



Epic Dimensions of Buddhism as a Discourse for Cultural Transaction beyond Boundaries

PR. OLIVIER ARIFON,

NICE CÔTE D'AZUR UNIVERSITY, FRANCE

NALANDA UNIVERSITY, APRIL 2024

OLIVIER.ARIFON@PM.ME

[HTTPS://OLIVIER-ARIFON-CONSULTING.COM](https://olivier-arifon-consulting.com)

The Buddha: the enlightened one, in Sanskrit

- ▶ Siddhartha Gautama, Shakyamuni, The Buddha
- ▶ = a historical figure
- ▶ In northern India and present-day Nepal
- ▶ Circa 2500 B.C.



Principles: reduction or elimination of Suffering

- ▶ From the endless movement of the passions to the extinction of the passions, the 4 truths:
- ▶ Conditioned Existence
- ▶ Suffering exists because there are causes that lead to its appearance.
- ▶ The third noble truth concerns the cessation or "extinction" of suffering.
- ▶ The fourth noble truth: the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Source: Wikipédia

Divisions and Spread of Buddhism



Three branches of Buddhism

Hinayana - Theravada:
South East Asia

Mahayana: China,
Japan, Vietnam, Korea

Vajrayana: Tibet,
Mongolia



Stories for meaning

Insights into our societies

1. Sense of loss of meaning: information makes the world unreadable,
2. Individualism versus individualization: the erosion of traditional sociability,
3. Feeling of powerlessness: globalization is causing (Western) and Eastern (?) societies to lose their grip.

Storytelling and Epic

1. From communication society to a society of influence,
2. Influence with its possibilities of polarization changes the balance of the terms of communication:
3. Actors can organize their remarks in order to promote doubt (scientific angle) or polarization (political angle).

In search of meaning

- ▶ After a decline from the grand narratives (religion, liberalism, socialism, totalitarianism), fragmentation leaves individuals to fend for themselves, according to the fragmented currents existing in the 21st century:
- ▶ limitlessness,
- ▶ illiberalism/ignorance,
- ▶ messianism,
- ▶ Declinism,
- ▶ and even jihadism.



Buddhism for cultural transaction

- 1 - Narrative – Epic
- 2 - Cultural relations
- 3 - Political dimensions

Example of Narrative/resource/s of power Yoga Day, 21st June

- ▶ The idea of International Yoga Day was first in 2014,
- ▶ The date of June 21 was chosen as it is the Summer Solstice, the day where there is the most sun out of every other day of the year.



"Yoga, embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action, restraint and fulfillment, harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being."

--Narendra Modi

June 21st has been declared as the "International Yoga Day" by the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 2014. The declaration came after the call for adoption of this day by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address to UN General Assembly on September 27, 2014.

The Complete Guide to Rishikesh, India: the Birthplace of Yoga

By [SHARELL COOK](#) | Updated on 07/06/22



Travel Wild/Getty Images

1 - Narrative – Epic for tourism

[HOME](#)[DESTINATIONS ▾](#)[PACKAGES ▾](#)[MONASTERIES ▾](#)[FESTIVALS ▾](#)[CONTACT US](#)

Top Packages

Buddhism, one of the three major religions in India, was born during the lifetime of Gautama Buddha. Buddhist pilgrims followed and still follow a route to visit with the life and teachings of Buddha in northern India. We design our all-inclusive Buddhist India Tour Packages to allow tourists to explore vital destinations of a lifetime.

Contact Information



Office Address

The Land of Buddha
4th Floor Jyoti Shikhar Building, Janakpuri District
Center,
New Delhi - 110058 (India)



Buddhist circuit tours

🕒 Duration: 08 Nights / 09 Days

📍 Location: Gaya-Bodh Gaya- DUNGESHWARI CAVES-RAJGIR-NALANDA- PATNA – VAISHALI-KESARIYA- GORAKHPUR-VARANASI.



Buddhist tour in india

🕒 Duration: 15 Nights / 16 Days

📍 Location: Delhi - Varanasi – Agra - Bodhgaya - Rajgir - Kathmandu - Patna – Nalanda - Vaishali - Kushinagar- Lumbini -...



Buddhist tour package

🕒 7 Nights / 8 Days

📍 Location: Lumbini - Kushinagar - Vaishali - Patna - Rajgir - Nalanda - Bodhgaya



Buddhist pilgrimage tours

🕒 Duration: 10 Nights / 11 Days

📍 Location: Delhi - Lucknow - Sravasti - Lumbini - Kushinagar - Patna - Rajgir - Bodhgaya - Varanasi - Delhi



THE EIGHT GREAT BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE SITES



UNESCO's Intangible heritage list (ICH)

15

▶ **Article 2 – Definitions**

- ▶ 1. The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (...)

- ▶ 2. The “intangible cultural heritage”:
 - (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
 - (b) performing arts;
 - (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
 - (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
 - (e) traditional craftsmanship.

- ▶ Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2> - [2'2 ICH Video](#)

Lipizzan horse breeding traditions

Austria , Bosnia and Herzegovina , Croatia , Hungary , Italy , Romania , Slovakia and

Slovenia



Inscribed in 2022 ([17.COM](https://www.unesco.org/en/whl)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Lipizzan horse breeding traditions were initially used to breed horses for the Habsburg imperial court in Vienna, but today the Lipizzan horse plays a special role in the everyday cultural and social life of communities in rural areas. They are included in events, celebrations and festivities such as horse blessings, carnival processions and parades. The horses also play a key role in therapeutic riding and sustainable tourism. The people who work at the state stud farms represent the main bearers of the element, along with therapists, craftspeople, groups of equestrian sports, military traditionalists, local communities and farm visitors. The values, knowledge, skills and practices are transmitted through hands-on experience, seminars and training sessions, as well as during festive and sporting events. The practice is also part of the curricula of certain local primary schools and of all agricultural and vocational schools and agricultural and veterinary universities. Lipizzan horse breeding has united communities for over 450 years, generating a strong sense of shared identity, including through its specialized vocabulary and the close emotional connection between breeders and horses.



The foals are darker until they are 3 years old.

© Slovene Ethnographic Museum and Ethnocinema Production, 2020

2 Buddhism for cultural Relations

ICH Unesco's list Can be promoted by MFA

Baul songs

Bangladesh



Inscribed in 2008 ([3.COM](#)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (originally proclaimed in 2005)

The Bauls are mystic minstrels living in rural Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. The Baul movement, at its peak in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has now regained popularity among the rural population of Bangladesh. Their music and way of life have influenced a large segment of Bengali culture, and particularly the compositions of Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Bauls live either near a village or travel from place to place and earn their living from singing to the accompaniment of the ektara, the lute dotara, a simple one-stringed instrument, and a drum called dubki. Bauls belong to an unorthodox devotional tradition, influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Bengali, Vasinavism and Sufi Islam, yet distinctly different from them. Bauls neither identify with any organized religion nor with the caste system, special deities, temples or sacred places. Their emphasis lies on the importance of a person's physical body as the place where God resides. Bauls are admired for this freedom from convention as well as their music and poetry. Baul poetry, music, song and dance are devoted to finding humankind's relationship to God, and to achieving spiritual liberation. Their devotional songs can be traced back to the fifteenth century when they first appeared in Bengali literature.



2 Buddhism for cultural relations ICH Unesco's list

Can be promoted by the MFA.

Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India

India

Inscribed in 2012 ([7.COM](#)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

In the monasteries and villages of the Ladakh region, Buddhist lamas (priests) chant sacred texts representing the spirit, philosophy and teachings of the Buddha. Two forms of Buddhism are practised in Ladakh – Mahayana and Vajrayana – and there are four major sects, namely Nyingma, Kagyud, Shakya and Geluk. Each sect has several forms of chanting, practised during life-cycle rituals and on important days in the Buddhist and agrarian calendars. Chanting is undertaken for the spiritual and moral well-being of the people, for purification and peace of mind, to appease the wrath of evil spirits or to invoke the blessing of various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and rinpoches. The chanting is performed in groups, either sitting indoors or accompanied by dance in monastery courtyards or private houses. The monks wear special costumes and make



Chod is a practice that separates one's consciousness from physical body.

© 2009 by Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir

Buddhism and Politics in Asia

Sri Lanka

Thailand

Myanmar

China

Buddhism and Politics

- ▶ Sri Lanka: Official Religion
- ▶ Thailand: State Religion
- ▶ Myanmar: a key point of society
- ▶ China: One of the three religions, under the control of the CCP



World Alliance of Buddhists (WAB)

International Buddhist Organizations with Worldwide Membership

[Home](#) [About us](#) [Organization & Structure](#) [Regional Center](#) [Activities & News](#)

Upcoming Events

[Home](#) ▶ [Upcoming Events](#)




The 4th Global Buddhist Congregation 2023

Date: 2023-10-12 - 2023-10-17 B.E. 2566
Venue: Kalimpong, West Bengal, India
Country: INDIA
Theme: Amazing Himalayan Buddhist Tradition & Social Spiritual Transformation 2023

India

- ▶ <https://mbsiindia.org/about-us-2/>
- ▶ World Buddhist Council: Taiwan
- ▶ <https://www.wbsc886.org/en>



 **MAHA BODHI SOCIETY OF INDIA** 
An International Buddhist Organisation founded by Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala in 1891

[HOME](#) | [ORGANISATION](#) | [PARTICIPATE](#) | [ACTIVITIES](#) | [NEWS & MEDIA](#) | [MBSI CENTERS](#) | [PUBLICATIONS](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

About Us

Enter Keyword

You are here: [Home](#) >> [About Us](#)

Maha Bodhi Society of India

The Maha Bodhi Society of India was founded in the year 1891 by a 26 year old Sri Lankan youth named Don David Hewavitarne who later became the champion for the cause of Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka, and became the Anagarika Dharmapala or the homeless one. His forming of the Maha Bodhi Society is almost legendary, young Dharmapala after he came to India was shocked to see the deplorable condition of the Maha Bodhi maha Vihara and the Bodhi tree at Buddhagaya. He at once went back to Sri Lanka to form the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1891 to free the Maha Bodhi Temple from the Mahant and restore the temple back to its original stature. He also wanted to revive Buddhism in India where it lay uncared for out of sheer (ignorance by the people then). It is mainly due to Dharmapala that Buddhism in its present state is still functioning as a major religion in the world.

« La part des dieux »- The Gods' share - 2

- ▶ The religious referent is first subjected to the logic of the State then becomes "over-confessional", i.e. a narrative or an analysis of new global issues.
- ▶ Allows a reference to a primordial identity and forms a register of individual and positive adherence.

"Religion seems to meet the conditions for success in a paradoxical modernity that values both individualism and a 'return to tradition.'

= Narrative used by governments and religious actors

« La part des dieux », Delphine Allès, 2021

The Gods' share

- ▶ In Europe, Nation states against the Church
- ▶ Post independence states religion as a means to access to sovereignty (Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, India...)
- ▶ Religious actors take part in the political process/unlike secular Europe
- ▶ Religious narrative, framework to explain complexity and conflicts
- ▶ Religious discourses included into the narrative seems able to substitute to the one on pacified international order
- ▶ But diversity of actors can't hide the lack of coherence of the solution.