enlightenment. The enormous response of the Government, monks and the people of Vietnam displayed the significance, strength and depth of Buddhist connections between India and Vietnam as well as the world.

The Sacred Relics arrived in Vietnam in a special Government of India aircraft on 2nd May, accompanied by the Union Minister of Parliamentary and Minority Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju. The Sacred Relics were enshrined in nine different provinces of Vietnam where they were visited by about 15.5 million (1.55 crore) devotees as well as the President of



Vietnam, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, Provincial Heads, foreign Ambassadors and senior officials. It was touching to see the large turnout of people, old and young, braving rain and heat, queuing for long hours to visit the Sacred Relics from early morning to late in the night, and public lining the streets during the movement of their procession expressing their deep reverence for the Sacred Relics throughout Vietnam.

In the light of such interest, the Government of Vietnam requested extension for 12 additional days for the exposition to take it to other parts of the

country, which was consented by the Government of India. The fact that the exposition of Sacred Relics from India in Vietnam coincided with the celebration of the United Nations Day of Vesak hosted by Vietnam this year from 6th–8th May, 2025, enabled their outreach to the international audience present in Vietnam for Vesak Day. Relics of Lord Buddha from India had earlier travelled to Thailand and Mongolia where also they received similar reverence from the local population. The Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha thus become a spiritual and human connection with India for the



people of numerous countries.

These Buddhist connections between India and the world translate into tens of thousands of Buddhist pilgrims from around the world visiting holy Buddhist sites in India every year, thousands of foreign students undertaking Buddhist studies, Pali and related history, philosophy, etc., at educational institutions in India as well as exchanges between Buddhist monks, scholars, academic institutions of India and other countries. Scholars and academicians recognise the enduring imprint

of teachings of Lord Buddha to some of the pressing global challenges today such as war and violence, societal unrest or climate change. Our Buddhist connections strengthen India's friendship and cooperation with these countries and deepen the message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. This strong living Buddhist heritage in India is a treasure of India's rich history that we should all appreciate and experience, together with its significant role in our relations with the world.