



CONCEPT NOTE

For Online Webinar

“ENGAGED BUDDHISM: A JOINT WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA AND ASEAN” April 28-30, 2021

Organized by:

School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization, Gautam Buddha University

In Association with

Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

There is a growing interest in Buddhism the world over because many informed people have grown rather weary of religious dogmatism and superstition, on one hand, and greed and selfishness arising from materialism, on the other. Buddhism can teach humanity to walk the Middle Path of moderation and have a better understanding on how to lead a richer life of peace and happiness. The study of religious and other aspects of Buddhism, one of the most dominant cultural treasures of Eastern societies, has been contributed by many scholars, Western as well as Eastern. Some of them, especially the Western, are inclined to conclude irrespectively with their personal backgrounds of one sided view that Buddhism is concerned only with secular existence, and that the best things good and benevolent to the rest of mankind. The essential spirit of Buddhism represents “The Middle Way of Life”, dialectically rejecting the evil aspects of the above mentioned extremisms; or rather transcending them. Buddhism stands for the welfare and well-being, physical as well as mental, of all mankind. The need for physical or material welfare is acknowledged, but in the final analysis of human existence it is not made the ultimate end of humanity; the highest, deepest, and absolute of human value lies in the moral, mental, and spiritual.

Those who seek to understand how the Buddha looked at various forms of social stratification such as caste, color, wealth, etc., could benefit much by going through the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhist attitude becomes clear when it is presented in the context of Indian development shows the difference between how the Buddha perceived social stratification and how traditional Indian thought viewed such social phenomena as caste, color, etc. How much could Buddhism contribute to peace and social harmony which would be of great importance to all those living in the present world. Various strategies for social harmony and peace are pursued relentlessly by academics, policy-makers, thinkers, etc. in this context, it could be interesting to read what the Buddha has to say in this vital area. A living example of translating such strategies to action is exemplified in the reign of the great king Asoka in India. No one thus state that the Buddhist strategies in this area are only confined to theory and not related to the practical order of life. In Buddhist countries, the values taught by the Buddha are gradually disappearing not solely due to social change, but more due to the ignorance both of the Buddhist clergy as well as the laity about their importance. This webinar highlight the importance of these values and indicates how such values could even become useful in a present world society. Very often people, particularly scholars, emphasize the other-worldly character of Buddhism and go on to declare that the Buddha had nothing to say on mundane matters. But it has been refuted by a number of scholars and put forth their justifications through their writings which now a days known as Engaged Buddhism.

This webinar will give a bird's eye view of the Engaged Buddhism and its application in present global order with focus on fundamental principles of Buddhism. The proposed webinar is going to deliberate upon various aspects which are as under:

1. An Overview of Buddhism and Buddhist Heritage of India
2. Routes of Dissemination of Buddhism into Southeast Asia
3. Buddhist Heritage in Southeast Asia
4. Engaged Buddhism: Origin and Nature
5. Engaged Buddhism and Global Issues: Social, Economic and Environmental Issues

The webinar aims to focus on deliberating upon the various aspects of engaged Buddhism and its role and relevance in present world scenario with focus on the burning issues like social and religious harmony, peace, economic, etc. The ASEAN has rich Buddhist Heritage viz. Archaeological, textual, or art historical sources produced across the region from the early first millennium C.E. until 18th century. Buddhism in Southeast Asian can only be characterized as diverse and eclectic as its presence was felt as part of the Indian cultural influence that flourished throughout the ASEAN region. During This workshop will highlight those issues from the point of view of Buddhist heritage in South East Asian Region.

The target audience would be:

1. The target audience would be civil servants of ASEAN countries.
2. The overall objective is to promote and emphasize India's Buddhist linkages with these countries.
3. The workshop would be of 3 days.
4. Each day it will be of 2-3 hours of instructions (Online) and 2 hours of additional offline assignment on any appropriate subject based on instructions delivered on each day.

Chief Patron: Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, GBU

Patrons: Prof. N. P. Melkania, Dean Academics & Prof. S. K. Singh, Dean, SOBSC

Webinar Coordinator: Dr. Arvind Kumar Singh

Expected names from ITEC, MEA:

1. Sri Arindam Bhattacharya, Director, DPA4, MEA
2. Sri Manoj B. Verma

Expectation from partner agency:

1. Arrangement of Virtual Platform
2. List of Dignitaries for inaugural session
3. List of participants
4. Honorarium for speakers, if any