

## **Buddhist Cultural Heritage: Interpretations and Preservation**

### **National Museum Institute**

One of the major Indic religions that spread across the world, especially in Asia, Buddhism was born in c.5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The inception of Buddhism is centered around the historical figure of the Buddha, who was born as Siddhartha Gautama to a princely household of Kapilavastu, near the present Indo-Nepal border. Early Buddhism was essentially based on the teachings of the Buddha. The central tenet of Buddhism is that all sentient beings are tied to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and during their lifetime they experience sorrow. In order to liberate themselves from this cycle, they need to follow the path of liberation and attain salvation. As the religion developed and evolved, different sects emerged – the Hinayana (The Lesser Vehicle), Mahayana (The Great Vehicle), and a form of Tantric Buddhism known as the Vajrayana tradition. The different schools of Buddhist art that emerged in India – Gandhara, Mathura, Sarnath and later the Pala school of art had a profound impact on the art of South-East Asia. The Buddhist murals of India also influenced the painting traditions of countries in East and South-East Asia.

The National Museum Institute proposes an introductory course on Buddhism titled, '**Buddhist Cultural Heritage: Interpretations and Preservation.**' The course will have **7 sessions** of **90 minutes**. The sessions will introduce the students to Buddhism and Buddhist art from India and South-East Asia.

**Lecture Dates:** 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Lecture Timings:** 11:30 AM -1:00 PM, 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

#### **Session 1:**

**Early Buddhist Art (I) – 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM**

Convener: Prof. (Dr) AnupaPande

The session will trace the development of the Buddha image in the Indian subcontinent, as it evolved from aniconic representation to the iconic representation of the Buddha. It will shed light on the important aspects of Buddhist art in Sanchi, Bharhut, Gandhara, Mathura and Sarnath. The session will also give the interface with South-East Asia.

#### **Session 2:**

**Early Buddhist Art (II) - 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM**

Convener: Prof. (Dr) AnupaPande

The session will discuss in detail the Indian Buddhist painting tradition of Ajanta and Bagh, focusing on the stylistic features and the narratives that accompany these paintings.

#### **Session 3:**

**Philosophy of Buddhism - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM**

Convener: Prof. (Dr) R. Panth

The session will introduce the course takers to Buddhism and discuss the story of Buddha, the Eight-Fold Path, the Three Universal Truths and the Four Noble Truths. It will also briefly introduce the philosophy of Buddhism that informs the Hinayana and Mahayana traditions.

**Session 4:**

**Buddhist Art in Eastern India -24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 2:30 PM**

Convener: Dr Savita Kumari

The session will focus on the art of the Pala-Sena period from the geographical region of Bihar and West Bengal between the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. Select examples of stone and bronze sculptures and palm leaf manuscripts will be discussed.

**Session 5:**

**Buddhist Art in South-East Asia – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM**

Convener: Dr Savita Kumari

The session will introduce the learner to the Buddhist art and architecture of South-East Asia. Citing examples from Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia, the lecture will highlight India's interface with South-East Asia, focusing specially on historic Buddhist ties between India and ASEAN countries.

**Session 6:**

**Issues and challenges in conservation of living monastic heritage in Ladakh – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 2:30 PM**

Convener: Dr Satish Pandey

The Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh have been in constant use by the community and occupy a central position for religious and cultural practices. These repositories of cultural heritage are facing numerous challenges and many of them have undergone irreparable damage in the recent past. The issues and challenges of conservation of cultural heritage in Ladakh do not arise only from the material aspects of objects and sites themselves but also from the societal context in which they are embedded and the functions they serve. The talk addresses some of the major issues and challenges in preservation of monastic heritage in Ladakh and discusses the need for ensuring sustainability in conservation interventions to save the invaluable cultural heritage in the region.

**Session 7:**

**Documentation & Exhibition of Buddhist Cultural Heritage – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 11:30 AM**

Convener: DrManvi Seth

The session will introduce the learner to the basics of documentation and display of Buddhist material heritage, with a special reference to Ladakh. It will also highlight the traditional methods of display in the context of the socio-cultural setting of Ladakh. It will also introduce the learner to the intangible aspects of the culture of Ladakh and the documentation of the same through documentaries and other digital means.