DESTINATION ENLIGHTENMENT:
BUDDHISM AND THE GLOBAL BAZAAR IN BODH GAYA, BIHAR

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1999
M.A., Carleton University, 2003

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Anthropology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

December 2009

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a historical ethnography that examines the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site. On June 26, 2002, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya was formally inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a place of cultural heritage and a monument of "outstanding universal value" this inclusion has reinforced the ancient significance of Bodh Gaya as *the* place of Buddha's enlightenment. In this dissertation, I take this recent event as a framing device for my historical and ethnographic analysis that details the varying ways in which Bodh Gaya is constructed out of a particular set of social relations. How do different groups attach meaning to Bodh Gaya's space and negotiate the multiple claims and memories embedded in place? How is Bodh Gaya socially constructed as a global site of memory and how do contests over its spatiality implicate divergent histories, narratives and events? In order to delineate the various historical and spatial meanings that place holds for different groups I examine a set of interrelated transnational processes that are the focus of this dissertation: 1) the emergence of Buddhist monasteries, temples and/or guest houses tied to international pilgrimage; 2) the role of tourism and pilgrimage as a source of economic livelihood for local residents; and 3) the role of state tourism development and urban planning. Based on my analysis of these social constituencies I argue that World Heritage sites, like the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, are important global spaces of convergence where history, memory, narratives and groups are entangled through UNESCO's universal claims. It is for these reasons that it is important to look beyond the universal abstraction and examine the ways in which spaces of global memory are laden with social and cultural meaning that is activated, reproduced and contested through a range of social practices. In this way, World Heritage is not only about the production of authoritative pasts but it is also about creating new meanings and forging new global public spheres across cultural, national and religious difference.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIBS	- All Indian Bhikkhu Sangha
ASI	- Archaeological Survey of India
BGTA	- Bodh Gaya Temple Act (1949)
BGTAB	- Bodh Gaya Temple Advisory Board
BJP	- Bharatiya Janata Party
BTMC	- Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee
CDP	- City Development Plan
CYSV	- Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini
DMP	- Draft Master Plan
FPMT	- Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition
GOI	- Government of India
GRDA	- Gaya Regional Development Authority
HUDCO	- Housing Urban Development Corporation
IBC	- International Buddhist Council
ICCROM	- International Study for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICH	- Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICOMOS	- International Council of Monuments and Sites
IMC	- International Meditation Centre
INC	- Indian National Congress
INTACH	- Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage
IOC	- Indian Oil Corporation
JBIC	- Japanese Bank for International Cooperation
JEXIM	- Export-Import Bank of Japan
JMS	- Japanese Market Survey
JNNRUM	- Jawaharlal Nehru National Renewal Urban Mission
MAC	- Mahabodhi Action Committee
MSI	- Mahabodhi Society of India
MSJ	- Mahabodhi Society Journal
NAC	- Notified Area Committee
NPS	- National Park Services
OBC	- Other Backward Castes
OECF	- Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund
RJD	- Rashtriya Janata Dal
RMP	- Revised Master Plan
SAIL	- Steel Authority of India
SBJ	- Sambodhi Journal
SC & ST	- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes
SPA	- School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi
TPA	- Town Planning Authority
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations
WCU	- World Conservation Union
WHC	- World Heritage Convention

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for my doctoral dissertation was made possible by the generous support of the University of British Columbia and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. I offer my enduring gratitude to all the faculty and staff in the Department of Anthropology at UBC during this time. In particular, I am grateful to my supervisor John Barker who has been my mentor ever since I arrived at the University of British Columbia in 2003. Thank you so much for all your encouragement and guidance through this entire research endeavour. I am also greatly indebted to both Gaston Gordillo and especially Anand Yang for their ongoing support and direction with my research. Other colleagues who have been involved in this dissertation at various stages include: Millie Creighton, Alexia Bloch, Vinay Kamat, Anand Pandian, Simon Coleman, Ian Harris, Katherine Hacker, Robert Pryor, Tara Doyle, Alan Trevithick, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Herb Stovel, Abhishek Singh, Sraman Mukherjee, Jessica Falcone, Jason Rodriguez, Kate Hennessy, Kisha Supernaut and Chris Condin.

In India and Bodh Gaya, I would like to thank Prachi from the Shastri Institute in New Delhi, Bulu Imam and family in Hazaribagh, Rohan D'Souza at JNU, INTACH, KP Jayaswal Research Institute, Mahabodhi Society of India, AN Sinha Institute for Social Science, P.C. Roy, Naresh Bannerjee, Dr. Ansari, Ram Swarup Singh, Bano Haruli, Shatum Seth, Ven. Priyapal, Kiran Lama, Seewalee Thero, Ven. Dhammika, Sister Mary, Kailash, Christopher Titmuss, Poonam Thakur, Rick Fendrick and Sachindra Narayan. I am also grateful to all my generous friends, field assistants and informants at Bodh Gaya who have made this research possible. In particular I want to thank Bhalwant Kumar Sinha and his family for their unconditional love and support over the duration of my fieldwork.

There are also many family and friends in Vancouver who have offered their encouragement and assistance throughout this endeavour. Thanks to: Arun Fryer, Don Grayston, Evo, Rachel Kreuger, Lisa and Clint Baker, Barb and Dennis McDonald, my wife Erika and last but not least, my parents Angela and Lorne Geary who have supported me through all my years of education.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Lorne and Angela

1. INTRODUCTION:

FROM HERMITAGE TO WORLD HERITAGE: BUDDHISM AND THE GLOBAL BAZAAR

This dissertation is a historical ethnography that examines the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a UNESCO World Heritage site. Bodh Gaya is a small town of international significance located in the southern Gaya district of Bihar in north-east India. The global relevance of this place derives from its association with the founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, who attained enlightenment here over 2550 years ago.[1] According to various Buddhist legends, after abandoning extreme austerities and penance for six years, Siddhartha Gautama decided to settle in a forest grove next to a flowing river with sandy fords. Impressed by the sylvan environment and convenience for getting alms from a nearby village, the future Buddha decided this was a suitable place for striving and congenial to his meditation practice (Dhammika 1996). Under the canopy of a *Pipala* tree - now known as the Bodhi tree - Gautama sat in sublime contemplation on the nature of suffering and the root of its causes among all sentient beings. Then, on the full moon of *vesak*, after three days and three nights of concentration, his mind was purified and Gautama was enlightened.

Historically, the term Bodh Gaya came into use around the eighteenth century and was primarily adopted to distinguish the sacred site from the larger city of Gaya, a prominent center of Hindu pilgrimage some 7km away (Asher 2008).[2] Prior to this, the place of Buddha's enlightenment had various designations including *Uruvela, Bodhimanda*, *Sambodhi*, *Vajrasana* and *Mahabodhi*. Although the forest hermitage where Buddha obtained enlightenment was not a significant site of pilgrimage during the Buddha's life, over the centuries disciples of the Buddha began to visit the place and gradually transformed the site into a living center of Buddhist worship and sacred veneration. Linked to the establishment of Buddhist pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya is the central monument, or *Vihara*,

[1] As Tara Doyle (1997: 5) has written in an earlier dissertation, the actual date associated with the Buddha's life presents a number of obstacles due to the fact there are different chronologies from various Buddhists texts. Most of the social actors responsible for the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment draw upon the "long chronology" taken from Sri Lankan sources which locate the Buddha's birth between 624 BCE and his death in 544 BCE.

[2] The name Bodh Gaya has also be spelled differently at various times such as Boodha Gaya, Buddh Gya, Bauddha Gyah, Bodhi Gaya, Buddha Gaya and BodhGaya (Dhammika 1996: 1). For the purpose of standardization I use Bodh Gaya throughout this dissertation.

commonly referred to as the Mahabodhi Temple or "Great Awakening" temple today. Although there is a wide difference of opinion among modern scholars about the origins and date of the Mahabodhi Temple, early archaeological scholarship have traced the first commemorative shrine around the tree (the *bodhi-ghara*) along with a protective stone railing and diamond throne (referred to as the *Vajrasana*), to the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Asher 2008). As part of Ashoka's campaign to promote the Buddha-*Dharma* (teachings) in its homeland, the emperor is often credited with helping legitimize the practice of pilgrimage and royal patronage to these sacred sites of Buddhist memory.



Figure 1.1 Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Over the course of many centuries, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya was embellished and other key sites linked to the spiritual itinerary of its founder also became thriving religious centers of pan-Asian pilgrimage attracting Buddhist royalty, monastics, and lay devotees throughout the Indian subcontinent and beyond (Doyle 1997). The history of Buddhist influence at Bodh Gaya is documented by numerous inscriptions, archaeological findings and travel accounts by pilgrims themselves. Foremost among these are the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims *Faxian* in the fifth century and *Xuanzang* in the seventh century. The latter describes the presence of a Ceylonese monastery named the Mahabodhi Sangharama that was built by King Meghavana and housed over a thousand monks to the north gate of the Mahabodhi Temple. During this time, Bodh Gaya was part of the Kingdom of Magadha, and the heart of a powerful Buddhist civilization that endured for many centuries. It was not until the fall of the Pala Dynasty and the growing influence of Muslim rule around the twelfth century that Buddhism became largely extinguished from its land of origins and many of these monuments and pilgrimage centers were destroyed or fell into ruin.[3]

The recent historical and social transformation of Bodh Gaya from a relatively abandoned site

[3] For more critical examination of the existing theories and diverse factors that contributed to the decline of Buddhism at Bodh Gaya and India see Frederick Asher 2008: 14-15.

(at least with respect to Buddhist state patronage and pilgrimage activities) into a global destination that attracts millions of Buddhist pilgrims and tourists each year begs the following questions: What happens when a rural town populated by Hindu and Muslim residents becomes deeply enmeshed within the sacred geography of Buddhists around the world? How do transnational processes and conflicting agendas involving pilgrimage, tourism and heritage come to shape the development of Bodh Gaya as an international destination? How do religious, economic and social aspirations intermingle and connect people across national boundaries? Finally, how does Bodh Gaya as a place of universal value compare to other sites within the imagined community of World Heritage?

On June 26, 2002, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a place of cultural heritage and a monument of "outstanding universal importance," this inclusion has reinforced *the* ancient significance of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment (WHC 2002). In this dissertation, I take this recent event as a framing device for my historical and ethnographic analysis that details the varying ways in which Bodh Gaya is constructed out of a particular set of social relations. I argue that World Heritage sites like the Mahabodhi Temple Complex are important global spaces of convergence where history, memory, narratives and groups are entangled through UNESCO's universal claims. In order to delineate the various historical and spatial tensions that underlie the inscription of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site I examine a set of interrelated transnational processes that are the focus of this dissertation: 1) the emergence of Buddhist monasteries, temples and/or guest houses tied to international pilgrimage; 2) the role of tourism and pilgrimage as a source of economic livelihood for local residents; and 3) the role of state tourism development and urban planning. Before describing the layout of chapters that form the basis of this historical ethnography, it is important that I discuss some of the broader theoretical issues relevant to this dissertation. In particular, I will assess the comparative and theoretical value of World Heritage as an object of social analysis in relation to anthropological perspectives that include: space and place, memory and global connection.

1.1 Locating World Heritage and Global Spaces of Universal Value

The 1972 World Heritage Convention is today one of the leading texts "in terms of influencing management practices and perceptions of heritage across the globe" (Smith 2006: 94).[4] At a

[4] It is also important to highlight that the World Heritage Convention derives from dialogue and inspiration from earlier authoritative and largely Eurocentric based texts and charters. Prior to the World Heritage Convention of 1972 was the

rudimentary level, a World Heritage site can be defined as *a cultural or natural site of outstanding universal value*. These global spaces of universal value are selected by members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and are protected and conserved by the state parties that have signed the United Nations Convention *Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage* that was established in November 1972.[5] Linked to UNESCO's constitutional mandate "to build peace in the minds of men," the World Heritage Convention emerged out of a shared international campaign to safeguard a number of ancient Egyptian sites that were threatened by the construction of the Aswan High Dam in 1954. This controversial decision to flood the southern Nile valley by the Egyptian government had the potential to destroy a number of monumental sites such as the famous rock temples at Abu Simbel. In response to the building of the Aswan Dam, UNESCO launched a worldwide campaign to protect the ancient sites and eventually led to the reconstruction of both Abu Simbel and the Philae temples on higher grounds. Although the cost of the project reached upwards of US$80 million, with contributions from over 50 countries, the rescue efforts were seen as an international success which helped to initiate a draft convention by UNESCO and the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to protect what was deemed "the common cultural heritage of humanity."

As part of the nominating process for World Heritage inscription, state parties must first take an inventory of its significant cultural and natural properties. From this Tentative List, countries proceed to select a proposed site that can be placed into a Nomination File and presented and evaluated each year before the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Conservation Union (WCU). These international agencies comprised of heritage professionals and experts evaluate the nominated properties based on a set of selection criteria outlined by UNESCO. The criteria detailed in the '*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*' is provided below and is one of the main working tools and mechanisms for determining World Heritage status. While the criteria is regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the changing conceptual views

Venice Charter, otherwise known as the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*. This treaty comprising of largely European members was drafted in 1964 and is a foundational text for the establishment of an international protocol for the conservation and preservation movements that developed from the 1960s onwards (Smith 2006).

[5] UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – is a specialized body of the United Nations that was established on November 16 1945. The purpose of the agency according the constitution is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the UN Charter. The organization is based in Paris and presently UNESCO has 193 Member States and six Associate Members. The World Heritage programme is one facet of the larger international body.

of World Heritage, nominated sites must be of “outstanding universal value” and meet at least one of these ten criteria,

1. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
2. to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
3. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
4. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
5. to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
6. to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
7. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
8. to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
9. to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
10. to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation. (whc.unesco.org 2009)

Thus, based on the above criteria, the World Heritage Committee determines whether or not the nominated properties by the state party are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Since the inaugural meeting in 1972, there have been 186 state parties that have ratified the Convention and support the expanding list of properties maintained by the international World Heritage Programme. Central to UNESCO's guiding principles is a shared belief that many cultural and natural sites provide immeasurable benefits to humanity and should be protected and maintained at all costs. In 2009, there are presently 890 properties forming the World Heritage List, which include: 689 cultural, 176 natural, and 25 mixed properties, in 148 countries. To help illuminate some of the underlying transnational processes and anthropological themes linked to World Heritage signification at Bodh Gaya, in this dissertation I draw upon three sets of theoretical concepts: space and place, memory, global connection.

1.1.1 Bodh Gaya as a Multilocal Place

In recent years there has been a growing critique in anthropology that has challenged the assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture that was part of earlier ethnographic writing (Gupta & Ferguson 1992; 1997). A number of social theorists (Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Malkki 1997) have pointed to the disjuncture between the idea of culture as a group of people held together by a system of shared meanings within a fixed territorial space and the complex global and cultural mobilities characteristic of the world today. Rather than take the "premise of discontinuity" and the entity of culture as the basis for cross-cultural comparison, Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 6-8) suggest we need to rethink the production of cultural differences through spatial connections. In recognizing the polyphony of voices that constitute ethnographic fieldwork and in seeking to move beyond the ways in which anthropologists have incarcerated the native within specific spatial and cultural locales (Appadurai 1988), I approach Bodh Gaya through the theoretical lens of space and place (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003).

How are places made meaningful and who has the power to make places of spaces? According to Margaret Rodman (1992), she argues that anthropologists need to take a more critical approach to the use of place apart from their creation as locales for ethnographic description. Places are not "inert containers" but are always socially constructed in ways that are "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple" (Rodman 1992: 641). As "contact zones" (Clifford 1997) and unique points of intersection where social meaning is produced, many different stories can be told about places. Attending to the different voices, stories and institutional practices that are part of place-making is also a "critical element in the construction of agency that subjectivity always entails" (Sivaramkrishnan & Agrawal 2003: 7).[6] Therefore, in order to "empower" place in anthropological theory, Rodman (1992: 644) proposes the concept of "multilocality," suggesting we attend to the multiplicity of inhabitants voices and meanings found in places. This also requires taking seriously the relationships of power that underlie the social construction of place and how "places come into being through praxis, not just through narratives" (Rodman 642). In support of Rodman's analysis, cultural geographer Doreen Massey (1994: 155-156) identifies four main characteristics of place that are relevant to my analysis of Bodh Gaya as a World Heritage site: 1) Places are not static, they are

[6] Drawing on Sivaramkrishnan & Agrawal (2003) in this dissertation, I focus on the agency of historically grounded actors, institutional histories and communities of interest at Bodh Gaya. By focusing on these relational stories of place that are grounded in discussions of lived experience it brings to the foreground the ways in which Bodh Gaya, as a World Heritage site, is constructed through overlapping and multiple points of production.

processual and conceptualized in terms of social interaction. 2) Places do not have boundaries in the sense of divisions which frame simple enclosures. 3) Places do not have single unique identities, they are full of internal conflicts. 4) And none of these aspects above deny the uniqueness of place – the specificities of place can be continually reproduced.

In foregrounding the multiple practices associated with place making at Bodh Gaya, I make a conscious effort to move beyond some of the theoretical limitations within the field of pilgrimage and tourism studies. Rather than seeking to define whether or not Bodh Gaya is a pilgrimage or tourist site for example, I prefer to examine the tensions between these multifaceted social forms as an integral part of place construction itself. The limitations of these theoretical orientations is especially evident within the pilgrimage literature, where Coleman (2002) has argued there have been two dominant constraining metaphors in anthropological studies of pilgrimage: 1) The Turnerian (1978) depiction of *anti-structure* and *communitas*, and 2) Eade and Sallnows' (1991) emphasis on the sacred as a *contested* process at pilgrimage sites.[7] Although I am not denying the importance of both communitas and especially contestation in shaping a pilgrimage centre like Bodh Gaya, these models have created intellectual straight jackets that have prevented other forms of analysis. The spatial environment at Bodh Gaya holds a diverse set of meanings and continues to be shaped by a number of complex and overlapping forces that do not reflect clear-cut dichotomies and rigid separations between communitas/ contestation; pilgrimage/tourism; structure/process; sacred/profane; faith/markets; religious virtue/state power. In an effort to expand the field of pilgrimage and tourism studies, I investigate the specific cultural, social, and economic dimensions of pilgrimage and tourism at Bodh Gaya as it interfaces with constructions of place.

In the forthcoming chapters I draw upon these anthropological ideas in order to examine the contingency of processes and practices that underlie the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site. How is Bodh Gaya shaped by various groups, institutions and social actors who have competing visions of what the place should be? What are the consequences of World Heritage

[7] According to Turner and Turner (1978), the study of pilgrimage leads towards an understanding of how universal oppositions shape our social worlds, which in turn, also lead us towards the human search for universal truths. Central to their analysis is the concept of communitas that can be employed to analyze Christian cults across time and space and their associated forms of structural change. Pilgrimage practices are described as sharing similarities with *rites of passage* - as the central framework of ritual and symbolic analysis – characterized by antistructure, liminality and always leading towards communitas (the achievement of communitas is seen as the pilgrim's fundamental motivation). Thus, pilgrimage is defined as a liminal activity in that it is innovative with a transformative dimension of the social. For Eade Sallnow (1991), the authors propose a new agenda suggesting that pilgrimage be analyzed in terms of contestation. Pilgrimage "is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official and non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and communitas, *and* for counter-movements towards separateness and division" (2-3).

significance in relation to the different communities of interest? Throughout this dissertation I will argue that it is important to pay careful attention to both the "multilocality" and "multivocality" that underlies World Heritage designation and to delineate the historical and spatial meanings that place holds for different people. Bodh Gaya is multilocal in at least three senses which are detailed in chapters three to five: as the "navel of the earth" and a place of pilgrimage for Buddhist groups; as a lived space and source of economic livelihood for local inhabitants; and as a state and governmental object for the implementation of urban and tourism development programs. As I explore in this dissertation, each of these forces mediate the constitution of this particular place at various scales and are central to the spatial politics that derive from World Heritage designation. It is through a historical and ethnographic analysis of these multilocal forces that one can begin to address some of the power differentials and inequalities that are produced within a transnational meeting ground like Bodh Gaya.

1.1.2 Bodh Gaya as a Site of Memory

Linked to the critical reassessment of space and place in anthropology is also a renewed interest in theorizing the social role of memory and the ways in which heritage places become the locus of "imaginaries" and central to the production of distinctive cultural pasts (Nora 1989, 1996; Connerton 1991, Urry 1996; Berliner 2005). In drawing attention to the social and cultural significance of memory, according to Berliner (2005: 200-201), the "label "memory" aims to grasp the past we carry, how we are shaped by it and how this past is transmitted. . . [memory is] a synonym for cultural storage of the past: it is the reproduction of the past in the present, this accumulated past which acts on us and makes us act." As an active cultural process of meaning making that involves both remembering and forgetting, Pierre Nora's (1989; 1996) analysis of "sites of memory" or *lieux de mémoire* are of particular relevance in this context. According to Nora (1996: xvii), a site of memory "is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community." As foci for the production of cultural and global spaces of memory, this can include temples, ancient monuments, memorials and World Heritage sites. They are symbolic places, according to Nora (1989: 7), "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself." Central to Pierre Nora's (1989) formulation of sites of memory is a sharp distinction between history and memory. For Nora (1989), sites of memory are a product of modern times and their contemporary importance reflect the need to recall the past to support the

present work of forgetting. Implicit in Nora's analysis is a sense that the emergence of sites of memory mirrors the deterioration of the past as living memory (or cultural continuity), a distinction that parallels the differences between orality and literacy.

The work of Pierre Nora raises a number of questions relevant to the present analysis of World Heritage designation. How do past memories become invested in the present and what are the consequences of using "distant events as horizons that can inform present action" (Rodman 1992: 644)? How is the memory associated with places made, imagined, contested and enforced? How are particular pasts renewed and activated through international conventions and transnational agendas? The diffusion and intensification of heritage discourse in the twentieth century, according to Smith (2006: 4), reflects the dominance of Western and Eurocentric approaches to the past which naturalized "a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage." Central to the dissemination of authoritative definitions of heritage is a persuasive philosophical assumption that there exists an inherent aesthetic and scientific value to the physicality of heritage properties *in situ*. In other words, according to Smith (2006: 91), monuments are treated as "a 'witness' to history and tradition," which serves to "anthropomorphize material culture and creates a sense that memory is somehow locked within or embedded in the fabric of a monument or site." This "authoritative heritage discourse" places emphasis on the idea of material authenticity, freezing the past and making sites more susceptible to all sorts of practices by professionals and experts that include mapping, managing, preserving under national-legislation, international agreements, conventions and charters (Smith 2006).[8]

As the forthcoming chapters will make clear, heritage and global sites of memory like Bodh Gaya are also inherently contested. Not only does heritage reflect the "preservationist desire" by professionals and experts in the heritage industry, but it is also central to the production and reproduction of social memory in the present. Who decides what constitutes the "official" history of a place and how it is to be regulated and managed? Who decides what pasts and memories should be "preserved" and what is "forgotten"? Rather than viewing history as contained within the landscape or built form itself, the idea of memory switches attention to the ways identity, place and history are actively created and recreated in multiple ways on an ongoing basis (Winter 2007, Smith 2006). In other words, heritage spaces, like Bodh Gaya are not "inherently valuable" due to their physicality but rather reflect the cultural processes and activities that are undertaken to attribute meaning to places of

[8] According to Smith (2006: 93) the intertextuality and chain of these texts are also important in that they collectively reinforce the authorizing discourse and existential assumptions about the nature and value of heritage. "The conventions and charters enacted by UNESCO and ICOMOS may be understood as authorizing institutions of heritage, as they define what heritage is, how and why it is significant and how it should be managed and used" (Smith 87).

remembrance.

In examining the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya as a global site of memory, I am suggesting a critical space for understanding the multiple engagements with World Heritage that incorporate local, national and transnational frames of meaning. Like other contested sites of memory in contemporary India and around the world, there are a number of overlapping histories and competing forms of knowledge that intermingle with the "public remembrances of place" (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 300). In delineating these various appropriations of the site, I link memory with the idea of heritage to "reinforce the idea that heritage is not a passive subject of management and conservation or tourist visitation – but rather an active process engaged with the construction and negotiation of meaning through remembering" (Smith 2006: 66). Not only is heritage applicable to a wide range of social groups but heritage also opens up a new terrain for analyzing the negotiation of values and meanings that intersect with the material past. In seeking to analyze these local, national and transnational webs of significance at Bodh Gaya, I draw upon the concept of global connection.

1.1.3 Bodh Gaya as a Site of Global Connection

Like many pilgrimage and tourist destinations that are undergoing rapid social change, the transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site can be interpreted as a by-product of globalization resulting from the transnational movement of people, capital, ideas and images that link this urban-rural town with the spiritual event of the Buddha's enlightenment (Appadurai 1996; Brennan 2005).[9] However, given the long historical breadth and scope of inter-Asian influence at Bodh Gaya over the centuries, it is tempting to discern that Bodh Gaya has always been a place of global connection and transnational influence. As the "navel of the earth" and the geographic centre of the Buddhist world, the place of enlightenment has long existed in the spiritual itineraries and religious imagination of Buddhist's prior to the history of nation-states. For reasons I explore in this dissertation, since the late nineteenth century and especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, Bodh Gaya has become a place of intensified global connection that revolves around the memory of Buddha's enlightenment. Within the last few decades there has been a surge of extra-national Buddhist groups

[9] Initially the term *transnational* was defined as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – across spatial borders linking together their societies of origin and settlement (Basch, L., N. G. Schiller, et al. 1994). Although the literature on transnationalism was primarily used in the context of migration, more recently, it has been broadened to include various themes and issues related to globalization and the complex cultural mobilities that characterize the world today.

acquiring land, new networks of international aid and assistance, improved transportation and both tourism and urban development initiatives, all of which have accelerated the profile of Bodh Gaya and India's Buddhist circuit on the global map. Today, Bodh Gaya, like other prominent geographic centres of tourism and pilgrimage, is a social and cultural meeting ground between the local and the global (Brennan 2005).

One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that spatial conflict at Bodh Gaya is generated by both the rapid economic development under globalization and the linked conservation demands placed upon the built environment to safeguard a particular vision of the past. At the heart of these spatial conflicts are a wide of range of experiences, both positive and negative, that are associated with the rapid development of Bodh Gaya into a destination and global site of memory. Instead of seeking to resolve debates over whether or not tourism development or World Heritage is exploitative or beneficial to the host societies, for example, in this dissertation, I am interested in unraveling some of the spatial tensions produced between the local and global and map the complex politics of relationships that underlie a site of universal value. Rather than reaffirm the popular distinction between global integrative forces and local reactions, Tsing (2005) proposes the need for a more nuanced ethnographic appreciation of global connection and how it comes to life in "friction."

According to Tsing (2005: ix-x), the term "global" "is not a claim to explain everything in the world at once."[10] Instead, the author approaches the global as a way of thinking about the history of social projects. "First, such projects grow from spatially far-flung collaborations and interconnections. Second, cultural diversity is not banished from these interconnections; it is what makes them – and all their particularities – possible. Cultural diversity brings a creative friction to global connections" (Tsing ix-x). In drawing attention to these ethnographic "zones of awkward engagement" that constitute global connection, one must attend to the overlapping histories and relationships that underlie universal aspirations (Tsing xi). For example, how does UNESCO World Heritage aspire to fill universal dreams and visions of a common humanity? How does World Heritage and the designation of global spaces of universal value translate in particular places and particular times? How do universals offer new spaces of opportunity and creative possibilities that become charged across cultural difference?

For Tsing (2005: 1) universals, like the production of World Heritage at Bodh Gaya can be

[10] Similarly, the local is not merely the refuge of the particular, the specific, or the different. As Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal (2003: 12) discuss, the local is not a "site of purity, where difference emerges to haunt tales of global uniformity and homogenization. . . spaces become localities because of how they are situated in particular networks with other people, places and social entities. Localities are produced as nodes in the flows of people and ideas, and are thoroughly constructed." This also applies to other relational terms with spatial reference such as regional, national and global.

approached as an ethnographic object because they are “charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters.” Although universals suggest a form of abstraction that is all encompassing and one that transcends locality, according to Tsing (2005: 8), they are always “limited by the practical necessity of mobilizing adherents.” In other words, as a form of aspiration and engagement that connects people across distances and lines of difference, universals also have an important practical utility that is forged in transnational dialogue. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that universals are not politically neutral and the power to inscribe places of World Heritage reflect specific interests and influences. It is for this reason that one must attend to the ways in which universals are engaged in the flow of practice and embedded in specific settings where the “contingency of encounters makes a difference” (Tsing 3). According to Tsing (2005: 7-8), as “unfinished achievements” they can never fulfill their promise of universality but they are nonetheless important social projects that are “effective within particular historical conjunctures that give them content and force.”

In the chapters that follow I explore the ethnographic specificities of global connection in Bodh Gaya and the ways in which cultural diversity, overlapping histories and divergent meanings give grip to the universal aspirations of World Heritage. In seeking to examine the “emergent cultural forms” that derive from “global encounters across difference” (Tsing 3), I draw upon the bazaar as an organizing metaphor that foregrounds the messy confluence of social relationships and converging agendas that characterize Bodh Gaya's spatial environment today. Drawing on the bazaar as a metaphorical image also positions the historical ethnography in a way that mediates a broader and diverse set of themes in each chapter but is premised on interaction and connection rather than discrete groups and histories. As stated in the previous theoretical sections, Bodh Gaya is a place of “multilocality” where history, memory, narratives and groups are entangled in the productive friction between the local and global, particular and universal. Attending to Bodh Gaya as a World Heritage site ensnared by the socio-cultural dynamics of the Indian bazaar opens up the possibility of an ethnographic account of global interconnection. To provide an account of this complex ethnographic setting where World Heritage designation was imposed, I provide a thick description of Bodh Gaya's annual cycle below.

1.2 Ethnographic Setting: Bodh Gaya's Annual Cycle

In south Bihar, the heat builds up in late February and within two to three months the temperature can escalate to a stifling 40° Celsius. During these hot summer months, the sub tropical climate is dry with heat waves surging eastward from the Rajasthani deserts. The local *tharra* or "sky juice," made from fruit of the *mahua* tree begins to flow more regularly and its popular consumption coincides with the off-season of agricultural labor. Due to the large social demographic of scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward castes (OBC's) (the official Government designation) that dominate the region, for close to two months, Bodh Gaya becomes a thriving market of wedding celebrations and local *Melas*. Although there are very few Buddhist pilgrims at this time, on the full moon in the second month of the lunar calendar the Buddha *Purnima*, or *vesak*, is held. This event which commemorates the birth, enlightenment Nirvana and passing (*parinirvana*) of Gautama Buddha is typically held in late April or early May. Numerous functions are arranged to honor the memory of the Buddha by the International Buddhist Council (IBC) and the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC). However, for the last decade, it has also been the staging ground for the Dalit Ambedkar Buddhists who arrive in the hundreds primarily from Nagpur in Maharashtra to protest the "Hindu" management of the temple.



Figure 1.2 Agriculture and irrigation practices for the winter crops

From mid to late June, the first signs of the monsoon season manifest through violent electrical storms and short intense rain fall. The dramatic arrival of the monsoon rains also signals the most laborious period for peasant farmers and agricultural laborers who provide extensive irrigation practices to support rice paddy cultivation and other crops in the forthcoming months. With the marble sandstone in the temple precinct heating up, there are few visitors to Bodh Gaya in the monsoon season except for occasional day-trippers from Gaya and larger groups of domestic Bengali and south Indian pilgrims en route to other holy sites in the north. As the monsoon rains begin to wane, in early September, the nearby Hindu pilgrimage city of Gaya celebrates the annual *sraddha* or 'ancestral rites' called *Pinda-*

pradana (the offering of balls of food-stuffs).



Figure 1.3 Gaya-sraddha along the Falgu River adjacent to Vishnupad Temple

Throughout the Gaya region, there are some forty-five different sites carved into the mythic landscape and symbolize the demi-god *Gayasur* whose enormous prone body comprises the length and breadth of Gaya's sacred ground (Doyle 1997). As a satellite site, Bodh Gaya is situated symbolically at the feet of Gayasur and over a period of eleven days (but often extends much longer) thousands of *Vaishnavite* pilgrims from all regions of India descend on the auspicious Falgu river and Mahabodhi Temple Complex to offer *pitrapash* for their recently deceased ancestors.

According to many of Bodh Gaya's residents, the beginning of the Buddhist season in early September is kicked off with the arrival of Robert Pryor and his American-based Antioch School Program which takes residence at the Burmese *Vihara*. This program which began in 1979, involves some thirty to forty American students and five teachers who will receive a 3 ½ month intensive program in Buddhist studies, Hindi language training and meditation traditions. In September, the Sinhala pilgrims from Sri Lanka also begin to arrive in large coordinated groups, initiating the first wave of Buddhist pilgrimage. Accustomed to the warm climate closer to the equator, many of these monks, nuns and lay devotees prefer the months of September and October or February and March. Activities are organized on a large scale by the Mahabodhi Society of India (MSI) which celebrates the annual anniversary of Anagarika Dharmapala on September 17th. On this day, pilgrims, visitors and Buddhist sympathizers commemorate the memory of this agitator from Sri Lanka who challenged the feudal lordship of the Bodh Gaya *mahanta* and his claims to proprietorship over the Mahabodhi Temple in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Flower garlands stretch across the campus and large numbers of lay pilgrims dressed in light white cloth move throughout the township.



Figure 1.4 Sri Lankan pilgrims

Following the month of September, a more diverse crowd of international pilgrims and visitors begin to move through the small urban-rural city of Bodh Gaya. Flights from the recently constructed 2002 Gaya International Airport start their regular schedule, providing direct access to the land of enlightenment from Bangkok, Colombo, Rangoon, Kathmandu and recently Bhutan. October often coincides with numerous local festivals and activities tied to the lunar calender and are celebrated with great enthusiasm. There is *Dasahra*, *Durga puja*, *Dipavali*, the Mucharin *Mela*; and often overlapping with the Muslim holiday of *Eid ul-Fitr* marking the end of Ramadan. In Bihar during this time, there is also the famous indigenous *Chhath puja* where numerous village women and families descend to the river after three days of fasting to offer prayer to the ancient solar deity, Surya. As the festivals roar through the town and the Gayatri mantra plays repeatedly throughout the town speakers, the harvest season begins, bringing clouds of small insects, or *kira* now exiled from the surrounding fields and making their last pilgrimage towards the evening light fixtures. . . If light is provided.



As the local Hindu and Muslim festivals wind down by month's end, the great robe offering ceremonies are held by largely Theravada Buddhist groups. *Kathina*, as it is traditionally called, symbolizes the end of the monsoon retreats and many s*anghadanas* are held between the different Buddhist schools and monasteries whereby pilgrims and lay devotees offer robes, gifts, feasts and monetary assistance to support the monks and nuns in their noble pursuit. As the Buddhist pilgrimage season takes shape there are more opportunities for visitors, backpackers and practitioners to draw upon a wide range of continuous teachings and courses in meditation and Buddhist philosophy. As a convenient stopover for travelers along the 'banana pancake trail' from Kolkata to Varanasi, Bodh Gaya provides a refuge for those seeking spiritual solace or temporary social work. During the winter season, courses are offered at the Goenka-inspired Dhammabodhi Vipassana Centre, the Insight Meditation Centre, Ayang Rinpoche's POWA course, a six month spiritual program offered by the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom and the popular ten-day Vipassana courses organized by Christopher Titmuss, which has been a regular feature of the Winter season since 1975. In addition to these annual events, each year there is often a new monastery or hotel being inaugurated that attracts various Buddhist patrons, local politicians and curious onlookers.



Figure 1.5 Chhath puja along the Niranjana River

Figure 1.6 Kathina Dana at the Burmese Vihara

In late October, Mr. Bhansali, a diamond trader from Gujarat, sponsors the annual month-long eye-camp in conjunction with the Samanvay Ashram. During this time, over 22,000 villagers throughout Bihar and neighboring provinces descend on the land of enlightenment to receive free eye operations. Although activities build in the month of October, by November the town is alive with multicolored Buddhist robes and an expanding marketplace that caters to the sacral-commercial interests of the religious diaspora. A dozen caravan style tent-restaurants covered in canopies of plastic tarps along with a Tibetan refugee market materialize north of the main temple. These Tibetan and Bhutanese restaurants, along with a few local entrepreneurs, set up shop for four months and cater to the many respective pilgrims from their home lands.



Figure 1.7 Month long annual eye-camp

Mohammad's and Om Cafe [not Om Restaurant] are popular meeting spots for largely Western and repeated visitors who take full advantage of the rich dessert menus. On any given night, you can engage in discussions about consciousness, overhear Rinpoche gossip or eavesdrop on the colorful banter of travel tales across India. In recent years, the Siam Restaurant has also enriched the available global cuisine offering Thai food with prawns flown in directly from Bangkok on the weekly flights. With the arrival of the winter season, hundreds of small tour and travel operators begin to spring up alongside the various Himalayan merchants strewn across the public space outside the Mahabodhi Temple. The local shopkeepers from the handicraft emporiums put aside their decks of cards to entice onlookers with their fluency in Japanese and other countries influenced by Buddhism. Outside the main temple is a wide selection of Kashmiri shawls, Thanka paintings, Buddhist statues, *malas*, CDs, dried Bodhi leaves, postcards, prayer flags, singing bowls and other Buddhist trinkets and souvenirs. Along the footpath to the temple entrance, the chant "*Buddham saranam gacchami*" (In the Buddha I take refuge) resonates above the crowd. There are steamed momos, sweet *jalebi,* plenty of chai and refreshing lassis for those interested in sitting back and admiring the divine stew which spills out from the main *stupa*.

During this period of heightened pilgrimage activity, the broadband Internet cafes directly adjacent to the temple are packed with travelers, practitioners and young Tibetan monks who chat on MSN messenger after spending the larger part of the day completing their preliminary practices. Along the footpath, young touts, or rather 'friendly guides' as they call themselves, are eagerly circling in search of conversation, 'sponsorship' or commission from the nearest educational charity trust. Elderly women, children, and beggars inflicted by polio and leprosy begin to descend from the outer villages into the cracks, corners and shadows of the exterior temple grounds. On the west side lane of the Mahabodhi complex there is a prominent stronghold for the downtrodden. They utilize this space to squeeze tin cups and bowls through the walled enclosure in anticipation of some donations from the circumambulating pilgrims. In this galloping global traffic, large tour buses, tractors, horse-carts with airtel advertisements, rickshaw wallahs, motorcycles, wild dogs and dizzied visitors congest around the perimeter.



Figure 1.8 Beggars wait outside the Mahābodhi Temple during the Tibetan Monlam

With the influx of visitors, Bodh Gaya also serves a thriving shadow economy of alcohol and drugs. Young men from Gaya picnic on Sunday evenings to the international centre to look at foreign women, eat chow mein and drink whiskey in the dark corridors of the restaurants.

Through the peak months of December and January many of the pilgrims from the Himalayan regions migrate to Bodh Gaya, escaping the cooler climates by following respected lamas or Rinpoches from the divergent Tibetan schools. Often the Karma pa and the 14th Dalia Lama are the main attractions during this dense period of Tibetan pilgrimage flows. Sighting rumors of Hollywood Buddhist icon Richard Gere tend to circulate in the restaurants. Bodh Gaya has also become a regular forum for the Tantric empowerment practice known as the Kalachakra initiation which began here as early as 1976. During these large ritual assemblages, the Kalachakra grounds on the nearby *maidan* is no longer a popular cricket ground for the youth, nor a helicopter landing pad for politicians such as Lalu Prasad Yadav. Bodh Gaya has a similar function when a series of Tibetan Monlams or World Peace Prayer Festivals are coordinated. Over these ten day events, the entire Mahabodhi Temple grounds are alive with the droning sounds of repetitive chanting, although occasionally interrupted by the daily Muslim prayers broadcasting from the nearby Mosque. On any given day during the peak season, the main Mahabodhi Temple Complex is a magnet of spiritual cosmopolitanism, plural worship and recreational activities. The global traffic and the transnational vernacular of this UNESCO World Heritage site becomes the main attraction for many locals and visitors who rest in the shade of the Bodhi tree and compete for falling leaves as sacred souvenirs. By late February, the crowds once again disperse, the tents in the market are removed and things gradually slip into the warm ebb and flow of the off-season. By the time *Holi* or 'festival of colors' arrives in early March, Bodh Gaya and much of Bihar, for that matter, are absent of Buddhist pilgrims and the next cycle of weddings begin.



Figure 1.9 Tibetan Nun at the front entrance of the Mahābodhi Temple

1.3 Fieldwork Background and Methodology

It is evident in the thick description of Bodh Gaya's annual cycle that this is a complex cultural landscape that incorporates a wide variety of stakeholder interests. Prominent groups include: international Buddhists (Theravada and Mahayana); Indian and Ambedkarite Buddhists; Tibetan refugee community; Shaivite ascetics; Gayawal brahmins; Vaishanavite pilgrims; Muslims; local and regional state government officials; urban and tourism development authorities; shopkeepers, merchants and vendors; peasants and agricultural laborers; archaeologists; conservation and heritage experts; social workers and NGOs; and travelers and tourists (both domestic and international). The municipal town (or notified area) of Bodh Gaya is spread roughly over an area of 17 sq. km and extends from the Mahabodhi Temple on a east-west and north-south axis. To the north is the larger city of Gaya and to the south is the National Highway 02 or the Grand Truck Road. Based on the 2001 Indian Census, Bodh Gaya has an estimated population of 30,883 people and includes a high growth rate with the population doubling within the last two decades (CDP 2006).

The findings presented in this dissertation derive from fieldwork that was conducted in Bodh Gaya from 2005 to 2007. Over the course of eighteen months, this fieldwork drew upon a range of ethnographic methods including participant observation, archival research, interviews and surveys.[11] During this time I lived with an Indian family in the nearby village of Pacchati and developed close relationships with many members of Bodh Gaya's diverse urban community. The seed of this doctoral research project grew out of an earlier Master's thesis in the Department of Anthropology at Carleton University entitled *Catering to Consciousness: From Pilgrimage to Dharma Tourism* (2003). To research for my Master's thesis, I participated in a pilgrimage-tour called “In the footsteps of the Buddha,” which served as the basis for a case study on the tensions between pilgrimage and tourism among Western Buddhist pilgrims to India. Over three and half weeks, I traveled with a group of North American and European Buddhists to a number of prominent sacred sites linked to the spiritual biography of the Buddha. The pilgrimage-tour was led by Shantum Seth, an Indian Buddhist and Teacher who works in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh and brother of prolific Indian writer, Vikram Seth. As part of an itinerary of transformation, our group traversed the north Indian countryside

[11] Thoughout this dissertation I have changed the names of many informants or refer to them in general description to protect their anonymity. However, in some cases there are head monks, monastery caretakers, hoteliers and government officials who are readily identifiable actors in Bodh Gaya and therefore remain unchanged.

exploring the Buddha's life through the ruins of the past and incorporating his profound insights into our daily practice and meditations.

Many of the famous pilgrimage centres that are part of the Buddhist circuit in north India are located in areas of extreme poverty. Although Shantum Seth was a skillful guide in terms of bringing our group into contact with the everyday lives of peasant farmers, local artisans and schools, each night we also had the comfort of residing in four to five-star hotels and enjoying gourmet Indian buffets. In the town of Rajgir, for example, our group stayed at the Indo Hokke Hotel at roughly $128 US a night with air-conditioned rooms and a distinctive Japanese aesthetic that included floors made of teak wood and our own kimono robes. We had access to international channels, Internet, a spa-bath and imported Japanese food and beer to cap the night off before our final meditation of the day. For someone who had held a very Eurocentric and romanticized view of Buddhism as a religion of renunciation, my exposure to this blend of luxury spiritual tourism certainly troubled my theoretical models and left a strong impression that in many ways informs this current project.

In addition to this three week pilgrimage-tour that was the focus of my Master's thesis, I spent two months in Bodh Gaya interviewing other Western Buddhist pilgrims and participating in the Kalachakra festival. It was during this time that I became informed about the recent 2002 UNESCO World Heritage designation and some of the underlying spatial tensions and conservation issues that had emerged in light of this new international spotlight. For example, a major concern that had arose during this time was the oil lamp controversy and the role of Tibetan Buddhist ritual activities that were allegedly polluting the Bodhi tree and causing damage to the temple walls and ancient sculptures. Underlying the oil lamp controversy were other tensions surrounding the ritual component of the sacred landscape and the demands for appropriate heritage management and archaeological intervention. By the time I returned to Bodh Gaya in the fall of 2005 to undertake my doctoral fieldwork, these issues had certainly intensified and expanded beyond the walls of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex.

Within a few weeks of my arriving, it was clear to me that there was plenty of interest in this recent international designation, especially in terms of spatial issues and competing visions of place. Central to the traffic of rumors and heated discussion surrounding World Heritage inscription was the mounting fear that the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was going to be placed on the *List of World Heritage in Danger*, only three years after its official entry on the UNESCO list.[12] In the bazaar, there

[12] There are presently 30 properties which the World Heritage Committee has decided to include on the *List of World Heritage in danger* in accordance with Article 11 (4) of the Convention. Drawing from the Article 11 (4) the list includes properties of the cultural and natural heritage that are deemed “threatened by serious and specific dangers, such as the threat of disappearance caused by accelerated deterioration, large- scale public or private projects or rapid urban

was finger pointing, blaming and accusations of exploitation and corruption everywhere! One of the chief concerns related to the recent World Heritage designation was that the site was allegedly in "desperate need" of a 2 km buffer zone in order to meet the necessary international conservation requirements. However, implicit in the public discourse was another layer to this heritage management and conservation rhetoric which had little to do with safeguarding material culture for future generations. Rather, the spatial consequence of a 2 km buffer zone was seen as a necessary mechanism to "preserve the peace" and curtail the rampant commercialism and unchecked development that was now "encroaching" upon this global site of memory.

According to many Buddhist pilgrims and long-term visitors who claimed to have "discovered" Bodh Gaya as early as the sixties and seventies, the town was no longer a refuge of peace and spiritual sanctity but rather a bloated tourist site full of commercial activity and greed. In previous years I was told that one could rest in the shade of the Bodhi tree throughout the day and night without any problems, restrictions or obstructions. The temple complex was like an open-air museum and the bazaar was full of charming local hospitality. This sense of nostalgia and lament for the recent past was accompanied by frustration and growing criticism about the present. The town's entry into the global circuit of mass tourism and international pilgrimage brought rapid development and social change to Bodh Gaya that was not only affecting the spatial environment of the town but more importantly the "peacefulness" that many humble pilgrims were seeking. Unregulated development and new international airstrips had brought a massive explosion of hotels, guest houses, monasteries, seasonal charity trusts and shops, all within close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple. Slum villages, trash heaps, contaminated pools of dead water, inefficient water and electricity, and regular complaints of noise pollution had increased. Alcohol, drugs and illegal activities were also on the rise and many locals feared it would not be long until sex tourism arrived on the scene.

For the first-time visitor to the place of enlightenment, in order to have their moment of peace under the Bodhi tree, they had to wade through aggressive shopkeepers, street vendors, touts, hustlers, pestering youth and swarms of beggars along the footpath. Even the main temple precinct presented challenges. In recent years, it is has not been uncommon for "sly monks" or "beggars-in-robes" to request money and food in their begging bowls only to remove their robes at the end of the tourist

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or tourist development projects; destruction caused by changes in the use or ownership of the land; major alterations due to unknown causes; abandonment for any reason whatsoever; the outbreak or the threat of an armed conflict; calamities and cataclysms; serious fires, earthquakes, landslides; volcanic eruptions; changes in water level, floods and tidal waves." If a World Heritage site is deemed to be threatened by the above standards, the committee can add them to the List of World Heritage in Danger and publicize such entries at will.

season. There was also talk of golf courses, chair lifts to the nearby Dhungeshwari caves, light and sound shows and other major tourism initiatives that would bring unfathomable contamination to this hallowed site where Buddha obtained enlightenment. Common to all the accusations, rumors and finger-pointing was a general unease surrounding the recent accelerated pace of development at Bodh Gaya from a small rural town in south Bihar into a major global destination. It is the spatial conflicts that are produced and negotiated within a transnational arena of universal significance that I seek to explore in this dissertation.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

I begin in chapter two with a historical overview of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex and the modern revival of Buddhist pilgrimage. Spanning the nineteenth and twentieth century, this section describes the reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment and the disputes over rites of worship and proprietorship of the Mahabodhi Temple up to India's independence. It is during this period that the British colonial state not only gathered information about the history of Buddhism in India but also restored prominent Buddhist sites, such as the Mahabodhi Temple Complex. Throughout this chapter I unravel the converging agendas and contradictions around the regulation of sacred space and religious practice at Bodh Gaya. How does the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya emerge as a symbol of pan-Asian Buddhist unity? And what are the enduring legacies of British colonialism in constructing the “official” memory of the site? Following this historical background, I then proceed in chapter’s three to five, to examine three transnational processes that I argue are central to the social transformation of Bodh Gaya since independence and underpin the contemporary spatial politics of World Heritage designation.

In chapter three, I describe and analyze the institutional growth of Buddhist monasteries, temples and/or guest houses that are now in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple. Following India's independence from British colonial rule, extra-national Buddhist groups from the religious diaspora have begun to arrive in much greater numbers and linked by expanding transnational networks of pilgrimage and patronage. Among the Buddhist diaspora, Bodh Gaya is above all “the navel of the earth” and a place of pilgrimage and sacred memory. How is the place of Buddha's enlightenment made sacred through certain transnational spatial forms and commemorative activities? How are these Buddhist groups received by local residents and what are some of the moral and ethical dilemmas this

entails? In this chapter, I provide a detailed history of the transnational religious processes involved in activating the Buddhist memory of the site and the conflicts and challenges they engender.

While many of the monks, nuns and managers tied to the establishment of foreign Buddhists institutions in Bodh Gaya maintain social relations outside of India, there are also those linkages and connections that extend beyond national boundaries even if movement is not available. According to Brennan (2005), "transnational social fields" exist even among those who do not themselves move across borders. In chapter four, I examine Bodh Gaya as a lived space and consider the growing importance of tourism as a source of livelihood and opportunity for social mobility among local residents. Within the last few decades, many of Bodh Gaya's residents have become intertwined with the global flows of traffic and the high seasonality of pilgrimage and tourism throughout the year. Exploring the life histories and bazaar stories of local people helps to illuminate the ways in which Buddhism and the public life of its antiquity fuel the local economy and provide a creative space for empowerment and social change. How do local communities seek beneficial interests from regular contact with global flows? How is the Buddhist memory of the site negotiated by local inhabitants who draw upon and transform these claims into local histories of belonging? In chapter four, I argue that the everyday lives and stories of local residents are an integral part of World Heritage and the ongoing production and negotiation of its meaning in the public sphere.

Similarly, as an object of cultural heritage and state control, in chapter five I examine the ways in which the place of enlightenment provides a central resource for national development and future visions of socio-economic prosperity. Following independence, the Bihar State Government has looked to rehabilitate the town of Bodh Gaya and redesign the landscape to ensure the town's international visibility as a growing destination for pilgrimage and tourism. These efforts on behalf of the Bihar State and regional authorities to rehabilitate the site have also led to violent conflicts with local people who live in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple. How is international pilgrimage and spiritual tourism linked to certain urban phenomena such as tourism development and beautification? How are state-sponsored development plans and initiatives resisted by local groups? In this chapter I track the "failed" history of a master plan for Bodh Gaya, as well as the different urban agendas initiated by state elites to design a tourist landscape for wider global consumption.

Although chapter's three to five can be read as separate transnational processes, they do not necessarily reflect the interests of discrete actors, groups or communities. The purpose of these three chapters is to provide the ethnographic and historical context for my analysis of the recent World

Heritage designation in chapter six. Since the official designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site in 2002, this recent historical layering has brought to the foreground the politics of space and the contests of meaning among Bodh Gaya's diverse set of publics. It is in this final chapter that the distillation of my research findings and several overlapping themes are brought together to address the contemporary implications of this World Heritage designation. Drawing on the Buddhist concept of the conditioned genesis, I argue that the globalization of Bodh Gaya's heritage landscape was set in motion much earlier than the official designation and that the historical encounters over place are important to understanding the contemporary conflicts. Through an analysis of global connection and the local chains of cause and effect, I examine the ways in which UNESCO's claims of universality can operate in contradictory ways that silence discord but also exacerbate new forms of conflict in relation to the power geometries that underlie the spatial environment. In my conclusion, I review the main arguments of my thesis and discuss the prospects of Buddhism and Bihar's worlding heritage in relation to India's rise as a global superpower. Building on my analysis of the conditioned genesis in chapter six, I argue that World Heritage sites are important ethnographic settings to look for the emergence of a global public sphere and new creative forms of transnational governance that revolve around international campaigns to produce a culture of peace.

2. CHAPTER TWO:

THE LIGHT OF ASIA: A CONTESTED SITE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH

In this chapter, I examine the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Like many other sacred centres and heritage sites in contemporary India (and throughout the world), the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya can be categorized as a contested space where "conflicts in form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 18). However, unlike many other living centres of religious worship, Bodh Gaya is unique in that there is a long historical lapse between the earlier centuries of Buddhist pilgrimage and its more recent modern and transnational resuscitation as a global site of memory. The theories that surround the decline of Buddhism in India are many (Gombrich 1988; Harvey 1990; Doyle 1997; Asher 2008). One common explanation is the ascendancy of Islamic groups and the gradual destruction of monasteries and centres of religious faith that accompanied expansion by the Muslim Turks into the Gangetic region.[13] Drawing on travel accounts by Chinese pilgrims Faxian (334-420 ADE) and Xuanzang (596-664 ADE), other scholars have suggested that the Buddhist *Sangha* was in decline as early as the fifth century and that later forms of Mahayana Buddhism were absorbed by a resurgence of Hinduism, especially the growth of Bhakti movements.[14] What is clear is that, with the fall of the Pala Dynasty and the expansion of Muslim rulers by the twelfth and thirteenth century, the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya was largely deserted and left for ruin. The fall of the north-eastern stronghold of Buddhism, involving the destruction of neighboring Nalanda University in 1198, must

[13] The Muslim "conquest" of India beginning in the last decades of the twelfth century is the customary explanation for the decline of Buddhism in India. Central to these narratives, according to Asher (2008: 15), is the report in, *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, by Minhaj al-Siraj. In this report, the author describes an organized attack by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1198 on a fortified city of Bihar that is likely present day Bihar Sharif. Although it is difficult to know the extent to which these "attacks" or "invasions" led to the disappearance of Buddhism from India, they would certainly have impacted the existing monastic system and patronage networks that supported them. The problem with these discourses is that they also perpetuate an image of "marauding Muslims more intent on iconoclastic rampage than on a military engaged in a battle for the control of territory" (Asher 15). It is more likely that a combination of factors and processes over time contributed to the Buddhist disappearance rather than "large-scale desecration" from Muslim rulers. What is clear is that the Mahabodhi Temple was significantly damaged during these incursions or at least neglected over a lengthy period time. When Dharmasvamin, a Tibetan pilgrim, visited Buddha Gaya in 1234 AD he notes that the place was deserted and only four monks were found staying monastery there.

[14] *Bhakti* refers to a devotional love to God. The emergence of this Hindu religious movement allegedly started in southern India and eventually spread north during the later half of the Indian medieval period (800-1700 CE). The main spiritual practice was a loving devotion directed towards a particular form of God, such as Shiva, Vishnu or Rama.

have been a major catalyst for the temple's demise as a centre of living religious activity.

Although the importance of the place of Buddha's enlightenment remained central to the religious imagination of its followers outside the geographic centre of faith, the decline in royal and lay patronage in Bodh Gaya created an important rupture in historical memory which prefigured the conflicts over heritage and sacred space that followed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this period of rupture, other histories and identities became intertwined with the place and it became "over the late medieval period more effectively Hindu than Buddhist" (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 282). In examining the political importance of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex during British India, the role of antiquarians, colonial archaeologists and ethnographers are particularly relevant. It was not until the nineteenth century that the site became an important historical and archaeological specimen for the British government and in the process of restoring the ancient site brought the politics of religious identity to the foreground. According to Tara Doyle (1997: 13), Bodh Gaya's "re-invention as a place associated primarily with the Buddha's enlightenment was significantly influenced by Orientalist constructions of knowledge regarding what came to be called 'Buddhism' by the mid-nineteenth century, and that these constructions were integrally linked to both the establishment of and struggles against British-Indian colonial rule."

How are certain historical processes tied to preservation and archaeological practice intertwined with concerns over proprietorship, management and the regulation of faith? How is the history of Bodh Gaya constituted during British India and how does the materiality of this site engage various social actors far removed from the place itself? In examining the different applications of the past and the practices associated with the regulation of sacred space, I organize this chapter into a set of three broad temporal frameworks: *recovering the past; reclaiming the past; and recasting the past.* Drawing on the existing scholarship on Bodh Gaya and some archival material, I detail the convergences between various groups and outline the prolonged battle for the custody of the central monument. These interactions span the nineteenth and twentieth century, up to the establishment of the Bodh Gaya Temple Act (1949) following Independence in 1947.[15] Not only does this historical background underpin the post-colonial and public life of Bodh Gaya since independence, but it also sets the larger context for examining a set of transnational processes that are part of the contemporary spatial politics of World Heritage today.

[15] In particular this chapter draws upon the recent publication of Alan Trevithick's (2006) *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya* and Tara Doyle's (1997) unpublished Phd Dissertation entitled *Bodh Gaya: Journeys to the Diamond Throne and the Feet of Gayasur*. Additional archival research was carried out in 2006 at the British Library, London Indian Office.

2.1 Recovering the Past: Convergences among the British Raj, Burmese Missions and the Giri Sect

As the Mughal rulers of India were being replaced by the new British colonial regime in the mid-nineteenth century, a central question occupied the early "discovery" of Bodh Gaya and its significance as the place of Buddha's enlightenment: "how to allocate the sacred space at Bodh Gaya"? (Trevithick 2006: 17). A number of scholars (Doyle 1997, Trevithick 2006; Guha-Thakurta 2004) have shown that the difficulty lay in the overlapping histories and competing religious claims to sacred property that came to define Bodh Gaya's space. On the one hand, for a period of at least six hundred years, Bodh Gaya was a Buddhist site located in an area of "Hindu" India, where no Buddhists were resident and very few Buddhists ever visited (Doyle 1997). On the other hand, in spite of the long historical lapse in pilgrimage activity by Buddhists to Bodh Gaya, the memory of the temple and its association with the central event in the life of the Buddha continued to be held by Buddhists around the world. This is evident by "virtue of the central position awarded to the Buddha's enlightenment" (Doyle 1997: 60) found among numerous Buddhist texts, scriptures and among the artistic reproduction and diffusion of Mahabodhi Temple replicas and models such as in Burma, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, and Thailand (Guy 1991, Asher 2008). Therefore, despite the virtual disappearance of a Buddhist institutional presence at the place of enlightenment, many Buddhist groups continued to venerate Bodh Gaya from a distance.

According to Tara Doyle (1997: 60), "the fact remains that as the numbers of Buddhist pilgrims and patrons dwindled, both from inside India and abroad, the *physical* site both diminished and was Hinduized." Central to this process was a Shaivite ascetic named Gosain Ghamandi Giri who settled in the deserted site around the year 1590 (a date assigned by the ascetic group themselves).[16] As Asher (2008: 16-17) has noted, this was by no means a forceful takeover of the temple, but rather the likely occupation of an abandoned sacred site: "after all, conflicts over religious space often have roots not so much in forceful appropriation of the monuments of another faith but rather in the reuse of a site with longstanding sanctity, even if it was sanctity for another faith." Although I discuss the social history of the Bodh Gaya Math in chapter four, what is important to highlight at this juncture is that for over 400 years a lineage of Giri *mahantas* (abbots) have made Bodh Gaya the corporate headquarters for the

[16] The *Shaiva* renunciates who settled in Bodh Gaya trace their lineage to the eighth-century philosopher Shankaracharya. According to Asher (2009: 17), the first Shavaite ascetic Gosain Ghamandi Giri likely settled in Bodh Gaya due to the sanctity of the site, "even if its Buddhist affiliation was buried under debris and erased from the memory of any living person."

Shaivite sect, wielding strong regional influence as a religious monastery and a powerful *Zamindar* (landlord). The institution's role as a landowner is evident in the eighteenth century when the Giri sect received a rent-free grant of four villages by Emperor Shah Alam (1759-1806), including the one on which the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple lay. Over time, as Guha-Thakurta (2004: 282-284) describes, the "legitimacy of the Giris at the site came to be supported by a powerful repertoire of myths that linked the two neighboring holy sites of Gaya and Buddha Gaya to a complex Hindu cosmology, assimilating the figure of the Buddha, the bodhi tree, and various Buddhist votive objects within its own pantheon and rituals." Among Hindus, the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple and surrounding objects became a monument to "Buddha Dev", an incarnation of the god Vishnu and a popular site in the network of Hindu pilgrimage linked to the larger circuit of ancestor worship or *Gaya-sraddha*, in neighboring Gaya city (Doyle 1997).[17] According to Trevithick's (2006: 4-6) analysis, the "Hindu appropriation of the Mahabodhi Temple depended not only on claims of a purely proprietary sort, but also on an encompassing ideological apparatus" that absorbed Buddhist elements as a "subordinate segment of a greater Hindu tradition."

Adding to this complex dynamic is the central place of the new British rulers and the early ethnographers and antiquarians who held the site in high "archaeological esteem" (Trevithick 1).[18] In recent years, a number of studies have examined the romantic pursuits and explorations of British civil servants tramping through the Indian subcontinent in search of its hidden past and detailing their admiration for India's ancient ruins (Allen 1999; 2004; Almond 1988; Lopaz 1995). The early stages of Bodh Gaya's modern reinvention occurred in a geo-political context greatly influenced by British imperial interests in South Asia, where issues of power and knowledge accompanied Orientalist constructions of religious identity (Doyle 1997; King 1999; Ludden 1996; Said 1979). As part of the filtering of the Orient into Western consciousness, India became defined by its religion and the essence of Buddhism and India's past greatness was located in the past. Thus, ever since the first inscription was translated at Bodh Gaya from a European scholar named Charles Wilkens in 1788, the British were "confronted with questions that involved competing claims to the sacred space at Bodh Gaya, and

[17] According to Trevithick (2006) there has been and continues to be concurrent Hindu/Buddhist worship of both Vedic gods and Buddhist Bodhisattvas. "The main Buddhist view is that a circumambulation of the Bodhi-tree is a sacred commemoration of the Buddha's Enlightenment" and for Hindus, pilgrims visit Bodh Gaya to make offerings of rice cakes to their ancestors as part of the Gaya *sraddha* (Trevithick 5). Although Gaya is the main pilgrimage centre for these ancestor rites, the bodhi tree and other sites in the vicinity of Bodh Gaya are considered part of the forty-five recommended sites in the *Gaya-mahatmya* narratives (Doyle 1997).

[18] Not only was the site held in high archaeological esteem but from the from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bodh Gaya was also visited by a number of travelers, surveyors and artists such as William and Thomas Daniell who painted the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple in 1790.

competing versions of sacred history" (Trevithick 2006: 8). According to Trevithick (2006: 9), the first "epigraphical probe into Bodh Gaya had produced evidence of religious 'confusion,'" that inspired efforts on behalf of the Government of Bengal to conduct a complete ethnographic survey of the area. As Trevithick (2006: 10) comments, "this is but one example among many of the British Indian anxiety that religious groups be kept separate, definable, bounded, and easily managed."

Commissioned by the directors of the East India Company, as part of the newly expanding Bengal Presidency, Francis Hamilton-Buchanan (1762-1829) was the first British-Indian government surveyor to undertake a significant mission to the area. Hamilton-Buchanan stands as a key figure in the early stages of European constructions of the "religion of Bouddha" and of an ancient Buddhist civilization in India (Almond 1988). Through his descriptive reports and detailed diary, Buchanan highlights the decrepit condition of the ancient temple in Bodh Gaya and indicates that there was no sign of Buddhist worship in the area except for the aid of his tour guide, an unnamed *Sannyasin* renunciate who had allegedly converted to Buddhism some years prior by Burmese pilgrims.[19] Although Buchanan describes the populace in Bodh Gaya as "Hindoo," he nonetheless was one of the first European surveyors to see and represent "Buddha Gaya" "as *originally*, and therefore *essentially*, a Buddhist place" (Doyle 1997: 80). Most of Buchanan's account of the region relay his encounters with elite religious authorities such as members of the Bodh Gaya Math, or among the Gayawal Brahmins from the nearby city of Gaya. This town, Buchanan notes, is reminiscent of his home in Scotland, and a "centre of stubborn orthodoxy" (Trevithick 2006: 10).

Although fragments of communication and pictorial reports continued to pass through Calcutta, relaying the decrepit condition of Bodh Gaya's central monument, it was not until 1847 "that 'English gentlemen' began to consider organizing the removal of antiquities in the manner we may think of as early modern archaeology" (Trevithick 11). As the newly appointed 'Archaeological Enquirer', Captain Markham Kittoe was one of the first 'English gentlemen' to generate archaeological interest at Bodh Gaya and helped to establish a degree of institutional independence from the more distinguished Orientalism of the Asiatic Society. Although Bodh Gaya was slated to be a key property of Kittoe's early antiquarian investigations, due to his poor health, he was unable to carry out any comprehensive archaeological field study on the Mahabodhi Temple (Trevithick 2006). It was not until the mid-century that Major-General Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), the so-called "father" of Indian

[19] According to Doyle (1997), the Burmese pilgrims, who Buchanan refers too, were high ranking officials deputed by King Bodawpaya in 1807. For more on Buchanan's account of the Gaya region see James, John (1934), (Ed.) *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811-1812*. Patna: Bihar and Orissa Research Society.

archaeology and close associate of Orientalist James Prinsep (1799-1840), proposed to establish of a more thorough survey of Indian antiquities at Bodh Gaya.[20]

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the early establishment of modern archaeology by "enlightened" European scholars is closely intertwined with the largely unexplored field of Indian Buddhist studies and the newly formed British Imperial Government following the "Great Mutiny" of 1857 (Trevithick 2006; Doyle 1997; King 1999).[21] In light of the growing anti-Hindu sentiment that was exacerbated by the Indian uprising, it is no surprise that India's "classical" Buddhist "civilization" was a central preoccupation of early British archaeologists "who asserted that the vitality and greatness of India's classical Buddhist period was being manifested, once again, under the aegis of the new British Raj" (Doyle 1997: 93). Furthermore, according to Doyle (1997: 93), the investigation of "a "dead" religion, and the sites associated with it, would in no way compromise the British government's purportedly neutral stance *vis a vis* India's living religious communities" namely, Hindus and Muslims. For this purpose, in 1861, the newly retired Alexander Cunningham sent a memorandum to the Viceroy, Lord Canning, requesting a detailed investigation of the ancient Buddhist remains, now based on a corpus of scholarly material and translations, including the famous narratives of Chinese travelers Faxian and Xuanzang. Lord Canning's response to the memorandum was that "it would not be to our credit, as an enlightened ruling power," to allow the neglect of Indian antiquity to continue (Trevithick 2006: 28).

With the support and sanctioning of the Viceroy, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was formally established and Cunningham appointed the first Director General. The first project undertaken by the ASI under Cunningham's Directorship was a survey and fieldtrip to the Hindu pilgrimage town of Gaya and the smaller satellite town of Bodh Gaya in the winter of 1861-1862. Although Cunningham's initial authorized survey was in effect an "elaborated inventory of Indian antiquities," a number of excavations followed by his assistants Major Mead, R.L. Mitra, and J.D. Beglar (Trevithick 29). The succession of archaeological surveys at the prominent Buddhist site not

[20] Major-General Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893) began his Indian career as a 2nd Lt. in the Bengal Engineers and retired in 1846. Prior to his interest in the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya he had undertaken archaeological research at the great stupa of Sanchi in 1851, and helped unearth the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana (two of the chief disciples of the Buddha). This is certainly one of the most significant events in the early British "discovery" of Buddhism in India.

[21] The Great Mutiny or Indian Rebellion of 1857 began as a mutiny of *sepoys* of the British East India Company's army on 10 May, 1857, in the town of Meerut. This upheaval soon erupted into other civilian rebellions that traversed the upper Gangetic plain and central India. The rebellion was seen as a considerable threat to the East India Company in that region, and it was contained only with the fall of Gwalior on 20 June 1858. The rebellion is also known as India's First War of Independence, the Great Rebellion, the Indian Mutiny, the Revolt of 1857, the Uprising of 1857 and the Sepoy Mutiny.

only yielded significant treasures but also brought to the foreground the extent to which Hindus had assimilated the Buddhist imagery into their own ritual practices. For example, Major Mead indicates that Hindus had literally appropriated the surrounding Buddhist objects seeing the *stupas* as "ready made Lingams" (Trevithick 30). This concern about the Hindu absorption of Buddhist iconography was also shared by Rajendralala Mitra, who wrote five years after Mead about the ease with which the Buddhist *stupa* functioned as a Shaivite *Lingam*. So, at a very concrete level, according to Trevithick (2006: 31), "important symbols of the two faiths were interchanged with great facility."

In the context of these early authorized surveys by Cunningham and his assistants, the main objective was an accurate historical description of the ruins. At that stage, the preservation of artifacts and antiquities were of little concern to the British colonial government and the goal of restoring ancient monuments was far beyond the desired expenditure of the British imperial government (Trevithick 2006).[22] As Guha-Thakurta (2004: 288) notes, "in its earliest forms, then, colonial archaeology can be seen to have accelerated rather than stalled the process of decay. . . [and] it was not until the 1870s that archaeology shifted to a new concern with reconstruction and preservation, with ways of restoring history and meaning" to this dilapidated site of "unreadable rubble." These changes in archaeological method were initiated by Cunningham when he was recalled from London in 1871. From this point forward, there was a marked shift towards the preservation of ancient monuments as "historical specimens" and the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple were deemed a monument worthy of restoration due to its association with significant events and by virtue of its "beauty and grandeur" alone (Trevithick 2006: 33). However, it is important to note, that the commitment to this project by the British government "did not arise simply out of a shift in archaeological policy, but was triggered by the intervention of the Burmese mission . . . charged by King Mindon Min with the task of restoring the temple" (Trevithick 33).

By the end of the eighteenth century, Burmese kings had once again begun to renew their interest in the sacred geography of the Buddha, bringing their Theravada views of royal patronage into conflict with British constructions of knowledge about India's lost religion (Doyle 1997, Dhammika 1996, Trevithick 2006).[23] As in the past, delegations of Burmese Buddhists had made repeated visits to

[22] According to Trevithick (2006) Cunningham himself took a large collection of images and artifacts to England after the disbanding of the first archaeological survey in 1865. In fact, as the author (2006) suggests, "such a practice was designed into the survey. . . [and] the haphazard looting of the past had achieved some degree of organization" even after the formal establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India. In other words, "the destruction of the archaeological value of sites, as we currently recognize such value, continued unapace" (Trevithick 32). [see also Leoshko 1996].

[23] For more on the historical relationship between Burmese royal missions and the importance of restoring the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya see Doyle (1997)

Bodh Gaya in 1795, 1811, 1823, 1833 and 1867 with the intent of restoring the temple as a form of ritual merit-making and to bolster their own government's political prestige (Doyle 1997). These dispatches by the king of Burma resonated with Hamilton-Buchanan's findings in 1811 when he was informed that Burmese Buddhists had been inquiring about the condition of the site. The pressure to undertake restorative action and retain control over the archaeological process at Bodh Gaya had its roots in the Winter of 1874, when the British Government of India received communication from the king of Burma, Mindon Min (1853-1878) requesting to send a mission to Bodh Gaya because: "it is His Majesty's wish to repair the enclosures of the Great Bodi tree, which from a long site of existence must have fallen into decay" (Trevithick 2006: 19). According to Trevithick (2006), the dispatch by Mindon Min was to be the last of a long line of Theravada Buddhist kings to initiate a mission to Bodh Gaya in the tradition of royal patronage (see also Tambiah 1976 and Doyle 1997).[24] Although the British authorities decided to facilitate the Burmese request, there were stipulations made by the colonial government that nothing should be done to "offend the prejudices of the Hindoos," in particular, the most salient group of "Hindoos" at Bodh Gaya, the Giri Sect (Trevithick 2006: 34). Drawing on Trevithick's analysis of these negotiations, it must be noted that as far back as the late medieval period, the Giris at Bodh Gaya had managed to establish themselves in a manner that satisfied both Mughal rulers and the British Raj. Although the Giri's eventually became rival opponents to the robust Buddhist claims of the Mahabodhi Society (discussed in the next section), prior to this, the Bodh Gaya mahant appears to have benefited from the arrangements of visiting Burmese Buddhist's to the sacred site.

With the permission of the mahant, the Burmese began their restoration work in 1877 and continued for about six months until the activities came to the attention of the Government of Bengal. From an archaeological point of view, the "Burmese workmen were making a mess of the old temple at Buddha Gaya" (Trevithick 36). Shortly after this notification, the Government of Bengal deputed Rajendralala Mitra of the ASI to report on the authenticity of the Burmese restoration efforts. In his report, Mitra notes that they were working "energetically and piously," but according to "no systematic or traditional plan. . . They are ignorant of the true history of their faith and perfectly innocent of archaeology and history, and the mischief they have done by their misdirected zeal has been serious"

[24] According to Tara Doyle (1997) there was practically no contact or royal missions sent to Bodh Gaya following the fifteenth century up until the early nineteenth century. The primary reason for this lapse in pilgrimage activity was due to the political upheaval in Burma after the fall of the Pagan kingdom in the thirteenth century. It was not until the rule of *Ba-Daw-Pa-Ya* from 1782-1819 that Burmese contact was made with Bodh Gaya once again. The last effort to restore the temple was by King Mindon Min, who ruled the Kingdom of Pagan for 25 years from 1853-1878.

(Trevithick 36-37). In light of this intervention with the Burmese mission and the deterioration of Anglo-Burmese relations following the death of Mindon Min, the British Government of India decided to apply the "appropriate" archaeological techniques and take up the task of restoring the Mahabodhi Temple itself. This was the first time that British government felt the need to "assert its monopoly over the restoration of the site and define its own arena of jurisdiction. For the first time at Bodh Gaya, the traditional religious practices associated with the renovation of a sacred monument found themselves at odds with a modern historical and archaeological view of restoration" (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 288-289).



Figure 2.1 Photograph of Mahabodhi Temple in 1861
Source: Reproduced from Mitra (1972[1878])



Figure 2.2 Photograph of Mahabodhi Temple after 1884
Source: Reproduced from Barua (1934)

For this purpose, Sir Ashley Eden, the Lt. Governor of Bengal appointed Alexander Cunningham and assistant J.D. Beglar the extensive task of restoring the ancient temple. The restoration of the Mahabodhi Temple began in 1880 and was completed in 1884 at a cost of 200,000 Rp. (approx. US$ 4,600) (World Heritage Application 2000: 14). This project was both lengthy, costly and a contentious venture due to the fact that Beglar had rebuilt part of the Mahabodhi Temple based on a stone model found at the site that depicted the bodhi tree, the railing, and the throne (Guha-

Thakurta 2004; Trevithick 2006). According to a report by Cunningham, it was restored on the basis of a stone model "found amongst the ruins from which the whole design of the building as it existed in medieval times could be traced with tolerable completeness" (World Heritage Application 2000: 14). To a large extent, the restoration of the Mahabodhi Temple as a unique testimony to the ancient history of Buddhism in India was also a "reconstruction" conjured and constituted by the early application of archaeological science and strongly influenced by the Orientalist constructions of Buddhism (Leoshko 1996). As a natural consequence of having repaired and restored the Temple at enormous costs, the British Government of India also sought to take greater responsibility for the maintenance of the site by placing the building and its grounds under the government supervision of the Public Works Department.

In concluding this section, I want to emphasize that prior to the Burmese mission that served as a catalyst for archaeological intervention by the British authorities, there appears to have been no friction or recorded grievances caused by the foreign Buddhists, such as the Burmese who continued to reside in the Mahant's residential compound. So, at this very early point in the modern recovery and reinvention of Bodh Gaya's ancient past, "Hindus" and "Buddhists" appear to have had no series conflicts (Trevithick 2006: 39). As Trevithick (2006: 40) points out, cooperation among the British, the Burmese, and the Giris towards the recovery of Bodh Gaya's ancient past "created a complex new reality" into which Sinhalese pilgrim, Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Society would soon enter.

2.2 Reclaiming the Past: Sir Edwin Arnold, Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Society

The first person to raise the question of the "restoration of the Buddha Gaya Temple to the Buddhists," was Sir Edwin Arnold, the celebrated author of *Light of Asia*.[25] Since the 1879 publication of this "Victorian Buddhist epic" and poetic rendition of the life of Buddha, Edwin Arnold had acquired a worldwide reputation as "a kind of patron-saint of Buddhism" (Almond 1988, Guha-Thakurta 2004). In January 1886 Edwin Arnold decided to make a pilgrimage to the town of Bodh Gaya and pay homage to the Buddha at the recently restored Mahabodhi Temple by the British Government of India. Although disturbed by the desecration of Buddhist images by Brahman priests at

[25] The *Light of Asia*, subtitled *The Great Renunciation*, is a highly acclaimed 'biblicized' Buddhist epic that was first published in London in 1879. This poetic account chronicles the life of the Buddha and became one of the most widely read English texts ever published on Buddhism (Trevithick 2006).

the hallowed site, it was his reception among Buddhist clergy in Ceylon that convinced him of the need to reclaim the sacred property of the Mahabodhi Temple for the world Buddhist community. When Edwin Arnold returned to London, he decided to write a provocative plea in the *Daily Telegraph* (1893) requesting that the British Government acquire the temple and hand it over to the Buddhists. The descriptive and romantic account of his pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya is entitled *East and West: A Splendid Opportunity* and deserves to be quoted at length as an exemplary passage of Arnold's universalizing aspirations and Orientalist invocations of Buddhism that helped to propel demands for the "forgotten site" onto the world stage.

> I would to-day, in these columns, respectfully invite the vast and intelligent British public to forget, for a little while, home weather and home politics, and to accompany me, in fancy, to a sunny corner of their empire, where there centres far more important questions, for the future of religion and civilisation, than any relating to parish councils or parish pumps. I will, by their leave, tell them of beautiful scenes under warm skies; of a temple fairer and more stately, as well as more ancient, than almost any existing fane; and will also show them how the Indian Government of Her Majesty, supported by their own enlightened opinion, might, through an easy and blameless act of administrative sympathy, render four hundred millions of Asiatics for ever the friends and grateful admirers of England. . .
>
> . . . It is here! Beyond the little village of mud huts and the open space where dogs and children and cattle bask together in the dust, beyond the Mahunt's College, and yonder great fig tree which has split with its roots that wall, twelve feet thick, built before England had even been discovered, nestles an abrupt hollow in the surface, symmetrical and well-kept, and full of stone images, terraces, balustrades, and shrines. . . Yet more sacred . . . is the Maha Bodhi tree – in the opinion of superstitious votaries the very original Bodhi tree, miraculously preserved – but more rationally that which replaces and represents the ever memorable shade under which the inspired Siddhartha sat at the moment when he attained sambodhi, the supreme light of his gentle wisdom. . . And, beyond all doubt, this is the spot, most dear and divine, and precious beyond every other place on earth, to all the four hundred million Buddhists in China, Japan, Mongolia, Assam, Cambodia, Siam, Burma, Arakan, Nepaul, Thibet, and Ceylon. This is the authentic site, and this the successor-tree, by many unbrokenly cherished generations. . .
>
> . . .I think there never was an idea which took root and spread so far and fast as that thrown out thus in the sunny temple-court at Panadurè, amid the waving taliputs. Like those tropical plants which can almost be seen to grow, the suggestion quickly became a universal aspiration, first in Ceylon and next in other Buddhist countries. I was entreated to lay the plan before the Oriental authorities, which I did. I wrote to Sir Author Gordon, Governor of Ceylon, in these words: "I suggest a Governmental Act, which would be historically just, which would win the love and gratitude of all Buddhist populations, and would reflect enduring honour upon English administration. The temple and enclosure at Buddha-Gaya are, as you know, the most sacred spots in all the world for the Buddhists. . .
>
> . . . To rectify this sad neglect, and to make the temple, what is should be, the living and learned centre of purified Buddhism, money was not, and is not, lacking. . . Asia did not abandon its

> new desire. . . Went at last to the then Indian Secretary of State, Lord Cross – always intelligent, kindly and receptive – and once more pleaded for the great restoration "Do you wish, Lord Cross," I asked, "to have four hundred millions of Eastern peoples blessing your name night and day, and to be for ever remembered in Asia, like Alexander or Asoka, or Akbar the Great?" "God bless my soul, yes" answered the Minister; "how is that to be done?". . . I was astonished and rejoiced to find how firmly the desire of this restoration had taken root, and how enkindled with the hope of it Ceylon, Siam, Burmah, and Japan had become. The Maha Bodhi Society, established to carry out the scheme, was constituted. Thus is this new and great idea spreading, and the world will not be very much older, I think, before Buddhism by this gateway goes back to its own land, and India becomes the natural centre of Buddhistic Asia. Some people who will ask, why should the British public take any concern in such a movement? . . . Apart from the immense historical, religious and social importance of Buddhism in Asia, here is an opportunity for the Government of India to gratify and concilate half the continent by the easiest and least costly exercise of good-will. Buddhism would return to the place of its birth, to elevate, to spiritualise, to help and enrich the population. It would be a new Asiatic crusade, triumphant without tears, or tyranny, or blood; and the Queen's administration would have the glory and benefit of it. . . The Hindu of Madras, a leading native journal, writes: "If there is anything in the intellectual and moral legacies of our forefathers of which we may feel proud, it is that sublime, pure and simple conception of a religious and moral system which the world owes to Buddha. Educated Hindoos cannot hesitate in helping Buddhism to find a commanding and permanent footing once more in their midst, and to live in mutually purifying amity with our Hinduism itself. Here is indeed, for an enlightened British Indian Minister, "a splendid opportunity."[26]

As evident in Sir Edwin Arnold's provocative plea, Bodh Gaya presented "a splendid opportunity," that would bestow honor upon English administration and unite some "four hundred millions of Asiatics." Although this patron-saint of Buddhism is a central figure in the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment, it was the self-fashioned Sinhalese Buddhist convert, Anagarika Dharmapala, who first launched a concerted transnational campaign to reclaim the sacred grounds through the formation of the Mahabodhi Society.

As Guha-Thakurta (2004: 286) describes, Dharmapala is an "exemplary specimen of a colonial Sinhalese intellectual, a product of a curious mix of missionary education, Theosophical initiations, and occult mysticism" who was "reborn" to "Buddhism in the 1880s through the route of European Orientalism and Theosophy and made the Buddhist "recovery" of Bodh Gaya the lone cause of his later life." Born into a wealthy family in Colombo in 1864, the young English-speaking Don David Hewavitarne (who changed his name to Dharmapala around 1889) had taken interest in the

[26] This account by Sir Edwin Arnold was reproduced in the appendix of '*History of Maha-Bodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya*' (1900) by Anagarika Dharmapala. Printed by K.P. Mokkerjee and Co. Calcutta. London India Office, British Library.

Theosophical Society through its leading proponents H.P. Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott.[27] As an enthusiastic young supporter, in 1884 Dharmapala accompanied Colonel Olcott on a trip to Japan that was intended to establish new outposts for the Theosophical Society and to popularize the Buddhist Catechism that they had been working on (Trevithick 2006: 58). During their visit, the two Theosophical Ambassadors carried a letter in Sanskrit from the prominent Ceylonese Buddhist monk, Ven. Sumangala Nayaka Mahathera, which contained words of good wishes addressed to the Chief Priests of Japan. This was one of the first acts of communication which had passed between a Southern Buddhist and Northern Buddhist branch for centuries. In the process it convinced Dharmapala and Olcott that they were now playing a leading role in the revival of modern Buddhism.[28] While in Japan, Dharmapala fell ill, and while resting in his quarters, he read the popular text *Light of Asia* produced by Sir Edwin Arnold. In the word's of Dharmapala, rather than any canonical source: "The idea of restoring the Buddhist Jerusalem into Buddhist hands originated with Sir Edwin Arnold after having visited the sacred spot in 1886. It was he who gave me the impulse to visit the shrine, and since 1891 I have done all I could to make the Buddhists of all lands interested in the scheme of restoration" (Trevithick 2006: 59). As Trevithick (2006: 68) notes, it was the popularized and "ecumenical thrust of Arnold's proposal" which styled the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya as the symbolic centre of faith for "a million oriental congregations" that inspired Dharmapala's quest to reclaim the sacred space. Underlying this assumption was the belief that a culturally diverse and geographically scattered World Buddhist community would respond in a united fashion.

[27] The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 with the objective of investigating mediumistic phenomena and advancing the spiritual principles and search for Truth known as Theosophy (Greek: *theo* - of Gods, *sophia* – wisdom). Two of the main founders of the organization were Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) who moved to India and helped establish the International Headquarters at Adyar, Madras (Chennai). It was held by the Theosophists that all religions were both true in their inner teachings and problematic or imperfect in their external conventional manifestations. It was in India, that they became interested in studying Eastern religions, such as Buddhism.

[28] By modern Buddhism I am referring to ways in which leading theosophists such as Olcott and Blavatsky looked to unite different forms of Asian Buddhism through their publication of the "Buddhist Catechism" and based on a return to the "authentic" teachings of the Buddha. For theosophists and other Orientalist scholars during the late nineteenth century, the Buddha's experience of enlightenment was seen as compatible to many of the ideals of European enlightenment such as reason, empiricism, science, universalism and so forth. The essence of the Buddha's original teachings derived from the translation of Buddhist texts and philosophy, not in the current ritual adaptations and religious orthodoxy. Linked to modern Buddhism is Obeyesekere's notion of "Protestant Buddhism" that refers to the Buddhist reform movement in Ceylon which was strongly influenced by "modern" values of the British colonialists, incorporating elements of Protestant Christianity, while at the same time representing a modern Buddhist revival and protest against the domination of the British and Protestant missionaries. For more see Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1990).



Figure 2.3 Anagarika Dharmapala next to the Vajrasana, 1891
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India



Figure: 2.4 The Japanese image
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India



Figure: 2.5 Anagarika Dharmapala
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India

Moved by Sir Edwin Arnold's eloquent plea, Dharmapala and his friend, the Japanese Shingon priest Kozen Gunaratana, made a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya on January 22, 1891 with the aim of seeing the neglected condition of the famous Buddhist shrines in India. That afternoon, Dharmapala sat in contemplation adjacent to the *Vajrasana* and was visibly moved by the ruinous state of the Mahabodhi Temple as *the* geographical centre of Buddhist faith. According to Trevithick's (2006: 42) biographical study, from this point forward, Dharmapala "experienced a sense of mission that would structure the remainder of his life." In Dharmapala's own words: "As soon as I touched with my forehead the Vajrasana, a sudden impulse came to my mind to stop here and take care of this sacred spot, so sacred that nothing in the world is equal to this place where Prince Sakya Sinha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree."[29] Over the course of his six week visit to Bodh Gaya, Dharmapala also discovered that the situation was more complex, especially due to the fact that the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple appeared to be in the custody of the Giri sect. This prompted him to record in his diary that: "a powerful Buddhist's eloquent voice is needed to show the knavery of the selfish bigoted Brahman priests" (Trevithick 42).

With this diary entry, Dharmapala began his transnational campaign for Buddhist control of the Mahabodhi Temple with the ultimate goal of reclaiming sacred ground for the world Buddhist community. It is also important to note, that at this early stage of Buddhist mobilization for the cause, "neither Arnold nor Dharmapala knew the extent to which the temple was embedded in a system of longstanding local and regional relationships, at a concrete social level, and neither did they appreciate the extent to which the Buddha, and Buddhism itself, were encompassed, culturally and ideologically, by Hindu practices and ideas" (Trevithick 70). Thus, the program of reclaiming Buddhist sacred ground was by no means an easy task, especially given the ambivalence and "religious confusion" that involved overlapping ritual behavior at the site. Drawing a comparison with Ayodhya, Guha-Thakurta (2004: 286) suggests that "Bodh Gaya, too, emerges as a space of religious harmony and coexistence, unmarked by any overt signs of strife between Hindu and – in this case – Buddhist worshipers, until the intrusion of a reinvented modern-day form of the competing religion of Buddhism." In contrast, then, to the Burmese Buddhist team who maintained close relations with the Giri Mahant at Bodh Gaya over the course of their restorative efforts, the coming of Dharmapala is indicative of the modern reclamation of the site which espoused clearly defined religious boundaries over rites of worship and

[29] In other words, when Dharmapala first arrived in Bodh Gaya, he had not, up to this point, developed any anti-Hindu sentiment. Rather, as a '*chela*' or student of Master Koot Hoomi (one of the Masters of Wisdom from the teachings of Theosophy), Dharmapala was an advocate of occult science and spiritual pluralism rather than a Sinhalese Buddhist.

proprietorship of the temple grounds.

Building on a network of theosophical contacts among the Bengal High Society and the Ceylonese Buddhist community, Dharmapala made his aspirations concrete with the establishment of a *Maha Bodhi Society* on May 31, 1891 (referred to hereafter as the Mahabodhi Society of India). The High Priest of Ceylon, Sumangala Hekkuduwe was elected President; Theosophist Colonel Olcott was named Director and Dharmapala himself, became General Secretary. The main objective of the society was "to make known to all nations the sublime teachings of the Arya Dharma of Buddha Sakya Muni, and to rescue, restore and re-establish as the religious centre of this movement, the holy place Buddha Gaya, where our Lord attained supreme wisdom" (Trevithick 2006: 82). From the outset, Dharmapala had made explicit his ecumenical and transnational ambitions: "The society representing Buddhism in general, and not any single aspect of it, shall preserve absolute neutrality with respect to doctrines and dogmas taught by sections and sects among Buddhists. It is not lawful for anybody, whether a member or not, to attempt to make it responsible, as a body, for his own views" (Trevithick 82). Despite this new platform of Buddhist solidarity, efforts to reclaim the Mahabodhi Temple for the world Buddhist community proved to be an extremely complicated and challenging endeavor for Dharmapala. First and foremost, there was the misguided conduct of Hindu pilgrims who were not acting appropriately and that the Giri Sect should not have jurisdiction over a Buddhist temple. Having struggled to acquire land for the Mahabodhi Society in Bodh Gaya and not having any established rights to access the temple, Dharmapala set out on a urgent mission to build Buddhist networks, request financial support to purchase the temple and sow discontent against the Hindu control of the central monument of Buddhist faith.

At the outset of Dharmapala's campaign, the government of Bengal had not established any formal rights of proprietorship concerning the temple, nor had they envisioned doing so (Trevithick 84). Although the government of Bengal did not reject the notion that there may be some body capable of expressing the aspirations of the Buddhist communities, there was also concern that the activities of "outsiders" might exacerbate existing religious tensions. With regards to the purchase offer proposed by the Mahabodhi Society, the policy of the government up to this point had been: "that if the Buddhists want to put in a priest of their own, they must buy the Mahant out, with the goodwill of the Hindu community" (Trevithick 84). Dharmapala continued to press the British government to intervene and assure the sale of the Mahabodhi Temple to the Buddhist community. However, there was little support or backing by the Collectorate and Bengal who were content to steer clear of any religious

discord. Nor did the Mahant appear to have any interest in selling the temple itself. Thus, as a means of garnering wider public attention to the demands of the Mahabodhi Society, Dharmapala decided to stage a 'International Buddhist Conference' on October 31, 1891, and recruited a handful of Buddhists for this event.[30] Although this event was a relatively small gathering, the International Conference did set in motion a series of negotiations between Bengal's Lieutenant-Governor Elliott, The Collector of Gaya, G. A. Grierson and the Bodh Gaya Mahant. The conclusions derived from the state negotiations were that formal government jurisdiction, or private ownership by extra-national Buddhists would be unwise at this juncture because it was likely that the "Hindu community would object if any definite project were started for making it over to unknown strangers from Ceylon or Burma" (Trevithick 86). Dismayed by the lack of support, Dharmapala continued to sharpen the distinctions between Buddhist and Hindu traditions over the course of his religious galvanizing. According to Trevithick (2006: 88), this divisive shift away from the philosophical base of "theosophical piety" also led to confrontations with Colonel Olcott, who continued to see the Mahabodhi Society and Dharmapala's cause as merely a branch of the larger organization.

After the formal establishment of the Mahabodhi Society in 1891, Dharmapala continued to publicize the goals of the organization and mobilize support for the temple campaign through the staging of several ceremonial and commemorative events in Bodh Gaya and beyond. Central to Dharmapala's lobbying efforts was the establishment of the Mahabodhi Society headquarters in Calcutta and as editor of the newly inaugurated Mahabodhi Society Journal (MSJ). Through his journal writing, Dharmapala set out, in a style reminiscent of Sir Edward Arnold, to compare Bodh Gaya with other religious centres of world faith such as Mecca and Jerusalem. By linking Bodh Gaya with a global network of world pilgrimage centres this would help elevate the Buddhist memory of the site and anchor its symbolic geography in a central sacred place. As Trevithick (2006: 87) points out, although it is difficult to assess the influence of this kind of formula among a pan-Asian Buddhist community, it "functioned more to re-awaken, or perhaps to invent, such sentiments" in the first place. A key turning point in the transnational career of Dharmapala was his participation in the famous 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, where he accepted an invitation as a "representative of the Southern Buddhist Church" (Trevithick 95). The reception of his talk, entitled *The World's Debt to*

[30] Although the International Buddhist Conference was a relatively small gathering, it was attended by new members of the Mahabodhi Bodhi Society including Y. Ato, C. Tokugawa and Kozen Gunaratana of Japan, delegates from Sri Lanka, China and the Chittagong region. The Japanese delegates announced in the conference that the authorities of the Nishi Nonganji Temple were prepared to purchase the Mahabodhi Temple by paying an adequate price to the local Mahant. As will become apparent in the forthcoming chapters, the financial relationship between Japanese Buddhists and the Mahabodhi Society continues to this day.

Buddha, greatly bolstered his confidence and later commented in his diary that “some likened me to Christ!!!” (Trevithick 98). As Trevithick explains, this excursion to the United States not only redefined Dharmapala's self image as an international figure, but it also marked the beginning of a certain financial independence for the Mahabodhi Society, which led to increased strains among his larger Theosophical network. Central to this process was his encounter with a wealthy Hawaiian philanthropist named Mary E. Foster, who contributed a huge source of financial support to his various projects while en route to India through the Pacific.[31] In addition to this lucrative stop in Hawaii, Dharmapala visited Japan and Thailand, “propagandizing for the 'great cause'” before arriving back in India in the Spring of 1894 “with something of an international reputation, a new sense of purpose and possibility, and an independent source of financial support for his new society” (Trevithick 99).

While in Japan, the Kozen Gunaratna's family gifted Dharmapala with a seven-hundred year old Buddha statue that, it was hoped, could be installed in the abandoned upper-level chamber of the Mahabodhi Temple. Although his initial attempt to install the Japanese image was revoked by the Mahant's supporters and the District Magistrate, D. J. Macpherson, Dharmapala kept the image at the Theosophical Rest house at Gaya for a more opportune time. That day was February 25, 1895, when Dharmapala was moved by a deep revelation to install the Buddha statue in the early morning.

[31] One of Mary E Foster’s legacies is the ‘Foster Botanical Garden’ in Honolulu which is the oldest Botanical Garden in Hawaii and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Among other things, the garden contains a Sacred Fig via a cutting from Anuradhapura, which is a clone descendant of the Bodhi tree.

Despite his validating authority to establish the seven-hundred year old image at the Mahabodhi Temple, Dharmapala set out for Bodh Gaya accompanied by two Sinhalese monks and a lay pilgrim N.S. De Silva. It must be emphasized that at this point, Hindu priests and worshipers at Bodh Gaya had never seriously questioned the site's Buddhist past. However, with the installation of the Japanese image of the Buddha that early morning, Dharmapala was met with violent resistance from the Mahant's men who deemed the act offensive to the Hindus. This confrontation surrounding the installation of the Buddha image set in motion a longstanding legal contest that both polarized and concretized Buddhist and Hindu demands over rights of worship and proprietorship of the temple that continued up until the mid-twentieth century. Throughout his life, Dharmapala referred to these legal proceedings as the "Great Case" in an effort to galvanize support for the Mahabodhi Society and his historical mission as self-acclaimed leader of the international Buddhist campaign. In the middle of this dispute was the British colonial government, now pressed with the difficult and discomforting task of managing sacred space and competing forms of religious practice.

Throughout the long duration of the "Great Case" that is explored in detail by Trevithick (2006), the specific legal situation at Bodh Gaya had remained largely undefined. The proprietorship of the temple was best characterized as "dual custodianship," shared between the Mahant and to some extent, the British Government, whose claims it was believed "had existed ever since its restoration was undertaken" (Trevithick 121). The "Great Case" went through a series of appeals, which made transparent the challenges on behalf of the British Indian secular state in terms of "regulating, guaranteeing, or delimiting religious rights" (Trevithick 131). As Trevithick explains, ever since the 1858 proclamation by Queen Victoria announcing transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown, it "contained a strong and explicit promise to refrain from interference in religious matters" (Trevithick 132). In seeking a stance of religious neutrality, the extensive legal deliberations by the British government had in many ways strengthened the general impression that the Mahant was the actual owner of the Mahabodhi Temple and its sacred property. At the same time, it was acknowledged that Buddhists should have some right of worship and access to the temple, although the British government was reluctant to place the property of the temple in the hands of an extra-national body. For Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Society, the "Great Case" was in many ways a great failure. In light of the prolonged legal battle, Dharmapala was forced to pay upwards of 22,500 Rupees in legal fees and lost significant credibility as a representative body and transnational voice for pan-Asian Buddhism in India. According to Trevithick (2006: 135), this financial burden reflected poorly on his

Buddhist ecumenical ambitions in India and it was not until after the first World War that he managed to mobilize sufficient funds to open an additional Buddhist Vihara in both Sarnath and Calcutta.

Despite Dharmapala's shortcomings, the preservation and reclamation of Buddhist heritage received another boost under the new policies of Viceroy Lord Curzon and his attempt to place the temple within the *Ancient Monuments Preservation Act* of 1904. Along the lines of many Orientalist scholars before him, Lord Curzon held a strong sense of history and the place of the British Empire within it. According to Allen (2002: 6), Lord Curzon had once declared that "the sacredness of India haunts me like a passion" and as Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1904 he set out to preserve, protect and enhance India's past greatness. Through the preservation of India's rich cultural heritage, ancient monuments and artifacts could serve as emblems of Indian "civilization" that could be "held in trust against the neglect and depredation of a heedless population" (Trevithick 2006: 144). In terms of Bodh Gaya, Lord Curzon first became aware of its contested character on a trip to Mandalay, Burma. When visiting the Kuthodaw Pagoda on November 29, 1901 he received a petition from Burmese Buddhists expressing concern over the "fate of presents" sent by King Mindon "to the Temple," which had been allegedly appropriated by the Mahant (Trevithick 145). When Curzon became informed on the legal disputes and the competing claims of proprietorship over the Mahabodhi Temple, he sought to address the situation directly and *in favor* of Buddhist demands for the site. For this purpose, Lord Curzon visited Bodh Gaya in 1903 and took it upon himself to quiz the Mahant directly about his religious association with the Mahabodhi Temple. Although this meeting between Lord Curzon and the Mahant was not recorded in any extensive form, it is clear that the visit strengthened the Viceroy's conviction that the temple belonged to the Buddhists (Trevithick 2006).

Although failing to reach any grounds from which to devalue the Mahant's claims of ownership, a Commission was later formed under Lord Curzon that took up the issue of religious legitimacy over Bodh Gaya's sacred space. Having collected and examined the available evidence, it was recommended by the Commissioners that more "Government supervision is needed" to regulate and oversee appropriate religious conduct at the Mahabodhi Temple. It was also advised that a supervisory board of "five respectable gentlemen" excluding non-Indians and Buddhists due to their sectarian influence, be established (Trevithick 158).[32] Despite the Viceroy's active intervention to

[32] In a 1903 memorandum on Bodh Gaya produced by lieutenant governor of Bengal, J. A. Bourdillon to the viceroy Lord Curzon it states: 1) the temple was undoubtedly Buddhist and ought to be made over to the Buddhists; 2) true Hindu worship has never been conducted here" and orthodox Hindus did not consider it to be a Hindu temple; 3) *the mahant* should be induced to surrender ownership of the temple and its grounds in return for a payment by the Mahabodhi Society; 4) should *the mahant* remain obdurate, the government should consider "securing the ancient shrine for the state" under the preservation of Ancient Monuments Bill; and 5) once acquired the property should vest in the Bengal

establish a new form of state management and amicable negotiations over the controversial Mahabodhi Temple, in the end, the Mahant, Krishna Dayal Giri, refused to accept the new terms and once again the issue was dropped back to the level of regional administration. One of the benefits derived by the sympathetic British Government under Lord Curzon was that Dharmapala was finally able to obtain some land in Bodh Gaya for the construction of a Mahabodhi Society Rest House. While this was regarded as a major achievement for Dharmapala, complicated matters of custodianship and rites of worship continued to strain the reputation of the Society.

As an example of the competing visions of Hindu-Buddhist relations over the site, the arrival of Japanese pilgrim Okakura Kakuzō in 1903 provides an illuminating case. Okakura Kakuzō was a friend of Hindu reformer Vivekananda and brought to Bodh Gaya an alternative vision of place, one based on Hindu-Buddhist cooperation and a broad appeal to "common origins" rather than the politics of confrontation among two opposing religions.[33] Shortly after his arrival, the Japanese pilgrim entered into negotiations with the Mahant over a grant of land in Bodh Gaya for the construction of a rest house where an old Japanese priest could be stationed "until the first batch of pilgrims could be sent along" (Trevithick 171). Unlike the fierce opposition held between the Mahant and Dharmapala, the prospect of "a distinguished representative of Japan" was encouraged by the Mahant who was more than willing to cooperate with his request for land (Trevithick 171). As Trevithick (2006: 171) points out, although the British Government could not legally prevent the transfer of land to "an Asiatic alien," in light of the extensive legal proceedings and in response to the commission's report, Bengal had two main concerns: "1) that foreign influence in the area might exacerbate existing tensions and 2) that within the "Buddhist Community" itself, dangerous rivalries obtained." In an effort to avoid further international complications, the Bengal Government denied the building permit for the rest house offering the following statement: "Government is not satisfied that there is any necessity for another resthouse at [Bodh] Gaya and, moreover is of the opinion that the multiplication of interest there is undesirable" (Trevithick 172). As a result, the arrival of Okakura Kakuzō marked an important transition for the British government who finally, after years of legal and public contests, sought to distance itself from the local entanglements at Bodh Gaya and the direct administration of religious affairs. Following the

government and its administration be entrusted to a mixed committee of "officials and nonofficial Buddhists" (quoted in Guha-Thakurta, 2004: 295)

[33] Kakuzo Okakura was an art historian and philosopher who helped to popularize Asian ideas. Prior to his trip, as Reschauer (1980) describes (in Trevithick 2006: 168), Okakrua had "declared sententiously and quite inaccurately" that "Asia is one." As a kind of Japanese variant of the Orientalist project according to Trevithick (2006: 168), Okakura was able to build friendly relations with many prominent Hindus such as the Tagore family and the popular Vedantic activist Vivekananda, who had been Dharmapala's more famous rival at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

case of Okakura Kakuzō, there was only one final step taken by the British authorities to place the disputed Mahabodhi Temple within its government jurisdiction. This involved reclaiming the temple in terms of its archaeological value.

In light of the second partition of Bengal, in 1911 Bodh Gaya was geographically situated within the newly created provincial government of Bihar and Orissa. As part of an inventory of properties deemed worthy of the *Ancient Monuments Act* of 1904, an officer, J.F. Blakiston, provided a list to the provincial authorities in Patna on September 11, 1914 recognizing "Bodh Gaya and everything within the compound, Gaya" to be protected (Trevithick 173). According to Trevithick (2006: 174):

> in the context of the previous forty years' experience at the site, the inclusion of Bodh Gaya in Mr. Blakistons's list made little sense. Since the Burmese restoration project, three Governor-Generals of India, and three Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal had considered proposed changes in the management of the Mahabodhi temple. In each case, it had been determined that Government had no grounds to take executive action, and in each case the wisdom of this determination had been enhanced by the fear of negative Hindu reaction. At both provincial and central levels, and in spite of occasionally very strong sentiments for change, the government had demonstrated an inability to establish a new configuration of rights.

In response to the inventory by the Archaeological Survey of Bihar and Orissa, the Commissioner of Patna, A.W. Oldham accepted the enlisted properties as falling under the Act "except the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya and the images, sculptures, carvings, inscriptions, etc, within the compound of the temple" (Trevithick 174). I wish to highlight this decision by the Commissioner of Patna, because this was the final retraction by a British Indian authority to affect a new form of control and management over the contested site of memory at Bodh Gaya. The discourse used by the executive makes clear that: "the District Magistrate of Gaya very properly points out that to declare the Mahabodhi Temple and its surroundings to be a protected monument under the act might give rise to serious complications. Things had much better be left as they are at Bodh Gaya at present" (Trevithick 174).

In this section, I have explored the transnational claims and universal aspirations of Sir Edwin Arnold and Dharmapala to reclaim the sacred grounds of Bodh Gaya for the world Buddhist community. In outlining the various disputes over proprietorship and rites of worship at the Mahabodhi Temple, including the "Great Case," I have also discussed the ambivalence and political oscillations of the British Government of India in seeking to reconcile religious meaning at Bodh Gaya. From this point forward, questions surrounding management and proprietorship in Bodh Gaya were no longer

addressed by the British Government in India. Upholding a position of religious neutrality that had become disengaged from the administration of temple affairs, all the regional authorities could do was ensure that peace was maintained in the area. However, over the next thirty years, up until India's Independence, the demands for the Mahabodhi Temple by Buddhist groups was far from silent. In the context of an emerging Indian nationalist movement, the place of Buddhism and Buddhists became an important subject of discussion within the Indian legislative bodies and political organizations. As Trevithick (2006: 175) indicates, this arena required the development of a new language for Dharmapala and his supporters, one that was "not confrontational, but ameliorative" in terms of negotiation with the Indian politicians.

2.3 Recasting the Past: Indian National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru and the Bodh Gaya Temple Act

As I examined in the previous section, ever since the second partition of Bengal in 1911, Bodh Gaya and the claims of Buddhist groups became reconfigured as part of the provincial jurisdiction of the Government of Bihar and Orissa. Although at that time the British colonial authorities sought to distance themselves from religious matters, the foreign and Indian Buddhists claims for the Mahabodhi Temple found a sympathetic base among "secular" and "liberal" Hindus from the emerging Indian National Congress and the All-Indian Hindu Mahasabha. As Guha-Thakurta (2004: 288) explains, ever since the Mahabodhi Temple entered a "global map of demands and devotions, Bodh Gaya also found itself at the centre of a new national configuration." Therefore, it is important to see at this stage how the modern discourse surrounding religious identity and the management of sacred space became embedded in a larger Indian national context that required a strategy of "mutual interest and cooperation" (Trevithick 2006: 178). Although Dharmapala continued to editorialize for complete control of the central monument of Buddhist faith, over time, he also began to see the wisdom of lobbying for peaceful resolution based on Hindu-Buddhist unity over the shared Mahabodhi Temple grounds (Trevithick 178).

The Bodh Gaya question first came before an Indian nationalist representative body at a Gaya session of the Bihar Provincial Conference of the Indian National Congress in 1922. Under the chairperson Nanda Kishore Lal, the Mahabodhi Society's chief legal advisor proposed a legislative solution based on a "discourse of mutuality" which supported "Hindu-Buddhist veneration of a

common sacred ground" (Trevithick 178). In order to mobilize support among the popular Indian nationalists, Dharmapala had written to Mahatma Gandhi on a number of occasions, seeking his intervention and support for the cause. While in prison, following the violent outbreak at Chauri Chaura, Gandhi eventually replied to the Mahabodhi Society's repeated lobbying efforts but "seemed content to register sympathy and to blame the impasses on the inequities of British India" (Trevithick 179). Published in the Mahabodhi Journal, in Gandhi's own words, "much as I should like to help you, it is not possible for me to do anything directly at the present moment. The question you raise can be solved in a moment when India comes into her own" (Trevithick 179).

Gandhi's sympathetic statement and foretelling became a reality when two years after independence the Bodh Gaya Temple Act was formulated in 1949. However, prior to this point, the Mahabodhi Temple issue and the discourse of mutual cooperation continued to be shaped and structured by a number of public forums among the Indian National Congress (INC). Although the Mahabodhi Temple case remained a relatively marginal issue within the INC meetings, an important turning point was the Cocanada Conference, held in Andhra Pradesh in 1923. During the meeting, congress members were approached by a number of Burmese Buddhist delegates who insisted that a committee be formed to investigate the situation at Bodh Gaya. To this effect, a resolution was reached and the respected Bihari lawyer and the future first President of India, Rajendra Prasad, was given the task of spearheading the committee. Other members of the committee included Braj Kishore Prasad, Dr. Kashi Prasad Jaiswal, Ceylonese Buddhist, Gunasinha and Damodar Das, who later converted to Buddhism and became Bhikkhu Rahul Sankrityayana (Prasad 1957: 232). Although the committee appointed under Rajendra Prasad had not yet convened, during the joint-session of the All-Indian Congress and the All-India Hindu Mahasabha held at Begaum in 1924 the question of Bodh Gaya was once again pressed by a special Buddhist delegation dispatched by the Mahabodhi Society (Trevithick 2006). Similar to previous forums, most of the members of the INC were sympathetic to the Buddhist demands, but like the Government of Bengal some years earlier, they raised concerns about the "multiplication of interests" and argued that "international complications might arise if the temple were given over to Buddhists of foreign nationality" (Trevithick 2006: 180; Prasad 1957: 232). Having for all purposes abandoned the plight of reclaiming exclusive control of the temple, the Buddhist delegation at Belgaum was able to garner much conservative Hindu support by drawing on two sensitive issues: cow-killing and beef-eating (Trevithick 2006). As a result of their skillful negotiation around these issues, the Buddhist delegation was able to gain consensus from the participants in

support of guaranteed access for the Buddhists under a system of joint control. Although the shape that joint control would take in the context of the Mahabodhi Temple remained undetermined, the Begaum Conference helped to expand the support base of national elites that now included both the Indian National Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha (Trevithick 183).[34]

In the years that followed, the Bodh Gaya question continued to circulate through Dharmapala's editorializing and was raised during a number of public meetings held by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress throughout the country. However, due to the growing significance of the Indian National struggle, direct action on the case was often postponed. Dharmapala continued to work throughout his life for the Bodh Gaya cause, but in the latter part of his career, his efforts began to shift towards improving the Mahabodhi Society's properties in Sarnath, another prominent Buddhist pilgrimage site. As a result of a heart disease linked to rheumatism, Dharmapala fell ill in 1928 and shortly thereafter left India for treatment in Europe. It was not until 1931 that Dharmapala returned to India and Sarnath, where he took formal ordination as Sri Devamitta DhammaPala on July 31st and participated in the opening ceremonies for the newly constructed Mulagandhakuti Vihara on November 11th that same year. Wishing to die as a full member of the *Sangha*, he received the Upasampada or higher ordination on January 16, 1933 and passed away in Sarnath on April 29, 1933. Prior to his death, Dharmapala vowed to continue fighting for the Mahabodhi Temple in his next birth. After his demise, Dharmapala was succeeded by his trusted assistant Devapriya Valinsinha, who remained General Secretary for the next thirty five years.[35]

Although the passing of Dharmapala was a significant loss for the Bodh Gaya cause, informal discussions, negotiations, and petitions continued in the context of the Indian Legislative body from the Mahabodhi Society under Devapriya Valinsinha and Burmese members of the Legislative Assembly (Trevithick 2006). Throughout these petitions, it appears that the British Government of India and

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[34] In his autobiography, Rajendra Prasad's (1957: 233) states that the Hindu Mahasabha adopted a resolution recommending the management of the temple by a joint committee of Hindus and Buddhists: "We recommend that the management of the Buddha Gaya temple should be handed over to a joint committee of Hindus and Buddhists and that religious ceremonies in the temple should be performed according to Buddhist rites, without depriving Hindus of the right to worship and offer puja there." When the committee met with the Mahant directly, they tried to persuade him of their proposal, assuring reasonable compensation from the loss of income derived from pilgrims. The Mahant noted however, that the annual income is insignificant (roughly 2000 Rp), compared to the income generated from the Math, which amounted to several lakhs of rupees. More importantly, the temple bestowed great honor for the Mahant because it "commanded great respect in India and abroad" and was therefore, reluctant to relinquish it (Prasad 233).

[35] Devapriya Valinsinha was born in a village near Kandy in Sri Lanka on February 10, 1904. After studies in Colombo at the expense of Dharmapala, he came to Calcutta in 1917, where he passed his BA from the Presidency College in 1926. As the most devoted and trusted assistant of Dharmapala, he was appointed General Secretary and Treasurer of the MSI. He would later serve as one of four Buddhist members nominated for the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee that was first constituted in 1953, a position he held until his death. He died in Colombo in 1968.

associated national political organizations were more than inclined to see the matter drop to a provincial level. Overtime, other voices began to emerge in the public arena that held national persuasion in terms of their "Indian" identification rather than distinctly "Buddhist" religious views. Once Rajendra Prasad's committee was formed, he amassed a collection of testimonials and opinions regarding the Bodh Gaya question from a diverse set of Hindus and Buddhist sectarian groups. According to Trevithick (2006: 193), one of the more intriguing documents was a set of letters received from June to December 1937, from two Buddhists, Anagarika Suhrit Ranjan Roy, a Bengali, and Vincent de Silva, a Sinhalese, both joint secretaries of an ad-hoc organization entitled "The Buddha Gaya Defense League." With support by Buddhists from Burma and Chittagong, along with many Indians, the organization was preparing to launch a *Satyagraha* demanding Buddhist control of the temple. The issue was deemed to be important to all of India, as Bodh Gaya was described as "the emblem of the greatest civilization in India, nay, of the whole East" (Trevithick 193). Apologizing for the committees neglect of the issue, Prasad decided to place his report before the All-India Congress at Delhi on March 6, 1937 with the aim of resolving the contentious issue in an appropriate and swift manner. Although the *satyagraha* was never launched there was a growing opinion among its adherents that if the temple should be made over to "foreigners," a "grave injustice will be done to the Indian Buddhists. . . from Chittagong, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Kashmir" (Trevithick 195). Despite efforts from the Bodh Gaya Defense League to campaign for Buddhist control of the temple, the implementation of a bill transferring ownership to a joint-committee continued to be blocked in the legislative assemblies and never came to be debated seriously until after independence. However, as a small and ill-defined group, according to Trevithick (2006), they were able to affect the thinking of other prominent leaders in terms of a distinct "Indian solution" to the Mahabodhi Temple case.

With the end of the second world war and India's formal independence from British colonial rule on the horizon, the Mahabodhi Society, which have always regarded itself as the "prime mover in the campaign to recover the temple" once again began to mobilize Hindu support for the cause (Trevithick 196). In a conference sponsored by the Mahabodhi Society at the Birla Temple in Patna in 1946, chairperson Rajendra Prasad, now President of the Constituent Assembly and Jagatnarayan Lal, President of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, expressed that "the Buddhists should be given some measure of control over the temple" (Trevithick 198). Although the Giri Mahant continued to reject any principal of joint-control over the temple following independence, increasingly the terms of debate became more intense, with international pressure mounting from India's central role in the post-

colonial non-alignment movement.

As leader of the Indian National Congress and the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru had for long, held a personal interest in the Buddha and the central place of Buddhist civilization within the new national biography of India. Throughout his life, Nehru's reverence and admiration for the memory of the Buddha grew. In his two famous books *Autobiography* (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1946), the influence of Buddhism on the civilization of India is evident through his elaborate synthesis of historical events. The Buddha, echoing many Orientalist scholars before him, was revered as a "great social reformer" in the spirit of Sir Edwin Arnold's invocation from the *Light of Asia*. In his *Autobiography* Nehru writes: "The Buddha story attracted me even in early boyhood and I was drawn to the young Siddhartha who, after inner struggle and pain and torment, was to develop into the Buddha. Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* became one of my favorite books. In the later years when I traveled about a great deal in my province, I liked to visit many places connected with the Buddha legend, sometimes making a detour for the purpose" (Samtani MSJ 1965: 70).

Not only did Jawaharlal Nehru develop a keen interest in Indian Buddhist heritage but he also visited numerous Buddhist countries throughout his life. In particular, in his *Selected Works*, one can discern that Nehru held a strong attraction to Ceylon, which has symbolic ties to India linked by the journey of the Bodhi tree branch to Anuradhapura as early as 288 BCE. On a trip with his family to Ceylon prior to independence, he wrote in his autobiography that the Buddha has "always had a great appeal for me. It is difficult for me to analyse this appeal, but it is not a religious appeal, and I am not interested in dogmas that have grown up around Buddhism. It is the personality that has drawn me. So also the personality of Christ attracted me" (Samtani, MSJ 71). When describing his encounter with Buddhist monks in Ceylon, he also noted that the "the dominant expression of almost all of them was one of peace and calm, a strange detachment from the cares of the world. . . Life seemed to be for them a smooth flowing river moving slowly to the great ocean" (Samtani, MSJ 71). Although Nehru was drawn to the noble life of the Buddhist mendicant he also had his reservations: "I looked at them with some envy, with just a faint yearning for a haven, but I knew well enough that my lot was a different one cast in storms and tempests. There was to be no haven for me, for the tempests within me were as stormy as those outside" (Samtani, MSJ 71).



Figure 2.6 An exhibition held in Teen Murti House, New Delhi during the 2550th Buddha Jayanti Anniversary, 2006-2007

Given Nehru's homage to the memory of the Buddha and his universal message of peace, it does not come as a surprise that following India's independence on August 15, 1947, a number of Buddhist symbols were adopted as national emblems and crests of the Government of India. The strategic use of prominent Buddhist icons like the Dharma Wheel and the Lion-capital from the Ashokan Pillar at Sarnath not only signified India's inter-Asian cultural power as the birthplace of this great world religion but also provided a "neutral symbol" for navigating through the volatile Hindu-Muslim divide, especially in the aftermath of the Partition (Doyle 1997; Zelliot 1992). Throughout his career as Prime Minister (1947-1964), Nehru frequently recited the Buddha's teachings and Emperor Ashoka's compassionate ideals as examples for a secular path of progress and national prosperity. To this effect, Buddhism also found an important place in Nehru's expression of national foreign policy. His role as leader of the non-alignment movement and his refusal to align with any specific power block was in many ways the post-colonial expression of the "middle way." As Prime Minister of a newly independent country, he declared his foreign policy based on the five rules of conduct or *Panchasila*, which is a Buddhist term, calling for peaceful co-existence between people, nations and ideologies. In the speeches and letters to neighboring Buddhist countries, Nehru often evokes the "message of the Buddha," whose path of righteousness and spirit of transnational solidarity was as vital today as it was 2,000 years ago. As an example of Nehru's vision of India as a centre of inter-Asian

cultural power within the new post-colonial world order, he writes:

> If a nation is to be great, she cannot afford to have any barriers between her and the outside world or between different sections of her own people. If such barriers do exist, such a nation cannot influence the world nor can she take advantage of the experiences and discoveries of each others countries. After a continuous study of the history of India, I have noticed that whenever the nation has been at the peak of her greatness there have been few barriers between her and other nations. At such times her influence has spread far beyond her frontiers as ancient monuments at places like Angkor in Siam proved. India's strength had been cultural and did not arise from military strength. Her great men, too, like Gautama Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi belonged to the world (Nehru Selected Works, Vol. 8, 5: 5).

Given the universal and worlding aspirations of India by the mid-century, the unresolved Bodh Gaya question became an important and strategic means of mediating foreign policy within the region. With India as a favored location for pan-Asian conferences, the first Prime Minister was now anxious that neighboring Asian countries, including Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ceylon, and Burma should look to India as a friend. For this purpose, Nehru wrote in a letter to his Principal Private Secretary on February 15, 1949 that "it would be desirable to give a certain international character to this temple. . . [that] would have no executive authority or power but will nevertheless be helpful and will be a graceful gesture to the Buddhist world (Nehru Selected Works Vol. 9, 10: 110).

Although in many ways, Nehru envisioned himself as the modern incarnation of Ashoka and looked upon the Buddha as the "greatest son of India," still the ultimate legislative solution had to be resolved at the provincial level (Nehru Selected Works Vol. 33, 2: 24). For this purpose, the Prime Minister of Bihar, S.K. Sinha (later designated as Chief Minister), introduced a bill in the Bihar Legislative Assembly for a joint management scheme. This Draft Bill reflects decades of conflicting claims over Bodh Gaya's sacred property and builds directly on the groundwork of Rajendra Prasad's testimonials and report. Ultimately, the Draft Bill outlines a joint administration of the Mahabodhi Temple comprised of an equal number of Hindu and Buddhist representatives that are elected by the state government. Although direct government control became effectively nominal, the bill does ensure that the District Magistrate of Gaya would serve as the ex officio chairperson, which in reality tips the balance of power toward a Hindu majority (Guha-Thakurta 2004). Furthermore, the proposed legislature also ensured (as it still does today) "that Buddhist membership of the committee would be restricted by and large to "Indian Buddhists," keeping at bay not only the Mahabodhi Society but also the surging presence of Asian Buddhists at the site (Guha-Thakurta 297-298).[36] Not surprisingly, when

[36] Although Rajendra Prasad is one of the chief architects of the Draft Bill, in his autobiography he states: "I hold and believe that justice and fairness require that the management of the temple should be entrusted to the Buddhists, but as

the amendment was passed and the bill circulated for public comment in 1948, the Mahabodhi Society were opposed to the legislature and pressed for a number of changes. In order to satisfy the demands of the Mahabodhi Society, S.K. Sinha made a few amendments to the bill including, along the lines of Nehru's request, the establishment of a separate "advisory board" to be appointed by the Bihar state government but, importantly, to be comprised of a majority of Buddhists "who may not all be Indians" (Trevithick 2006: 200). The Bill, entitled the *Bodh Gaya Temple Act* (Bihar XVII of 1949), was eventually passed on June 19, 1949 with its purpose "to make provision for the better management of the Bodh Gaya Temple and the properties appertaining thereto."[37]

Although the Mahabodhi Society under Devapriya Valinsinha eventually accepted the new Bodh Gaya Temple Act, the Mahant Harihar Giri (1932-1958) remained distressed by the fact that the temple would no longer be in his possession. Shortly after the passing of the new provincial legislature, the Mahant petitioned to the Supreme Court declaring the Act a violation of the Constitution of India (Doyle 1997; Ahir 1994). The Mahant even succeeded in obtaining an injunction from the Magistrate of Gaya, preventing the Government from taking over the Mahabodhi Temple and entrusting its management to a Committee in accordance with the 1949 Act. As a result of these obstructive tactics, for nearly three years, the Government of Bihar was blocked from taking the temple and entrusting its management to a committee as envisaged in the Act. These actions had infuriated Nehru who went as far as threatening the Mahant that if he did not give up the temple he would "look quite closely" at the amount of land then owned by the Math (Doyle 1997: 181). Thus, it was only towards the end of 1952 that the first Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee was finally constituted with the following representatives: the five Hindu members were the Chairperson, K.N. Sinha; Kumar Ganga Nand Singh, R.L. Nandakeolyar; Brij Kishore Narain Singh; and Mahant Harihar Giri. The four Buddhist members included Devapriya Valinsinha of the MSI; Jinaratana Bhikkhu of Assam; Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap; and Dr. Arabinda Barua. The first Superintendent of the Mahabodhi Temple was Anagarika Munindra from the Chittagong region.

The actual ceremony which transferred jurisdiction of the Mahabodhi Temple from the Mahant Harihar Giri to the new management board took place during the Buddha *Purnima* day on May 28

Hindus also look upon Lord Buddha as one of the incarnations they should also be represented" (234).

[37] This committee, formally called the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC), operates under a set of by-laws that were adopted on February 26 1957. It consists of a chairperson and eight members. The Act specifies that all members of the Committee shall be Indians and that among the eight, four shall be Buddhists and four Hindus (normally including the mahant). The Chairperson, the ninth member, is the District Magistrate of Gaya District, so long as the district magistrate is a Hindu; whenever the district magistrate of Gaya is a non-Hindu, "the State Government shall nominate a Hindu" to serve as chairperson of the Committee.

1953.[38] As Trevithick (2006: 201-202) points out, in many ways the ritual ceremony serves as a sort of mnemonic device that encapsulates many of the underlying issues that characterized the dispute prior to the transfer of power to a joint-committee. Drawing over 5000 people, the ceremony began with a procession of Buddhists monks and laypeople from the Mahabodhi Rest House to the temple grounds led by a contingent of trumpet-playing Tibetans and followed by Ceylonese, Burmese, Cambodian and Indian Buddhists. Presiding over the ceremony was the Governor of Bihar, Sr. R.R. Diwaker, and Dr. S.K. Sinha, the Chief Minister of Bihar. In his presidential remarks the Chief Minister recalled the glory the Buddha had bestowed on the land of Bihar and hoped that Buddhists from all over the world would come in large numbers to revive the dry fountain of Buddhist culture and restore the link between India and the world. There were Sanskrit Hymns offered by disciples of the Mahant, the recitation of Buddhist *suttras* in Pali, hymns to Vishnu and a number of messages of congratulations read out by prominent foreign and Indian dignitaries. Following the official declaration presented by the Mahant to the new Chairperson of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC), a Hindu employee of the Bihar Education Department brought the celebration to an end with extracts from Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia.*

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the various terms of dispute over the Mahabodhi Temple's sacred property that spanned the nineteenth and twentieth century. As Tara Doyle (1997) indicates, this ceremonial transfer marked the conclusion of some three centuries of Math Jurisdiction over the Mahabodhi Temple and the commencement of increased Buddhist and Bihar State influence over its management and development. The changes that have taken place since that time are the basis of this historical ethnography. Drawing on previous scholarship, especially Trevithick (2006), in this chapter I have contextualized the ways in which concerns over “foreign influence” and “international complications” deriving from Buddhist claims to sacred space were at the heart of the modern reinvention of this contested site of memory. As will become evident throughout this dissertation, there are many themes and issues presented in this background chapter that resonate in the post 1953

[38] The first formal meeting of the BTMC was held at Gaya on April 26, 1953. Some important decisions that were made included: the appointment of a caretaker or superintendent to look after the affairs of the temple; the appointment of two Buddhist *Bhikkhus* to conduct worship in the temple (one of whom was to be maintained by the MSI); the placing of a charity box inside the temple to facilitate offerings; and to arrange a thorough cleaning of the temple and surrounding area.

period. At the same time, there are also significant changes and discontinuities that I seek to bring out in the set of chapters that follow. What are the various historical and spatial tensions that have arisen over claims to sacred property in Bodh Gaya since 1953? How is the resource of heritage negotiated through complex postcolonial and transnational frames? Central to these questions are a set of processes tied to the deepening transnational effects on the site and its culmination with the 2002 designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage site. While disputes over rites to worship and the politics of religious identity continue to coalesce under the surface of this contested site of memory there are other important relationships and spatial commitments surrounding pilgrimage, tourism and heritage that I now turn too.

3. CHAPTER THREE

THE NAVEL OF THE EARTH: BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE AND TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS NETWORKS

> Pasts become meaningful and usable only when they are activated by the contemporary desires of individuals and communities, and, most powerfully, by the will of the nations (Guha-Thakurta 2004: xvii)

In the last chapter, I described the inaugural ceremony transferring jurisdiction of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex to a joint Hindu-Buddhist administration under the *Bodh Gaya Temple Act* (1949). This event marked a historical turning point in the transformation of Bodh Gaya's spatial environment from a contested site of religious faith under British colonial rule, to a centre of international Buddhist pilgrimage within a post-colonial national order. Although the legal stipulations outlined by the *Bodh Gaya Temple Act* have remained a point of contention among many Buddhist followers and sympathizers, it does signal an important historical shift towards increasing Buddhist influence over the Mahabodhi Temple and its surroundings (Doyle 1997). As I examined in the previous chapter, central to the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment has been the influence of Buddhist missionaries and transnational religious movements like the Mahabodhi Society of India (MSI) that have played an integral role in mobilizing pan-Asian Buddhist support to reclaim sacred ground. Just a year prior to his death, Anagarika Dharmapala wrote in his diary that at Bodh Gaya, "Burmese, Japanese, Chinese, Siamese [and] Tibetans should have cottages built for each country" (Trevithick 2006: 205). Following Dharmapala's expiration, this prophetic statement has become a concrete reality. At Bodh Gaya today, there are over forty Buddhist institutions that include monasteries, temples, and/or quest houses with many representing the unique aesthetic and architectural styles of different Buddhist countries.[39] Many of these opulent and lavish religious landmarks, like the new Karmapa Monastery or the older Royal Wat Thai, present a pronounced spatial and visual counterpoint to the impoverished rural landscape that surrounds them.

In this chapter, I examine the relationship between Buddhist pilgrimage and the construction of monasteries, temples and/or guest houses at Bodh Gaya that grew out of the 1956 Buddha Jayanti

[39] The intensification of religious forms of globalization is not isolated to Bodh Gaya, but also reflects a growing pattern among other prominent sites of religious memory such as the Buddhist pilgrimage sites at Lumbini, Sarnath, Kusinagara, Sravasti, Rajgir and so forth.

celebrations. In order to delineate the historical and spatial tensions that underlie the UNESCO World Heritage designation I explore the emerging forms of transnational Buddhism that have played an integral role in elevating the Buddhist memory of the site and transforming the physical and cultural landscape.[40] How is the place of Buddha's enlightenment made sacred through certain transnational religious networks and spatial forms? What are the aims and objectives of these religious centres in relation to pilgrimage, patronage and place memory? Finally, what strategies are employed by foreign Buddhist groups to build a spiritual community and negotiate the complex cultural and religious forms of difference? In the first section, I provide a historical and descriptive overview of the different national and regional networks of Buddhist institutions at Bodh Gaya. Drawing on interviews, surveys and historical material, I provide details on prominent religious figures, specific institutions and events that have shaped the globalization of Buddhism at Bodh Gaya within the last fifty years.[41] Spatially, these monastic and architectural developments are also significant because this projects an image and presence of Buddhism over the surrounding geography. In describing the proliferation of foreign Buddhist institutions at Bodh Gaya it is important to note that these religious centres and their caretakers have not escaped criticism, especially in recent decades as a result of competing local interests. In the second half of the chapter I examine the spatial politics of land acquisition under Jungle Raj and the moral and ethical quandaries they entail.

3.1 Buddhism and the Nation-State: Pilgrimage and the Return of the Religious Diaspora

Among the diverse streams of Buddhism that form the religious diaspora, Bodh Gaya is regarded as the *navel of the earth*: a place of pilgrimage and site of sacred reverence due to the significance of Buddha's enlightenment over 2550 years ago. Although transnationalism and the flow of people, ideas, and goods across regional and nation-state boundaries are often regarded as a recent historical phenomenon, pilgrimage and religious movement have always been central to the practice of

[40] In using the term “transnational Buddhism” I am referring to religious migrants who “live their lives across borders and maintain their ties to home, even when their countries of origin and settlement are geographically distant” (Basch, L., N. G. Schiller, et al. 1992.: ix). Rather than using “traditionalist” and “modernist” frameworks to approach Buddhism I am interested in examining the role of Buddhist diasporic communities and the global dissemination and exchange of Buddhist ideas, practices, teachers and images that converge on Bodh Gaya's sacred space. For more on the developmental periods, regional histories and analytical perspectives of global Buddhism, see Martin Baumann: http://www.globalbuddhism.org/ Vol 2, 2001.

[41] Most of the information collected in this chapter derives from interviews and surveys with the head monks and caretakers of various monasteries in Bodh Gaya. There were also a number of supplementary data gathered through articles and publications by the monasteries themselves, along with local Buddhist journals such as the *Mahabodhi Society*, *Sambodhi and Prajna*.

Buddhism. From the initial renunciation at the Sakya kingdom in Kapalivastu, to his final Nirvana in Kusinagara, the Buddha placed movement at the core of his spiritual life. According to the various textual versions of the *Mahaparinirvana* ("Great Final Enlightenment") *Sutra*, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to undertake pilgrimage and visit the places associated with the pivotal events in his spiritual life: Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Isipatana (Sarnath) and Kusinagara.

> Ananda, there are four places the sight of which will arouse strong emotion in those with faith. Which four? 'Here the Tathagata was born', this is the first place. 'Here the Tathagata attained Enlightenment', this is the second place. 'Here the Tathagata set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma', this is the third place. 'Here the Tathagata attained final Nirvana without remainder', this is the fourth place. The monk or nun, layman or laywoman, who has faith should visit these places. And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these places with a devout heart will, at the breaking up of the body, be reborn in heaven.[42]

In the centuries following Buddha's Nirvana, ardent devotees and disciples have crossed regional, cultural and large geographical boundaries, enlarging the global scope of Buddhism and reinforcing the religions sacred ties to the Indian subcontinent. Among those sites of memory sanctioned by the Buddha, Bodh Gaya is certainly the most important destination for pilgrimage.

Although the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment began in the nineteenth and twentieth century, it is important to highlight that the claims of international Buddhists today also reflect a much deeper historical pattern in the Indian subcontinent. Bodh Gaya's historical and sacred significance is one that is supplemented by a long history of epigraphical and literary sources which bears testimony to the site's importance as a centre of pilgrimage, art, learning and cultural interchange over the centuries.[43] Since the time of Emperor Asoka (304 - 232 BCE), there had been an institutional presence of Buddhist followers at this geographical centre of faith. The establishment of *Viharas* and *Sangharamas* that grew in the shadow of the Mahabodhi Temple was integral to the maintenance of the central shrine, the propagation of Buddhist teachings, and the economic life of the surrounding villages.[44] In fact, many establishments were also borne out of royal

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[42] This version of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra was reproduced from Dhammika (1996: 3).

[43] For more on Bodh Gaya and earlier narrative accounts of pilgrimage traffic since the time of the Ashoka see Dhammika (1996) *Navel of the Earth" The History and Significance of Bodh Gaya*. Also Aitken (1995) *Meeting the Buddha: On Pilgrimage in Buddhist India.*

[44] The Sanskrit and Pali term *Viharas* and *Sangharama* refer to a place of worship or a Buddhist monastery. According to Dhammika (1996: 47-49), these dwellings were likely seasonal abodes for wandering monks during the rainy season but over the centuries they became important centres of royal patronage and religious practice. The economic function of these monasteries are often overlooked and the cost of repairs and endowments must have been extensive. According to Dhammika, some of the monks at Bodh Gaya were likely involved in the management of property as they were in religious matters. Although the basis of Bodh Gaya's wealth was likely generated through donations, like in other parts of north-east India, many of the monasteries would have held land grants or villages provided by Kings. According to

patronage as acts of merit and served to accommodate visiting pilgrims and guests coming from abroad. For example, the famous Chinese pilgrim *Xuanzang* describes staying at a huge monastery founded by King Meghavanna of Sri Lanka in the fourth century, which is believed to have existed in Bodh Gaya for over nine hundred years.[45] It is the re-emergence of these Buddhist centres and their global connections in the twentieth and early twenty-first century that is the focus of the section that follows.

In the post-independence period, international interest in India's Buddhist geography grew substantially in the early fifties and culminated in the nation-wide celebration of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti, held in 1956. This commemorative event, marking the birth, enlightenment and *Parinirvana* of the Buddha, was a historical landmark for the revival of Buddhism at Bodh Gaya and helped to revitalize key inter-Asian links to the sacred geography.[46] The main lobbying force behind the event was the Mahabodhi Society which looked for co-operation from both the Indian state and their international network of supporters across a wide spectrum of the Buddhist world. Although the Buddha Jayanti was a year long event, the celebrations reached its zenith over the course of three days on May 22-25, 1956. During this period, thousands of international Buddhists, foreign dignitaries and local people converged on Bodh Gaya's sacred space to honor the memory of the Buddha within its newfound national context (Doyle 1997). As a largescale nationwide program, this event helped to reinforce the idea that Bodh Gaya was the centre of the Buddhist world within a wider international arena.[47]

Dhammika, these reports are especially common during the Gupta period.

[45] According to Dhammika's (1996: 25) analysis, during the early decades of the 4th Century the Mahabodhi monastery was established in Bodh Gaya. The monastery is linked to the younger brother of King Meghavanna of Sri Lanka (304-332 ADE), a monk of royal birth, who embarked on pilgrimage to India and complained about ill treatment by other monasteries en route to Bodh Gaya. In light of these events he sent an envoy to the King Samudragupta of India with a gift of jewels and seeking permission to build monasteries at all the sacred places for the convenience of Buddhist pilgrims. Furthermore, according to *Xuanzang's* account of the Mahabodhi Monastery, at the front entrance was inscribed a copper plate where Meghavanna proclaimed the establishment's policy of hospitality: "To help all without distinction is the highest teachings of all the Buddhas, to exercise mercy as occasion offers is the illustrious doctrine of former saints" (Dhammika 26)

[46] Although there is little consensus among historians and Buddhist schools around the specific date of the birth, enlightenment and *Parinirvana* of the Buddha, among Theravada Buddhists this date is often associated with *vesak*, a full moon which falls in late April or May.

[47] Some of the nationwide activities included: physical improvements made at Buddhist sites, the publication of dozens of government sponsored books and pamphlets on Buddhism and Buddhist Places (such as the book, entitled *2500 Years of Buddhism*, produced by the Publications division of the Government of India Information and Broadcasting Ministry), the broadcasting of numerous features, talks, and dramas about Buddhism by All India Radio, the convening of an International Buddhist Conference, the erection of the Buddha Jayanti Monument in Delhi, the issuing of a commemorative stamp, the making of a government sponsored film on the Life of Buddha, publication of the complete Pali Tripitaka in a number of Indian languages, and the organization of thousands of Buddha Jayanti cultural events and cultural progammes on the life and teachings of the Buddha. For more on the Buddha Jayanti events see Doyle 1997: 204.

In addition to the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations, 1956 was significant for two other important reasons. Firstly, there was the establishment of the Government constituted *Bodh Gaya Temple Advisory Board* (BGTAB) consisting of a Buddhist majority ["who may not all be of Indian citizenship"] that provided an important transnational link for the representation of Buddhists from different nations.[48] As I examined in the previous chapter, the establishment of an advisory board that could provide international advocacy was closely aligned with Nehru's national vision of India at the centre of a new post-colonial world order. The second event was the conversion of the untouchable leader Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956) to the Buddhist faith on October 14th in Nagpur, Maharashtra. On this special occasion, Ambedkar embraced the Three Refuges and Five Precepts and then proceeded to convert an estimated half million of ex-untouchable followers. According to Doyle's (1997: 207) analysis, Ambedkar "self-consciously waited until the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's *Parinirvana* to stage this *diksa* ceremony, and that his timing lent tremendous symbolic weight and visibility to the controversial act." Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine the legacy of Ambedkar's highly symbolic conversion to Buddhism, it is sufficient to say that the Dalit political leader had also hoped to revive and reinvent Buddhism as a living religion throughout its native land.[49] In the sections that follow, I provide a detailed survey of the transnational histories and regional networks of Buddhist institutions that have acquired land at Bodh Gaya following the landmark 1956 Buddha Jayanti year.

3.1.1 Thailand and Southeast Asian Buddhism

In the wake of international success generated from the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations, the

[48] The first meeting of the BGTAB was held on March 17th 1956 although it was not until 1959 that the Governor of Bihar formally established the rules and regulations of the advisory board. The primary task of the BGTAB is to advise the Indian government on the development aspects of the temple and Bodh Gaya in general. Based on the regulation, the BGTAB is to consist of no less than 20 members of which two thirds should be Buddhist with at least half of them foreign citizens. All the members of the Board are appointed by the Government of Bihar and the BGTAB usually meets every two years. The first BGTAB meeting was composed of the following members: District Magistrate of Gaya; U. On Pe, Burma; Bhikkhu Amritanand, Nepal; Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim; Devapriya. Valisinha, Mahabodhi Society of India; Ponn Sanpheach, Cambodia; Edwin Wijayratne, Ceylon; Director General of the ASI; Commissioner of Patna Division; Ex-Officio members: Dr. P. L. Vaidya, Director of Mithila Sanksrit Institute; Mr. N. C. Barua, Calcutta; Mr. Kosho Othami, Japan; Mr. Caopuch, China. For more on the BGTAB Board rules and meetings see Barua (1981) and Bannerjee (1996).

[49] Ambedkar had explicitly rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy based on caste inequalities. Shortly after his mass conversion, Ambedkar traveled to Kathmandu in Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. He then undertook pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kusinagaraa before expiring that same year. Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956, although his legacy continues (see chapter six).

King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej, was one of the first royal dignitaries in the post-independence era to acquire land in Bodh Gaya for the construction of a temple and rest house. Under direction from the Prime Minister of India, a large plot of land was gifted to the Royal Government by the Government of Bihar in 1957. The Royal Wat Thai became the first Buddhist monastery and temple in Bodh Gaya to be built under the jurisdiction of a foreign head of state. To celebrate the growing cultural exchange program between India and Thailand, a golden Buddha image was also installed in the Royal Wat Thai on May 3rd 1967 as a donation from the Prime Minister of Thailand, Thanom Kittikachorn. Special transportation provisions were made to ensure the safe arrival of the golden Buddha image, which was flown from Bangkok to Bodh Gaya on a special U.S. Military aircraft. Following a set of ritual rounds and *puja* at the Mahabodhi Temple the image was installed in the temple, where a message sent by the King of Thailand was read: "Let the installation of the Buddha image in the birth place of Lord Buddha and at the exact place where he attained Enlightenment symbolize the international friendship between India and Thailand."[50]



Figure 3.1 Royal Wat Thai

As a result of generous funding from the Government of Thailand, in the early 1970s, the Royal Wat Thai received a significant makeover and was re-modeled after the famous Marble Temple in Bangkok: *Wat Benchamabopit Dusitwanaram*. I begin this section with the Royal Wat Thai because in

[50] The image is 3.60 meters in height and cost upwards of 10,000 lakh. From the nearby Gaya aerodrome, the image was taken to Bodh Gaya in a procession led by the Head Monk Para Deb Visuddhimoli and a team of forty five guests from Thailand that included the mother-in-law of the Thai Prime Minister. For more details on the event see the *Mahabodhi Society Journals.*

many ways it served as a key benchmark for other national expressions of Buddhist architecture and aesthetic design that followed in its aftermath. With its sloping curved roof covered in golden tiles, the beautifully adorned Royal Wat Thai was the only Thai Buddhist institution in Bodh Gaya in the late twentieth century. It was not until the commencement of direct international flights from Bangkok to Gaya in 2002 that helped initiate a recent surge in Thai Buddhist pilgrimage activities and a growing number of religious centres from Southeast Asia. One of these institutions is the Wat Pa Buddha Gaya, located directly south of the Mahabodhi Temple. The name Wat Pa derives from its close association with Payap-Parutai Shinawatra, the younger brother of the now deposed Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The head monk is Dr. Bhudiyano, who is part of the Buddhist Thai Bharat Society under the Forest Monk tradition. In 2004, the Wat Niranjana was also established under the directorship of head monk Phrarajpipatanatorn, or otherwise known as, Luang Por Thavorn.[51] This educated Thai monk has two honorary degrees from California and New York, as well as a large global network of supporters, including a prominent monastery and temple based in Austin, Texas. Lastly, three other Southeast Asian Buddhist centres that have acquired land in recent years that include: the Cambodian Buddhist Monastery (2003); the Thai Bodhi Kham (2004) and the Wat Thai Magadh Vipassana Centre (2006).[52]

3.1.2 Burmese, Vipassana and Western Meditation Instructors

Another distinguished guest at Bodh Gaya during the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations was the first Prime Minister of the new Democratic Republic of Burma, U Nu (1905-1997).[53] As a leading Burmese nationalist and political figure in the post-colonial era, the arrival of U Nu provides another example of the continuing importance of pilgrimage and royal patronage by distinguished leaders of this neighboring Theravada country. During U Nu's visit to the place of enlightenment, he came into

[51] Luang Por Thavorn was born on March 4, 1952 in Nonesilaloeng, a small village in the Kalasin Province, Northeast of Thailand. He was ordained as a Buddhist novice at the Pordaeng Temple, located at Amphur Yangtalad in Kalasin Province.

[52] Thai Bodhi Kham was first established in 1979 when land was purchased in village Miya Bigha (Siddhartha Nagar) by the late Dr. Dhamma Wansa. However, it was not until 2004 that the organization was formally registered. Since 1979 the Thai Bodhi Kham has been run by Buddhist disciples of Dr. Dhamma Wansa from the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh.

[53] U Nu was a devout Buddhist and popular political leader of Burma. He had the Kaba Aye (World Peace) pagoda and the Maha Pasana Guha (Great Cave) built in 1952 in preparation for the Sixth Buddhist Council that he convened and hosted in 1954-1956 as prime minister. The council concluded in 1956 which coincided with the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations. On August 29, 1961 U Nu was also instrumental in declaring Buddhism as the official state religion in the Parliament. However, this constitutional amendment became largely ineffective when Ne Win took over power in March 1962.

contact with Acharya Anagarika Munindra (1915-2003), a Bengali Buddhist from the Chittagong region, and the first superintendent of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) from 1953-1957. After meeting the superintendent, the Prime Minister invited Anagarika Munindra to visit Burma for the purpose of receiving instruction in Vipassana meditation from the famous Mahasi Sayadaw at Thathana Yeikta in Rangoon (Pryor 2005). Shortly after the Prime Minister's request, Munindra relinquished his position on the BTMC and departed for Burma in early 1957 where he spent nearly ten years at the Mahasi Sayadaw's meditation centre in Rangoon. According to Pryor (2005: 8) "his visit was facilitated through a government project organized by U Nu to sponsor foreigners who wanted to learn Vipassana meditation in Burma." A program that was "an integral part of U Nu's emphasis on the government sponsorship of Buddhism which included the Sixth Buddhist Council in Rangoon in 1954" (Pryor 8). It was not until 1966 that Munindra returned to India and Bodh Gaya, where he embarked on a lifetime of meditation instruction and teaching.

The return of Anagarika Munindra and the Vipassana meditation tradition had a tremendous effect on the Burmese monastery at Bodh Gaya and abroad. In the previous chapter, I described the significance of the Burmese mission and restoration work that began in 1877. Growing out of these arrangements with the Bodh Gaya Mahant was the construction of a Burmese Rest House that was built 80 yards west of the Mahabodhi Temple under King Mindon Min's delegation. Although the rest house was later demolished in preparation for the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956, a second Burmese *Vihara* was established in 1936 by Ven. Nandamala.[54] Located on the Gaya riverside road, this has been the main Burmese Buddhist centre throughout the latter part of the twentieth century. However, during the military coup d'état led by Military General Ne Win in 1962, Burma was largely closed off to foreigners and many of the Burmese monks abroad were ordered back (Pryor 2005).[55] Despite the military imposed travel restrictions, the Burmese Monastery found new forms of financial and spiritual support in the late 1960s, when it became a central institution in the revitalization of the Vipassana movement, especially among western travelers, hippies and meditation enthusiasts seeking training and

[54] The Burmese Vihara was built on land acquired by the Tekari Raj and is located along the Niranjana and north of the Police station. According to the present Abbott of the Burmese Vihara, U. Nyaneinda, the first Abbott of the new Vihara was U. Nandumala who stayed for two months. Following this it was U. Dhammetsara who remained in Bodh Gaya for seven years up until 1943. He was replaced by U. Otiama until 1966, and from 1966 to 1976 the main Abbott was U. Tilawka.

[55] Although Burma underwent a radical militarization of the state after 1962, Burmese state leaders continued to undertake pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya. In 1968 for example, Military General Ne Win, along with his wife and a party of twenty members, visited Bodh Gaya on March 22. In exile from Burma, U Nu also returned to Bodh Gaya for one week in mid-November 1974 with his son and son-in-law. During his visit they were ordained as *Samanera* (novices) under the Bodhi tree and he also offered a donation 15,000 Rs to the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee as part of the Kathina Civara Dana Ceremony.

basic accommodations. Ever since Munindra returned from Burma to Bodh Gaya, he was an active meditation teacher offering personal instruction at both the Burmese Vihara and the Samanvay Ashram.[56] With his kind and gentle demeanor, Munindraji (as he was often called) was able to make the teachings and practical guidance accessible to a growing number of Western Buddhist followers. According to Robert Pryor (2005), from 1966 to 1969, Anagarika Munindra was the only English speaking Vipassana teacher available in India and many of his students from Europe and America such as Surya Ram Das, Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg, have gone on to become popular western Buddhist teachers.





Fig. 3.2 U Nyaneinda, the present Abbot of the Burmese Vihara

Fig. 3.3 U Nu of Burma before his formal ordination under the Bodhi Tree
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India

Following in the footsteps of Munindra was Satya Narain Goenka. Although of Indian descent, S. N. Goenka was born in Burma in 1924 and received formal training in Vipassana from the teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971) beginning in 1955.[57] After fourteen years of training, beginning in

[56] The Samanvay Ashram was founded in 1954 by Dwarko Sundrani and Vinoba Bhave (see chapter four). It is a charitable trust that works towards the betterment of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the Bodh Gaya region. The ashram is based on Gandhian values and is a centre for research and training in education and development.

[57] Goenka is a central figure in the global diffusion of the Vipassana movement and has taught tens of thousands of people throughout the world. The Vipassana technique that S.N. Goenka teaches represents a tradition that is believed to be traced back to the Buddha. His approach is entirely non-sectarian and regards the *Dhamma* – not Buddhism – as the

1955, Goenka returned to India in 1969 and began leading ten-day Vipassana meditation courses and camps throughout the country. In Bodh Gaya, Goenka's first meditation camp took place at the Samanvay Ashram on August 4th 1970 and continued to offer several ten-day courses over the winter season at both the Ashram and the Burmese Vihara. These informal courses were taught on the roof of the building or under large tents and could draw upwards of 200 participants. However, by the mid-seventies, S.N. Goenka no longer came to Bodh Gaya and Munindra provided his last retreat in the 1977-78 winter season. According to Tara Doyle, this was "an end of an era for westerners" but the gap was eventually filled through different channels of meditation instruction.[58]

One teacher in particular is Dr. Rashtrapal Bhikkhu, a Barua Buddhist from the Chittagong region who established the International Meditation Centre (IMC) in the early seventies and is today one of the senior monks in Bodh Gaya.[59] There were also a number of influential western practitioners and teachers that became an established part of the winter season in Bodh Gaya form the mid-seventies onwards.[60] One of these instructors is Christopher Titmuss and the insight meditation group which has been leading popular ten-day retreats based out of the Royal Wat Thai every January and February since 1975.[61] There is also the prominent Antioch Buddhist Studies Program which began in 1979.

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way to liberation. The main Dhammagiri Institute/Vipassana International Academy was founded by Satya Narain Goenka in 1974 in Igatpuri near Bombay.

58 Personal Interview, March 09, 2007.

59 Rashtrapal became an ordained monk in 1953. Over the years he has gained a reputation as a scholar of Buddhism, especially the Pali Canon and meditation practice. Rashtrapal acquired five acres of private land for the IMC just opposite the Magadh University in 1975. In 1990 the IMC shifted locations opposite the Royal Wat Thai and offers accommodation and teachings for pilgrims, especially the many Bangladeshi Barua and Indian Buddhists who visit throughout the year. Rashtrapal is also known for the annual Kathina Civara Dana ceremonies that he organized in 1971 and today draws some 3000 - 4000 Buddhists from eastern India and Bangladesh. In 1984 he was nominated as one of the 4 Buddhist members of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee and was an active member over the tenure period of (1984-1994). Recently two hundred articles on Buddhism were published in a collective volume entitled *The vision and the writings of the Venerable Rashtrapal Mahathera*.

60 Other prominent Western teachers during this time include Mr. Michael Kewlay who held retreats for three months for Westerners beginning in the month of December and used to be held at the Government of Bihar Hotel and at the Old International Meditation Centre. In 1986 Buddhist teacher Andrew Cohen also visited Bodh Gaya and participated in a Vipassana retreat held by Christopher Titmuss. After a life-transforming encounter with Indian master of Advaita Vedanta H.W.L. Poonja, Cohen began to teach under the guidance of his guru (with whom he later parted ways philosophically). Since that time Cohen had been offering meditation retreats in Bodh Gaya that were held in tents at the Tourist Bungalow for mainly American and Europeans from 1990 until 1996 before shifting to Rishikesh.

61 Christopher Titmuss is a senior Dharma teacher in the West who became an ordained Buddhist monk (Ven. Kitti Subho) in the Vipassana tradition of Thailand. In 1974 he provided his first retreat in Dharamsala and thereafter began regular Insight Meditation retreats during the Winter season at the Thai Temple in Bodh Gaya. He is the author of numerous books and has been influential in the global spread of Vipassana and Insight Meditation. He is the founder and director of the Dharma Facilitators Programme and the Living Dharma programme, an online mentor programme for Dharma practitioners. Throughout the year he gives retreats, participates in pilgrimages (yatras) and leads Dharma gatherings. In addition to his retreats at Bodh Gaya he has been an active member of the Prajna Vihar School and the Bodh Gaya Social Forum with Sister Mary through which he has organized a number of peace demonstrations. Christopher is also a member of the international advisory council of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and co-founder of Gaia House, an international retreat centre in Devon, England where he is based.

Robert Pryor is the founder and director of this successful American based study-abroad program that begins each year in early September and runs for four months. Building on this legacy of Burmese-Western infusion, the educational program is based out of the Burmese Vihara and American students receive four months of intensive training in Buddhist philosophy, history, contemporary Buddhist culture, meditation traditions and Hindi language. Over the course of the last thirty years, the head monk of the Burmese Monastery, U. Nyaneinda has also been instrumental in building these global connections and is today one of the senior Buddhist monks at Bodh Gaya. As Tara Doyle (1997) has examined, ever since U Nyaneinda arrived in 1976 at the age of 31, he has been active in the "Buddhification" of Bodh Gaya's landscape with his combined efforts in erecting images and Buddhist structures and also served as an authority for land brokerage for incoming Buddhist organizations abroad.[62] I examine issues of land acquisition in more detail in the second part of this chapter.

Thus, despite the isolationist policies and foreign restrictions following the Military coup in 1962, the Burmese Monastery at Bodh Gaya has been a transnational meeting ground between the East and West. In recent decades there have also been a growing number of Burmese pilgrims and state officials now returning to Bodh Gaya. As part of the new face of Myanmar foreign policy, on April 1, 1990, there was a "Good will Mission" to India by a twenty member Myanmar Delegation.[63] During their stay in Bodh Gaya, the group met with a number of professors at the nearby Magadh University and set up a program of mutual co-operation in the form of exchange of scholars, and the sending of students between India and Myanmar.[64] As a result of the changing diplomatic relations, by the mid 1990s, Burmese pilgrims and students began to arrive in much larger numbers each year. This has also spawned a host of new Burmese institutions including: the Great Holy Land Monastery (1998); Myanmar Monk-Students' Welfare Association of India (1999) and the Mahabodhi Meditation Centre (2004). Linked to the earlier influence of S.N. Goenka is also the recently established Dhamma Bodhi Vipassana Centre (1994).[65]

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[62] As Doyle (1997) has examined, through the joint efforts with a sculptor from Burma over a half-dozen Buddhist images have been erected in the surrounding landscape that reflect popular legends and stories of the Buddha's biographical life.

[63] Since 1989, the military government in Burma officially changed the English translation of many colonial-era names, including the name of the country, to *"Myanmar."*

[64] Although I do not have any information on the number of Indian students who have gone to Myanmar as part of this program, according to Dr. Tulku, the head of the Buddhist studies Department of Magadh University, since the early nineties, a percentage of foreign monks have been enrolled in the Buddhist studies program at Bodh Gaya. These students are largely from Myanmar, Bangladesh, Tripura, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Sri Lanka. They are doing graduate studies in MA and PhD and have sixty five seats limited to Buddhists. Personal Interview March 6, 2007.

[65] Although S.N. Goenka was central to the revitalization of Vipassana in the early seventies, it was not until the nineties that he formally established a Vipassana Meditation centre in Bodh Gaya. These centres are not necessarily defined as a Theravada organization, but the Vipassana teachings are based on the tradition of the late Burmese Sayagyi

3.1.3 Mahabodhi Society of India

In the last chapter, I discussed the central role of Anagarika Dharmapala in reclaiming sacred ground at Bodh Gaya. Ever since the Mahabodhi Society Rest House was established in 1901, this Buddhist centre, with its ecumenical thrust, has been at the heart of pilgrimage activities at Bodh Gaya.[66] The building itself reflects the British colonial architecture at the turn of the twentieth century with its covered verandah and arched entrance ways (Asher 2008). Given the close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple and the main bus loop, the Mahabodhi Society of India (MSI) has served a dual purpose as both a watch-tower and a magnet for international visitors providing information to tourists and pilgrims. The successor to Dharmapala was Devapriya Valisingh who was instrumental in the formation of the *Bodh Gaya Temple Act* (1949), the demands for a separate *Bodh Gaya Temple Advisory Board (BGTAB)*, and the success of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations. Another important figure in the development of Buddhism at Bodh Gaya is the soft spoken and mild-mannered monk known as Bhante Pannarama. With the help of his assistant, Dediyawala Wimala Thero, Bhante arrived in Bodh Gaya in 1968 and took over the Buddha Gaya centre of the Mahabodhi Society from 1970 to 1994.[67] Over the course of his management, Pannarama

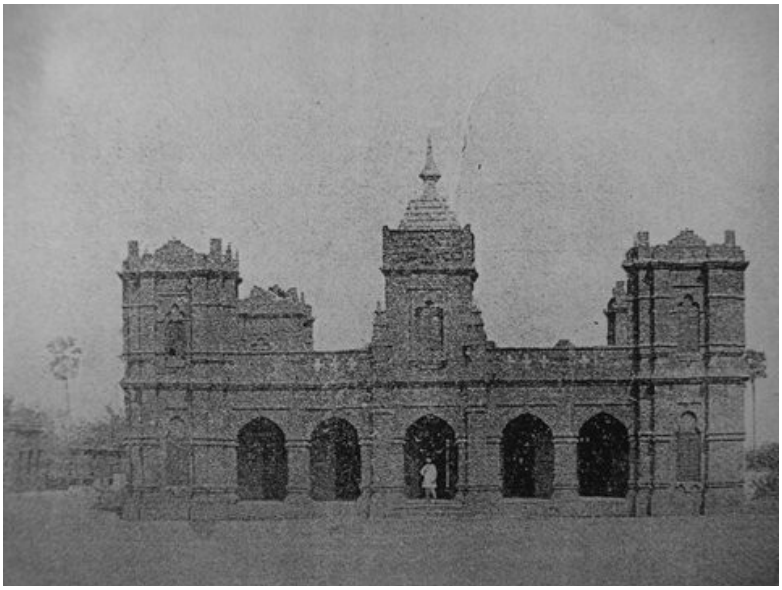


Figure 3.4 Mahabodhi Society Rest House in 1901
Source: Mahābodhi Society of India

U Ba Khin.

[66] The acquisition of land at Bodh Gaya was continuously blocked by the Mahant until the year 1900, when the Mahabodhi Society appealed to the District Board to sanction the construction of a Guest House and Vihara. The then District Magistrate, Mr. C.A. Oldham, was sympathetic to the Buddhist claims and helped to forward the proposal to the Government of Bengal. Later that year, the MSI were formally granted land rights in 1900 and the Society deposited 15000/- RS for the construction of the Vihara which was completed in 1901 (Ram Swarup Singh 1991: 69-70).

[67] Pannarama Mahathera was born Don George Liyanarachi in April 21, 1926 at Bulathasinhala village in Kalutare district of Sri Lanka. He was ordained a *Samanera* (novice) during his childhood days and obtained higher ordination (*upasampada*) under the D. Saddhatissa at the age of twenty, in 1946. There he received the Sangha name Pannarama, which translates "the monastery of wisdom." Pannarama first arrived in India from Sri Lanka on January 5th 1961. After serving as an assistant monk in charge at the Madras Centre of the Mahabodhi Society he moved to the Naugarh Centre

helped to redefine the MSI as a centre of learning and culture through the propagation of Buddhist activities, seminars, symposiums and literature. Pannarama also worked with the local population and encouraged numerous philanthropic projects, especially among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes from the neighboring villages. In an account of his arrival at Bodh Gaya, Pannarama was surprised that not a single Indian could recite the *Trisarana* (three refugees) and *Pancasila* (five precepts).

> More than two decades have passed since I had come to this place in 1970. That time only with a sense of veneration to this holiest Buddhist spot I started living here, worrying very little about other things. In course of time I felt that besides chanting Sutras, bowing to the Bo-tree, etc. individual religious routine something must be done for Buddhist reawakening in the surrounding area. Ven. Dharmapala's vow reminded me that the place of which every inch seems to have been sanctified by the Lord Buddha's feet, must have Buddhistic air in and around (MSJ Centenary Volume 1991).

Over nearly twenty five years, Pannarama and his assistant worked tirelessly to make the basic tenets of Buddhism intelligible to local youths and students (Fiske 1976: 131). As a result of his ongoing efforts, for the first time in the history of modern Bodh Gaya, three local youths, R.B. Prasad, Ram Swarup Singh (past BTMC member), and Hari Manji (now senior officer of the ASI) were initiated into Buddhism on the memorable occasion of Buddha Purnima Day in 1971 (MSJ 1971). This was followed by other waves of Buddhist conversion from 1972 onwards that helped to cultivate that "Buddhistic air" in Bodh Gaya and position the Mahabodhi Society at the centre of cultural activities.

As the oldest Buddhist organization in Bodh Gaya and India, the Mahabodhi Society celebrated its centenary anniversary in 1991, releasing a special souvenir entitled "*100 Years of the Maha Bodhi Society*" (also released in Hindi), which accompanied numerous celebrations at all the Buddhist sites. The celebrations began in Bodh Gaya on September 23rd (the anniversary date of Dharmapala) in which a sculptured gilded bust of the late founder was installed and unveiled before the High Commission of Sri Lanka, Mr. H. E. Neville Kanakaaratne.[68] A second set of events was also held on December 8-9, with various programs including a large procession to the Mahabodhi Temple, the inauguration of a homeopathy charitable dispensary and clinic, the inauguration of the Maha Bodhi Vidyapith (school) in

in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh – known today as Siddharthanagar which borders Nepal. After five years as the head of the centre, he served a brief period at the Sarnath centre before taking over the BuddhaGaya centre following the sudden demise Nandasara in 1968. [Published by the Ven. B Pannarama Nagrick Abhidnandan Samaroh Samiti 1994, Mahabodhi Society].

[68] The bust was designed and sculpted in Sri Lanka by M. Wipulasara Maha Thera, General Secretary of the Mahbodhi Society of India at that time. All expenses incurred for the making of the bust were donated by R. Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka.

Siddhartha Nagar village, a two day cultural program, a public meeting and a seminar entitled "Buddha Gaya and the Buddha World."

Perhaps the most influential foreign dignitary at Bodh Gaya during this time was the President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa. With Sri Lanka in the throes of civil war the president decided to visit India and the Buddhist pilgrimage sites prior to the seventh SAARC Summit (seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) which was held on April 10-11 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Within a period of seven months between 1992-1993, Premadasa visited Bodh Gaya on three occasions, each of which led to important religious and social developments. As homage to the Buddha, he provided two invaluable offerings to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex: the golden railings (*Ran Veta*) around the Bodhi tree and the gold plated canopy (*Ran Viyana*) that now rests above the *Vajrasana* (diamond throne). In light of his warm public reception at Bodh Gaya, the President of Sri Lanka also announced plans for the construction of 100 concrete houses and a community hall for scheduled caste families living in nearby Mastipur village. After four months of work commissioned by the Ministry of Housing and Construction in Sri Lanka, the President himself handed over the keys to each of the villagers on April 13 1993. On the decrepit foundation stone in front of the community hall today, it reads: "BuddhaGayagama - the village of Reawakened people." This was the second village of scheduled castes in Bodh Gaya to be renamed by international Buddhist patrons.[69] Sadly, President Premadasa returned to Sri Lanka shortly after the SAARC Summit and was assassinated by an alleged LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) suicide bomber as part of the May Day *padayatra* at Armour Street, in Colombo in 1993.

In the early nineties, the health of Pannarama begun to deteriorate and in 1994 he departed to Sri Lanka for six weeks of medical treatment. In recognition of his twenty five years of service at Bodh Gaya, a group of local residents held a public felicitation ceremony on May 15 1994, where he was given a "scroll of honor." The function brought together a large number of local residents, university scholars and international monks who came forward to thank and register their reverence for Bhante Pannarama. As noted in the *Sambodhi Journal (SBJ)*: "The one common point which emerged from the speeches was that nobility and simplicity reigns supreme in Bhante's personality. He is the best propagator of harmony, peace and goodwill" (SBJ 1994: 48). Pannarama replied in his laconic speech, echoing the words of Dharmapala: "Though I was born in Sri Lanka, BuddhaGaya is the dearest to me,

[69] Previously, the village Miya Bigha was the site of a massive conversion in the mid seventies. Through coordinated efforts of the Mahabodhi Society, Japanese, Royal Wat Thai and other Buddhist centres the village of schedule castes is now referred to as Siddhartha Nagar.

I will love to be reborn here if I get rebirth." Shortly after leaving Bodh Gaya, Pannarama died the following year on May 18 1995 in Colombo.

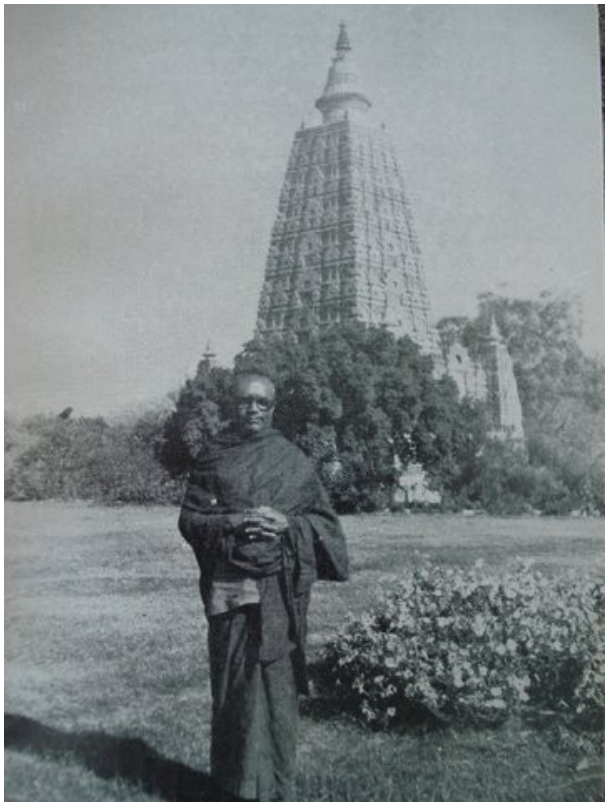


Figure 3.5 Bhante Pannarama
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India



Figure 3.6 Stone tablet from Premadasa's village of reawakened people

Bhante Pannarama was replaced by the controversial Maitipe Vimalasara Thero. As part of my analysis of World Heritage designation in chapter six I examine some of the recent developments pertaining to Mahabodhi Society at Bodh Gaya. At this point it is sufficient to say that from the mid-nineties to 2002, Vimalasara emerged as a key spokesperson and leader for the international Buddhist community at Bodh Gaya during a period of heightened tension between Indian and foreign Buddhist factions over management of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex. As a means of uniting the growing expatriate community of Buddhists at Bodh Gaya, Vimalasara was instrumental in establishing the International Buddhist Council (IBC) and was appointed General Secretary.[70] Thus, for over one hundred years, the Mahabodhi Society has been active throughout the Indian subcontinent as an ecumenical and transnational organization rather than a distinctly Sinhalese Buddhist institution. This

[70] Previously there was an earlier organization of international Buddhist members called the World Buddhist Federation that was under the direction of Magadha University Professor Tulku.

is part of the reason why it has remained a centre of power and influence throughout the twentieth century.

3.1.4 Tibetan Refugees and Himalayan Buddhists

So far I have described some of the Theravada Buddhist developments that grew out of the year long Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956. For a number of foreign dignitaries and Buddhist leaders from the religious diaspora, this was the first time visit to the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Another special guest that was invited by the Mahabodhi Society was the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. Although the Chinese authorities had initially refused to allow the Dalai Lama to depart from Lhasa to the Buddhist site in India, Jawaharlal Nehru intervened on behalf of the Mahabodhi Society and ensured the Chinese that his visit would not threaten Sino-Indian relations. Thus, despite mounting pressure from the People's Liberation Army and the growing instability in the Tibetan plateau, the 14th Dalai Lama arrived at Delhi's Palam airport on December 25th.[71] In the company of the Panchen Lama and the Maharaja of Sikkim, the Tibetan leaders proceeded on pilgrimage to a number of Buddhist sites including Bodh Gaya on December 27th. A public ceremony was held under the Bodhi tree in which the two respected teachers delivered sermons and conducted pujas to a large audience. At the age of twenty one this was the Dalai Lama's first visit to Bodh Gaya but certainly not the last.

As Toni Huber (2008) recently examined in *The Holy Land Reborn*, Tibetans have long maintained a ritual relationship with India, particularly by way of pilgrimage. In his analysis of the changing Tibetan constructions of India's sacred geography over the centuries, Huber concludes by describing the contemporary articulations of India among those Tibetans who live in exile in their Buddhist holy land. Since the plight of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959, more than 150,000 Tibetan refugees have fled to India over the last fifty years and the impact of this refugee community on Bodh Gaya has been tremendous.[72] According to Tara Doyle's (1997: 350-351) analysis, there are five

[71] In 1956, the Maharaj of Sikkim arrived in Lhasa with a letter from the President of the Mahabodhi Society requesting the participation of the Dalai Lama to attend the 2500th Budha Jayanti. In Dalai Lama's (1991: 123) biography *Freedom in Exile* he writes: "I was ecstatic. For us Tibetans, India is *Aryabhumi*, the Land of the Holy. All my life I had longed to make a pilgrimage there: it was the place that I most wanted to visit." The Dalai Lama departed Lhasa at the end of November in 1956 with a small entourage including the Panchen Lama and Lobsang Samten. They traveled to Gangtok in Sikkim and later to New Delhi where he met with Prime Minister Nehru and the President of India, Rajendra Prasad.

[72] In exile, the 14th Dalai Lama returned to Bodh Gaya in the winter of 1960. There he met a large deputation of Tibetan refugees undertaking pilgrimage. In his own words (1991: 172): "A very moving moment followed when their leaders came to me and pledged their lives in the continuing struggle for a free Tibet. After that, for the first time in this life, I ordained a group of 162 young Tibetan novices as *bhiksus*. I felt greatly privileged to be able to do this at the

reasons why the Tibetan Community have been drawn to Bodh Gaya: 1) The majority of some 100,000 Tibetans refugees are settled in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, making travel to Bodh Gaya relatively easy. 2) Many of these Tibetans also in engage in seasonal work and are often free during the winter months. 3) The presence of large numbers of pilgrims and tourists in Bodh Gaya attract many Tibetans who make their living as merchants running shops and/or restaurants. 4) Performance of pilgrimage, especially to Bodh Gaya has become central to many Tibetans' religiosity. 5) Bodh Gaya has become "a meeting place for the diaspora community - a place where they can gather socially, reunite with Tibetans who have recently fled their homeland, receive teachings from their religious leaders, build monasteries (there are over half-a-dozen Tibetan *gompas* in Bodh Gaya), and begin to construct a new cultural and religious identity outside Tibet" (Doyle 351).

Since 1959, the influence of the Tibetan refugees and Himalayan Buddhist groups has been immense, but the earliest Tibetan Buddhist *gompa* at Bodh Gaya predates the exiled community some three decades earlier.[73] In 1934 a small Tibetan Temple from the Gelug sect was constructed to the east of the Mahabodhi Society under the patronage of famous Lama Kanpo-Ngawang Samten of Ladakh. However due to the lack of financial support and resources in Bodh Gaya, the first head monk Lobsang Samten later gifted the Tibetan Temple to the religious leader of the Gelug school, the 14th Dalai Lama on May 2nd 1947. Since that time, the temple and monastery has served as the main headquarters for the Dalai Lama whenever he arrives in Bodh Gaya.[74] Also, from an administrative point of view, the Gelugpa Tibetan Monastery is now an appendage of the Namgyal Private Monastery in Dharamsala

Tibetan monastery which stands within sight of the Mahabodhi Temple."

[73] A *gompa* is a Tibetan term that is used in the Himalayan region to describe a centre of learning, monastery or university.

[74] Under the patronage of the Dalai Lama the first Abbott to stay at the monastery was a senior monk named "Dhamgto Rinpoche.' The successor to Dhamgto Rinpoche was 'Ling Rinpoche' and followed by 'Tara Rinpoche'. The Gaden Phel Gay Ling Tibetan Mahayana Monastery (as it is formally called today) was completed in 1952 and the large Mahayana Rest House was opened in 1986.

where the 14th Dalai Lama resides in exile. 

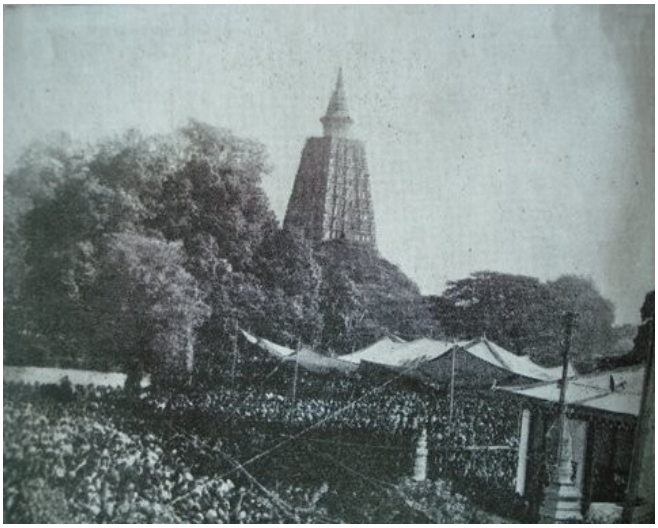


Figure 3.7 14th Dalai Lama during the Kalachakra
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India

Figure 3.8 Kalachakra ceremonies in 1974
Source: Mahabodhi Society of India

The first major ceremony involving a large religious assemblage of Tibetan devotees was the Kalachakra empowerment initiation held in December 1974.[75] Often described as a complex and

[75] Kalachakra is a Sanskrit term that means "time-wheel" or "time-cycles" and refers both to a Tantric deity (Tib. yidam) of Vajrayana Buddhism and to the philosophies and meditation practices contained within the Kalachakra Tantra and its many commentaries. The 14th Dalai Lama is regarded as the most prominent Kalachakra lineage holder alive today, having performed over thirty initiations around the world. See also Werner Herzog's Documentary entitled "Wheel of Time" (2003).

advanced form of Vajrayana Tantric practice, the Kalachakra initiation has become an important ritual medium for the public revitalization of Tibetan culture and religion in exile. Although many attendees follow the commitments and engage in the initiation practice, for others, especially those lay pilgrims coming to Bodh Gaya from the Himalayan regions, the initiation has become an opportunity to receive blessings from the enlightened teachers. The 1974 Kalachakra empowerment initiation brought an estimated 100,000 Tibetan Buddhists together and was situated on a podium directly in front of the Gelug Tibetan Monastery and Mahabodhi Society. Since the 1974 Kalachakra *puja*, the 14th Dalai Lama, and other prominent incarnate Lamas from the Tibetan diaspora, have used Bodh Gaya's sacred space more frequently during the winter season. In the month of December 1985, these large religious gatherings reached a new level when the Dalai Lama held his second Kalachakra initiation ceremony at Bodh Gaya. This historic event brought double the number of attendees from the previous decade and was followed by a rare Monlam Chenmo that involved both the 14th Dalai Lama and other renowned Rinpoches from various Tibetan lineages. With more than 200,000 in attendance, from over thirty one countries, this became the largest Kalachakra initiation ever performed by any Dalai Lama in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. Given the carrying capacity of this small rural town and the sudden influx of large numbers of Himalayan Buddhists, the event also generated some controversy between local and state authorities.

Prior to the Kalachakra *puja*, the Government of Bihar had deployed a number of state agents to collect a five-rupee tax on the main road into Bodh Gaya. Tara Doyle (1997: 352) writes that the understanding among the Bihar government officials and the Tibetan refugee community was that these funds were to be spent providing basic facilities such as electricity, drinking water, latrines and cooking oil. However, from the viewpoint of those Buddhist pilgrims who participated in the gathering, these services were neglected at the time of the ceremony. The vast tent city of devotees gradually transformed into a gigantic open sewer; both clean water and cooking fuel were almost impossible to find. Although the event was likely a lucrative venture for both state and district authorities, the neglect of basic amenities left many sick, including the Dalai Lama. According to one eye witness that I interviewed: “the locals provided only four toilets so the Tibetans petitioned. . . Shit was all around the river bank, so we began to bury it. There was not even a place for the flies to land. As a result, the Tibetans came and departed swiftly and this led to enormous resentment among the villagers.” The foul and putrid conditions of the town continued for months after and even overlapped with a Lonely Planet writer who had this to say about the place of enlightenment: “Bodh Gaya is small and quiet but, if you

are not planning a longer study stay, a day is quite sufficient to see everything. Apart from the stupa and various monasteries Bodh Gaya is just a grubby little dump with an enormous population of flies" (Lonely Planet 1985: 307).

The second incident deriving from the 1985 Kalachakra ceremony was the confrontation between Tibetan refugees, the Government of Bihar and local authorities concerning the public use of religious structures. Prior to the Tibetan gathering, a large *dais* and stage platform was constructed on the nearby *maidan* where the Dalai Lama could deliver his religious sermons to a large audience. Under specific orders by the state, the religious structure was to be removed at the ceremonies conclusion.[76] However, instead of dismantling the large podium an image of the Buddha was installed by devotees to delay the process. This event spawned violent demonstrations by many local residents against the Tibetan community and regional authorities arguing that if *all* the public spaces were devoted to religious functions, there would be no space for local congregations and meetings. The severity of the incident was not resolved; these matters were also taken up in New Delhi (Banerjee 2000). As a result of the bitter disputes and tension between the Tibetan refugee community and both local and state authorities the Dalai Lama temporarily stopped giving teachings at Bodh Gaya and shifted his base to the Central Higher Institute of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath (Doyle 1997).

Despite the 14th Dalai Lama's temporary disassociation with Bodh Gaya as a result of the incident, there were other prominent teachers who have re-connected with the sacred space at Bodh Gaya and forged key transnational alliances abroad. One of the more influential and controversial Tibetan leaders at Bodh Gaya since the late eighties is Tarthang Tulku. Previously, Tarthang Tulku had sponsored the occasional puja in Bodh Gaya, all of which were financed by his California Berkeley-based Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Centre (TNMC) and led by Nyingma teachers living in India, Bhutan, and Nepal (Doyle 1997). After spending twenty one years in the United States, Tarthang Tulku decided to return to India and in 1989 began organizing the annual Nyingma Monlam Chenmo or the "Great Prayer Festival for World Peace."[77] According to Doyle (1997: 357), "the Monlam

[76] Previously, there was another small podium erected in front of the Mahabodhi Society during the first Kalachakra ceremony in 1975 which also served as the main centre for security arrangements whenever there had been large religious congregations.

[77] According to Doyle (1997: 353-354) Tarthang Tulku is a Nyingma teacher who fled Tibet during the Chinese occupation in 1959. In India he has taught Tibetan at the Sanskrit University in Benares up until 1968 and then settled in Berkeley, California in 1969. Within four years he founded the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Centre (the first Vajrayana practice community in America), Dharma Publications (a press that produces books, prints, and a magazine, all focusing on Tibetan Buddhism), the Tibetan Aid Project (designed to support Tibetan refugees and rebuild monasteries in India and Tibet), and the Nyingma Institute (the purpose of which is to perpetuate "the transmission of the psychological, philosophical, and experiential insights of the Nyingma lineage" to North American academics, psychologists, and the general public).

Chenmo in Tibet was a tremendously popular, monastic New Year's festival, one inaugurated in 1409 by the Gelugpa patriarch, Tsongkhapa, and subsequently held each year in Lhasa, where it attracted hundreds of thousands of participants." Until 1959, it was organized by the Gelugpas, who have traditionally been the more powerful political and religious group in the region (Doyle 1997). Thus, prior to Tarthang Tulku's invention, according to Doyle (1997: 357), the Monlam Chenmo had never been a Nyingma festival, nor was it ever performed in Bodh Gaya. With support from his California based Dharma Publications and the Tibetan Aid project, Tarthang Tulku's mega-puja has been growing each year and continues to provide free food and texts to all the participants.[78]

Modeled after the success of Tarthang Tulku's invention, Bodh Gaya and other Buddhist sites in India have recently become the staging grounds for other prominent Rinpoches and lineages such as Gelugpas, Kagyus, and Sakyas to emulate this Monlam and unite their own disparate followers scattered throughout the Indian subcontinent. For example, in 2002, a Kagyu Monlam Chenmo prayer was also offered in Bodh Gaya for the first time. The gathering brought over 7,000 Buddhist monks from different sub-schools, including seventeen incarnate lamas to the town. The Monlam was led by the 17th Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorji and since then, has become an annual event. Directly following the Kagyu Monlam, in 2002, was the third Kalachakra initiation held in Bodh Gaya, an event that was attended by 150,000 devotees from over a hundred different countries. Given the elevated importance of Bodh Gaya's sacred space among the Tibetan diaspora, other teachings and sponsored events are now part of Bodh Gaya's annual ritual cycle. Some of these regular events include the popular six-month spiritual program at the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom under the directorship of Lama Zopa, the Schechen Monastery seminar series, lectures by Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche as part of the Antioch Program, and HE Choeje Ayang Rinpoche who has been teaching a ten-day Phowa course since 1996.[79] It is also worth noting that in recent years the legacy of Tarthang Tulku has also been passed on to one of his younger siblings. In 2006, the daughter of Tarthang Tulku, Wangmo Dixey, and her husband from the California based *Light of Buddha Dharma Foundation* have been sponsoring annual *Tripitaka* Chanting ceremonies under the Bodhi tree in conjunction with the Mahabodhi Society

[78] According to Tarthang Tulku (quoted in Doyle 1997) doing prayers in a power place where not just Sakyamuni, but all Buddhas are enlightened adds to the accumulation of merit which serves to generate positive power and energy. Doing prayers, virtuous acts and meditations are seen as particularly efficacious at the *navel of earth* and so is multiplied 100,000 times.

[79] Choeje Ayang Rinpoche left Tibet with his family in 1959 at the age of seventeen. After living for five years at Namdrol Ling monastery in Bylakuppe, India, Rinpoche started to build his Thupten Shedrub Jangchub Ling monastery, also in Bylakup. Since 1996, Ayang Rinpoche has been teaching annual Phowa courses in Bodh Gaya, which is a Tantric practice and preparation for the transference of consciousness at the moment of death. Since 2006, construction has been underway for his own Amitabha Foundation Centre in Bodh Gaya.

of India. Unlike Wangmo Dixey's father however, the Tripitaka Chanting has brought together largely Theravada Buddhists with no connection to the Nyingma school.

Not surprisingly, in light of Bodh Gaya's revitalization as a magnetic point of Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage, a number of different schools and Rinpoches have acquired land to provide accommodations and facilities for their pilgrims. Since the 2500th Buddha Jayanti ceremonies, these include: the Galden Shatup Targeling or Urwela Tibetan Temple from Ladakh, located in village Bakroar (1957), the Sakya Monastery (1973) the Bhutanese Temple and Guest House sponsored by the Royal Government of Bhutan (1983);[80] the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom under Lama Zopa and Lama Yeshe (1984); the Karma Tharjay Chokhorling Kagyudpa Vajrayana Buddhist Monastery, (known locally as the Karma Temple) under Rinpoche Beru Khyentse from the Kagyu lineage (1988); Duidal Jyangchub Choiling Monastery of the Tamang Buddhist Association from Darjeeling (1992), Nyingma Monlam Institute (1994), Druk Ngawang Thubten Choling of Bhutan in Bhagalpur Village (1997);[81] Namdruling Dharma Centre under Penor Rinpoche (1998); Shechen Monastery (1998);[82] and the Sikkim Temple Guest House (2002).[83] The latest Tibetan monastery and temple to be inaugurated at Bodh Gaya is the Pal Terger Rigzin Khacho Dargye Ling (2007)[84] under the authority of the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa. As an example of the global mandala (Zablocki 2005) and transnational reach of Tibetan Buddhism today, the elaborate opening ceremonies held on January 3, 2007, including a ten

[80] On December 27, 1975 a sixteen-member delegation led by Mr. Kaka Dorji from the National Assembly of Bhutan, arrived in Bodh Gaya. During this time, a plot of land was allocated by the Bihar state government for the future site of a Bhutanese monastery. The Bhutanese follow Mahayana Buddhism and belong to the Dukpa Kargyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism. During the inaugural foundation stone ceremony for the Bhutanese Temple on October 28th 1983, the Governor of Bihar, Dr. A.K. Kidwai welcomed the Royal Government of Bhutan and read a personal message from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. As a gesture to the Royal Bhutanese Government, one million rupees was offered by the Indian Government for the construction of the 20 room Guest House and Temple.

[81] According to the head monk Sonam Borji, land was purchased back in 1992 for the Druk Ngawang Thubten Choling of Bhutan but was not officially opened until 1997. Due to the highly politicized reincarnation of the late Shabdung Rinpoche, the construction of the monastery has some tension with the Royal Government of Bhutan Temple at Bodh Gaya. For the first two years following his reincarnation, the 10th Shabdrung Rinpoche remained in exile in Bodh Gaya and a resident of the monastery before being sent back to Bhutan in 2006.

[82] The Shechen Monastery is linked to the founder Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche, the Rajguru of Bhutan. The Present Head is Rabzam Rinpoche and is built under the auspices of SRPC (Sechen Rabzam Public Charitable) Trust. Each year, usually in the beginning of December, prominent Lama's such as Shechen Rabjan Rinpoche, Zega Khoutol Rinpoche and Khampo Pema Sharob provide teachings to large audiences. It is also worth noting that on February 13, 2006, there was the ceremonial consecration blessing of the Kadam stupa [symbol of the Wisdom mind of the Buddha] erected in front of the Guest House and Temple to commemorate the kindness and compassionate deeds of Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991). This stupa was in fulfillment of his wishes to build eight stupas in the major sacred places in India and Nepal related to the eight major events of Lord Buddha's life.

[83] The Sikkim Temple Guest House was inaugurated by Shri Pawan Chaneling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim on 11th January 2002. The land was acquired back in 1969 on lease from the Government of Bihar as part of the Notified Area.

[84] When I completed my fieldwork in April 2007, there were additional monasteries, temples and guest houses under construction including the 'Friends of the Western Buddhist Order' and the Amitabh Meditation Centre. Unfortunately I was unable to find any information at that time.

day teaching program, that was entirely sponsored by the Taiwan Hwayue Foundation.



Figure 3.9 Front entrance of the new Pal Terger Rigzin Khacho Dargye Ling

3.1.5 Japanese Buddhism

From the early seventies to the early nineties, the Japanese, like the Tibetans, had a tremendous impact on both the development of international Buddhism at Bodh Gaya and in terms of economic repercussions on the local society. As I described in the previous chapter, the Japanese have long maintained a close relationship with the Mahabodhi Society ever since Dharmapala began his crusade to reclaim the Mahabodhi Temple for the world Buddhist community. In the post-independence era, the first royal Japanese guests to visit Bodh Gaya were the Crown Prince Akihito and the Crown Princess Michiko, who arrived by charter plane at the Gaya airport on December 5th 1960. According to Ahir's (1992: 138) account, this historic day was the biggest welcome ever given to a foreign dignitary; upwards of 50,000 people had allegedly attended. A special reception had been organized by the Mahabodhi Society under Devapriya Valinsinha, who formally welcomed the royal couple to the sacred site of Buddha's enlightenment. This event also marked the first time in history the heir-apparent to the throne of Japan visited Bodh Gaya.

Five years later, in October 1965, a large Japanese stone Pagoda was constructed in front of the Royal Wat Thai by the International Buddhist Brotherhood Association (IBBA) or Kokusai Bukkyo Koryu Kyokai, an independent organization founded by the various Buddhist sects in Japan.[85] In light

[85] In a pamphlet produced by the IBBA organization it states four main objectives in relation to Bodh Gaya: a) To build a Japanese Temple and an International Buddhist House at the sacred place of Bodh Gaya where Lord Buddha

of the growing Japanese interest at Bodh Gaya, the Government of Bihar decided to lease a 4.6 acre plot of land to the Japanese Buddhist Association as part of the Notified Area. To commemorate the future site of the IBBA on February 16th 1968, a "holy" foundation stone was brought from Japan involving a sixteen-person delegation headed by the Chief Priest, Rev G. Tomatsu. During the ceremony the Chief Priest announced plans to construct a wooden Zen *hondo* (meditation hall) modeled after a Japanese temple in Kyoto, a pilgrim rest house with air-conditioned rooms, hot baths (*ofuro*) and a Japanese garden. The opening ceremony for the Japanese Rest House took place on February 14th 1970. On this special occasion, a message was read by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, recalling the sacred ties between India and Japan, due to the teachings of Lord Buddha. Although there were strict provisions on the use of the Japanese Rest House, it was certainly the most luxurious accommodations available at Bodh Gaya at that time.



Figure 3.10 Indo Nippon Buddhist Temple

attained enlightenment. b) To provide facilities for Japanese Buddhists to come and learn the teaching of Lord Buddha to strengthen their belief in Buddhism. c) To provide facilities for international understanding and also for all people to exchange Japan-India's cultural ideas and also to give facilities to world Buddhists to have discourses to enlighten themselves. d) To work for the world peace and human happiness by studying and sincerely following the teachings of the Buddha.

Following the construction of the Japanese Rest House was the formal inauguration of the Indosan Nippon Temple on December 8th 1973; a date that coincides with the Japanese anniversary of Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment.[86] This traditional Japanese-styled pagoda was built at an estimated cost of 40 lakh (US $102,000) and brought together many distinguished guests to inaugurate the special event, such as the President of India V.V. Giri.[87] Over the next twenty years, the IBBA has been involved in a number of cultural events and social projects that continue today. These include the annual 'International Buddhist Conference' that began in 1975, a library and meditation centre, a nursery, kindergarten, medical dispensary and an agricultural technology research centre.[88] In addition to these philanthropic activities, the IBBA, along with other Japanese development institutions such as the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) (see chapter five) have been providing financial assistance to the state government for town infrastructure and development along the Buddhist circuit.

Despite the IBBA's claim to represent a number of Japan's Buddhists sects, a second Japanese centre grew out of close transnational ties with the Mahabodhi Society of India. From 1968 to 1983, Dr. Nelluwe Jinaratana Nayaka Mahathera was the General Secretary of the MSI and like many of his predecessors, he devoted his entire life for the progress of the society forging strong links with various Buddhist countries, especially Japan. As a ritual extension of these longstanding ties, the General Secretary gifted a portion of the Buddha's relics to a Japanese Buddhist sect, the Daijokyo Sohonzan of Nagoya in November 1973.[89] Following a special ceremony in New Delhi, members of the Daijokyo

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[86] Similar to other Buddhist cultures and regional sects, the Japanese have their own set of rituals and ceremonies that reflect the Japanese calendar, such as the enlightenment of Sakyamuni on December 8th, the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana on February 15th and birthday of the Buddha on April 8th.

[87] Following the national anthems of both Japan and India, there was the sounding of the “Bell of Peace” which hangs at a weight of 2250 kg directly in front of the temple. The bell was presented by Mr. Konosuke Motsehito, the Chairperson of the National Electrical World Co. in Japan and rings each day at 5 am (April to September) and 6 am (October to March) and 12 noon and 5 pm every evening.

[88] In 1977, the IBBA opened the Bodaiju Gakuen 'Bodhi tree kindergarten;' it caters to poor and underprivileged children between the ages 3 ½ years and 4 years. The school has around 160 children registered each year and most of them are from the nearby Mastipur village. Other land was also provided by the Government of Bihar to expand their educational and social welfare objectives that include the Komyo Free Medical Clinic and an International Buddhist Library. Under Sister Chiko Kamtru, a Japanese Women's Committee was also formed to look after health care and medical treatment. About 200 patients are treated on every working day and the main objective is to provide free medical facilities to the poor and needy people in and around Bodh Gaya.

[89] Daijokyo means the Great Vehicle of the Mahayana, this sect believes in the Lotus doctrine [Lotus Sutra – Sadharma Pundarika Sutra] propagated by St. Nichiren (1222-1282). This lay sect was founded in 1914 by the late Rev. Tatsuko Sugiyama in its headquarters in Nagoya. This is one of the newest lay sects in Japan and Rev. Y. Sugisaki is the current Chief Abbott and President. The relics had been previously enshrined in the Dharmarajika Vihara, the main Mahabodhi Society headquarters in Calcutta. They were gifted to the Daijokyo Sect in November 1973 in the company of Rev. Hozan Sugisaki, President Rev. Y. Sugisaki, along with 83 lay devotees from Japan. A portion of these relics are now enshrined in the Peace Pagoda that was built for the relics at the main Headquarters of the Daijokyo Secto Temple in Nagoya.

sect embarked on pilgrimage tour through north India and Nepal visiting Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kusinagara, Lumbini and Sanchi. After visiting the place of enlightenment, the Daijokyo Association of Nagoya requested land from the Government of Bihar to construct a Japanese temple and rest house. Thus, on February 13, 1983 the Daijokyo Buddhist Temple was completed and formally inaugurated by the then President of India, Giani Zail Singh, Daijokyo President Rev. Y. Sugisaki and Vice-President, Mr. Mangal Subbha. The Daijokyo Temple is a two-storied concrete building with a three-storied Pagoda roof built in a traditional Japanese architectural style. During the opening ceremonies it was announced that the Daijokyo Sect had future plans to construct an 80 feet high image of Lord Buddha, a rest house for the benefit of pilgrims, a vocational training centre and an agricultural training program for the social welfare of the local people.[90]

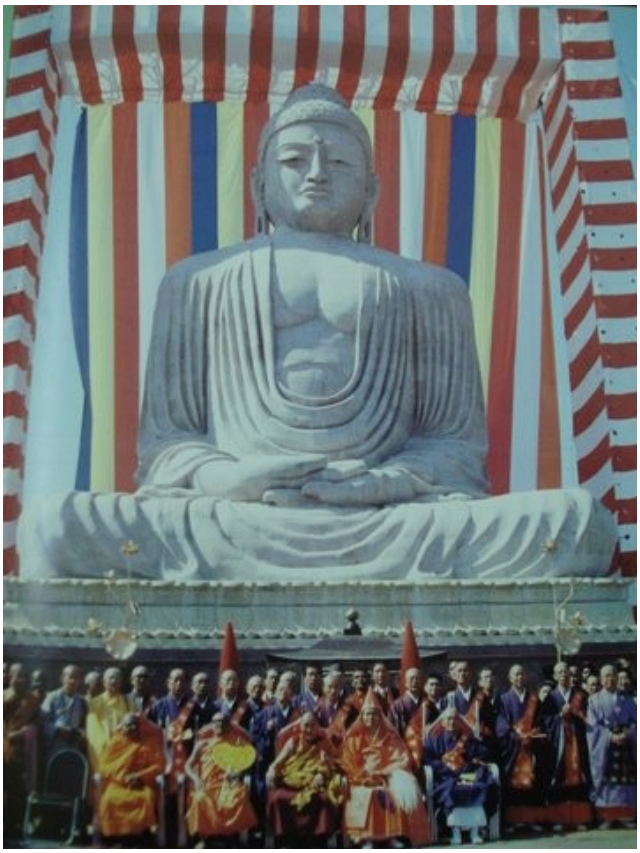


Figure 3.11 Unveiling of the Great Buddha Statue
Source: Daijokyo Buddhist Temple

As will become apparent through this dissertation, the influence of Japanese Buddhism on Bodh Gaya resonates through each of the following chapters and certainly peaked with the unveiling of the Kamakura-style 'Great Buddha Statue' by the Daijokyo sect on November 18th 1989. With the unveiling of the Great Buddha Statue it became the highest Buddha image in India at approximately 64 feet tall in height. The image depicts the Buddha sitting in the *dhyana mudra* position (or mediation pose) on a lotus flower with his eyes half closed. The elaborate statue was designed over five years by V. Ganapati Sthapati, one of the best known contemporary sculptors of traditional images in India (Asher 2008). The execution of the statue was done by a prominent stone-working company known as Thakur & Sons, who carved the entire Great Buddha Statue out of

[90] The Governor of Bihar, Dr. Kidwai endorsed Rev. Y. Sugisaki's request for 20 acres of agricultural land to set up a training centre in collaboration with the State Government to educate local farmers in Japanese agricultural technique. In 1985 the Daijokyo Buddhist temple opened the Vocational Training School; by 1988, the Daijokyo Buddhist House was formally opened to accommodate pilgrims. A homeopathic dispensary was also established in village Bakroar in 1997.

blocks of pink chunar sandstone.[91] At the base is a solid concrete pedestal and inside is a hollow spiral staircase from the ground floor to the chest of the statue. Wooden shelves have been provided in the interior walls, wherein 16,300 small Buddha images made of bronze and sent from Japan have been enshrined. As a major tourist attraction at Bodh Gaya, the Great Buddha Statue, alongside a burgeoning number of Mahayana monasteries and temples have certainly redefined the landscape as the navel of the earth and a major centre of world Buddhism.

3.1.6 East Asian Mahayana Buddhism

Although the Japanese have been very influential in terms of Buddhist development at Bodh Gaya, a number of prominent Mahayana Buddhist institutions from East Asia have also contributed to the globalization of Bodh Gaya's landscape. Two kilometers west of the Mahabodhi Temple is a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple and Rest House under the head Abbot Thay Huyen Dieu (Ven. Dr. Lam Trun Tu). This three-storied rest house, surrounded by gardens and medicinal plants, was formally inaugurated on February 17th 1994. As the founder of the Lumbini Development Trust, Dr. Lam has also been very active in the place of Buddha's birth, where he established the Viet Nam Phat Quoc Tu in 1993. This was the first international Buddhist temple in Lumbini; since then, Dr. Lam has worked closely with the Nepalese government to develop Lumbini as an international Buddhist centre.[92] A second Vietnamese Buddhist Centre entitled the Vien Giac Institute was also established at Bodh Gaya in 2002. It belongs to the Lin Tzi Zen tradition but practices pure land Buddhism.

[91] As part of the 13th Anniversary of the Daijoko Buddhist Temple the chief ten disciples of Lord Buddhawere unveiled. These statues were installed on either side of the Great Buddha statue on February 20th 1996. All of the statures are carved out of the same pink chunar stone; each measure 15 feet in height and sit on a high pedestal, five on either side.

[92] Although Dr. Lam had visited Lumbini back in 1969, it was not until 1993 that King Birenda and the Government of Nepal granted Dr. Lam the land-rights and permission to build the Viet Nam Phat Quoc Tu. Dr. Lam is the President of the International Buddhist Federation at Lumbini and has actively involved in a number of social projects including the protection of the Sarus cranes, the 'Viet Nam Bridge of Love project.'



Figure 3.12 Vietnamese Buddhist Temple

Directly west of the Mahabodhi Temple on the main entrance road is the old Chinese Temple and the World Chongwa Buddhist Sangha of Taiwan. Although the remnants of old Chinese Temple was built as early as 1935 by Sitingchen, (or S.T. Chen) a Chinese Buddhist Savant (Doyle 1997), it was not until 1997 that major renovations were made to the building under the head Chinese monk Wu Chein.[93] Directly behind the Chinese Temple is the World Chongwa Buddhist Sangha of Taiwan that also began construction of a temple and rest house in the mid-nineties. The President of the Taiwanese Sangha is Rev. Shih Wu Yuan, who also manages another Buddhist monastery in Calcutta and caters largely to Taiwanese, Singaporian and Melanesian Buddhists.

Linked to the transnational networks of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism at Bodh Gaya was the first international gathering of Buddhist nuns, held in February 1987. With the inaugural speech provided by the 14th Dalai Lama, this historic event brought together over 1500 monks, nuns and laypeople from over twenty six countries. According to Thubten Chodron, this special occasion was the first time in approximately 800 years that a *Bhikshuni* Sangha (a community of fully-ordained nuns), in India performed the Bhikshuni *posadha*, the nuns' bimonthly purification and restoration of

[93] It is has been difficult to find information on the origins of the Chinese temple. It is likely associated with the Chinese Buddhist community that was established in Calcutta. Perhaps this is why Tan Yun-shan, a close friend of Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, came to stay in the monastery in the early nineteenth-century. Other sources such as Fred Asher (2008) suggest it was constructed in 1945. Allegedly, the Chinese Temple was built on a plot of land donated by the Birlas.

vows.'[94] Although a lineage of fully ordained women had been kept alive in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam, this was the first time, after many centuries, that a Bhikshuni posadha had been done in the land where the Buddha's teachings originated. In addition to reviving the Bhikshuni Sangha the special occasion was also the founding meeting of Sakyadhita, a worldwide Buddhist women's organization which means "Daughters of the Buddha." Some of the more prominent Bhikshuni's who participated in the event include: Karma Lekshe Tsomo (USA), the late Ayya Khema, Sylvia Wetzel and Jampa Tsedroen (Carola Roloff) (all from Germany), as well as the Bhikkhuni Kusuma (formerly Dr. Kusuma Devendra, Sri Lanka) and Bhikkhuni Dhammananda (formerly Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, Thailand).

Lastly, in the early nineties, there have also been a growing number of Korean Buddhist institutions at Bodh Gaya. One of these centres is the Korean Buddhist Hokooksa Temple and Rest House that is still under construction on a plot of land directly behind the Nyingma Institute campus. The president of the organization, Dr. Hyun Ki Hong, and General Secretary Dr. Kim Kwang Tae maintain close ties with the Korean National Centre of the Mahabodhi Society of India. Another active South Korean organization is entitled the 'Join Together Society;' it began an educational project known as the Sujata Academy at the foot-hill of Prakbodhi Hill in Dhungeshwari in 1995. This area is largely inhabited by the Manji community of scheduled castes and is located 10 km northeast of Bodh Gaya town, across both the Niranjana and the Mohanta rivers. Finally, there is one additional centre with prominent East Asian and Mahayana connections entitled the Asian Buddhist Cultural Centre founded by a Ladakhi monk known as Venerable Ananda. Ananda has been a longtime resident at Bodh Gaya and served as a Buddhist member of the BTMC in the eighties and nineties. Since then, he has been running a non-sectarian centre with support from the *Buddha's Light International Association* in Singapore.

3.1.7 Indian Buddhism

Although the general pattern of Buddhist development at Bodh Gaya reflects the global networks of transnational Buddhism that I described above, nevertheless, there are some Indian

[94] For more information on the gathering see www.sakyadhita.org *and* www.thubtenchodron.org. According to the Sakyadhita website, the founding objectives are to: 1) To promote world peace through the practice of the Buddha's teachings; 2) To create a network of communications for Buddhist women throughout the world; 3) To promote harmony and understanding among the various Buddhist traditions; 4) To encourage and help educate women as teachers of BuddhaDharma; 5) To provide improved facilities for women to study and practice the teachings. In 1998, another historic event for the bhikshuni Sangha was held in Bodh Gaya that drew upwards of 132 women from over 22 countries. From February 14-23 there was a large bhikshuni ordination that was organized by Master Hsing Yun from the Fo Kuang Shan Temple in Taiwan.

Buddhist groups with Theravada roots that have emerged since the post-independence period. In the same year that major renovations were made to the Royal Thai Wat, the Head Bhikkhu, Phra Debvisuddhimoli, also helped to establish a central Indian monastic organization at Bodh Gaya. Under the leadership of Jagadish Kashyap (1908-1976) the *All Indian Bhikkhu Sangha* (AIBS) was established in July 1970. Jagdish Kashyap was an educated middle class Bihari who was ordained a Buddhist in Ceylon in 1934 (Ahir 1989: 89-100). Noted for being a great scholar, he was involved in the early transcription of Pali and became the founder of the Nalanda Institute. Unlike Jagdish Kashyap, almost all the members from the governing body came from the ethno-Buddhist background of the Barua and Chakma Buddhists of Bengal and Assam (Ahir 1998: 99). However, in the last few decades, the membership demographic of the AIBS shifted significantly and now reflects the growing presence of Dalit Maharastran Buddhists or New Buddhist from the Ambedkar tradition.[95] The significant presence of the Dalit Buddhist community in Bodh Gaya is also linked to the demands for control of the Mahabodhi Temple that I explore in chapter six. Lastly, in addition to the AIBS, four other Indian Buddhist institutions have settled in Bodh Gaya in recent years: the Buddhist Pilgrimage and Cultural Centre of Bangladesh (1992); the Vajra Bodhi Society (1994) Chakma Buddhist Temple (1998) and Dhamma Chakra Mission (2000).

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In this section, I have provided a historical and descriptive account of the different forms of transnational Buddhism that have been inscribed in Bodh Gaya's landscape since the landmark 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations. Through various ritual and commemorative activities that I described above, this has reinforced that Bodh Gaya is the "navel of the earth" and a site of global memory while also recognizing its heterogeneity and diversity across national, sectarian and cultural lines. Initially, the growth and expansion of transnational networks from the religious diaspora came to reflect the national aspirations of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who helped to recreate an international religious conclave of Buddhist monasteries, temples and/or guest houses. Although the number of Tibetan Refugees and Himalayan Buddhists on pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya grew substantially following the 1959 Chinese invasion of Tibet, to a large extent, the pattern of Buddhist development following

[95] Government land was acquired by the AIBS back in the late seventies. However it was not until May 31st 2003 that the headquarters and guest house was formally inaugurated in the presence of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India.

independence continued to reflect the larger geography of the British Empire and the prominent ties with Theravada countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. However, by the late seventies and eighties, Theravada influence at Bodh Gaya was eclipsed by the growing institutional presence of Mahayana Buddhism and the expanding Vajrayana networks within the Tibetan refugee community. In light of the proliferation of institutions, the *Bodh Gaya Temple Advisory Board* met on April 4th 1986 and decided that all Buddhist countries should be directed to maintain a representative "national" character and that land should not be allotted indiscriminately (Bannerjee 2000: 143). However, as I have shown, from the late eighties onwards, national articulations of Buddhism provided a difficult container for the complex transnational networks of the religious diaspora. Related to these developments was the institutional blurring between hotels, guest houses, NGOs and monasteries along with a breakdown in land allocation policy that provided both opportunities and challenges for the expatriate Buddhist community.

3.2 Buddhism and Jungle Raj: Where the Middle Way meets the Crooked Path

So far in this chapter I have traced some of the prominent transnational histories and networks of Buddhism that have emerged in Bodh Gaya over the last fifty years. Like many tourist and pilgrimage locales in the midst of rapid change, the institutional growth of monasteries at Bodh Gaya can be interpreted as a by-product of globalization or an example of "trasnationalism from above." However, in a state notorious for its poverty, it is important not to overemphasize the power of the global in the circulation of images, people, capital, commodities, ideologies, and technology, without addressing the ways in which these global flows also reproduce and perpetuate forms of exploitation, uneven development and social conflict (Brennan 2005: 45). In recent years, many anthropologists have critiqued the cultural imperialist model of globalization and have begun to explore the complex and fluid forms of "creolization" (Hannerz 1996), hybridity and disjuncture (Appadurai 1996) that constitute place-making, especially in post-colonial societies. How are transnational processes tied to globalization grounded in particular local contexts? How is the emplacement of transnational Buddhism at Bodh Gaya resisted, reshaped and transformed by the spatial politics of locality and culture? How does a religion that advocates a renunciation of worldly attachment come to terms with the social realities of corruption and violence?[96]

[96] Buddhism is often defined as an "other-worldly" religion. According to Morris (2006), Buddhism is a way of salvation that can be attained through insight into the ultimate nature of reality. It is a religion that "is not concerned with god or

From the late eighties onwards, the expanding networks of transnational Buddhism has overlapped with significant changes at the provincial level that affected the land acquisition process at Bodh Gaya. During the Indian general elections in 1989 and state assembly elections, Lalu Prasad Yadav successfully led a National Front coalition in Bihar and was elected Chief Minister of the Janata Party in 1990. Building on an alliance of Muslim-Yadav caste support, the rise of this controversial subaltern leader helped to recreate a new political and populist atmosphere in Bihar widely known as *Jungle Raj* and characterized by the rise of backward caste politics, increased violence, corruption and lawlessness. This period of Jungle Raj directly affected the land acquisition process at Bodh Gaya that required new strategies among foreign Buddhist groups and senior resident monks to negotiate the increasingly fragmented and complicated land relations. Following the Buddha Jayanti in 1956, the "official government land" had been previously recognized as part of the "Notified Area" to serve the purpose of international Buddhist development at the site. However, with the escalating cost of land and a breakdown in land management policy between the state and regional authorities this served to redefine the spatial environment that proved mutually beneficial to both Buddhist and local land elites (Bannerjee 2000). As I will demonstrate, these changes brought the middle way in alignment with the crooked path. In this section I examine the moral and ethical dilemmas of transnational Buddhism during this period of Jungle Raj.

3.2.1 Dacoity and the making of Spiritual Gated Communities

In the previous section, I described the ways in which the Buddhist diaspora have empowered Bodh Gaya's place memory through various forms of ritual and spatial appropriations, especially through the construction of monasteries, temples and/or guest houses to support pilgrimage activities. While some of these Buddhist institutions, like the Royal Wat Thai and Indo Nippon Temple have become fossilized museums of Buddhist national culture and key objects of the tourist gaze, there are others that have built enclosed monastic centres for the purpose of religious practice and meditation training. During my interviews and surveys with different monks and caretakers from the foreign Buddhist institutions, it became clear that there had been an increase in armed robberies, violence and

the world, but with human life, or rather sentient beings, and with the elimination of suffering" (Morris 44). For Durkheim (1915), Buddhism was a religion that did not easily fit within theistic definitions and argued that the "Buddhist was not interested in knowing whence came the world in which he lives and suffers, he takes it as a given fact, and his whole concern is to escape it" (Morris 2006).

corruption targeted against many of these centres throughout the nineties.[97] These practices of *dacoity*, as I was told, took on a variety of forms that overlapped with the changing land acquisition patterns and the growing influx of Buddhist institutions in the surrounding area. The majority of criminal activities involved some form of petty theft, especially in those Buddhist centres that were some distance from the main township. As one Buddhist monk described, "Bodh Gaya used to be a village back in the eighties. Since then we have seen a vast expansion of growth. It used to be more relaxed with easy-going people. Now, we see more greed and thievery. . . also more poverty. More people are also leaving the villages and migrating to the city." One of these organizations that were susceptible to dacoity was the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom.

The Root Institute is a highly successful transnational Buddhist organization within the Gelugpa tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa of Tibet. It was founded by the late Lama Thubten Yeshe and spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Over the course of his life, Lama Yeshe established a wide network of centres around the world under the banner of FPMT, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. According to the Root Institute website, as a way of returning "the historic kindness to the Indian people," it was Lama Yeshe's intention that the Root Institute be a "dynamic centre where the Buddhist ideals of universal responsibility and education could be taught and practiced. . . [a place to] preserve and spread the rich variety of India's ancient wisdom culture in its religious, philosophical, educational and cultural manifestations."[98] Since the passing of Lama Yeshe in 1984, the Root Institute at Bodh Gaya has become a prominent non-profit charitable society that offers a six month spiritual program during the winter season and is involved with numerous volunteer based social projects throughout the year.

During this period of Jungle Raj, in the mid-1990s the Root Institute encountered a string of attacks by dacoits who forced the directors to re-evaluate its security measures, especially given its relative isolation 2 km west of the Mahabodhi Temple. According to a volunteer from the Root Institute:

There were three armed attacks during this time. On one occasion, forty people came during the

[97] The word *dacoity* is the anglicized version of the Indian word 'dakaitee' which comes from Dakoo (meaning "armed robber") or Dakat.

[98] For more on the Root Institute and the FPTM network see www.rootinstitute.com. In recent years there has been some research on the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom and the FPMT network. For more on the FPMT, and the Maitreya Project see Abraham Zablocki (2005) and Jessica Falcone (2009) forthcoming PhD dissertation at Cornell University. For more on the links between education and pilgrimage see Kory Goldberg (2009) forthcoming PhD dissertation at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) entitled *Buddhists Without Borders: Pilgrimage, Foreign-Aid, and Education in BodhGaya*.

> night into the retreat houses and started to empty them. Some residents came out of their rooms with a flashlight and there was only one security guard with an old dog. The guests were shot at with one of those home made shotguns, which fired in different directions injuring two people. The second attack came outside the compound when an Israeli was attacked. He did not want to give up his possessions and was shot. The third attack involved an armed robbery at the clinic which at that time was a home for the destitute. . . .so in some ways this place is not a security bubble. Every one here gets attacked; it is not just the foreigners, it is the locals too.

In response to these violent attacks, the directors of the Root Institute decided to construct a large cement wall covered with barbed wire. Adding to the security measures was a huge police tower and an armed guard at the front entrance gate. According to one of the previous directors, the police post was provided by the Government of Bihar in response to the disconcerting press coverage that "western tourists are being shot in Bodh Gaya."

These clashes under Jungle Raj have contributed to a spatial realignment of foreign religious institutions in the area. Many prominent Buddhist centres at Bodh Gaya, like the Root Institute, have created a landscape of religious enclaves and what I refer to as *gated spiritual communities*. As I have described in the previous section, many of these monasteries, temples and/or guest houses are transient centres that primarily serve to accommodate the global flows of Buddhist pilgrimage to the place of enlightenment. As non-profit charitable trusts and religious societies, they also operate with considerable autonomy and are spaces largely controlled by foreign nationals. Although some Buddhist expatriates have settled in Bodh Gaya more permanently, many of the monks, nuns and directors from the respective foreign Buddhist institutions are highly mobile and have the financial resources to travel across borders and maintain networks of monasteries and temples in various places around the world. As national and sectarian embodiments of Buddhist tradition, the clusters of monasteries at Bodh Gaya can serve to reinforce a kind of "enclave consciousness" that establishes distance from the local population. These are religious centres where pilgrims and visitors can be relatively "isolated from the host environment and the local people" as well as find comfort in their own cultural and spiritual gated community (Urry 1990: 7; Brennan 2005: 77).



Figure 3.13 Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom

In order to create a spiritual environment that is conducive to religious practice and the mendicant life, many of these foreign Buddhist monasteries have built large walled enclosures, hire guards, and maintain a variety of security measures. Similar to Low and Lawrence-Zuniga's (2003: 5) analysis of commercial and residential development projects, these spatial forms of physical separation can reinforce a sense of "social segregation, cutting off communities by visual boundaries, growing distances and ultimately walls." One is also tempted to see the parallels with Setha Low's (2001) analysis of urban discourses of fear among gated communities in the United States. According to Low (2001), resorts, club developments, golf courses and middle class suburban developments are part of a pattern of social avoidance tied to larger processes of neoliberalism and globalization. Whereas in the United States, these exclusive spatial forms are designed to enhance prestige and leisure for white, middle-class people, at Bodh Gaya, the retreat environment creates a kind of religious separation designed to keep out undesired guests and local people. Thus, Buddhist monasteries in Bodh Gaya, like gated communities in the United States, also serve to regulate space through architectural design and security measures (Low 47). Although these gated spiritual communities are not necessarily borne of racism or racial segregation, they do institutionalize a kind of religious segregation and function in

terms of legitimizing exclusion. In other words, this process can reinforce a visual landscape of fear and create an image of the local population as violent and dangerous (Davis 1992).

I would also argue that the fear, violence, corruption and insecurity that accompanies perceptions of Bodh Gaya under Jungle Raj has only intensified the desire for peace, spiritual solace and moral enclosure within the built environment of these foreign Buddhist institutions. The exclusionary walls can represent both a response to the perception of fear, but also a means of justifying religious separation and cultural difference from the wider public sphere. According to Low (2003: 151), "the walls are making visible the systems of exclusion that are already there; now the walls are constructed in concrete." For these reasons, many of the head monks and caretakers of the various monasteries insist that they do not engage with local politics. As one Burmese monk described, "the reason for this, well you know. . .it is the situation in Bihar. They see us as big and want our money. . . We stay away and remain peaceful and quiet, avoiding politics." Although walls and gates are used to create a sense of security, as Low (2001, 2003) argues, gating and spatial strategies of avoidance provides an "incomplete boundedness" in that workers from feared groups still enter to work for residents and the residents themselves need to leave in order to shop. Thus, I would argue, along the lines of Setha Low, that the fear of dacoity and violence under Jungle Raj serves to legitimate religious segregation but also disguises more enduring inequalities, mainly economic inequalities linked to global capital and transnational religious financing.

Let me be clear that this is not the case for every foreign Buddhist institution at Bodh Gaya. However, I am suggesting that the construction of large boundary walls, gating and security measures has deepened the climate of fear at the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Given the relative affluence and wealth of these foreign Buddhist monasteries, many of these institutions also provide a range of philanthropic and social services that can neutralize the economic inequalities and mitigate the cultural and religious fault lines in an area of dense poverty. During an interview with one of the previous directors of the Root Institute, she noted: "regarding the attitude of people running the monasteries, it requires respect and cooperation if it is to lead to harmony. The reason why we have had trouble with dacoits in the past is that back then we were not that respectful. We became vulnerable to a bad reputation. But this has all changed now, especially with the clinic." Today, the Root Institute has become a leading example of "engaged Buddhism" by combining social work with spiritual practice (Queen & King 1996). In addition to its popular six-month spiritual program, the Root Institute runs a year-long charitable medical clinic and employs upwards of thirty-two local workers throughout the

year. It must be clarified that although centres like the Root Institute are now widely respected for their ongoing social work in the surrounding area, there are other religious centres whose activities represent a kind of "moral minimalism" that is "an aversion to confrontation and conflict and a preference for spare, even weak strategies of control" (Baumgartner 1988: 10). In my opinion, it is these acts of "moral minimalism," such as charity projects, that in my opinion, can serve to depoliticize other ulterior motives linked to transnational religious capital and financing from the Buddhist diaspora.

The important point is that Buddhist monasteries, in the past and present, have always served a multitude of functions. At Bodh Gaya I have suggested that religious segregation is justified in response to Jungle Raj but also perpetuates new forms of prejudice and socioeconomic disparities in the surrounding area. As foreign enclaves surrounded by large cement walls and gates, the discourse of fear and violence can be used to legitimize separation and exclusion from the local population. However, these spatial tactics of privacy, insularity and moral minimalism have also been subject to criticism by many local groups who see the proliferation of Buddhist monasteries as a sign of religious neocolonialism. This view is especially prevalent among the local-run hotels and businesses who regard foreign Buddhist institutions and their luxurious guest houses as a financial rival in a landscape where commercial and religious interests intermingle in productive ways.

3.2.2 Commercial and Religious Entanglements

In the previous section I noted that many of the foreign Buddhist monasteries acquired land on lease or donated from the Government of Bihar as part of the 'Notified Area.' This pattern was established following the Buddha Jayanti of 1956 and continued until the late eighties when it was gradually supplanted by alternative land acquisition strategies employed during Jungle Raj.[99] During one of my interviews with an Indian Buddhist monk at Bodh Gaya, he explained that the main challenge foreign nationals face in acquiring private land is that they are unfamiliar with the land registration process and the ways in which the Indian legal system operates on the ground level in Bihar. One of the main regulations preventing the direct purchase of land by foreign nationals is the *Land Acquisition Act* (1894) and the *Transfer of Property Act* (1884), both of which prevent foreigners from acquiring land from a private owner. One avenue of circumventing these legal stipulations has

[99] It is important to note that the early pattern of land acquisition has not been entirely overturned by the processes I detail in this chapter. Even today, the Government of Bihar continues to provide land on lease to Buddhist institutions, especially foreign Buddhist governments.

been to form a 'Religious Trust' or 'Charitable Society', a process akin to establishing a Non-Governmental Organization under the *Societies Registration Act.*[100] However, in order to receive tax exemptions from the Indian Government, an Indian majority is required in the overall structure of the registered governing body and its annual income revenue must be declared as part of the *Indian Income Tax Act* (1961).[101]

As a religious institution and a registered non-profit organization, many of these centres rely upon the reciprocity of the Buddhist laity through the virtuous practice of *dana.* Dana in both Sanskrit and Pali refers to "generosity" or "giving." Within a Buddhist context, dana is one of the perfections or *paramitas* (dana-paramita) that helps to purify the mind and reach the ultimate goal of enlightenment. As institutional receptors of dana, the monks and nuns at the various monasteries are benefactors of this exchange where virtuous deeds at a holy place translates into religious merit. Among the large number of Buddhist pilgrims who visit Bodh Gaya and stay at the respective monasteries, dana is often presented in the form of money, food and clothing. Hence, the spiritual economy of dana circulates widely through the monasteries and is especially prevalent during the large *kathina dana* (robe-giving) celebrations that mark the end of the monsoon season.

As a result of this virtuous economy of generosity and the lack of regulation given their status as non-governmental charitable societies, many hoteliers in Bodh Gaya have argued that these monasteries have become "five-star religious centres" and "spiritual resorts" that provide excellent boarding and lodging facilities that cater to international Buddhist pilgrims on pre-planned tours. According to one hotelier in Bodh Gaya,

> Regarding the hotels and monasteries there are more than twenty of them from different countries. It has developed into an industry, not as monasteries. They should be run as a place of worship, for their own people. The hotel pays taxes on rooms, commercial and electrical charges. . . The monasteries benefit from taxes and carry out a business. There are five to seven buses staying at the monasteries. Some say they provide geisha and A/C rooms. The Buddha says we should leave behind the luxurious life, yet the Buddhists are providing all the services. They are also creating a hurdle in the livelihood of the local people. Monasteries should not do business or they should be charged with taxes. We have to pay luxury taxes on rooms, meals, commercial electricity bills, commercial gas bills, sales tax and income tax on all transactions.

[100] Each of these procedures follow certain laws and regulations under the *Society Registration Act* (1860); *Indian Trust Act* (1882); *Charitable and Religious Trust Act* (1920); and *Religious Endowment Act* (1863). To set up a 'Trust' requires a minimum of three trustees with a majority of Indian citizens, while in the case of a 'Society' there is a minimum of seven members and at least four Indian members must be trustees.

[101] If there are large donations provided by a foreign patron, these institutions must also abide by the *Foreign Exchange Management Act* (1999) and *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act* (1976). As part of the legal regulations outlined by the Government of India these institutions must provide a three year audit report through a chapter accountant for verification.

> There are also municipal taxes on the land we are running. So this stands in sharp opposition to the monasteries. And since it is seasonal, from September to March we must also keep staff and payment in the off months.

The hoteliers and local businesses argue that these monasteries offer a "fixed rate" for rooms and should be charged a "holding tax" by the Bihar Government that reflects their commercial (high costs) or residential (minimal costs) rates. While many of these monasteries suggest a "recommended donation" for their lodging; in other cases, the monasteries do offer "fixed rates" but strongly object to these commercial accusations. From the point of view of two Buddhist monks who are caretakers of Buddhist monasteries in Bodh Gaya:

> Pilgrims and tourists prefer to stay in monasteries. Their purpose is different from visiting the Taj Mahal. This is a religious and peaceful atmosphere. They meet with monks and do puja. No one can demand of the tourists or pilgrims where they should stay. Hotels put pressure to stay at their establishments. But there are those people who are going to holy places and want to stay in a Dharamsala. It is the same with Hindu pilgrims, Thai people - Thai temple, Burmese - Burmese temple. This is mainly for reason of food, language, culture and for puja. Others think the monasteries run like hotels, offering air conditioning. It is not an ancient time, we also need these facilities.

> We also do not advertise that we give cheaper rates or better accommodation or compensation to the customer. That kind of advertising we never put forth. If this kind of thing we are initiating then we are in a position to be blamed. We have no advertisement like "customer satisfaction guaranteed" or "around the clock hospitality." Monasteries believe in religious practices. Pilgrims have respect and reverence, no one can stop them.

Although some of these foreign Buddhist institutions have begun to pay the "holding taxes" in recent years, these matters are far from resolved; they have even reached the High Court in Patna. In addition to the ongoing battles over "fixed rates" and "holding taxes," the Buddhist monasteries also contest their categorization as commercial enterprises by the Bihar State Electricity Board which has led to a significant hike in electrical tariffs in recent years. As one monk from a Tibetan Buddhist monastery explained:

> With the growth of visitors at Bodh Gaya many of the politicians started building hotels and became jealous of the monasteries. The hotels even formed a committee attacking monasteries accusing them because of their lack of customers. You know in the beginning. . . in the 1970s there were not so many Buddhist tourists, especially from Japan and Taiwan. With the growth of monasteries came the Buddhist tourists. They never realized this. During the recession time, many hotels came up but no money was coming from the visitors. So they started accusing us and informing the government. Writing in the newspaper. . . all bad information. Then came the electricity board. It used to be NDS but now it is CS-5. Between commercial and domestic.

> They implemented this upon all the monasteries and mosques. For many years we have been paying some 1,500 rupees each month and it is increasing with the introduction of the CS-5. The hotels are also commercial but some are being charged as domestic. . . We have been fighting these charges for a long time.

In response to these commercial accusations and the escalating tariffs imposed on the foreign monasteries, the expatriate Buddhist community has for many years refused to pay the taxes.[102] This contentious issue reached a new level of intensity in February 2002 when the Bihar State Electrical Board disconnected the power supply of 34 monasteries. Under a blanket of darkness, this brought additional protests by the Buddhist monasteries who threatened to close their centres until matters were resolved at the state level. The effect of these ongoing quarrels and disputes has not only redefined the landscape in terms of commercial and religious antagonisms but it has also contributed to new communal fault lines between Buddhist and Hindu groups at Bodh Gaya. As one Buddhist monk explained,

> No other monasteries in India are paying. This is a charitable project. The local Indians are thinking we are receiving so much money from foreigners. Sometimes we feel very sad, this is Hindu territory and no one is supporting us. Instead we are attacked. They are always looking down upon us. This is creating a strong Hindu-Buddhist sectarian view. They forget that it is because of the monasteries that Bodh Gaya has developed.

The public discourse of fear under Jungle Raj not only resonates in the interior walls of these religious monasteries but is also indicative of the growing concerns by local residents who fear the town is being overrun by wealthy foreign Buddhist interests. Similar to Brennan's (2005) observation of hotel resorts in the Dominican Republic, these monasteries and guest houses have brought “first world” services to Bodh Gaya while the local population still live in “third world” conditions. Although many of these foreign Buddhist institutions do create employment opportunities for the local population, from the view point of many hoteliers and tour operators, they are also in direct competition with local-run businesses and services. Therefore, the private religious infrastructure that accompanies transnational Buddhism vividly symbolizes how benefits from pilgrimage and tourism development often do not reach the local population. The so-called profits generated from the spiritual economy of dana can easily evaporate along transnational circuits and are not necessarily invested in the local economy.

[102] More information on the power supply cuts in Bodh Gaya can be found at http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/jan/31soroor.htm. According to the news source the cost collectively runs around 2.5 million rupees pending clearance



Figure 3.14 The Harijan Colony next to the Tibetan Karma Temple

The spatial tensions and social conflicts over commercial and religious motivations are certainly linked to the escalating land prices around Bodh Gaya. With more competition over space in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple this has brought a huge inflation over land prices and the majority of land is no longer affordable for most local residents. According to Kabir Saxena, a long term resident at Bodh Gaya, back in the eighties, 6000 Rupees (US$ 125) a *katta* was “considered a high price at the time. Now it is three or four Lakh (US$ 6000 to 8000) per *katta.*” From the viewpoint of many local residents, the skyrocketing prices are directly equated with the proliferation of Buddhist monasteries. The expanding number of lavish religious buildings that have converted rice paddy fields within ten years serve as a daily reminder to many local residents of the economic disparities and differences between Bodh Gaya's public and those foreign religious enclaves viewed external to it. However, it is precisely through these changing land patterns that transnational Buddhism has become susceptible to local forms of bribery and extortion.

3.2.3 Acquiring Land the Crooked Way

In the last ten years the number of tourists have increased and so has the amount of money coming into the hotels. Back then the only places you could stay were in the local houses and

> villages. Now we are seeing lots of foreign tourists and money coming from India into the area. There has been an explosion of development and building. . . without any control. And with money to bribe you can get anything you want here (Senior Buddhist monk at Bodh Gaya).

At the centre of these commercial and religious antagonisms are a growing number of court cases charged against the land holdings of these foreign Buddhist institutions. One case example is the Nyingma Buddhist Institute which has been embroiled in legal battles over land for the last ten years. The popular Nyingma Monlam, or 'World Peace Ceremony,' that I described in the previous section has become a regular feature of Bodh Gaya's ritual cycle bringing thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns and laity to the sacred centre over the course of ten to twenty days in the winter season. In order to provide the necessary lodging for upwards of 10,000 devotees each year, the Nyingma Institute acquired three acres of private land from a local landowner back in the early 1990s along with two additional acres donated by Dzongsar Rinpoche for this purpose. When I interviewed the manager of the Nyingma Institute in Bodh Gaya, he explained:

> At that time there were so many people coming here, so many different tents were scattered all around the Kalachakra grounds. People were just sleeping on the ground. And due to the poor conditions people were getting sick due to the dust and dirt. There were also unnecessary local people entering into the tents and stealing things. . . There was absolutely no safety at all. If storms were coming through we were washed out by rain and wind. There were all these problems, so Rinpoche decided to give us this land for these safety reasons.

Two years after construction of the Nyingma Institute began on the five acre plot the manager was confronted by a local elite and “well known agitator” claiming that this land had belonged to his ancestors. This accusation led to a court case in 1996 between the two camps which continued for another four years, all the while, blocking the Nyingma Institute from further construction. Although this is not the place to examine the specificities of the land dispute, in the end, the Gaya District judge (who some say was bribed), rejected the land entitlement of the Tibetan Buddhist group. This response prompted the Nyingma Institute to take the legal case to the Patna State High Court and after years of legal deliberations the State High Court decided to revoke the lower court decision and claimed a “stay order.” While matters appeared to be settled with the latest decision and the previous district-level judge reposted, after two years, the same judge returned as the CJM (Criminal Judge Magistrate) of Gaya District. Shortly thereafter, the manager of the Nyingma Institute was once again confronted by the local elite complaining that all his money and court expenses had been drained. He was then kidnapped, beaten up and 125 rupees were taken from his wallet. When the case went before the

Criminal Judge Magistrate, the accusations of dacoity were reversed and the manager of the Nyingma Institute was promptly thrown in jail where he stayed for one month. In light of these events, the Nyingma Institute eventually settled on an agreement. According to the manager,

> My Guruji and followers come here to Bodh Gaya for good things. We did not want to continue quarreling so we eventually decided to compromise with a payment of 40 Lakh [US$ 83,000]. This was in February 2006. They said that the court case could take another thirty years to resolve. So we decided to settle. *We made peace*. The block officers they take so many bribes. Their view of foreigners is that they have lots of money so let's rob them. . . It can be so difficult here. I remember the Kalachakra in Amaravarti – the state was so supportive and everything was done so well. Now you compare that with here. [My emphasis]

The Nyingma Institute is not the only Buddhist organization that is implicated in these moral and ethical predicaments over competing land claims and disputes during this period of Jungle Raj. Many of these institutions have followed the path of the Nyingma Institute and *made peace* through some financial agreement but at the cost of perpetuating the corruption and bribery that has become institutionalized in Bodh Gaya and Bihar. However, there are others, like the Root Institute of Culture of Wisdom who have faced three land cases but have chosen "to fight it out" in the lengthy court trials based on "moral principle." But this appears to be a rarity.

Although some senior monks like the Burmese Abbot are well known for their skillful means of mediating these land issues on behalf of foreign Buddhist groups, very few are familiar with the Indian legal system and the process of land acquisition that I alluded to earlier. One exception is Bhikkhu Priyapal Bhante who is a student of political science from the Chakma Buddhist Community of North-Eastern India. Ever since Bhikkhu Priyapal came to Bodh Gaya in the late nineties, he has been fighting these institutional forms of corruption and bribery that underlie land disputes at Bodh Gaya. According to Priyapal,

> Buddhism believes in clarity. I have had to read these books and advise on the basis of the law. Most of these people do not want to invest their time in these things and would rather build temples and get sponsorship. . . The International Buddhist Council has been involved in these court cases. There are so many of them embroiled in land knots. It is difficult to convince our colleagues otherwise. The system in Bihar is difficult. Foreigners also do not want to go through the details. They would rather keep the mentality of bribery. The India system is slow and corrupt, there is no doubt about that. So they would rather use the money to pay the Government employee, then transfer. Then later they are requested to pay more money. . . It is an endless cycle.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which institutional practices associated with pilgrimage and transnational forms of Buddhism have shaped Bodh Gaya as an international destination and space of global connection. Similar to Werbner's (1996) analysis of Pakistani migrants to Britain, I have looked at the ways in which Buddhist groups sacralize new spaces and root their identities in new localities and diasporic centres. Over the course of the last fifty years, there has been an exponential growth in Buddhist pilgrimage activities and religious networks which have re-centred the sacred topography of Buddhism and activated the collective memory of Bodh Gaya as the navel of the earth. Within a two to three kilometer radius of the central monument, the spatial appropriation of land by monasteries, temples and/or guest houses is perhaps the most visible symbol of the transnational influence of global Buddhism in Bodh Gaya. Ever since the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956, the Indian state and the Government of Bihar have been instrumental in encouraging international Buddhist growth at the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Many of these monasteries were established on the basis of foreign government sponsorship in order to serve the laity and cater to visitors at a time when there was little in the way of facilities for those undertaking pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya. As a result, until the late eighties almost all of the land at Bodh Gaya had been provided to Buddhist groups on lease by the Government of Bihar, as part of the Notified Area.

From the late eighties onwards, the Nehruvian vision I described at the beginning of this chapter gradually became usurped by Jungle Raj and a number of criminal elements began to reverberate at the interstices of the local and global. This directly affected the land acquisition process at Bodh Gaya and brought the middle way in alignment with the crooked path. Challenging overly simplistic views of place-making under globalization, I have shown that it is important not to overlook the structures of inequality that accompany the globalization of Bodh Gaya's spatial environment. This requires moving beyond a narrow view of globalization that overemphasizes mobility and circulation at the macro-level and ignores the constraints generated by new transnational processes (Brennan 2005, Tsing 2005). Similar to Brennan's ethnography of sex tourism in the Dominican Republic, at Bodh Gaya I found that those who have visas and foreign citizenship are well positioned to take advantage of an increasingly interconnected world. With the relatively inexpensive travel opportunities available in many Asian and Euro-American countries, many of Bodh Gaya's foreign expatriate community are able to take advantage of the low cost of land and labor to build their dream monasteries and temples. Catering to the religious diaspora at the doorstep of transnational devotional flows can also be very lucrative, especially when the power of the sacred becomes intertwined with the spiritual economy of dana and

religious aspirations for peace, social development and aid. Aihwa Ong's (1999) distinction between "mobile" and "nonmobile" subjects is especially relevant in this case where many Buddhist monks, nuns and caretakers embrace a kind of "flexible citizenship" at Bodh Gaya. Flexible citizenship, according to Ong (1999: 6), "refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (see also Brennan 2005: 43).

This is not to deny that many of these Buddhist groups also take enormous risks, especially financially and legally, in establishing a monastery at Bodh Gaya. The institutional growth of these religious landmarks with government tax benefits has become a major point of contention in recent years, especially among local-run hotels and businesses who view these monasteries as financial rivals. Not only has this phenomenon drastically altered the financial value of the agricultural land in and around Bodh Gaya, but through their isolation, detachment and self-containment as gated spiritual communities, many lavish monasteries with extra-national addresses have become a symbol of the economic and religious inequalities generated by globalization and transnational Buddhism. As more and more local residents fear their voices and rights to livelihood are becoming marginalized from the site, this is exacerbating conflict between groups especially over land. Consequently, the proliferation of Buddhist institutions has brought rapid social change to Bodh Gaya's landscape that is generating new asymmetries of power, inequality and difference. But as I have shown, these changes have also created new alignments and articulations that have repercussions for the moral and ethical practice of Buddhism at the navel of the earth.

4. CHAPTER FOUR:

SERVITUDE REVISITED: TOURISM AND THE PUBLIC LIFE OF THE GLOBAL BAZAAR

In the previous chapter, I examined the institutional growth of transnational Buddhism at Bodh Gaya since the landmark Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956. Although the spatial appropriation of land by foreign Buddhist groups have also produced a set of moral and ethical challenges, the emergence of these diasporic religious centres have certainly played an integral role in elevating an authoritative history and memory of the site that commemorates the location of Buddha's enlightenment. In this chapter, I examine Bodh Gaya as a lived space and the growing importance of tourism as a source of livelihood and opportunity for social mobility among local residents. Within the last few decades, many of Bodh Gaya's residents have become intertwined with the global flows of traffic and the high seasonality of pilgrimage and tourism throughout the year. Exploring the life histories and bazaar stories of local people helps to illuminate the ways in which Buddhism and the public life of monuments fuel the local economy and provide a creative space for empowerment and social change. How do relationships of servitude articulate with the high seasonality of the south Bihar region? How do local communities seek beneficial arrangements from regular contact with global flows? How is the Buddhist memory of the site negotiated by local inhabitants who draw upon and transform these claims into local histories of belonging?

In this chapter I argue that the everyday lives and stories of local residents are an integral part of understanding the spatial politics of World Heritage and the ongoing production and negotiation of its meaning in the public sphere. Before I turn to a set of life histories and bazaar stories that are linked to the international traffic of pilgrimage and tourism, I wish to highlight that there are other religious institutions at Bodh Gaya that are not part of the larger transnational networks of the Buddhist diaspora. In chapter two, I examined the central role of the Bodh Gaya Mahant in earlier disputes over rites of worship and proprietorship of the Mahabodhi Temple during the colonial period. In this chapter, I begin by contextualizing the social history of Bodh Gaya town in relation to this Shaivite Math and Gyan Prakash's (1990) '*Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India.* Following this historical backdrop, I proceed to look at the social movement against the Bodh Gaya

Math in the seventies and the changing forms of political economy in relation to tourism development. In particular, I examine the ways in which servitude takes on new meanings and articulations in the informal economy of tourism and the public space of Bodh Gaya's global bazaar. I argue that the fragmentation of the *Zamindari* system and the decentralisation of the Bodh Gaya Math as the main institutional power centre is a key factor in the transnational transformation of Bodh Gaya into a global site of memory.

4.1 Bonded Histories and Labor Servitude

4.1.1 The Bodh Gaya Math and the Consolidation of Power

In *Bonded Histories*, Gyan Prakash (1990: xi) examines the "extraordinary longevity of labor servitude" in the south Bihar region, especially its persistence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through an interrogation of modern "discourses of freedom" in opposition to "slavery," Prakash argues that bonded labor in India's feudal system is not simply a remnant of pre-modern times but was also sanctioned and constituted through the practice of colonial rule. As part of his extensive genealogy of labor servitude, Gyan Prakash provides an overview of the physical geography and social history that defines the south Bihar region where Bodh Gaya is located. In terms of physical geography, the river Ganges has historically provided a natural division between north and south Bihar. The northern part is characterized by alluvial plains and numerous river systems that descend from the southern range of the Himalayas, providing a productive flat terrain for seasonal crops. However, to the south, the physical geography is marked by a strong slope descending from the Chota Nagpur hills, making it extremely challenging to retain moisture for agricultural practices. Hence, to the south of the Ganges, and especially in the area around Bodh Gaya, the landscape was marked by "high agricultural seasonality" and "peak periods of labor demand to ensure water storage through the construction of irrigation and water tanks" (Prakash 16). [103]

In terms of the social demographic and hierarchy of land relations that were documented in the

[103] According to Gyan Prakash (1990: 17-25), due to the rugged terrain that defined the geographic slope from the Chota Nagpur range north to the river Ganges, the physical characteristic of the environment prompted new innovations in agricultural practice. The annual monsoon rainfall from mid-June to October would cause a rapid run-off of retreating water and the need for huge investments of labor to ensure the retention of moisture. According to Prakash, the importance of landscape manipulation through the constructing of irrigation channels (*pains*) and tanks (*ahars*) were essential to storing the water for reliable cultivation during the cropping season. These irrigation devices that have supported paddy cultivation have historically been the main occupation of the agricultural communities in the region.

Permanent Settlement of 1793, Prakash (16) explains how "landlords were declared owners of land for which they paid land revenue directly to the government.[104] These private property owners, called *Zamindar*s, consisted of both big-estate holders as well as petty landlords, who were often indistinguishable from peasants and frequently held lands also as tenants." These Zamindars consisted of largely upper caste groups who collected a "produce rent" that linked the interests of peasants with those of the Zamindars, who were also expected to maintain the system of irrigation works. According to Prakash, this system of rent and the nature of the agricultural labor force became two of the main distinguishing features of the south Bihar region. In order to cultivate the landed estate of the Zamindars, these upper castes landlords were dependent on the hired labor force from the ranks of low and "outcaste" populations of which the *Bhuinyas* and *Musahars* are of the greatest number.[105] In Buchanan-Hamilton's (1936: 87) observation in the early nineteenth century, he also noted that close to 75 percent of the cultivators in the Gaya district were indebted and "at one end of the chain stands the Zamindar or Malik who holds the estate from Government under the Permanent Settlement, and pays his land-tax direct to the Government treasury. At the other end is the actual cultivator called the jotdar or kasth-kar who is most invariably a mere tenant-at-will." In the Bodh Gaya Block, which covers an area of 249 square kilometers and contains 139 villages, there are a high proportion of these scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.[106] Together, many of these populations were represented as *Kamias* which were defined by their long-term ties with the landlords.

The extent of this regional distribution of long-term bondage relationships between Kamias and Zamindars leads Prakash (1990: 29) to ask the following question: if the "distribution of the kamia population in south Bihar, then, correlates with differences along the north-south continuum in

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[104] The Permanent Settlement of 1793 is often referred to as the Cornwallis Code which was an agreement between the East India Company and Bengali landlords or *Zamindars* to fix revenues to be raised from agricultural land. This agreement had far-reaching consequences for both agricultural methods and productivity in the entire British Empire and the social transformation of the Indian rural landscape.

[105] The term "outcaste" or "depressed classes" was used by British colonial officials and Orientalist scholars to describe "untouchables," "Dalit" or "Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes" (SC/ST), the official government designation today. Among the two laboring agricultural groups noted above, the *Bhuinyas* in particular, are a prominent untouchable group found in nearly every district to the south. According to Prakash's (1990) analysis, the prominence of these Bhuinyas as economic dependents tied to landlords, has to do with the "middle gangetic area," as the geographic and historical crossroads from which the Hindus of the plains confronted the non-Hindu peoples or tribal populations of the Chota Nagpur range. The name Bhuinya itself derives from the Sanskrit root for "bhumi" (land/ of the soil) and the spoken language dialects such as Maghi to the south and Bhojpuri to the north is also testimony to this unique socio-cultural transition zone.

[106] According to the 2001 census, the total population of Bodh Gaya town is 30,883 with 16,751 male and 14,132 female. The total population for the entire Bodh Gaya Block which covers an area of 249 square kilometres and contains 139 villages is 91,882 of which 39,736 are from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, around 43% of the population.

irrigation and agriculture . . .did the regional distribution of Kamias have something to do with the pattern of agriculture? Did the high agricultural seasonality of the southern region generate particular labor demands, met by labor bondage?" These questions are central to Prakash's study and according to the author, "intrinsic to the very definition of south Bihar as a region" (29). It is at this juncture that we need to examine more closely the history of the Bodh Gaya Math and its influence as one of the largest Zamindars in the state of Bihar.

In the *Brief History of the Bodh Gaya Math* that was compiled by Rai Ram Anugrah Narayan Singh Bahadur under the orders of G.A. Grierson in 1892, the document traces the origins of the Shaivite monastery to the late sixteenth century.[107]

> It is said that as early as *Mágh* of the Fasili year 997 (corresponding with 1590 A.D.), one Gosain Ghamandi Gir, a holy devotee of this order, while on a pilgrimage tour, became so very fond of the sylvan solitude of the neighborhood of the place where the *Math* now stands, that he selected it as the place of his religious devotion, and subsequently built a small monastery there for the accommodation of the itinerant members of his order (Bahadur 1892: 1).[108]

After the arrival of Gosain Ghamandi Gir in the late sixteenth century, Bodh Gaya became an important centre for the institutional development of a Shaivite monastic order that brought religious providence in line with agricultural reclamation.[109] According to Prakash (1990: 71), "with paddy-based agriculture expanding and intensifying, "palatial towns" arose at the seats of established landed chiefs, and a number of towns based on garrisons, trade, and religious centres also developed." Thus, the rise of these landlords, such as the Bodh Gaya Mahant, became an "important constituent of the social relations that structured the process of historical settlements and shaped the pattern of the Bhuinyas's subordination as Kamias" (Prakash 72). Unlike the northern part of Bihar, where land had been occupied by numerically large upper caste groups, in the Gaya district, the political economy of

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[107] According to Tara Doyle (1997: 134) the "Giris are one of ten monastic sub-orders, known collectively as the Dasanamis, which are founded by the famous eighth-century systematizer of Advaita Vedanta philosophy, Sankaracarya." Furthermore, Bayly (1983) explains how the Dasanami establishment, in particular the Giris, were also noted for the power and influence they wielded by virtue of being major traders, bankers, and landlords.

[108] Based on the Singh Bahdur's (1892) *Brief History of the Bodh Gaya Math* and recent changes in the twentieth century the Mahants and their dates are as follows: Ghamandi (1590-1615), Chaitanya (1615-1642), Mahadeva (1642-1682), Lal (1682-1720), Keshava (1720-1748), Raghava (1748-1769), Ramhit (1769-1806), Balak (1806-1820), Shiva (1820-1846), Bhaipat (1846-1867), Hem Narayan (1867-1892), Krishna Dayal (1892-1932), Harihar (1932-1958), Satanand (1958-1977), Dhanshu (1978-1980), Jagdishanand (1981-1989); Jayaram (1989-1998); Sudarshan (1998 till present)

[109] In the *Brief History of the Bodh Gaya Math* the account also details the symbolic significance of a talismanic cup known as the *katorá* which is both central to the origin story of the Math and also lends weight to the subjugation of the religious elites over the local populations. According to the tradition, this *katorá* cup was given to the third Mahant, Mahadeva Gir, who was a devout worshiper of Anna Purna Devi. The significance of the mythical cup is linked to the ritual distribution of food, which in turn, must have reinforced the Math's religious claims to authority.

labor production was based upon an "extreme social hierarchy," whereby a few landlords held collective dominance over numerous untouchables and peasant groups (Prakash 74).[110]



Figure 4.1 Bodh Gaya Math

Replacing the Mughal rulers, the East India Company and the expanding British Empire brought significant changes to the political economy of the south Bihar region where the Bodh Gaya Math is located. In light of the Permanent Settlement of 1789 and the increasing "objectification of land" by the British rulers, between the 1850s and 1930s "land control replaced direct claims over people in determining the social relations of production. Whereas earlier, rights over land derived from relations between people, by the late nineteenth century, unequal control over land became the basis of social relations" (Prakash 83). Consequently, during this period of colonial intervention, powerful Zamindars like the Bodh Gaya monastery continued to consolidate their power through the acquisition of land and the intensification of agricultural production. According to Prakash (1990: 109), it appears that the Bodh Gaya monastery, "more than any other landowner, was in an excellent position to enlarge the cultivated areas of villages under it," as a result of the "presence of monks in every village" which provided a "ready institutional basis for agricultural operations." As Prakash (1990: 118) explains in

[110] This point is reinforced by the "Gaya Village notes" which show that all over the Gaya district, peasants were of scheduled caste backgrounds, dominated by a few upper-caste landlords in most villages.

further detail, the Bodh Gaya monastery

> possessed an institutional mechanism to introduce centralization. From the beginning, the monastery had not been content with merely receiving rents from its revenue-free villages. Through monks spread throughout Gaya district, the monastery brought its revenue-free and Zamindari villages under direct management. Residing in the villages, these monks enabled the monastery to assume actual possession of even those villages that it had received as grants. In the nineteenth century, through purchase, grants, and permanent intermediary tenures, the monastery added to the lands it possessed as a revenue-free holder. A report of 1892 listed more than half of 212 villages, or shares in village lands, with the monastery as a tenureholder or as a Zamindar. Managed by its disciples, the monastery's rental income rose from an estimated Rs. 30,000 – 40,000 in the 1830s to over Rs. 100,000 in 1892.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the Bodh Gaya monastery consolidated its power and wealth through its agricultural operations alone. Another important factor that must have contributed to the prestige and divine legitimacy of the Shaivite monastery was that it also claimed to be the principal guardian of the Bodhi tree and the ruins of the Mahabodhi Temple. As I described in chapter two, due to the reverence and devotion bestowed upon the sacred grounds by Hindu pilgrims in the Gaya region and early royal Buddhist ambassadors such as the Burmese, the religious traffic and the "gifts" that were endowed upon the property must have also been substantial. It is also important to note that the Bodh Gaya Math also commanded wide respect from regional authorities and the British colonial government itself. For example, during the Delhi Imperial Assemblage on January 1st 1877, the Mahant, Hem Narayan, was given a certificate of honor by the Queen Victoria for rendering valuable assistance and relief work during the Bihar famine of 1873-1874.[111]

Evidently, prior to India's independence, the "objectification of land" by the British Raj had a profound effect on the agrarian political economy of the south Bihar region that was defined by its high agricultural seasonality and its particular labor demands, met by labor bondage. Practices of colonial governmentality tied to land settlement documentation and new legal arrangements helped to secure greater possession of land by the Zamindars and bind certain social relations to the land itself. It is in this context that the Bodh Gaya monastery consolidated its power as a Zamindar and a religious institution with the resources to ensure that the peasant laborers remained subordinate tenants. The Shaivite Mahant, as I have suggested, was by no means a mere rent-receiving landlord, the Math also gained divine legitimacy as a monastic order which received financial patronage as the caretaker of

[111] For more on the Mahant's recognition during the Delhi Imperial Assemblage see Singh Bahdur's *Brief History of the Bodh Gaya Math*, Bernard Cohn (1983) and Tara Doyle (1997).

Bodh Gaya's sacred property. However, this position of hegemonic influence in the Bodh Gaya region was by far secure, especially in light of the growing nationalist movement and the challenges to the Zamindari system in the post-colonial period.

4.1.2 Agrarian Reform and Land Gift Movements

Following British colonial rule, a number of wide-ranging agrarian reforms and land movements redefined India's countryside in the first few decades of independence. According to Chandra, Mukherjee and Mukherjee (2002), agrarian reforms took place in two broad phases within the new modern democratic structures. The first phase involved "institutional reforms" that brought together a number of policies such as the abolishment of Zamindars and other intermediaries; tenancy reforms to provide greater security to tenants; ceilings on major landholdings, and lastly, a number of co-operative and community development programs were launched. The second phase entitled "technological reforms" took place around the mid to late sixties in light of the "Green Revolution" and the industrialization of the agricultural economy (see also Gupta 1998). All of these activities were taken up immediately by Jawaharlal Nehru, who felt that the inequalities apparent in the countryside were inconsistent with the democratic and socialist aspirations of the ruling Congress party (Brass 1990).

As part of the institutional reforms set out by the Congress Party, the Zamindari abolition bills were introduced in a number of states within two years of independence and by the late fifties they were firmly established in the legislature. Despite the broad consensus among Indian leaders regarding the abolishment of Zamindari, according to Paul Brass (1990), with agriculture deemed a "provincial subject," all the central leaders could do was set certain guidelines with the expectation that state leaders could implement the reforms. This process proved to be more complicated, as the means of enacting these structural policies within the various state assemblies provoked enormous criticism and opposition from many state leaders who were concerned about antagonizing the rural elites and land-controlling castes. Similarly, the establishment of land "ceilings" with the goal of "making land distribution more equitable" (Chandra et al, 2002: 385) was also fraught with several legal obstacles that challenged the interests of the Zamindars. According to Chandra et al (2002: 387), given the controversial disputes over proprietary interests as well as the nature of the legislation, this "ensured that the ceilings would have a very muted impact, releasing little surplus land for redistribution."

Although Bihar was the first state in independent India to legislate on land reforms, it was also here that “landlords put up the most resistance.” Many, like the Bodh Gaya Mahant, were able to devise strategies to retain a large part of its landed estate (Chandra et al, 2002: 378). According to Kelkar and Gala (1990), at the time the abolition of Zamindari bills were introduced in the early fifties, the Mahant had claimed “personal rights” over the entire property of the trust which included upwards of 600 villages, 488 of them in Gaya district alone. The large surplus of land provoked a number of legal disputes and a series of court cases within the Patna High Court and eventually the Supreme High Court of India. From the viewpoint of Kelkar and Gala (1990) and Arun Sinha (1991), in the end, a settlement was eventually reached that went “against public interest” between the Bodh Gaya Mahant, the Bihar State Government and the Bihar State Religious Trust Board (BSRTB) (an autonomous board established by government to oversee the affairs of the state's numerous religious trusts). As Kelkar and Gala (1990: 92) explain,

> Strangely, at this stage, the trust Board and the mahant came forward with a compromise. Under the compromise, the court decreed, in September, 1957, that 2,300 acres was the property of the math or of the trust, and that the mahant was entitled to rights over 240 acres of this land as well as to a sum of Rs. 1,000 per month for personal expenses. The remaining land was decreed to be the personal property of the mahant, in regard to which the Government and the Bihar Religious Trust Board were neither to be concerned nor would they interfere with management by the mahant of the said properties. . . It is important to note, however, that prior to the court decree, the mahant had sold or transferred all his 'personal' lands in the names of 680 disciples (called giris), many of whom, in turn, sold or transferred their land to others. Such transactions continued throughout the 1970s. Even after all these transfers, the mahant still held 1,712.26 acres of land in his personal name. The committee enquiring into the math estate in 1980 observed 'that although a total of 1,712.26 acres of land is still held by the mahant in his own name, no action under the Land Ceiling Act to acquire the surplus land has been initiated by the Administration.'

These efforts to undermine the polarization of wealthy landlords and the exploited rural tenants were not confined to government legislature alone. Alongside the Nehruvian structural policies in the early fifties was the *bhoodan* or 'land-gift' movement that was led by Maharashtran born Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982). Often described as the spiritual successor of Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave had initiated a non-governmental land reform movement with the aim of obtaining 50 million acres of land for redistribution to the rural poor. Under the banner of *Sarvodaya Samaj*, Vinoba Bhave and his followers undertook a nation-wide *padayatra* or pilgrimage on foot that traversed the Indian countryside persuading large landowners to donate at least “one-sixth of their lands as *bhoodan* for distribution among the landless” (Chandra et al. 2002: 392). Given the influence of the Champaran

district of northern Bihar, which propelled Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, along with the entrenched social divisions between land owners and landless, it does not come as a surprise that Vinoba Bhave invested a significant amount of time in the region.

According to Ramagundam (2006: 82), “it was Gaya that really became Vinoba's laboratory for a non-violent revolution of land redistribution among the landless.” For eighteen months, Vinoba Bhave and the newly established Gaya District Bhoodan Collection Committee concentrated their efforts on persuading powerful landlords to voluntarily “gift their lands” for redistribution. For many of the existing Zamindars, like the Bodh Gaya Mahant, the land-gift movement also provided an opportunity to strengthen their social standing among the national elites of independent India through their virtuous acts. By gifting property that “legally” no longer belonged to them, they effectively blocked the new government legislation and legitimized the brutal history of land acquisition in the first place (Ramgundam 2006). In the end, the Gaya district became one of the most “successful” regions for the mobilization of the Bhoodan movement with some 5000 acres of land that was to be distributed to over 3000 of Gaya's poorest families.[112] During this time, the Bodh Gaya Mahant also donated land for the establishment of the Samanvay Ashram, the nearby Magadh University campus and Gaya College. In other words, despite these altruistic gestures, throughout the sixties, labor servitude continued unabated and these land reform movements had little sustaining impact on the reconstruction of the agricultural landscape.

4.1.3 The Bodh Gaya Land Struggle

So far in this section, I have shown how both the ruling Congress party and Vinoba Bhave have tried to dismantle the Zamindari system and bring land to the landless. As I have suggested, both of these initiatives have had a limited impact on the Bodh Gaya Math and the infrastructure of labor servitude that it relied upon. After twenty-five years of independence, the Shaivite monastery maintained its hegemonic position over hundreds of villages in the surrounding area and continued to be viewed by many of Bodh Gaya's residents as the *sarkar* (government or overlord of the region). According to Dr. Tulku, a senior professor of the Buddhist Studies Department at Magadh University,

[112] According to Ramagundam (2006), the Bhoodan movement involved four distinct stages that were designed to complete the agenda of land reform: 1) *Donation*: the land is gifted; 2) *Confirmation*: a detailed survey of the land by the government sponsored land managers is provided; 3) *Distribution*: confirmed land is given to the landless; 4) *Assessment*: the revenue for each piece of land is assessed. According to Ramagundam, the first stage was largely completed by the end of the fifties, although the progress of the confirmation stage was tedious. It was the distribution process that really stalled the efforts and also became prey to all sorts of legalities and controversies.

"when I came here to Bodh Gaya [in the sixties], the Mahant was still ruling the area. There was no need for a court or District Magistrate. Even they would come and bow to the feet of the Mahant. The area was completely dominated by the Mahant." Amarnath Gupta, the former driver of the Bodh Gaya Mahant, vividly described the collection of elephants, horses, camels and foreign cars that provided a visual affirmation of the Mahant's power and affluence. His elephants, such as Sambhu Prasad and Balmukund were especially popular among early tourists and visitors to Bodh Gaya during this time. On special occasions, the Mahant provided elephant rides across the Niranjana river to visit some of the lesser known Buddhist sites in neighboring Bakroar village.[113] These displays of symbolic capital must have certainly reinforced the social standing of Bodh Gaya Mahant as the *sarkar* in the area. As one local resident recalls, "when the car rode, two people would sit aside the drivers who were very strong. . . They were related to the Mahant and when the car moved along the road everyone would stand up to show respect."

The inspiration for a land struggle against the Bodh Gaya Math has its roots in the student demonstrations that were held in Patna before the Bihar state legislature on its opening day of the Budget session on March 18, 1974. According to Kelkar and Gala (1990: 82), the late sixties and early seventies were marked by a "dual trend" towards "increasing political repression" and "strong movements for democratic rights." Although the student uprising was initially spawned in response to concerns over public education, the populist movement quickly spread to incorporate wider provincial and national agitation against the Congress government under its new leader, Indira Gandhi. It was in this social milieu that the students appealed to one of the most famous political personalities in Bihar, Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) for his leadership. Having devoted nearly twenty years of his life to Vinoba Bhave and the Bhoodan Movement, JP had now become quite critical of Bhave's Sarvodaya movement which he regarded "as nothing but a concerted effort to block the growth of political consciousness among the oppressed" (Kelkar & Gala 84). After years of campaigning for peaceful social change, he began to recognize that struggle was indispensable for a "Total Revolution" and the student movement - *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini* (CYSV) - provided the framework for his return.[114]

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[113] According to the former driver of the Mahant, the elephants were named: "Sambhu Prasad," "Balmukund," "Chanchal", "Santi" and from Sonepur "Damadar." The names of his horses were: "Sewata; Chetak; Maruti; Gandharb and Maharani." Over the years, the Mahant also amassed a collection of vehicles that included a 'Master Buick' made in England with license plate No. BRB477. This prized Buick model was allegedly sold to a Japanese visitor for 40,000 Rupees. In addition to the Buick, the Mahant held in his possession three jeeps (two Mahindra's and one Ford), two Ambassadors with the license numbers BRB476 and BRB475 along with two trucks, BRB435 and BRB3595.

[114] Drawing on the experience of the 1968 student and youth revolt in Paris, JP had become sympathetic to the lines of unorthodox Marxist ideologues like Marcuse, believing that youth should play a leading role in laying the ground work for a revolution (Kelkar and Gala 1990). From the platform of the Gandhi Maidan in Patna, he requested the students of

Concurrent with the March 18th student demonstration in Patna was the arrival of a prominent Sarvodaya leader from southern India, J. Jagannathan, and his wife Krishnamma who had visited Bodh Gaya and the Samanvay Ashram. During this time, the Sarvodaya activists had become aware of the brutal conditions of the landless laborers and their connections with the Bodh Gaya monastery. One of their main interlocutors was a twenty-two year old son of a Math employee named Pradeep, who was also involved in the March 18th student demonstrations. Through the assistance of Pradeep, Jagannathan gained some insight into the operations of the Math, especially the vast network of '*kacheries*' (courts) turned farmhouses through which the Math directed its operations through various monks. After appealing to the District Magistrate of Gaya and the Mahant directly, Jagannathan became convinced that pressure needed to be expended by the masses themselves.

In order to mobilize support for the Bodh Gaya land struggle, Jagannathan asked Pradeep to join the agitation. When I interviewed Pradeep in Bodh Gaya about his encounter with Jagannathan, he noted that at first he was reluctant to be involved, especially given his close association with the powerful monastery and the family benefits derived from these arrangements. Retelling his meeting with Jagannathan, Pradeep states:

> before lunch we were sitting outside of the home where there were also about one hundred land laborers of the Bodh Gaya Math *kacherie*. They had come to leave the fields of the Math to take lunch. All the male members were half naked, barely wearing any clothes. Females were covered in basic clothes and muddy. Then he asked me "who are they?" And I replied, "they are the landless laborers working for the Math." "But the Mahant . . . is this a religious place?" Jagannathan asked. I replied "Yes." Then he convinced me that the Bodh Gaya Math is for development of the Hindu religion but these people are hungry and naked. At that time the Mahant was having the paddy fields sown. But only the powder from the paddy could be used for food among these poor. So we decided to begin a revolt. But he asked me "why are you fighting if you cannot bring anything for these people? Otherwise your fight is useless," he said. . . So I had taken the decision to fight against the Mahant. We decided on a date of April 18th 1975 for the hunger strike in front of the Bodh Gaya Math gate. This decision surprised many people because my father was also an employee of the Bodh Gaya Math. Among the public it was very dangerous to raise your voice against the Math. . . So the public began to have faith in me.

Shortly after Pradeep's decision, he set out with Jagannathan and Krishnamma, along with a few Sarvodaya workers, to collect information from the surrounding villages and describe the means of

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Bihar to stay out of university for a year in order to work for the purpose of "Total Revolution." According to Arun Sinha (1991), from the outset, JP had carried a higher aim than just the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly. He hoped to realize his vision of total revolution by carrying the youth and the people towards the seven fields of transformation: economic, social, political, cultural, intellectual, educational, and spiritual.

agitation against the Math. Despite their initial enthusiasm and dedication to the cause, these efforts to mobilize the landless laborers in Bodh Gaya was short lived when Indira Gandhi called a state of Emergency on June 25, 1975.

In 1978, following twenty months of Indira Gandhi's controversial State of Emergency, the land struggle was once again revitalized by members of the *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini* (CYSV). Given the earlier groundwork of Jagannathan and local activists such as Pradeep, members of the CYSV had elected Bodh Gaya for its "*saghan kshetra* (intensive area of struggle)" during a meeting held in Patna in February 1978 (Sinha 1991: 102). According to Kelkar and Gala (1990: 93), there were two main reasons for selecting the Gaya district and the Bodh Gaya Math as the focal point of struggle: 1) the disproportionate concentration of agricultural land in the control of the Bodh Gaya Math; and 2) the famine-stricken situation of the district. A third reason that likely contributed to this decision was that Jayaprakash Narayan had also "urged the youth to integrate themselves with the society's *antima jana* (lowest person)" (Sinha 1991: 102). Given the high proportion of bonded laborers from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes that I described earlier in this section, the town of Bodh Gaya became an ideal setting to wage a land struggle against the Math.



Figure 4.2 Pradeep - leader of the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini (CYSV)

The first demonstration took place within a few months following the Patna meeting on April 8th 1978. Outside the front entrance gate of the Bodh Gaya monastery, several hundred student volunteers and landless laborers sat in protest. A popular slogan among the masses was "*jo zamin ko boye jote, woh zameen ka Malik hoi* (those who sow and plough the land are the owners of the land)" (Kelkar & Gala 1990: 93). Following the initial demonstration, the leaders of the CYSV announced that there would be full-time advocacy work and mobilization activities by a team of CYSV volunteers to increase pressure on the Math through a non-cooperation movement on the four main blocks tied to the monastery (Sherghatti, Barchatti, Mohanpur, and Bodh Gaya proper). Drawing on the groundwork of Jagannathan and utilizing strategies employed by Naxalite groups, the volunteers, or "movement

officers," traversed the countryside over the next few years, meeting, eating and working with the Kamias and other landless laborers.[115] As one student activist Priyadarshi recalls during an interview in Patna, "we were committed to peaceful means, not like the Naxalite groups who carry arms. There was to be no means of violence; this was our conviction. But for mixing with the people we followed the Naxalite way, by living with the untouchables in their houses and eating with them. Those days the food of these families was inhuman. I was also living with them, but it was very difficult."



Figure 4.3 The ruins of the Math katcheri in the village Gosain Pesra

After months of networking across the four surrounding districts, the CYSV activists began to concentrate their efforts in a village on the outskirts of Bodh Gaya called Gosain Pesra. Arun Sinha (1991: 104) describes, the village as "an old *mutt kutchery*, a spacious brick building of *Zamindari* days, now used as the farm house where the monks and staff of the abbey lived to look after the cultivation done by 80 *Kamias*, 70 of them Bhuyans."[116] From Gosain Pesra, many of the Kamias began to implement a series of non-cooperation tactics that included boycotting the winter harvest

[115] The term Naxalites comes from Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal, where a section of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led a violent uprising on May 25th 1967 in response to a peasant who was attacked by hired hands over a land dispute. Although the movement began in West Bengal, in recent years, the Naxalite groups have spread into other rural areas of central and eastern India, such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

[116] Another reason why Gosain Pesra was selected as a key point of struggle was that Jagannathan had worked closely with the Kamias in this village during the pre-Emergency days.

crops and interfering with other peasants and small landholder groups deployed by the Bodh Gaya Math. As a model village, the non-cooperation tactics deployed at Gosain Pesra were used to spark further agitation in the neighboring villages. One of these villages was Mastipur, located directly west of the Mahabodhi Temple and adjacent to the Indo-Nippon Temple. It was on the outskirts of this village that the land struggle reached a new level of intensity when the Kamias encountered a violent backlash from the Mahant's men.

During the ploughing season on August 8th 1979, the Bodh Gaya Mahant hired a number of workers and *goondas ('*member of a crime gang or thug') to gather at the nearby farmhouse outside Mastipur and ensure the fields were sown for the winter harvest. In response to the Math, the bonded laborers from the village of Mastipur called for an emergency meeting and decided that swift action was required. Arun Sinha (1991: 107) describes the unfolding of events,

> It was midday when about 200 labourers, empty handed, filed out of the village accompanied by two Vahini volunteers who had stayed on: the other volunteers had not arrived. The slogan-chanting Kamias were spotted across the fields, where, at the farmhouse end, the ploughmen were beginning to work. Just as the head of the Kamias procession reached the metalled road and was about to cross it into the fields, there were deafening explosions all around them. So many home-made grenades came flying in quick succession from the other side, so thick were the clouds of smoke, that it became impossible for any of the Kamias to see beyond one or two feet. Then tearing the blinded sky, as the grenades continued to explode, a cry reached everyone's ears: one of the Kamias had fallen beside the road, hit by a bullet in his foot. As others rushed in the direction of the screams more gunshots struck another kamia, young Ramdeo, in the thigh and in the foot. He stumbled and in the next instant was dead.

After witnessing the horrific attack, the father of Ramdeo ran empty-handed to confront the Math's army. A younger boy, named Panchu Manji, also followed him, shouting that he should not face the men alone. Within a few yards of giving chase, Panchu was also struck by a grenade that hit him in the stomach, “leaving a large hole through which his intestines spilled out” (Sinha 107). Amidst the panic and violent episode, the Vahini volunteers rushed off to contact the police while other laborers moved to the village gathering axes, hatchets, clubs and other weapons to storm the farmhouse, where Ramdeo's father was being held.

> Having probably exhausted their grenades and cartridges, the roughnecks, as they saw the armed *Kamias* running towards them, let go of the old man, and turned to rush into the farmhouse building and, when all were in, to bolt its door. Only one man from their side failed to do this, Ramadhar Singh, the manager of the *mutt* farmhouse at the adjoining village, Tikabigha. He tried to escape towards the town but the avengers chased and grabbed him, and killed him with a shower of blows. Later it became known that the murdered farmhouse

manager was an uncle of Pradeep's (Sinha 1991: 107).

These violent attacks and confrontations in the surrounding fields of the Mahabodhi Temple brought enormous public attention to Bodh Gaya and fresh demands by the Vahini volunteers against the monastery and their employers. Despite the Vahini's effort to employ Jayaprakash Narayan's guiding principle of non-violence, the attack of the Kamias on Pradeep's uncle threatened to undermine the reputation of the Bodh Gaya land movement as a "peaceful class struggle" (Sinha 108). However, in response to the accusations of murder against the monastery, a number of head monks were arrested, which was seen as a major achievement among the Kamias and the beginning of the downfall for the Bodh Gaya Math.

In the aftermath of the social uprising, Jayaprakash Narayan's health begun to deteriorate and he passed away in Patna later that year. Despite the loss of JP, the Vahini volunteers have continued to actively work in Bodh Gaya throughout the early eighties and beyond. Following the non-cooperation movement that reached its climax outside Mastipur village in 1979, around 3,000 acres of the Mahant's land, spread over 30 villages in four administrative blocks, remained unploughed (Sinha 1991). Despite the growing enthusiasm surrounding the non-cooperation tactics, it is also important to note that there were also many landless laborers who were in great distress, without work or food. This was compounded by a drought crisis in the region which left many starving. In response to these challenges, a proposal was put forth by the Kamias to stake claim to the land and begin cultivation in the forthcoming season.

Responding to the mounting pressure and persistent agitation by the CYSV activists and landless laborers, many of whom were women, the Bodh Gaya Mahant turned to the Indian judicial system. He filed an appeal to both the State High Court in 1984 and eventually the Supreme Court in August 1987, as a means of blocking the resistance movement (Kelkar & Gala 1990: 92).[117] In conclusion, the Supreme Court order of August 1987 decided that the Math could only have a

[117] According to Kelkar and Gala (1990), a key element that had been a focus of in the land struggle was the marginality of the women's role in the movement. For some of the more prominent Vahini women activists from Patna, such as Manimala and Kanak, their experience in the surrounding villages had prompted them to point out the prevalent gendered forms of discrimination that accompanied these concerns over land entitlement. Critical of JP's concept of the lowest person, *antima jana*, these women activists argued that the movement had been wrongly associated with the kamia alone, but rather more attention should be directed towards the kamia's wife in bringing about a wider social transformation. Kelkar and Galaargue that within the CYSV movement against the Math, women had constituted some thirty to forty per cent of those actively engaged in the struggle with many holding leadership positions in the outlying villages. "Their struggle was at two levels, for women's dignity and against inequities in the existing socio-economic and political system, as well as for women's equality and against male domination, including that of men of their own community. The women cadres emphasized that a political movement has to fight against all causes of women's oppression and exploitation" (Kelkar and Gala 96).

maximum of 75 acres of land in the names of deities and 25 acres in the name of the *sevayant* (Kelkar & Gala 92). In other words, nearly 300,059 acres of land had been acquired with 200,039 acres to be distributed among the landless laborers. For many, this order of the Supreme Court was the final deathblow to the Bodh Gaya Math and its longstanding system of labor servitude and brutal exploitation. Among the Vahini activists, the court order signaled a "total collapse of social, economic and political power of the math" and strengthened the determination of the rural poor to continue their struggle for rights to land and livelihood (Kelkar & Gala 1990: 92).

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Although the land struggle that took place at Bodh Gaya is often described as a major achievement for the empowerment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the surrounding area, there are also those who argue that little enduring social benefit or substantive economic change has resulted for these marginalized groups. Despite this new found "freedom" from the tyranny of the Bodh Gaya Math, the acquisition of a few *katta* of land has also led to increasing uncertainty over work and regular employment. Many of those who have acquired land in the surrounding villages at Bodh Gaya have opted to sell property or lease it out to Buddhist groups. When Ramagundam (2006: 13) interviewed some of Mastipur's residents today, he noted that some people argue that they were better off during the Mahant's time: "at least we were assured of food, even if it meant occasional thrashings." The high agricultural seasonality, the inconsistent rains and crops and the ongoing conflicts over dissemination of land have left many former Kamias vulnerable and struggling to find sustained employment throughout the year. These conditions are also prevalent among other backward castes (OBC's) and land holding castes that are now seeking opportunities for social mobility outside the deprived agricultural sector.[118] All over the Gaya district, there is out-migration from the rural areas into the swelling cities of Gaya, Bodh Gaya and further abroad in search of employment. Many of these groups now look to the place of Buddha's enlightenment for opportunities in the booming construction industry where hotels, temples and monasteries are being built each year. Rumors and stories travel throughout Bodh Gaya's hinterland of economic opportunities in tourism and the international traffic linked to Lord Buddha.

Building on the previous section, in the second part of this chapter, I examine the changing

[118] The Central Government of India also classifies other caste/class groups on the basis of their social and economic condition such as "Other Backward Classes" (OBC). The OBC list that is presented by the commission changes over time and reflects the social, educational and economic needs of marginalized groups.

articulations of servitude in relation to the growing impact of pilgrimage and tourism at Bodh Gaya. According to Gyan Prakash (1990: 29), it was the "high agricultural seasonality" and its particular labor demands that were "intrinsic to the very definition of south Bihar as a region." In light of the fragmentation of the *Zamindari* system and the changing local and regional power equations in relation to the demise of the Bodh Gaya Math, the political economy of tourism has become an important vehicle through which many local residents and migrants to Bodh Gaya have gained new forms of economic and social mobility. Tourism at Bodh Gaya, like the agricultural demands, is also marked by a high degree of seasonality that runs over the winter season when the Gangetic plains are at their coolest. Drawing on ethnographic material, in the following section I will build upon Gyan Prakash's genealogy of servitude and examine the life histories and stories that now revolve around tourism in Bodh Gaya's global bazaar.

4.2 "God is Guest": Tourism in the Global Bazaar

> Poverty is there. But those who are connected with tourism, they have done hard work. The rich people today, they have worked hard. They were once very poor, and most of them are not literate. They were able to establish themselves in the tourist market. Those who are rich today are self-made. At one time they were living as laborers for the Mahant. They saw the pilgrims, began working for them, guiding them. They were simply agricultural laborers and everything belonged to the Mahant. They were all coming from lower caste and a few upper caste, and a few from outside (Bodh Gaya Travel Agent).

> In the summer months there is no business. For six months there is no business. This is difficult for the locals. We can survive off four months, but without tourists it is boring (Buddha Handicraft Shopkeeper).

According to the Buddhist Pali tradition, when Prince Siddhartha decided to abandon the path of asceticism, following six years of extreme austerities, he was offered milk-rice from a young woman on the outskirts of Uruvela. The name of this young woman was Sujata, a daughter of the landowner from a nearby village called Senani. Having pledged that she would offer milk-rice to the spirit of the tree if she gave birth to a son, once her wish was fulfilled, she asked her maid Punna to visit the tree and prepare the place for offering. When Punna visited the place, she saw that Gautama was sitting under the tree in meditation. Having mistaken him as the tree-*deva*, she quickly returned to the home and reported the matter to Sujata, who in a great joy reached the spot and offered him the milk-rice in a golden bowl. Receiving the milk-rice from Sujata helped to restore the strength of the emaciated

Buddha and prepare his mental concentration for enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. I begin this section with the story of Sujata because these legends are often invoked by many local residents to demonstrate their historical connection with the ancient site. They are also a means of upholding a tradition of respect for visitors that is best captured in the phrase '*Atthiti Bhagwan hai'* or 'God is Guest.'

In this dissertation, I explore a number of transnational processes that have redefined Bodh Gaya's spatial environment and underpin the social transformation of the place into a World Heritage site. Among these transnational processes, the return of the Buddhist diaspora that I described in the previous chapter has certainly been the most influential in terms of forging networks and relationships that span two or more nation-states (Basch et al 1992). While many of the monks, nuns and managers tied to the establishment of Buddhists monasteries in Bodh Gaya maintain social relations outside of India, there are also those linkages and connections that extend beyond national boundaries even if movement is not available (Brennan 2005). According to Brennan (2005: 42), "transnational social fields" also exist even among those who do not themselves move across borders. In this section, I explore some of these transnational social fields and the ways in which Buddhism in the global bazaar shapes the socio-economic life of local residents. Drawing on de Certeau (1984), I will also argue that it is in the public life of the bazaar that place becomes a lived space and Buddhism is transformed and given meaning through people's social exchanges, memories and daily interactions with foreigners.

4.2.1 Bodh Gaya's Global Bazaar

Considering the social history of the Bodh Gaya Math that I described in the previous section, it does not a come as a surprise that the Indian Census volumes highlight the importance of agricultural labor and related occupations as the primary source of employment for local residents in the surrounding area. Not only is Bodh Gaya a rural town based on an agrarian economy, the lack of diversification of job opportunities has also ensured that urban poverty has become a widespread phenomenon. In a detailed survey of income levels conducted in 2003 as part of a City Development Plan (CDP) that I discuss in chapter six, the data also revealed that nearly 70% of the population has an income level below Rp. 2500 ($52 US dollars) per month with many relying upon seasonal work (CDP 2006: 47). [119] At the same time, the data from both the Indian Census volumes and CDP highlights the

[119] This information is based on a City Development Plan for Bodh Gaya that was compiled between 2003 and 2005. It is now part of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Renewal Urban Mission Scheme (JNNRUM) that I explore in chapter six as

growing influence of tertiary occupational patterns that are tied to the burgeoning tourism and pilgrimage industry at Bodh Gaya.

> The economic prosperity of this small town is linked with the commerce it supports. Commercial establishments form an inherent part of a pilgrim town. In the case of BodhGaya, its status as a tourist and pilgrimage centre has governed the nature of the commerce activities operating in the town. . . . In BodhGaya commercial establishments are concentrated along the central town road (Domuha road) and near the Mahabodhi Temple Complex. Considerable commercial activities including informal and formal shops have come up along the Mahabodhi temple and the intersection of the central spine and riverside road. The local BodhGaya bazaar located close to the Mahabodhi temple is the makeshift CBD (Central Business District) serving the commercial needs of the town and outlying areas. A vegetable market is also located in the same area, which causes considerable nuisance in the area. Most of the development is highly organic and haphazard in nature. A number of hawkers also add to the confusion and disorder in the area (CDP 2006: 48).[120]

This description makes evident how the commercial landscape of Bodh Gaya revolves around the Bodh Gaya bazaar which is located directly adjacent to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex and unfolds along a north and west axis connected to the main entry roads. The bazaar, as both an institution and a space within a vaguely "oriental" setting, has long attracted western observers as a sensuous and exotic field of open-air merchandising and market relationships usually regarded as "chaotic, disorderly, and irrational places of exchange" (Favero 2008: 1). Within the Indian context of Gangetic Bihar, Anand Yang (1998) draws upon the bazaar as a significant "empirical counterweight" to other scrutinized and monumental sites of the colonial imagination such as the village and caste. Consequently, as a space of dynamic convergence, for Yang (1998), the bazaar provides an important postcolonial analytic for interrogating various social, cultural, religious, and political activities that have not been completely silenced from the historical record or received Orientalist historiography. Drawing on the Subaltern Studies collective, the author investigates the bazaar as a site of "historiographical rupture," and setting to reconstruct and narrate "the lived experiences of people as played out in the arena of, and against the backdrop of, markets" during the British colonial period

part of my analysis of World Heritage designation.

[120] In the *Gaya Village Notes, No. 359* compiled by the British colonial government in the early twentieth century, it also describes a bazaar where four *Halwai* (confectionery and sweet-maker) shops, one cloth shop and eleven shops of '*lihichani norosh*' had previously existed. When I conducted a survey of the bazaar in 2006, I was also told that some of the oldest shops in the bazaar were confectioneries. These included: the famous "Kalayan", "Arun Sweet House", "Dipu Sweet Shop" and "Mahavir Sweets." Mahender "Bastralia" and "Jamal" are some of the oldest tailors. There were also a number of mills and flour shops such as "Mishree", "Devnath" and "Baghwan Das." A few general stores such as "Sita General Store" and "Chandrika Shop" came later. Most of these shops in the bazaar were located directly in front of the main gates of the Bodh Gaya Math. Some of the earliest shops in front of the Mahabodhi Temple include "Jagannath Saw" "Warsi Medical Store", "Magadh Medical", "Shankar Medical" and "Gautam Lassi."

(Yang 16).[121]



Figure 4.4 Gautam Lassi Corner, Bodh Gaya Bazaar

Central to this analysis are the ways in which the organization and interrelationships characteristic of the Indian bazaar bring locality and region into contact with larger national and world systems frames. As Yang (1998: 16-17) explains,

> Both as an analytical unit and at a metaphoric level, bazaars speak the language of exchange and negotiation, of movement and flow, of circulation and redistribution – in short, of extracommunity or supracommunity connections and institutions. The India of Bazaar is therefore not confined to a particular site at the expense of wider ties. Such linkages, after all, did exist, and the village never suffered from that rather artificial quality of isolation that had been constructed for it in the colonial imagination.

Although Anand Yang examines the mediating role of the Indian bazaar in the evolving relationships between the British colonial state and indigenous society, here too, Bodh Gaya provides an important site to examine market relationships in a local setting now shaped by powerful transnational and neoliberal forces. Before proceeding along these lines, it is important to keep in mind Appadurai's (1986, 1988) warning to anthropologists about the ways in which images and hegemonic ideas have become married to specific cultural areas and the "essences" of particular places. However, in this case, the bazaar, unlike "hierarchy" for example, begins with the emphasis on cultural phenomena that are

[121] The Subaltern Studies Collective is a group of scholars primarily from South Asia who are concerned with various postcolonial themes and critical issues surrounding history and the developing world. The term Subaltern draws inspiration from the writings of Antonio Gramsci and their approach is one of a "history from below," focusing on the political consciousness and voices of non-elite groups.

translocal, heterogeneous and diverse.

Rather than inscribe the bazaar as the principal expression of Bihar's cultural landscape, I see the strength of this concept in terms of mediating a broader and diverse set of themes that are central to the anxieties and opportunities that define the globalization of Bodh Gaya's spatial environment today. I adopt the term “global bazaar” as both a guiding metaphor and a site of ethnographic analysis that emphasizes these transnational links, global networks and extensions which constitute Bodh Gaya as an international destination. Throughout the year, a number of small scale shops and street merchants use the public space to sell vegetables and goods to meet local needs. However, during the winter season the bazaar comes alive with street vendors, restaurants, Tibetan merchants, hawkers and beggars who seek beneficial arrangements and opportunities from this dense period of pilgrimage and tourism flows. In the surrounding villages, religious tourism also spawns all sorts of grassroots initiatives and entrepreneurial activities such as butter lamp wick preparation, incense manufacturing, lotus flower cultivation and Bodhi leave production. In the village of Siddhartha Nagar, for example, an entire micro-industry exists among the children who soak the Bodhi leaves in water tanks on the roof and dry them out before selling them in the bazaar.

Linked to the high seasonality of the bazaar and these local-global interactions is the substantial number of informal commercial employment that is generated by the international traffic at Bodh Gaya (CDP 2006). According to the survey results by HUDCO in 2003, among the informal sector at Bodh Gaya, 80% of these are local residents, 20% of whom derive from the surrounding region.

> On average, each informal sector worker operates in about 32 sq. ft. of space, works alone or with his family for about 13 hours a day. They have little access to services or facilities and the working conditions are generally poor. There is a wide variation in home income depending on the season. During the tourist season an average informal sector establishment makes Rs 4300 per month, whereas during the off season he makes only about Rs. 2030 per month. This highlights the close economic link of the informal sector with tourism (CDP 2006: 50).

What is evident in the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a world Buddhist site is that pilgrimage and tourism contribute significantly to Bodh Gaya's local economy, especially within the informal sector. Mirroring the extreme seasonality that characterizes the agricultural landscape, some of the local population now relies on the extensive tourist influx during peak periods of the annual cycle. For many, religious tourism informs the “economic lifelines of the town” as the dependence on agriculture gradually decreases (CDP 2006: 53). As a means of exploring some of these economic lifelines in relation to the changing political economy of tourism, I now turn to a set of life histories involving

merchants, restaurant workers, hoteliers and friendly guides to show how Tibetan refugees and local lives mediate these larger global processes at the social nexus of the bazaar.

4.2.2 Tibetan Merchants and the Restaurants

Based on my interviews with various shopkeepers, hoteliers and senior expatriates from the Buddhist diaspora, Bodh Gaya is often described as a "sleepy old Indian town" that began to grow significantly in the late eighties and early nineties, especially in the aftermath of the 1985 Kalachakra. Before this time, as one monastic caretaker explained, "there was no food available in Bodh Gaya, a loaf of bread took one week. It was difficult acquiring building materials for the monastery. As for communication services, you had to book a phone to connect a number. It was just a sleepy village. There were no proper roads and during the monsoon season it was muddy and full of snakes. But it was also lovely and peaceful." When I spoke with Tara Doyle about her experience at Bodh Gaya in the eighties and early nineties she also noted that back then "there were some families being employed through the monasteries but it was limited. There was not a great deal of merchandise being sold. There was the season and the non-season. For example, with the shops across from the Burmese Monastery it was like: 'Antioch is here so let's get more biscuits.'"

Although there have always been pockets of Indian, Burmese and Sri Lankan Buddhist pilgrims at Bodh Gaya, according to most residents, it was the Tibetan refugees or *Bhotias* (referring to both Tibetan and Bhutanese) that really transformed the place. As I described in the previous chapter, Bodh Gaya has become an important pilgrimage centre for the revitalization of cultural and religious activities among the Tibetan refugee community in exile. When these groups began to arrive in large numbers each winter season, many locals developed business relationships with them, especially those who lived in the neighboring villages in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple. According to two shopkeepers that I interviewed,

> They were the first big thing! It started with the Tibetans who were buying "rosery" "*malas*" and "Bodhi leaves." The Tibetans were also very dirty, wandering here and there. But this was a new thing for the people of Bodh Gaya and it sparked the growth of tourism. Also the mind developed with contact among the foreigners, such as the Tibetan and Japanese groups. This in turn made some locals wise and eventually came out of the clutches of the feudal lord. So during this time, there was a shift of population towards tourism business.
>
> First there was the 1974 Kalachakra Puja. At that time my father was providing 100 pieces of

> sliced bread to the Gelugpa temple that had to be brought from Patna. But it was after the 1985 Kalachakra. . . that is when all the other people started coming, especially the Tibetan and Japanese. All the people were buying land. In 1980 the price of land was 800 to 1000 Rp for 27 *katta* [one acre]. Back then it would cost 65 Rp per katta. They are now paying 2 Lakh to 3 Lakh per one katta around Bodh Gaya. The Tibetans today have tons of money and after 1985 they started to buy land.

As one can imagine, the tremendous expenditure of finance required for some of the large ritual assemblages, like the Kalachakra and Nyingma Monlam, must have also stimulated a wide range of responses among local residents and Tibetan merchants who began to seek beneficial arrangements from these religious gatherings (see also Doyle 1997). One of these responses has been the growth of restaurants and the seasonal Tibetan Refugee market.



Figure 4.5 Tibetan Refugee Market

As I described in the annual cycle, for roughly three to four months during the winter season, Bodh Gaya becomes a thriving pilgrimage town with large numbers of devotees and Himalayan merchants connected to the movement of lamas and spiritual heads from the various Tibetan schools. As an expression of this confluence of both religious and economic activities is the famous Tibetan Refugee Market. This market began more than 25 years ago and was originally located directly in front of the Mahabodhi Temple. Since then, it has shifted locations to the Jayaprakash *maidan*, the Kalachakra *maidan* and its present location at the edge of Pacchetti village. This market only operates during the winter season between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm daily and has roughly 50 shops or booths.[122]

[122] The market is run by a committee of ten members that include six Tibetans and four Indians each year. It costs roughly 3000 Rp to rent a space for the entire season and costs around 2,800 to 3000 Rp from the electricity board, although

Although there are some Indian families who work in the market, most of the shopkeepers are Tibetan merchants who migrate to Bodh Gaya from Darjeeling, Haridwar, Mysore, Dharamsala, Siliguri, Dehra Dun and Nepal. The shops offer a range of discount items that include sweaters, jackets, socks, shawls, blankets, scarfs, sleeping bags, luggage, jeans, topis, shoes, underwear and garments. These items are made from all over South Asia including some electronic items and garments from China. When I interviewed some of the merchants, I was told that the market primarily caters to the Indian population and there are many visitors who come each year from the surrounding districts of Gaya, Patna, and Sherghatti for shopping. According to one Tibetan merchant, each season "the business varies, sometimes good and sometimes not so good. But for pilgrimage and *puja*, coming here is very important."

Also catering to the influx of Tibetan Buddhists is an entire street of tent restaurants that surround the refugee market and are made of plastic tarps and dried mud and brick. Together they are part of a larger 'Tent Restaurant Committee' that is taxed by the Bihar State for use of the government land each winter.[123] The interior of these restaurants are similar throughout. They have wooden benches and tables with small descending light fixtures that are easily replaced by candles when the electricity fails. In the corners are large stacks of mineral water that can also be used as a TV stand that showcases the latest movies and popular music videos from Tibet and Bollywood. There are multi-color prayer flags strewn around the interior walls and draped across alters of the 14th Dalai Lama. There are digitized posters which depict super-imposed images of powerful Tibetan pilgrimage centres like Mt. Kailash but also popular western destinations such as New York, the London Bridge or the leaning tower of Pisa to entice visitors. The menus are generally the same in most of the restaurants which sell momos, thukpa, thenthuk, chow mein, chop suey, pork and chicken items and both Indian and English breakfasts such as omelettes and pancakes. Some of these restaurants also provide low budget sleeping quarters for mainly Tibetan pilgrims for around 20 to 30 Rp a night.

prices but can fluctuate depending on the Block Development officer.

[123] Although there is a high turnover of restaurants each year, when I surveyed the restaurants in 2006 there were the following: Nangchen Restaurant, Tenzin Restaurant, Yungbolhakag Restaurant, Mountain Cafe, Homy Cafe, Tibet Cafe, Kelsang Restaurant, Amdo Kokonor Restaurant, Tashi Delek Restaurant, Siam Restaurant, Bhutan Restaurant, Chhoden Restaurant, Potala Restaurant, Ngatse Restaurant, Mayul Shukmo Restaurant, Karma Restaurant, Tibetan Yangkhor Cafe, Mohammad Restaurant, Loyag Restaurant, Amala's Restaurant. Adjacent to the Tibetan temple there are also a handful of well known restaurants that include: Kang Lha Restaurant, Druk Restaurant, Madras Cafe, Yak Restaurant, Lobang Tibetan Restaurant, Dorjee Restaurant, Om Cafe and Fuji Green Restaurant.



Figure 4.6 Mohammad and Loyag Restaurant

There are a number of tent restaurants that have longstanding reputations in Bodh Gaya. The first tent restaurant to operate in Bodh Gaya was run by a Tibetan woman named Amala, who set up a small shop next to the Mahabodhi Temple in the early seventies.[124] Another famous Tibetan restaurant is Loyag which opened in 1983 prior to the Kalachakra festival. The founder of this restaurant is Annie Loyag, a Tibetan woman who had previously worked in a restaurant on the outskirts of Lhasa. After moving to Gangtok and Darjeeling in the seventies, she decided to set up a small restaurant near the Mahabodhi Temple where she benefited from regular contact with Tibetan pilgrims and western patrons such as Robert Pryor's Antioch Buddhist group.[125] Although it is primarily the Tibetan refugees who have propelled the growth of restaurants in Bodh Gaya, there are also some Indian establishments that have gained a popular reputation among foreign pilgrims and tourists to the place of enlightenment. One of these is Shivanath, which claims to be the first Indian restaurant in Bodh Gaya to cook Chinese food. This restaurant overlooks the footpath just east of the Mahabodhi Temple entrance and is known today as Shiva hotel restaurant.[126]

[124] When I interviewed some of the restaurant owners there were some conflicting reports regarding Amala. Some of them have suggested that she passed away 6 to 7 years ago and that the present "women who claims to be Amala" is a duplicate. When I interviewed the alleged Amala today, she told me that she left Tibet at the age of 25 and first came to Bodh Gaya in 1972 where she decided to open a restaurant. For close to ten years she had lived in Bodh Gaya but for the last 20 years she has been migrating back and forth with her family in Manila

[125] Since 1995 Annie Loyag no longer works in the restaurant and has become a nun.

[126] When I interviewed Satya Narayana he told me that the restaurant began with his grandfather who moved to Bodh Gaya from 'Buddhageri' near Manpur in the early 1930s. When he arrived in Bodh Gaya his grandfather decided to purchase some land from the Mahant and run a small sweet shop in front of the Mahabodhi Temple. Later it became known as "Shivanath Saw" when it was named by a tall American called Michael who used to stay at the Samanvay Ashram during the Goenka and Munindra meditation retreats. His father sold vegetarian food that usually consisted of rice, dal,



Figure 4.7 Shivanath before the Shiva Hotel Restaurant
Source: Courtesy of Satya Narayana, Bodh Gaya

Another restaurant that has become famous in Bodh Gaya is the popular Om Cafe. Today, this restaurant is tucked away at the end of the Mahayana Tibetan Guest house and like many of the other Tibetan Restaurants was established in the aftermath of the 1985 Kalachakra festival. The owner of the Cafe is Tsering, a Tibetan woman from Dharamsala, who manages the restaurant with the help of her adopted sister's children Dasang and Yangtse. Like many other Tibetan merchants, they also operate a satellite restaurant in Dharamsala where they reside most of the year. Since its inception in 1986, Om Cafe has become famous for its wide selection of specialty foods, breads and especially its brownies and chocolate-banana cakes. The restaurant boasts that all of its food is fresh, clean and prepared in a hygienic manner. It was for these reasons that the Om Cafe received a warm review in the 1987 Lonely Planet Guidebook which only helped to boost its success and reputation more broadly. At the same time, a successful business in Bodh Gaya is often prey for deceptive local imitations. Like other competing restaurants such as 'Old Pole Pole' and the 'Original Pole Pole', the Om name was hijacked five or six years back by a local entrepreneur when the new entry road was being built.[127] When I

subji and pakoras; along with milk sweets that the Kalayan family became famous for. In 1989 Satya Narayan's father passed away and since that time he and his brother have been managing the Shiva Hotel Restaurant.

[127] Adjacent to the Burmese Monastery are three tent restaurants 'Gautam Restaurant' 'Old Pole Pole' and the 'Original Pole Pole.' Gautam comes from an Adivasi background and moved to Bodh Gaya in 1977 from Assam. Since then, he has worked closely with the Burmese Monastery and the Root Institute for Cultural Wisdom. In 1986 he opened a small tent restaurant which operates in the winter season and caters largely to the Antioch Buddhist group. Since the late eighties, two young Japanese men, with the help of a local resident called Chakravarty Dilip, also decided to open a tent restaurant next to Gautam and called it Pole Pole. The name Pole Pole allegedly means 'Slow and Steady' in Swahili.

interviewed Tsering, she said "people now think that *they* are the original Om Cafe but it is not the case. We have lost some of our very special customers and our followers who ask them "where is Om Cafe" and they say "it has closed." Sometimes they are also being commissioned by locals to bring them to the right place. But we do not offer commission here. So the customers will have to come here of their own choice."

Besides the fierce competition over the popular name, there are also other challenges Tibetan refugees have faced when it comes to running a seasonal restaurant in Bodh Gaya. One underlying factor that has caused strain between local Hindus and Tibetan refugees is the consumption of non-vegetarian meals. According to Tsering,

> before moving to the Tibetan guesthouse we were on the roadside and there were all these unwanted people entering in. Many Indians would come, many young boys that would irritate you and the customers. One time, three boys came in demanding to see if we had meat or not. I said "where is your authority, show us your license." And they quickly tried to show us some papers. These Hindus came into the kitchen and started bothering me and the workers searching around for the meat. Fortunately there were some official people outside who were visiting the Tibetan Market and overheard me shouting. It was just a coincidence. So they came in and challenged these boys. In the end they didn't do anything. So in the beginning it was quite difficult. There were some threats, usually over meat. But on the whole it has been nice. I do like Bodh Gaya. . . this is a very strong place for me. Here I have access to the stupa which is quite strong.

Due to the stigma surrounding the illicit consumption of meat, there have been many popular Indian restaurants such as Shivanath, Madras Cafe and Fuji Green Restaurant that have gained a wide reputation for serving Chinese and strictly Indian vegetarian cuisine. Although the views on vegetarianism and dietary restrictions vary from the different Buddhist schools, in Vajrayana, the act of eating meat is not always prohibited. While it is often assumed that the Mahayana schools generally recommend a vegetarian diet, in Tibet, the climatic conditions likely contributed to supplementary forms of food consumption such as meat, where year-round agriculture is not possible. After fleeing Tibet, many Tibetan monks and nuns have not changed their diet patterns when they went into exile in India, despite being situated in a predominantly vegetarian culture. Although there have been many prominent Tibetan spiritual leaders like the 14th Dalai Lama and the 17th Karmapa who have publicly advocated for vegetarianism and denounce the killing of any animal, the stigma of beef-eating Tibetan Buddhists is still prevalent at Bodh Gaya today, and many local residents fear the chow mein, for

The success of Pole Pole, especially among the Japanese and Andrew Cohen's group spawned an imitation that has led to a battle over the name ever since. In recent years, all of these restaurants have been hard hit by the changes to the main access road into Bodh Gaya which no longer runs along the riverside road.

example, may contain hidden traces of meat.

In the past, some Hindu residents have tried to ban the consumption of beef and pork at the place of enlightenment, but at the same time, they are reluctant to alienate the Tibetan refugee community who play an integral role in fueling the local economy, especially during the winter season. Although the local Hindu community is suspicious of the Tibetan restaurants serving beef and pork, they are also willing to turn a blind eye and temporarily transcend the cultural norms for sake of business. As a means of circumventing these Hindu dietary restrictions and the ritual pollution taboos many of the tent restaurants hire local labor from the scheduled castes like the Bhuinya who are known to eat meat and raise pigs. During the winter season the beef, goat, buffalo or pork comes from the Muslim quarters of Gaya city and is handled by young scheduled caste workers in the hidden recess of these tent restaurants. When I was conducting a survey of the different restaurants it became clear that many of these young boys from scheduled caste backgrounds were working in the kitchens and were also able to speak Hindi and Tibetan interchangeably. According to Gyan Prakash (1990), he notes that the oral epics of the Bhuinya highlight the means through which they acquired a historical status as a ritually polluted group engaged in agricultural labor. However in this context, the ritual pollution taboo is inverted and provides a space of opportunity for Bhuniyas to position themselves in a way that ensures seasonal employment with the Tibetan refugee community.

In order to provide an example of these interconnections between the Tibetan refugee community, Muslim and scheduled castes, let me turn to the case of Mohammad's Restaurant. Mohammad's Restaurant, like Om Cafe, is one of the most popular 'hang-outs' during the winter season, with a strong following of western pilgrims and tourists. Inside the tent, Mohammad and his staff provides a diverse menu that infuses Tibetan, Chinese, Western and Indian cuisine. From the CD player you can hear a regular circulation of Bob Marley, the Doors and Bob Dylan. Mohammad's success, like many of those I will describe in this section, is also self-earned and emerges from the transnational pool of global traffic that defines Bodh Gaya bazaar during the winter season. Mohammad was born in the area known as the Harijan Colony today, just north of the Daijokyo Buddhist temple and the Karma Temple.

> My father was a builder and made very little money. He had nine children. He helped build the Tibetan guesthouse and also the main building. Back then, he was making 50 Rp a day (one US dollar) and through this work he became very close with the Tibetans. . . Although he cannot read and write, he can certainly speak Tibetan very well. I had always dreamed of owning a house to be able to invite my friends over. In 1996 I opened Mohammad’s Restaurant. I was 15

> years old. Since I was 12 years old I had started to work in the restaurants; at my brother's restaurant called Dorjee next to Fuji Green. Before 1996 this was the most famous restaurant. In a period of around 30 years the most famous restaurants were Loyag Restaurant, Om Cafe, Amala Restaurant and Dorjee Restaurant. From October to March, I used to be open for six months and usually open for Tibetan people only. There were not so many restaurants during those earlier months. When I opened in 1996 there was one man cleaning, one for service and two for cooking. . . So in total there were four people running the restaurant. I was not very successful at the beginning and was thinking that perhaps it was my signboard but after two weeks some old friends from Dorjee Restaurant began to arrive. Previously, some western people knew me there and they loved me because I was small. So for these reasons many westerners liked me. Before 1996 my brother's restaurant had great success but after 1996 I have been number one and have become more popular. My customers are very supportive and very happy. From the money of the restaurant I bought land for the guest house and began construction. My second brother runs a guest house up in Ladakh and has spent more than 15 Lakh. . . I am very proud of my fate. All together things are going well. It has been my dream to save money and put aside a separate amount for my brother and myself until I am old. For 40 years I will have to work hard. I also want to buy a little land and keep some goats. . . My other dream in time is to go to Europe. And also use some money for charity. This is also good karma and for the next life. And also for my son if he should need. But before . . . my family was very, very poor. Everyone has blessed me. The customers always support me and give me much energy. Friends from the United Kingdom had once given my father blood when he was sick. I remember that in 1992. Once I also asked an American for 400 Rp and I have always remembered his kindness and used it towards my English spoken. I then went on until class seven and after that there was no more English.

The success of Mohammad's restaurant is also tied to his regular employers such as Prem, a Bhuinya from the village of Jagdispur located at the base of Dungheswari mountain. This is a village that was directly under the control of the Bodh Gaya Math and its extensive system of bonded labor and servitude that I described in the previous section.

> My father died in 1995. He used to tell me stories of snake catching and could interpret dreams. He had some powers. But he did not want to teach me the snake handling when I was growing up. He came to visit us infrequently. Sometimes he would be away and for one month there was no cooking for our family. My father would eat but only a little bit. Before, many of us were working as Kamias. All were working for the Math. Most Bhuinyas were working for him. There was no land, just house property. This land I bought. For three years I was working for free and sleeping outside. After four years I had money and could finally buy a small plot of land. I have received no education. I start working in Bodh Gaya each winter in November. For fourteen years I have been working in Bodh Gaya. I first started some work with the Tibetan monks at Malakala cave who gave 4 Rp a day. I spoke no English and eventually they took me to Bodh Gaya to work in one of the Tibetan restaurants. I was around 8 years old at that time. I worked there for one year and I made around 400 Rp ($9 US) per month. Many of the Tibetan workers are also Bhuinyan. When Mohammods opened in 1996 I started working there. His father has been close with Tibetan people. Mohammad's father gives some money. Around this same time my father died. There have been very little changes in the village. Most workers here

> migrate to Gaya or Bodh Gaya. Mostly do day labor and construction work. At 14 years old I was married and my wife was a bit younger than me. We have four children: Sanjit, Ranjit, Sujit, Anil. I am the oldest brother of my family and I have one sister and she is married and living with her husband. I remember some days we had dinner, some days we had none. No *nasta*. Some days, we had to share a single *chapati*. By working at Bodh Gaya I learned good English and have met many foreigners. I have also become a great chef. It is my dream to have one small restaurant in Dungeshwari but my mother's health is not well. The last seven days she was not eating any food. Just one spoonful of milk. One of my sons also has polio but the allopathic medicine has not worked. I never ask money from western people, never, never. And never lie. If I have money I will do something.

Prem is just one example of the many young Bhuinya who regularly migrate to Bodh Gaya and other tourist towns during the winter season in search of employment. Although the pollution taboos surrounding the consumption of meat are certainly a contributing factor in the employment niche of the Bhuinyas, it is important not to overlook the poverty stricken position that is able to be exploited in the first place. When I spoke with a young student from the village of Mastipur, he explained that "the Buddhist people are very selfish and they do no social work. Their one aim is to earn some money. They do not follow real-Buddhism. I have seen some Buddhist monks and lay people who come to our village and drink wine in the evening. They also sell beef here. These are mainly those Buddhists from the Himalayan area. What happened to *panchasila*? The Tibetans are refugees and yet they can do anything for their survival."

Behind the walls of many Buddhist monasteries, hotels and restaurants are young boys from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes whose family once served as bonded laborers and Kamias under the tyranny of the Bodh Gaya Math. Today, these young boys are part of a new regime of labor servitude linked to the global market of tourism and its high seasonality at Bodh Gaya. At the interstices of this transnational space of global connection, some like Prem, are able to squeeze out a living to support his family and also fuel his future aspirations to build his own restaurant. While Prem considers himself very fortunate to work at one of the most popular restaurants under Mohammad, the fate of other Bhuinyas are not so fortunate. In the past, Tibetan merchants have been known to buy child labor from "middle men" in the impoverished villages surrounding Bodh Gaya and recruit them as servants in distant cities and towns along the Tibetan migration routes such as Dharamshala and Ladakh. This is not the same form of bondage that characterized agrarian practice and the consolidation of exploitative labor relations under the Bodh Gaya Math, but it is also a form of servitude nonetheless that is an integral part of the political economy of tourism in contemporary India.

4.2.3 Hoteliers and Japanese Brides

Up until the early nineties, hotels and guest houses were also fairly limited in Bodh Gaya. During the Buddha Jayanti in 1956, the only accommodations available were the existing Buddhist monasteries like the Mahabodhi Society and Burmese Vihara, the Birla Dharamsala and a few guest rooms and dormitories that were run by the central government. In 1968 the central government guest house was expanded and turned over to the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) who renamed the building the *Ashoka Travellers Lodge*. This lodge was the only government hotel in Bodh Gaya and catered to relatively affluent visitors charging upwards of 350/450 Rp per night in an A/C room. More rooms and facilities continued to be added to the ITDC lodge and in 1988 it was renamed the *Hotel BodhGaya Ashok.* However, in terms of low budget accommodations, there was only the state government sponsored Tourist Bungalows and Youth Hostel, along with a set of small family run hotels along the Gaya riverside road. These included Hotel Amar, Hotel Shashi, Hotel Archana and later, Hotel Cantica.[128]

The hotel and guest house boom in Bodh Gaya, like the tent restaurants, was also spawned in the aftermath of the 1985 Kalachakra festival when the town was flooded with Tibetan pilgrims who were staying in tents and residential homes in the nearby villages. During this time, it became apparent to the state government and many local residents that there was a sheer lack of adequate accommodation facilities to meet the peak demands of this growing international pilgrimage town, especially in the winter season. There were also very few local residents that had the financial resources to purchase land and construct hotels in the twilight years of the Bodh Gaya land struggle. However, this void was eventually filled by the financial windfall generated by the Japanese visitors that began to arrive in large numbers throughout the late seventies and eighties. Although it may have been the Tibetan refugees that sparked the development of pilgrimage-based tourism as a source of livelihood for many local people, it was the arrival of the Japanese that had a tremendous impact on the economic landscape of the town.

In chapter two, I described the transnational influence of Buddhism in Bodh Gaya, especially through the establishment of foreign monasteries, temples and/or guest houses that grew out of the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations. With the growth of these institutional forms of Buddhism, this process has helped bolster the development of pilgrimage activities and in some cases, create new

[128] The tourist bungalow was later converted into the Hotel Buddha Vihar and Hotel Siddhartha Vihar.

opportunities for local employment through indirect encounters with the monasteries and the patrons who frequent them. When the Indo-Nippon Temple and Daijokyo Buddhist Temple were built in the seventies and eighties this also corresponded with a large influx of relatively affluent Japanese pilgrims with a renewed interest in the sacred sites associated with Sakyamuni Buddha. Given the overall growth of the Japanese economy since the sixties, this also spurred new leisure and travel incentives for the Japanese Buddhists who looked to India for inspiration. As one handicraft shopkeeper described,

> The Japanese began to arrive in Bodh Gaya in the late seventies and by the mid-eighties things really expanded. All the hotels and shops. Before they were only selling on bed sheets. Than it was followed by little wooden shops or *goomtea*. At that time, the Japanese had become interested in Bodh Gaya and Buddhist sites and were providing very good business. These Japanese were also very simple or you can say ignorant and locals were charging very high prices. It all started with the Japanese. These were heavy buyers and they were also blind. The richness you see today began with the Japanese tourists. . . Some people started having good relations with Japanese, some were even going to Japan. The owner of Sujata Hotel was the beginning.

The story of Sujata Hotel and the legend of Shashi is a local point of reference for many residents who describe the development of tourism and the transnational power of Japanese financing at Bodh Gaya. As a kind of 'rags-to-riches tale', Shashi's father was a poor horse-cart driver whose family grew up in the government sponsored Harijan colony to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple. Ever since Shashi was a child he began to do business with the Japanese selling rosery malas, stones, photos, Bodhi leaves and river sand as sacred souvenirs. There were also a number of young local entrepreneurs who were smuggling Buddhist statues and sculptures from the Mahabodhi Temple Complex and Math property that could fetch a huge profit margin in the bazaar. With the floating prices of this informal shadow economy, many young men, like Shashi became rich instantaneously. Initially the group of young men operated as hawkers chasing the Japanese groups and/or selling gifts on bed sheets ('*chawki*') opposite the Mahabodhi Society or at the front gates of the Japanese monastery. Over time, the group became more firmly established and built small wooden shops across from the Thai temple to entice the Japanese as they made their way to the temple. There were also some who were able to learn the Japanese language that helped to strengthen their position in relation to specific Japanese flows. As two shopkeepers describe,

> In Bodh Gaya the Japanese were coming in large groups. Also the Thai were coming but they had no good economy. So they only bothered the Japanese. They were not foolish people but would pay much more than the actual price. Say something cost 10 Rp . . .the Japanese would

> pay 10 dollars. They could get $50 US dollars in a day but back then 200 Rp (US $5 dollars) would have been big money. So the Japanese had lots of money and there is some complex among the Japanese people. . . they want to bring home unique things.
>
> That time the Japanese used to have trust. There were very few travel agents back then. The Japanese would come to Bodh Gaya and also other tourist sites like Agra. But the Buddhist places were of central interest. They were very much here for the shopping. It is a custom among Japanese people, wherever they go, they buy something.

The fierce competition for the Japanese currency led to the establishment of a *Mala Photo Association*, a loose membership of local entrepreneurs who could mobilize for profit and claimed exclusive access to the Japanese groups. Due to the exorbitant rates that were being charged in the bazaar for these sacred souvenirs, this also prompted those like Bhante *Pannarama* of the Mahabodhi Society to establish their own store on the campus grounds and control prices so that visitors and pilgrims wouldn't be cheated. But as the Japanese grew in numbers throughout the eighties and the profits continued to multiply among the Mala Photo Association, many of the members began to purchase land and took out bank loans to construct hotels and build their own empire of handicraft emporiums. Although this group may not have been former Kamias, many of the hoteliers are composed of OBC's (other backward castes such as Kahar and Yadav) and come from relatively poor peasant backgrounds with very few of them owning agricultural land. There were also no caste or class divisions among the group and most were uneducated. As one shopkeeper, Rajesh explained “most of them were not literate, so you can say they were educationally backward but economically forward.” Rumors of this Japanese Buddhist bonanza and the wealthy emporium owners had even spread to the criminal mafia in Gaya city who began to target these hoteliers with bribery demands. These threats prompted many of the hoteliers and owners of the handicraft emporiums to hire their own *goondas* and it was in this context that powerful local leaders such as the now deceased MP Rajesh Kumar became implicated in assuring the protection of the local business men against the rival gangs.

This windfall in Japanese money helped to establish a wave of new developments tied to the burgeoning tourism industry that revolved around the construction of private hotels, guest houses, travel agents and handicraft emporiums. The first wave of private hotels were built across from the Buddhist monasteries such as the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Indo-Nipponji Japanese Temple when a new road was built in the early nineties. Previously, this area was all agricultural farm land and many of those who profited from the Japanese Buddhists invested in the relatively cheap cost of land at that time. Some of the prominent hoteliers from the Mala Photo Association include the

Shanti Buddha Guest House, Sujata Hotel and Hotel Embassy. Although the first wave of hotels began in the early nineties, after 1995, there was an explosion of buildings along the central spine of the new entrance road with dreams of capitalizing on the lucrative international traffic of Buddhist pilgrims from the Far East.[129] The mushrooming of hotels also coincided with a number of changes to the urban landscape that brought water supplies, electricity substation, telephone exchange, and the construction of a footpath adjacent to the Mahabodhi Temple. What came as a surprise to many of the local entrepreneurs was that the Japanese flows quickly evaporated in light of the recession in the Japanese economy. The impact of this recession left many of the hoteliers and guest house operators in a vulnerable position and began to direct their frustration against the foreign Buddhist monasteries. As one shopkeeper explained, "today the hoteliers are all wearing white Kuta pajamas, but underneath they are black due to corruption. Many of the hoteliers also have no credit in the market because they were built on bank loans that they have not been able to pay. So now they are accusing foreign Buddhists."

One of the more surprising ethnographic findings in relation to the development of tourism at Bodh Gaya is the extent to which many of the successful hoteliers have Japanese wives. Transnational courting is becoming more familiar in Bodh Gaya as it emerges as a global destination associated with the spiritual significance of the Buddha's enlightenment. It is believed there are more than 30 Bodh Gaya men today who live in town with a foreign wife. In a special issue of *India Today* published in 2003, there is an article written by Sanjay Kumar Jha that explores this interface of Indo-Japanese marriages in Bodh Gaya. The article is entitled '*Knot Uncommon'* and sheds some light on these emerging patterns of transnational romance. One of the more prominent married couples in Bodh Gaya today is Yuki Inoue and Sudama Prasad, the owner of Hotel Mahamaya. Like many youth in Bodh Gaya, Sudama held aspirations to work in the tourism industry and eventually moved to Delhi where we worked as an interpreter for Coxs & Kings, one of the longest established travel companies in the world. In Delhi, Sudama met his future wife Yuki who was visiting India with her father, a Fine Arts professor in Kyoto. Together they visited Bodh Gaya and it was during this trip that they fell in love. When I interviewed Sudama he explained in more detail,

[129] Other hotels and guest houses that I surveyed in 2006 include: Hotel Embassy, Niranjana Hotel, Kirti Guesthouse, Hotel Jeevak International, Hotel Buddha International, Hotel Prince International, Hotel Visal International, Hotel Tokyo Vihar Pvt. Ltd., Rahul Budha Guest House, Hotel Lord Buddha, VIP Guesthouse, Hotel Urevala International, Anukul Guest House, Hotel Lumbini International, Hotel Taj Darbar, Delta International, Ram's Guest House, Baba Ashram, the Myth of Sysipus House, Bodh Gaya Guest House, Sanghmitra Hotel, Lakshmi Guest House, Hotel Tathagat International, Deep Guest House, Rainbow Guest House, Archana House, Smriti Guesthouse, Taj Guesthouse, Shivam Guesthouse, Satyam Guesthouse, Shiva House, Amar Hotel, Hafiz Nasim House, Beauty Guest House, Shanti Guest House, Rahul Guest House, Ravi's Guest House, Laxmi Guest House, Aryan Guest House, Puja Guest House.

> Through them I was invited to Japan where I met them again. Then the parents talked to me and agreed. I had been working at Coxs & Kings but began constructing a hotel in Bodh Gaya in 1998. I also got married in 1998 and have been living a very happy life. The Japanese culture is good but hard working. . . . In the beginning it was difficult, not so much for me but for my wife. Many local people were abusing her when she first came. She was not understanding Hindi so well at that time. But now she has become Bihari. She has even adopted many Hindu practices here and has become a traditional Indian woman. . . Althoguh it is not like Delhi or Mumbai here. In Bodh Gaya you have to live like a local person. She realized this and adapted. In Delhi however she wears jeans and pants. But that is not allowed here. In Japan of course, no problem. Most of the Bodh Gaya people here are already married but have a Japanese mistress. This is not good for them and their society.

Since marrying in 1998, Sudama and Yuki spend most of their time in Bodh Gaya running the Hotel Mahamaya but also doing social work in Japan on a spousal visa. As Sanjay Jha (2003: 68) comments "theirs is no isolated case. East is increasingly meeting East in this temple town. Call it happenstance, call it heaven's blessing, but youths in the land of Buddha's nirvana now court Japanese girls with rustic aplomb."

Throughout Bodh Gaya's global bazaar there are many tales of transnational intimacy between the two countries.[130] While many Japanese women, like Yuki live in Bodh Gaya, there are also those men who live permanently in Japanese cities such as Sapporo and Kyoto and have started hotel businesses, restaurants and travel agencies that cater to the Indo-Japanese traffic in tourism. Many of these success stories perpetuate the myth of this "geographical dowry" and the role of marriage as a means of obtaining financial security in a developed country (Jha 69). Similar to Brennan's (2004) account of sex workers in the Dominican Republic, these instances of locals migrating to Japan as the husbands of Japanese brides only propels the fantasy of the "opportunity myth" where "anything could happen." Although it is commonly held that transnational courting has become a strategic means of improving economic standing and social mobility for local men, finding out why the Japanese women are attracted to the home grown Bodh Gaya stalk is not an easy question to answer. When I spoke to a local guest house owner with long ties to Japan, he explained

> In Bodh Gaya many people here do not have much knowledge of Japan. What they heard was from the elders who were making money. They had only that knowledge. The image of Japan from the eighties was an image that they were very rich and foolish. They just give money. Also it was believed that Japanese women were not satisfied with Japanese men. The men do not have much time for them or respect. And when the women come to India, they see our culture where the ladies do not work in formal jobs. Rather, they stay at home and take care of

[130] Although the majority of stories related to transnational courting revolve around Japanese women, there are certainly other cases involving different Buddhist groups and nationalities.

> the children. They also receive respect from the society. So they likely felt that the Asian men are good to marry, giving time to their wives and children. There was respect you can say. In Japan they do not have those things. The men do not have time. In one week, maybe they only have one day. The Japanese men are work machines. A Pakistani man had said to me that they were 'economic animals'. . . just working, working, working. There is no care for family and society. They have money and brains, but no heart. So Japanese women come here and get heart, respect and sexual relations. So it is very emotional for them. But these things in Bodh Gaya are not very much. You can call it 'emotional blackmail.' Locals requesting marriage when they are only staying here for 8 to 10 days and during this time there is talking, talking. And from the men and womens side there are proposals. So you can say there are two things: one, the Japanese women are marrying Indian men for culture, not for money. Even though they do not know the status of the man, his caste, or how much money he has. And among the Bodh Gaya men, they just want to marry so they can go to Japan and stay there. It is a 'spousal visa.' They can work there on a 'spousal visa' and as a result they can earn much more money. After they get married, maybe after 2-3 years they separate. But the men can manage a visa. So there is no harm to marry for 6 months.

According to Sanjay Jha's (2003) interpretation, the alchemy of this transnational romance is helped by the fact that both Japanese and Bihari culture are relatively conservative. In fact, the allure of Indian culture appears to be one of the underlying mystiques that plays into these inter-Asian fantasies. Back in Japan, according to Yuki, many of her girl friends are now looking to Bihar for romance: "After the success of my marriage, my friends in Japan have become crazy about Bihari boys," she says. The recent internationalization of Japanese women's lives and careers is also central to Karen Kelsky's (2001) ethnography entitled *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*. In this book, Kelsky explores the complicated and contradictory role of transnational desire among young Japanese "internationalists" who seek romance with Western men as a means of circumventing their countrie's oppressive corporate and patriarchal family structures. For Kelsky (2001: 4), the feminine allegiance to the West and the "occidental longings" among Japanese women are seen as a "potentially transgressive and transformative force." In contrast, Japanese brides in Bodh Gaya do not emulate the global West as the model of unfettered freedom but rather see Indian culture as a potentially transgressive force through their reinscription as "traditional Indian women." Even though most of the hoteliers in Bodh Gaya derive from Hindu backgrounds, it is also the prominent role of Buddhism that prefigures these transnational encounters in the first place. As Sanjay Jha notes, "strangely it is mainly Buddhism that arouse marital desires in pilgrims – the spiritual significance of Bodh Gaya among the Japanese is a factor that contributes to cross-cultural matches between the East and East. When Yuki's father was asked about her daughter's marriage to Sudama he said "Like Lord Buddha, my daughter came here to get ultimate enlightenment. . . It was her fate that she got married at Bodh Gaya to

Sudama" (Jha 69).



Figure 4.8 Japanese yearning in the global bazaar

Although many of these hoteliers and guest house operators are not former Kamias, this emerging business class that transcends religious and caste boundaries have gained a prominent social standing as the "big men" in relation to the economic development of pilgrimage-based tourism at Bodh Gaya. A process, as I have suggested, that took place during the decline of the Bodh Gaya Math and the rise of Tibetan and Japanese influences at the site. At the same time, I have also shown how the hoteliers are also highly dependent on the marked seasonality of the pilgrim and tourist flows. With the sudden departure of the Japanese in the early nineties, this left many of these young entrepreneurs vulnerable to the indecisive swings and vacillations of the global travel market. One of the ways in which these young men have looked to secure a foothold in the Japanese market is to build transnational bridges with Japanese women with the prospect of marriage and a spousal visa to escape economic hardships. However, similar to Brennan (2004), these cases of actual migration and success are few, and it is more common to have the Indian men return to Bodh Gaya within a few years.

Although the Japanese money has evaporated as quickly as it was earned, new networks of transnational Buddhism are becoming more prominent in recent years that are helping resolve the local recession but are also leading to new economic cleavages. According to most of the hoteliers and guest

house operators, these days, it is the East and Southeast Asian pilgrims from Thailand, Taiwan, mainland China and Singapore that are most promising, especially since the introduction of the new Gaya International Airport in 2002. Domestic Indian tourists and pilgrims from South India have also brought an additional source of income in the off season. As the largest visitor group to Bodh Gaya today, most of the Indian pilgrims come to perform *Gaya-sraddha* but prefer to stay in Bodh Gaya given in its comparatively clean and quiet location with modern amenities. The foreign Buddhist monasteries and the Great Buddha Statue have also gained a reputation as popular sightseeing attractions among Indian groups. Given the large surplus of hotels and substantial bed capacity in the off season it is no surprise that Bodh Gaya has also emerged in recent years as a popular destination for weddings and large conventions catering to doctors, engineers and financial accountants.

With the rising inflation of land prices and building costs to construct and maintain a hotel throughout the year, this is also leading to new conflicts between foreign Buddhist monasteries and wealthy outsiders who are keen to invest in the global prospects of Bodh Gaya's rebirth as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Two examples that many local shopkeepers point to is the Hotel Lotus Nikko and the Royal Residency. Both of these establishments claim to offer the most modern and luxurious accommodations and cater to the now elusive Japanese package groups. The Royal Residency for example, was completed in 2001 and it is tied to INPAC Pvt. which also runs four luxury hotels at other prominent Buddhist sites such as Kusinagara and the Centaur properties in Rajgir and Lumbini. Catering to wealthy Buddhist patrons, INPAC Pvt. also owns a large number of luxury tourist buses that can transport pilgrims along the Buddhist circuit to the next hotel chain. As part of the Government dis-investment policies, in 2001 the ITDC also sold the Hotel BodhGaya Ashok to Lotus Trans Travel, a private company, like the INPAC Pvt. group that caters to the exclusive hotel chains along the Buddhist sector. After adding, renovating and refurbishing over 25 rooms, the Hotel was renamed the Hotel Lotus Nikko in 2005, its third incarnation within the last forty years and a constant reminder to many local residents of the growing privatization of the public sector at Bodh Gaya.[131]

4.2.4 Touts, 'Friendly Guides' and the Informal Economy of Tourism

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to examine one final group that exemplifies the

[131] It also worth noting that the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee have also entered into financial partnership with the hotel business in recent years and have purchased the Lumbini International Guest House property which offers A/C rooms and a restaurant.

grassroots cosmopolitanism of Bodh Gaya's global bazaar. In fact, one's experience of Bodh Gaya today would be incomplete if it were not for a memorable tussle or encounter with a young street tout. The etymology of the word *tout* derives from the Middle English *tuten*, meaning to protrude or peer. When applied as a verb, 'to tout,' it generally refers to two prominent actions: 1) the process of selling something, typically by a direct or persistent approach with an attempt to persuade people of the merits of purchasing an item in order to obtain some profit or commission, often more than the original production cost; and 2) the frequenting of heavily touristed areas and presenting oneself as a tour guide (particularly towards those who do not speak the local language). The term *hawker* which is often used interchangeably with touts has some subtle differences and is usually associated with road-side vendors who sell merchandise or offer goods for sale in an aggressive manner often by shouting and roaming throughout the streets. Within the Hindi vernacular, both hawkers and touts are sometimes referred to as *pheriwalas* with the literal translation of 'those who move around.' According to Arvind Rajagopal (2001: 91) the *pheriwalas* are part of the "economy that spurs consumption, yet they function as quintessentially vagrant figures requiring discipline. The *pheriwala* is thus a figure bridging consumption and destruction. . . working in circuits seen as illegal in relation to the formal economy, but is also metaphorical, symbolizing a kind of disorder as a struggling but nevertheless illicit entrepreneur."

In India's public culture today, touts and street hawkers are often regarded as a social ill and an impediment to the smooth modern integration of an international tourism industry. Touts move throughout the bazaar creating and representing public space rather then being subject to it. The incentives for these footloose enterprisers are not dependent on wages necessarily, but rather "the condition of their survival is that they remain marginal, exposing their bodies to the elements while underselling those not obliged to do so" (Rajagopal 94). As key contributors to India's informal shadow economies, according to Rajagopal (2001: 94), these figures can be regarded as "symbols of metropolitan space gone out of control. . . As such, they become the exemplary image of an unattainable disciplinary project," especially when they interfere with tourism sites that serve as key modern emblems for expressing definitions of public civility. Through the peddling of services and aggressive tactics in public space these young urban youth are often overlooked by anthropologists despite their creative and strategic cross-cultural mediations that can extend beyond national boundaries (Favero 2003). As cultural brokers between India and the foreign world, they are what Ulf Hannerz (1998) describes as the "other transnationals," "those who are seldom the focus of

anthropological research but who nonetheless constitute small rings in the global chain of exchanges across national borders" (Favero 2003: 556).

Street vending and guiding are a key part of the commercial landscape that contributes to the informal economy of tourism in Bodh Gaya. Like the forefathers from the Mala Photo Association, today, there are numerous young men and boys who lurk on the outskirts of the Mahabodhi Temple finding amusement and opportunities in the local-global counter flows. For the remainder of this section I want to explore two central questions with respect to friendly guides and the informal economy of tourism in Bodh Gaya's global bazaar. First of all, drawing on Favero (2003: 554), I want to examine how "hanging out in the bazaar" next to a religious centre and a global site of memory provides an active space through which urban youth reflect on "India's role in a globalizing world and of determining their own place within it." Secondly, given the impoverished condition of rural south Bihar, I also want to examine the ways in which tourism provides opportunities and life chances, especially by utilizing "underdevelopment" as a resource for social mobility. Although I do not have much room to expand on the gender dimensions of these touts, as I describe shortly, these leisured activities in the public sphere are also indisputably gendered as masculine, and much of what goes on revolves around the prospects of transnational courting that I described in the previous section (see also Favero 2003).

Let me first begin by identifying the ways in which certain spatial practices of "hanging out" at popular tourist destination can become a form of public education and line of work for these Bodh Gaya youth. Many of the young boys that I spoke with define themselves as "friendly guides" catering to the needs of foreign travelers. Thus, direct interaction with tourists form not only "an important part of their working lives and the symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1990) but become a key facet of accumulating knowledge of foreigners, foreign countries and their location within the global scheme of things (Favero 2003: 556). Similar to Favero's analysis of urban youth in New Delhi's Janpath Market, engaging with this international traffic also provides an important degree of distance from the "boring traditional rural life" of their family and provides new avenues to circumvent the authority of tradition. As Favero (2003: 557) points out, "their choice of careers and free-time activities are, in fact, consciously planned to avoid being absorbed into the lifestyle represented by their families."



Figure 4.9 Touts and friendly guides wait outside the Mahabodhi Temple

These self-employed friendly guides are not necessarily divided along caste lines either. According to one 'friendly guide' named Raju,

> This business is not dependent on caste, all can do it. Tourism is not caste based. Caste only matters with marriage. . . Many of these boys do not want to get married. . . They show a strong interest in the western world. Previous hustlers such as Sanjeev and Ashok, both married Japanese girls. They took money and cheated them. They were trying to start a school or something and even went to jail. Both moved to Japan and they sometimes come here for business. . . I love languages. So many people benefit from learning languages. My dad is taking care of the people in his family. He also makes business with Japanese, primarily one or two groups in the winter season. Without them it would be very difficult.

As Akhil Gupta (1998) has shown, poverty and underdevelopment can also inform a key part of the subjectivities of people in the developing world, especially in a state like Bihar. Therefore, growing up on the outskirts of a global heritage site provides ample room for hanging out in the bazaar, observing and interacting with visitors and both learning and reflecting upon their own limitations and gross inequalities within India and abroad (Favero 2003). Tourism plays an important role here, especially in the informal sector which provides opportunities to improve life chances by building strategic alliances with foreigners, acquiring languages and appropriating the habitus of the mobile 'other.' Many of these youth and young men look up to the hotel owners as role models, some of whom are paradigmatic figures in the community for having gone from poor horse-cart operators to wealthy hoteliers as a result of these prosperous global connections. According to one 'friendly guide' who goes

under the name of Hollywood Sanjay,

> I like this work but I want to be a big man. You know like Sudama at the Mahamaya or at Sujata Hotel. You can say these are my role models. I am also looking for a European girl to marry and get citizenship and work abroad. . . or Japanese. And then I want to open one big school for children. I don't want a sitting job. I also want to do something for my society. Perhaps I will have two wives like Rajesh – to have both a Japanese and local girl. He is a Japanese guide. If I get married to a local girl it will be too much tension. Having a child I will be tied down. All of sudden I will have to support my wife and child. There will be many things to think about. With a Japanese wife I can get a visa.

Thus, on one level, what I am suggesting is that this the global traffic outside a prominent religious and tourist site can provide a kind of informal education in the transnational public sphere where urban youth encounter and imagine new lives and desires, while at the same time, learning, performing and engaging in various processes of identity-making. Corresponding with Favero's (2003) description, in Bodh Gaya one can also observe games of mimicry and displays of social positioning, performances of identity, processes of reflection, experimentation, debate, and invention that the author notes are an active part of the creative dimensions of culture change. What is especially prominent is the capacity for these youth to draw upon multiple identifications and shifting cultural address with the respect to the diverse foreign traffic to Bodh Gaya.

For many tourist and pilgrims to south Bihar, visiting Bodh Gaya is not only equated with the spiritual bliss of Buddha's enlightenment but also involves a direct experience of poverty that Bihar has become notorious for. Furthermore, the desires of tourists and their imaginary are also anchored and exposed in these particular settings in such a way that locals become quite conscious of certain expectations, especially when accumulating spiritual merit is associated with practices of dana, or generosity. Now for the remainder of this section, I would like to turn to an example of the everyday localized ways in which these touts acquire 'commission' or '*guskauri*' (maghi dialect) through their involvement with tourists. Let me introduce Om Aggrawal, he is 22 years of age and is born in the market area of Bodh Gaya. According to Om, he does 'guiding' to earn money for himself and his family. In the winter season he works as an independent friendly guide in Bodh Gaya. For the remainder of the year Om moves to other major metropolitan centres like Delhi, Dharamsala and Manila where he works for commission under guest houses and a Punjabi travel agent. When asked about his activities in Bodh Gaya he said:

> I take people walking around and tell them good places. You can say I am 'friendly guide.'

> Since two years ago I started doing this. It depends on the traffic, I can make sometimes 500 Rp, sometimes 200 Rp – on a trip to Malakala caves let's say. I primarily show people Buddhist sites, like where the Sujata offered the Buddha milk rice. . . I never give the impression of working for money. I never ask for money before. I like to think of them as guests. Money is not important. . . it is their choice. . . My first ambition is to make friendship, second cooperation, third is to think about money for myself.

Their self-identification as 'friendly guides' in my opinion, points to their strategic ambivalence as unofficial tourist guides who also seek transnational companionship. The ambivalence is necessary to play the 'lottery' as some of my informants describe; a process that strives to incorporate every possible beneficial arrangement that can emerge from sustained contact with the visitor. The key for many of these touts is to 'work' the main target areas and arrival points to ensure first contact. From this initial point of social interaction, a chain of possible commission exchanges can take place. These informal exchanges and commissioning activities take place on multiple scales throughout the bazaar from beggars, children requesting books, shoes and biscuits, to touts and NGO's, money transfers, shop owners, hotels and handicraft emporiums. Commission therefore is an integral part of the fluid exchange opportunities within the informal economy of the global bazaar and these youth play an important role in terms of directing the flow of tourist trade that supports wider consumption practices.

One of the more prominent services provided by these touts, as Om indicates, is to act as a guide and organize a day-trip to some of the lesser known Buddhist sites. Although some seasoned travelers will be uncomfortable with the arrangement and request to pay a service fee up-front, almost all the guides I met refuse this option. Rather, they prefer to take their chances in cultivating a deeper relationship along the way. As part of the tour itinerary, one also encounters numerous small schools, orphanages and charitable trusts located by the nearby Buddhist sites. These derelict educational centres are the product of foreign sponsorship and many, like the hotel and restaurant industry, also function during the winter season when tourist visibility is at its peak. Similar to a religious society or NGO, these 'charitable trusts' can be propped up quite easily, require a minimum of three people in the governing body and are the benefactors of state tax exemptions. Not surprisingly, many of these charitable trusts and educational schools are also managed by former street touts themselves who have turned to social work among the destitute as a means of ensuring long-term financial sponsorship. According to Deepak, who describes the process:

> There are different ways to get '*janpakra*' - 'to catch people for business'. The main motivation is a friendly guide. Most of these boys are coming from the local villages and are very poor.

> They want to become modern and move to foreign countries. They have an interest in western culture and activity. These people are seen as examples so they model themselves after western culture. Those who are educated have the goal of being a doctor where work is a given. But most do not pass tenth education, or have no education but still want to leave Bodh Gaya so they try to earn easy money. It is also connected to sponsorship. Trying to get five sponsors for schools and then the money disappears. They should be clear on how many sponsors are here. Many see that those who have schools get rich quickly. Other educated people work very hard for one month and maybe get 10,000 Rp while some people are getting 50,000 Rp very quickly. . . in one time.

In other words, for many of these urban youth, they look to capitalize on their relationship with foreign tourists and pilgrims, many of whom are repeated visitors. Through social work and charitable organizations, these activities transform poverty into financial support that can lead to a consistent income based on transnational sponsorship at relatively low costs for foreigners.



Figure 4.10 The proliferation of NGOs and educational charity trusts

Ever since the Internet cafes arrived in the last few years, this has provided an effective tool for transnational networking and ensuring financial aid and sponsorship throughout the year.[132] As one shopkeeper described, “we say: 'different seasons, different kinds of beggars.' There are email beggars who send emails during the winter season saying: 'it is really cold here, and that the children require sweaters and blankets. Can you please contribute in this way.' During the rainy season they write: 'we need money because the water is leaking in our homes.'” It is not surprising that some of these Internet shops also provide commission to local boys or allow them free access to the computer in exchange for

[132] Some say that Bodh Gaya was the first town in all of Bihar to receive a dial-up internet connection and may have preceded Patna, the state capital. The first internet cafe was opened in the 2000 and was called Magadh Internet Dhaba near the Mahabodhi Temple. Ever since the introduction of broadband in 2006 this has also drastically improved the speed of Internet connections and the cafes have subsequently multiplied.

customer patronage. Thus, similar to Brennan (2004), these practices can be seen as forms of "transnationalism from below." Through the strategic use of social networks and business partners with foreign visitors, urban youth seek to keep as many transnational ties open through emails, letters and faxes. Through Western Union and other money transfer services, these technologies have greatly improved the chances for sustained financial support from abroad that can alleviate the lack of employment opportunities available in Bihar.

What is perhaps most troubling about these arrangements between friendly guides and charitable trusts, is one cannot help but be disturbed by the kind of education these children receive as seasonal props in the pursuit of foreign sponsorship and how that is transmitted to the younger generation. According to one shopkeeper,

> I don't like that the nature of people here are beggars. Although there is so much labor work available here in Bodh Gaya, still they prefer begging. People are getting 'easy money' and very quickly. Then they start a society. . . Local people do not want to do labor or service work, especially when rice, cloth and money comes free. The local children are becoming habituated. Small children are now chasing after people. They are saying 'I am very poor, I need a book' then it is resold back to the shop for commission. They are only 5 or 6 years old and these things are beginning to happen on a large scale.

Although the lines between begging and entrepreneurial activities are very thin, many of these urban youth are aware of the calculus of morality that confronts these informal practices and more often these methods are employed as a strategy for survival rather than a mere ploy to dupe foreigners. In other words, it is the sharp global economic inequalities in the first place that provides the stimulus for these grassroots initiatives.

Exploring the creative and resilient practices of urban youth and the ways in which they mediate transnational forms of globalization is a central part of Bodh Gaya's public culture today. In the study by Honwana and Boeck (2005) entitled *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa,* these authors provide a dual emphasis on youth as simultaneously active transformers and oppressed victims of globalization. Similarly, these ethnographic findings accord well with this dual emphasis in that the imagination and desires of Bodh Gaya's youth are anchored in these cross-cultural encounters with tourism. On the one hand, the global bazaar is a space where urban youth can reinvent or improve the conditions of their life by seeking beneficial arrangements with foreign guests. Tourism provides a source of job creation and a host of new possibilities through foreign sponsorship, learning languages and building global networks. Many of them consciously bank on the "opportunity myth" in

tourists spaces where visitors spend their money, pilgrims provide dana, and there is always the potential for a windfall (Brennan 2004). At the same time, I do not want to minimize the obstacles, challenges and moral dilemmas that are part of the ambivalence of their informal location in this transnational arena. Thus, under these conditions of social change in contemporary urban India, it is important to pay attention both to the voices of youth as well as the political and economic contexts within which they participate as both agents and victims (Halperin & Scheld 2007: 174).



Figure 4.11 Urban youth in Bodh Gaya

4.3 Conclusion

By examining the social history of the Bodh Gaya Math we have seen the importance of agricultural land and the violent struggles over the landscape to liberate the bonded laborers from the vices of servitude. According to Gyan Prakash (1990: 142), during the colonial period debt-bondage had transferred the status of the oppressed groups from "the Otherness of the British self, to the Other of capitalism." Thus, while the British propagated the abolition of slavery and the importance of "freedom" as the essence of humanity they also protected and secured the right of religious landlords and *Zamindars* over the bonded laborer as was seen in the case of the Bodh Gaya Math. Far from producing "free" labor as Prakash demonstrates, the government tied kamia labor to agricultural production "even more tightly than before" (Prakash 168). Through the larger part of the twentieth century, this system of labor servitude had become more firmly entrenched despite a series of central government and non-government reforms initiated in the aftermath of independence. It was not until the mid-seventies that Jayaprakash Narayan and the CYSV student movement provided the inspiration for agricultural laborers and their support networks to "liberate" the land and gradually dismantle the Bodh Gaya monastery and its influence in the surrounding region.

An important point that needs to be emphasized in relation to the global re-imagining of Bodh Gaya as the central place of world Buddhism, is that the Shaivite monastery, prior to the agitation, continued to maintain a hegemonic position in the region as the dominant political/religious power

centre. Although the struggle for land and efforts to uplift the rural poor continue beyond the agitation through new government reservations and the proliferation of NGOs, the Bodh Gaya Math no longer holds the symbolic authority it once held as the region's *sarkar*. As Pradeep, one of the leaders of the social movement describes, “today, the Math is very different than in the past. You are seeing the complete opposite. At one time the vehicle of the Mahant would pass through the market road and all the people in their shops and customers would stand and bow. Now he is the one descending.” Despite the large campus that stretches along the Niranjana river, the institution no longer exhibits the affluence, educational praise or religious superiority it once had. Many of the Math's neighboring properties such as the Samadhi grave or Jagannathan Temple are decaying ruins overtaken by jungle and youth as popular retreats for smoking ganja and drinking alcohol. These decrepit buildings now run in stark opposition to the opulence of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, the foreign Buddhist monasteries and many luxury hotels. Although the Bodh Gaya Mahant continues to generate profit from the retail value of his landed property and the rent collection in the bazaar shops, this pales in comparison to its previous splendor. Like other heritage places in India that have converted palaces into upscale resorts and hotels, one cannot help but speculate whether or not the future of the Bodh Gaya Math lies in the luxury hotel industry.

In this chapter I have also explored some of the transnational social fields and economic lifelines of Tibetan merchants, hoteliers, shopkeepers, restaurant owners, touts and friendly guides that are an integral part of the social infrastructure that constitutes Bodh Gaya as a global site of memory. In Bodh Gaya, local people imagine Buddhism differently from those pilgrims and foreign visitors to the navel of the earth. Buddhism is primarily about new forms of wealth and income. For many marginalized and subaltern groups, the informal economy of tourism offers an alternative source of employment outside the deprived agricultural sector but it also generates new dreams and aspirations for social mobility and economic advancement that are tied to transnational migration and new networks of foreign sponsorship. Although pilgrimage-based tourism has created new forms of employment, it is also important to emphasize that these opportunities are limited and there are still numerous constraints which prevent locals from enacting these transnational social fields (Brennan 2004). As in the case of the foreign Buddhist monasteries and corporate hotels, there is a growing fear among many local people that these global flows of Buddhism and transnational financing can also bypass local residents. Similar to the seasonal constraints on agricultural production, economic mobility in tourism can also be short lived, unpredictable and unreliable. In other words, tourism can

also generate highly divergent experiences that involve new relationships of economic empowerment and powerlessness.

The important point that I have tried to convey in this chapter is that working with tourists in Bodh Gaya offers an array of economic, social and romantic opportunities not generally available to other Biharis and Indians in other parts of the country. Although some of the wages may be comparable to agricultural labor or construction work, the important point is that “they do offer contact with foreigners that can prove more valuable than their wages” (Brennan 2004: 63). It is for these reasons, that workers seek specific jobs with a “high degree of interaction” because the payoff can be marriage and migration out of India, or ongoing financial sponsorship though NGOs and education programs that secure a regular wage and livelihood (Brennan 63). This is most evident among the touts and friendly guides who seek interactions and opportunities with tourists that provide a “wider set of 'possible' lives than they ever did before” (Appadurai 1991: 197). It is for these reasons that I have focused on the public life of the global bazaar which captures some of the complexity of these transnational processes from below and the ways in which some residents creatively respond to the high seasonality of tourism in order to move beyond daily survival.

5. CHAPTER FIVE

GENEALOGIES OF A MASTER PLAN: BRANDING BUDDHISM AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BIHAR

> The place of the Buddha's enlightenment, Bodh Gaya is the spiritual home of Buddhists. It attracts tens of thousands of believers from all over the world. Its all pervading calm envelops the town, casting a peaceful spell on the visitor (Buddha Mahotsav Poster, Nov 11-13 2000)

In the previous chapters, I have examined some of the ways in which transnational Buddhism and local livelihoods have been connected to the global traffic in pilgrimage and tourism at Bodh Gaya. Through an ethnographic and historical analysis of these changing relationships over space and place, I have suggested that these groups are key social constituents that have reinforced the Buddhist history of the site and the international significance of Bodh Gaya as a global site of memory. Following independence, Bodh Gaya's spatial environment has also been appropriated by national and state government authorities whose vision of socio-economic development also intersects with the religiosity of the place. As an object of cultural heritage and national pride, in this chapter, I examine the ways in which Bodh Gaya's urban space has been re-scripted and rehabilitated by state officials to ensure the town's international visibility as a growing destination for tourism development. How are international pilgrimage and global tourism linked to certain urban phenomenon such as beautification and master plans for city development? How are cities like Bodh Gaya used as a resource for transnational capital and development assistance at various scales? How are state-sponsored development plans contested and resisted by local groups?

In this chapter I explore the role of aesthetics and spatial tactics as a means of social control in the planning of urban towns and heritage landscapes (Foucault 1975; Rabinow 1982; Herzfeld 1993; Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). According to Low & Lawrence-Zuniga (2003: 20) “planning, design and construction of the city are processes of social production responsible for shaping the urban environment, encoding it with intentions and aspirations, uses and meanings that are often themselves contentiously produced.” In order to contextualize the spatial politics of World Heritage at Bodh Gaya it is important to excavate these earlier histories of government land acquisition and tourism development initiatives following India's independence. In the first section of this chapter I examine the genealogy of a comprehensive master plan and the histories of village resettlement that have been part

of the transformation of Bodh Gaya into a world Buddhist site. In the second section, I analyze the ways in which tourism has become a primary industry for socio-economic development in the state of Bihar, especially since the liberalization of the markets in the early nineties. Drawing on a number of plans, surveys and marketing strategies, in this section, I describe how Buddhist heritage has become a key neo-liberal resource for international development assistance and an important cultural commodity as part of the branding practices associated with the global economy of tourism.

5.1 A Landscape Suitable for Striving: The Master Plan and its Displacements

> Obviously, at this holy land of rich and noble memories, technology must subserve higher ends, and, imbiding the spirit of its renaissance, recreate the old glory in its new setting (Master Plan 1966, Preamble)

5.1.1 2500th Buddha Jayanti

As I described in chapter two, the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations was a historical landmark for the development of international Buddhism at Bodh Gaya. With the support of the newly appointed Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC),[133] the Mahabodhi Society of India, and the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations Committee headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India, numerous commemorative activities and functions were held throughout the country. In preparation for the nationwide event, a number of physical changes to Bodh Gaya's urban landscape were also initiated during this time. One of the immediate concerns presented at the first BTMC governing body meeting held in 1952 was the "ugly hutments" that were situated in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex (Ahir 1994; Pryor 2005). On the south end of the temple, near the Lotus water tank, scheduled caste groups had allegedly used this space as a public sanatorium for their morning ablutions. When these activities came to the attention of the first Superintendent, Anagarika Munindra, he requested the state government to relocate the small *tola* of thatched mud huts that were negatively effacing the sacrality of the monument. With the support of the Bihar government, in 1954 and 1955 the homes of the scheduled castes were demolished and the village was relocated further west of the Mahabodhi Temple in a government built settlement known as the 'Harijan Colony' or 'Resettlement

[133] The state elected "Buddhist" members of the first Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee included: Devapriya Valisinha, General Secretary of the Mahabodhi Society of India, Bhikkhu Jinaratanata of Assam, Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, and Dr. Arabinda Barua. Anagarika Munindra was appointed the First Superintendent.

Colony' today.'[134] This was the earliest relocation of local residents in living memory, but certainly not the last.

As part of the larger beautification agenda in preparation for the Buddha Jayanti, many of the neglected Buddhist monuments and shrines throughout the country also received significant attention. For many of these Buddhist sites, this was the first time a coordinated national development scheme was in place to improve regional communications, transportation and tourist facilities. Some of the prominent changes at Bodh Gaya included: road repairs linking Bodh Gaya with Gaya city and Rajgir, the establishment of a central government rest house, an archaeological museum, a state government inspection bungalow and tourist dormitory, restaurants, canteens, and gardens to beautify the landscape (Ahir 1994).[135] The Mahabodhi Temple and its precinct also received a significant face-lift including restoration carried out between 1953 and 1956, the introduction of public utility services and the construction of a circumambulating path or *parikramas path* around the temple.[136] According to Ahir (1994:137), there were also archaeological excavations at the nearby Lotus Tank, the installation of an Ashokan Pillar (that had been found at Gol Pather in Gaya) and restoration work on the old Ashokan railings.

5.1.2 Draft Master Plan of 1966

Although the Buddha Jayanti celebrations of 1956 was a significant turning point in the rehabilitation of Bodh Gaya's landscape to promote international pilgrimage and tourism, from the early sixties onwards, urban planning and development discourse revolved around the exigency of a comprehensive master plan. The first *Draft Master Plan* for Bodh Gaya was formulated by the Bodh-Gaya Town Planning Authority in 1964 and formally published through the Superintendent Secretariat Press of Patna, Bihar in 1966.[137] This fifty-page comprehensive review of Bodh Gaya's town

[134] According to some residents of Bodh Gaya there were other scheduled caste dwellings that were shifted from the Kalachakra Maidan further west to Miya Bigha or Siddhartha Nagar Village.

[135] The Archaeological Museum was established by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1956 to provide "better security and preservation of priceless antiquities found during excavation in the Mahabodhi Temple." The greatest attraction is the 'stone railing pillars' that had once surrounded the Bodhi tree. These are sandstone and granite pillars that were constructed during the Sunga period (2nd and 1st Century BCE) and Gupta period (4th and 5th Century ADE). Other prominent antiquities include removable stones and bronze sculptures from the Pala period (8th and 12th Century ADE).

[136] According to the 1966 Draft Master Plan, piped water supply came to Bodh Gaya at overall expenditure of 315,000 Rp. under the 'Rural Water-Supply and Sanitation Programme' that was provided by the Government of India on the occasion of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti . Two 15'/12' tube-wells, each with a tested yield of 30,000 gallons per hour, were sunk at the edge of the Niranjana River in Bodh Gaya and Tikhabigha *tolas*. The present sewage system was also provided on this occasion.

[137] According to S.K. Sinha (2006), a senior Town Planner from the Bihar Urban Development Department and member of

infrastructure involved a 15 person project team with both central and provincial state support by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Chief Minister of Bihar, K.B. Sahay; Minister of L.S.G. (town planning) S.N. Sinha and Patna Division Commissioner, H.N. Thakur.

The *Draft Master Plan* outlines a phased development program at Bodh Gaya that would extend over 17 years (1964-1981) with a proposed budget of 17,000,000 Rp for implementation within the suggested time frame.[138] Within the 2,800 acre landscape proposed under the Bodh Gaya Master Plan scheme, the majority of the land is conserved for agricultural uses in order to sustain its rural economy. However, there are also 1,200 acres of the total land earmarked for specific development initiatives with 580 acres proposed for specific government land acquisition.[139] In terms of executing the Draft Master Plan, the 'Town Planning Authority' (TPA) was entrusted with the task in conjunction with the 'Notified Area Committee' (NAC) that includes members of the Local Self-Government Department and Housing Department. The aim of the TPA, according to the document, is to "control and foster town development in accordance with the Master Plan, through the application of the Bihar Restriction of Uses of Land Act and the Bihar Town Planning and Improvement Trust Act" (Draft Master Plan (DMP) 1966: 49).

As a reflection of the changing social demographic I discussed in the previous chapter, the calculations of the Master Plan (drawing on the 1961 Census figures) suggest a relatively slow rate of urbanization that includes a present population of 6,300 residents in Bodh Gaya: 72% from Scheduled and Backward Castes; 12% institutional and 8% Muslims and 8% Higher Castes. The general pattern of urbanization at Bodh Gaya has been largely confined to a rectangular area, one and three-quarters of a mile long and half a mile across in which eighty percent of the population resides in residual land of 219 acres (see Map below).[140]

INTACH (Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Hertiage), the groundwork for the Draft Master Plan for Bodh Gaya was first formulated in conjunction with the Buddha Jayanti by the State Urban Development Department in 1956. As a member of the project team, they initially prepared a document that involved two major authorities: 1) Gaya Improvement Trust, and 2) Planning Authority. Initially the Master Plan involved two separate documents, one for Gaya City and the other for Bodh Gaya. It was not until the sixties than an 'Improvement Trust' was set up and the two plans merged together under the 'Gaya Regional Development Authority' as part of the Bihar Regional Development Authority Act.

[138] The revenue source for the Master Plan was linked to the National Five-Year Plans (third to sixth). It also notes that other annual contributions are to be negotiated with the Government of India and foreign governments who wish to invest in the site.

[139] According to the Draft Master plan, since land acquisition costs will continue to rise and the land itself may become "undesirably developed" 380 acres of land, excluding built-up areas should be immediately acquired at an estimated cost of 7,600,000 Rp. (Draft Master Plan 1966: 49)

[140] It is also noted in the Master Plan that almost the entire bulk of these residual housing belongs to the *kutcha* (thatched and mud walls) category and lacks such basic amenities as piped water and sanitary facilities inside the dwellings.



Figure 5.1 1966 Draft Master Plan - Existing Land Use. Source: Town Planning Authority

Given the relatively slow rate of urbanization, according to the town planners, this provides an important sociological asset and, "further, gives the authorities a breathing time for action" (DMP 11). As I described in chapter three, Bodh Gaya is also geographically situated at the edge of a transit-region where the uplands of the Chota Nagpur plateau merges with the alluvial southern Gangetic plains. As a result of the physical geography, the overall slope of the land supports two large channels of flood water catchments that principally drain off along a channel running south to north, skirting around the artificial temple mound to the west.[141]

As part of the document's preamble, the two main "imperatives" which govern the planning of Bodh Gaya are: *a) Preservation of its supremely important historical, cultural and archaeological background. b) The necessity of channellising* [sic] *physical and economic development in a manner that highlights the dominance of nature and spirit and does not either compromise or obscure the basic character of the town.* Drawing on a wide range of "authoritative" narratives and descriptions of the

[141] This artificial mound sits has an elevation of 415 ± 5' above mean sea level, approximating that of the ridge-land in the vicinity. The surrounding agricultural and residual land has an elevation of only 397 ± 2' (Draft Master Plan 1966: 18-19).

site such as the Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang, along with archaeological reports from Alexander Cunningham, the main thrust of the master plan is to redesign Bodh Gaya's spatial environment in a way that reflects the virtues of the past and meets the requirements of the present and future. For this purpose a series of objectives are also outlined:

> a) The preservation of the Maha Bodhi Temple Vista from the approach road.
> b) The enhancement of serenity and aesthetic beauty within the Temple sector and generally within the whole town.
> c) Convenience of access to sites hallowed by the Lord during his meditations in Uru Vilva Vana (an enchanting forest land then covering the present town and environs).
> d) Needs of tourist homes, camping grounds, monasteries and rest-houses, meditation, recreational and symbolic parks, etc.
> e) Preservation of archaeological areas for excavation.
> f) Needs of the resident local populations.
> g) Local-regional needs due to the town's function as a service-centre and the seat of rural (block) administration.
> h) The needs of the Magadh University and its co-relation with other requirements.
> i) The crucial importance of maintaining a rural economic base and, therefore, of conservation of land, intensive cultivation and rural industrialisation.
> j) The crucial importance of its retention as a small town, for, as Sir Patrick Abercombie – a noted town planner – puts it, "then its amenities and attributes are more readily grasped and assimilated."
> k) Assimilation of the overall town development of the Gaya-Manpur-Bodh Gaya complex.

In order to meet the governing imperatives and central objectives outlined above, the Draft Master Plan is structured around a set of seven major topographical sectors (eight including Bakraur). The main focus of the Master Plan is the rehabilitation of the prominent *Temple Sector* which includes a total non-institutional population of 1,791 people mainly in the "revenue" villages of Taradih and Mastipur adjacent to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex.[142] One of the guiding concerns for the *Temple Sector* was the desperate need to safeguard the archaeological mound which had now become overrun by "unrealistic exploitation" both by the public and private agencies that were "adversely affecting. . . the serenity and aesthetic beauty of the sector" (DMP 46). The last prominent excavation of the *Temple Sector* goes back to 1884 under the colonial authority of Alexander Cunningham and Rajendralala Mitra, but now the "existing land use map highlights an almost tragic exploitation of the archaeological area for far less significant uses, and the consequent confusion of multifarious land uses in the Temple sector. Even unrelated pedestrian and vehicular traffic concentrates, as a result, within it

[142] As I examined in chapter three, both Taradih and Mastipur were defined as "revenue villages" for the Bodh Gaya Math that had been gifted to him by the Mughal rulers. See the *Brief History of the Bodh Gaya Math* that was compiled by Rai Ram Anugrah Narayan Singh Bahadur under the orders of G.A. Grierson in 1892.

and the position is further aggravated by the acute paucity of roads within the town" (DMP 14). Some of this "confusion" and institutional layering is equated with the establishment of the Mahabodhi Society Rest House, a Muslim Graveyard, the ruins of Jagannath Temple, the BTMC building, the Samanvay Ashram, a police station, hospital buildings and the expanding population of shopkeepers in the bazaar that runs between the Bodh Gaya Math and the main temple precinct in a "grossly insufficient ribbon of roadside land" (DMP 8).



Figure 5.2 1966 Draft Master Plan – Proposed Land Use. Source: Town Planning Authority

From this early point in the formulation of a Draft Master Plan for Bodh Gaya, one can observe the spatial tensions and overlapping interests between diverse religious, local and public institutional interests. According to the town planning authority, priority should be given to the archaeological sensitivity of the site and to ensure that all institutional development around the temple sector be removed, including resident dwellings. "Ideally no structures apart from the Maha Bodhi Temple and quadrangle, should exist within this area but, in practical terms, we envisage that, while residential, business and commercial uses could be expeditiously removed, the hard core formed by the shrines, monasteries, museum, central government rest-house and the water tower would remain within it for

long" (DMP 20) However, the town planning authorities also note that "the relocation of even these recent accretions is envisaged" at a later stage (DMP 46).

Thus, in juxtaposition to the existing "unrealistic exploitation" that presently occupies the Temple Sector, the town planning authorities envision the removal of these "multifarious structures" and describe an idyllic space where the enhancement of serenity and beauty builds upon the natural providence of its ancient character as the site of Buddha's enlightenment.

> To our concept, the treatment should reflect an honest and sensible utilisation primarily of the gifts of nature rather than the ostentations of man, and a simplicity and harmony of functions rather than an induction of new confusions to supplant the discarded old ones. Thus while velvety lawns and flower-beds fringed with shrubs; fountains, pools and rockery garden; pathways and avenues lined with coniferous and low-flowering trees-as also subtly placed clumps of shady trees, lighting and park-furniture have their natural place in it, care has to be taken to avoid a multiplicity of ostentatious and pseudo-artistic structures or sculptures and functions (Draft Master Plan 1966: 20)

The irony in this statement is that it is only through the "ostentations of man" that the gifts of nature can be realized, and this ultimately requires the displacement of a large number of residential dwellings in order to bring about the "simplicity and harmony" of functions within the Temple sector. For this purpose, the town planning authorities suggest that the acquisition of two villages be assigned within the Fifth Five-Year Plan in order to provide appropriate compensation to the displaced residents.

Although the Temple Sector is certainly the main focus of the Draft Master Plan, there are also other key sectors that require further analysis due to their spatial implications. One of these is the *Southern sector* which is located directly south of the Mahabodhi Temple and has a total population of 462 people in the hamlets of Tikabigha and Urel 'tola' (regarded as the original location of the ancient Uru Vilva Vana). Similar to the nostalgic underpinnings of the previous sector, in the efforts to revive the ancient memories of Bodh Gaya as a place of "mental concentration" the town planners emphasize the vital importance of establishing a 90 acre park in this Southern Sector in order to provide an "ideal environment for sheltered and secluded meditation" (DMP 25). This proposal involves a "fringe of tall and spreading trees all round, about 3-4 rows deep, sheltering a number of small meditational groves ('Kunj') informally distributed around pools and approached by winding tracks" (DMP 26). Once again, similar to the challenges encountered in the Temple sector, the desire for a space conducive to mental concentration also requires the acquisition of residential land from the two villages. According to the town planners, in order to convert this space into an environment that will "elevate the mind to a higher plane and prepare it for meditation" this requires the "dislodging" of Tikabigha village to create green

spaces that could be linked with the existing mango grove and vacant land that lies at the bend of the water channel (DMP 25-26). Otherwise, "neither the sight of a herd of deer, nor that of a newly planted mango grove, would restore the mental concentration of a person (in this modern age) frequently disturbed by whiffs of spicy smell and sound of traffic" (DMP 24).

Although the Temple Sector and Southern Sector are depicted as idyllic spaces where the ecology of the "natural" environment can help to elevate the mind, there are other sectors earmarked for residential and commercial growth. For this purpose, the town planners identify the *Northern sector* as a major residential hub and significant "point of contact" between tourist and local people where many of the "infringing" villages and commercial facilities can be resettled. In the Northern Sector there is an existing resident population of 1,971 that contains a number of prominent village hamlets such as Dehariabigha, Upadhyaybigha, Rajapur, Sonubigha and Pacchati. Although it is not entirely clear how and when this resettlement will take place, the town planning authorities certainly stress the need to implement these changes in the near future to avoid unnecessary complications.

> The present ribbon of shopping area, at the edge of the mound and to the east, (viz., the riverside) of the Maha Bodhi, is cramped for space and has already begun to objectionably creep up to the sacred precincts. Since the longer it occupies its present site, the greater would be the difficulties encountered in its relocation, an overall urgency attaches to the construction of a new shopping centre to accommodate the present as well as future needs of expansion (Draft Master Plan 1966: 33).

It should also be noted, that as part of the "diagnostic survey" of the Draft Master Plan, the data revealed an "abnormally low female literacy rate of only 8%" and inadequate education facilities throughout all of Bodh Gaya (DMP 10). Consequently, as part of the planned development for the Northern Sector, substantial funding should be directed towards educational, cultural and recreational facilities for local inhabitants, including proposals for higher category schools, an open air theater, a new shopping-cum-business precinct (modeled after the aesthetic and hygienic conditions of Chandigarh), a transport terminal, a rural industrial estate, a camping ground and cheap tourist homes.

With the residential and commercial area assigned to the Northern sector, there are also significant changes proposed for the rehabilitation of the *North-western* and *South-western sector*. Comprised largely of agricultural land, the *North-western* sector has a total population of 775 residents and includes the hamlets of Miabigha, a government high school, a state seed multiplication farm and other remote villages such as Janpur, Bhagwanpur, Baijubigha and Bhum toli. As part of the long term strategy proposed for this topographical sector is the importance of maintaining the large agricultural

base that sustains the existing population at Bodh Gaya. It is also envisioned that a new approach road to Bodh Gaya will cut through this sector linking the old riverside road with the Gaya-Dhobi Road just beyond the Royal Thai Monastery and tourist dormitory. The construction of this entry point and a new "rational road grid" for the town will help to ensure that the bulk of the traffic remains on the perimeter so that Bodh Gaya town will retain a "pedestrian character" where the major share of vehicular traffic would be taken by cycles, rickshaws, and carts carrying farm-produce (DMP 38). Lastly, it is also envisioned that a "symbolic deer park" may be erected in this sector to complement the Buddha's ancient links with the deer at Isipitana (Sarnath).

If the *North-Western sector* is characterized by agricultural green space and new rational road grids, in the *South-Western sector* the town planning authorities envision a space for future institutional development of Buddhist monasteries and government buildings as part of the 'Notified Area.' At the time the Draft Master Plan was completed in 1966, there was a total population of 514 people living in this sector which included the small hamlets of Pipalpati and Mastipur, along with the recently constructed Thai Monastery, tourist dormitory, block development office and staff quarters, the resettlement 'Harijan' colony, a small library and youth hostel. As I described in chapter two, almost all of the foreign Buddhist monasteries, temples and guest houses acquired government land in this sector as part of the 'Notified Area' up until the late eighties. Although the Draft Master Plan outlines the importance of monastic growth at Bodh Gaya it also suggests that the Buddhist countries be "limited to twelve" and strict architectural regulations be placed upon them. For example, the existing Burmese monastery in the Northern Sector is described as an "architecturally uninteresting" building and does not conform to the idealized topographical land grid. Therefore, "it must also be stressed that, through an enforcement of architectural and planning control future monasteries would have to express their national personalities in an ensemble as pleasing, if not more, as the recently built Thai monastery" (DMP 24). In addition to these state imposed regulations on Buddhist architecture at Bodh Gaya, in this sector, the town planning authorities also earmark space for a new Inspection bungalow, hospital and other public institutions such as an International Research Centre, Language Institute and Buddhist Art Gallery.[143]

In describing some of the prominent features and topographical sectors of the 1966 Draft

[143] According to the town planners, the Research Institute should have an excellent library "containing books, periodicals, published and unpublished researches on ancient history and culture, metaphysics and religion, anthropology and archaeology, etc. - and be located, due to the necessity of cross-references, close to the recently built museum. The International Languages Institute (to be run economically through the voluntary employment of learned resident monk-teachers) and the International Buddhist Art Gallery should be similarly located and, from all considerations, a site behind the Thai monastery may be considered appropriate" (DMP 23).

Master Plan it is important to highlight the ways in which the state government and town planners envisioned Bodh Gaya as a immanently Buddhist site where the virtues of its ancient past could be revitalized within a modern urban development framework.[144] From the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations through to the Draft Master Plan of 1966, Bodh Gaya and Buddhism received a significant amount of national and state emulation. Central to the long term vision of these authorities was that Bodh Gaya could serve as a model heritage city and an emblem of development that could unite local needs with international pilgrimage. With an introduction by Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, it is clear that the Draft Master Plan for Bodh Gaya, like other city master plans during this time, brought invocations of national heritage in alignment with the dominant development ideology of the post-colonial era. According to Indira Gandhi,

> Bodh Gaya has special historical significance for us and for Buddhists the world over for whom it is a place of pilgrimage. It is, therefore, important to see that this city does not develop haphazardly but according to a well thought out plan with consideration to the needs and conveniences of the local population as well as of tourists and pilgrims. I hope, the Master Plan for the development of Bodh Gaya will blend reverence with beauty and will indicate how greatly India values this ancient site of Buddha's enlightenment (Draft Master Plan 1966).

In the rational documentation of the social and natural environment it is also important to highlight that there is almost a complete erasure of both the Muslim and Hindu ritual component of the spatial environment. Bodh Gaya, as I have mentioned, has long been an important place of worship for local Hindu residents and also serves as an important satellite site for the larger network of *Gaya-sraddha*. Although the Master Plan does recognize local needs, especially in terms of educational facilities and the importance of improving business and commercial facilities in the Northern Sector, in many ways, the residents of Bodh Gaya are also seen as a potential form of contamination and interference with the natural virtues of the Buddhist landscape. A concern, which I will demonstrate, became much more pronounced in the following decades.[145]

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[144] Additional topographical sectors include: the *Western sector* as the future location of Magadh University. The *River-front sector*, where the development emphasis is on reclamation and landscaping, including embankment and flood protection measures. There is also a *Bakraur sector* that links Bodh Gaya with the sacred sites and legends of this village that "still retains some of its ancient attributes of a sylvan retreat" (DMP 3). In addition to a Bakraur link-road and bridge as an extension of the Temple bypass, provisions are laid out for future landscaping of Dharmaranya and other prominent sites including the Ajyapa tree, Sujata's hut, Matanga-Vapi temple and water tank. In Bakraur there is also the buried remains of a large stupa ascribed to Emperor Ashoka and other smaller mounds that are earmarked for future archaeological excavation under the plan. Lastly, the Town Planners also suggest that there should be future communication links between Bakraur and Prag-Bodhi Hill (now known as Dhongra Hill) on the other side of the Mohane River which is regarded as a significant site of the Buddha's austerities prior to his enlightenment.

[145] According to various local interlocutors, the state government has undertaken a number of small relocation drives starting in the late sixties, especially among those dwellings and shops located in the Temple Sector. Most of these

5.1.3 The Revised Master Plan and Relocation of Taradih Village

In chapter four, I examined the dismantling of the Bodh Gaya Mahant in the wake of student demonstrations and the mobilization of landless laborers by the *Chatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini.* During this tumultuous period of political unrest in the state of Bihar, and India more generally, Bodh Gaya's spatial environment also came to reflect the competing interests of various groups and agencies over the sacred site. Although the idyllic master plan of 1966 remained in draft format there were a number of strategies deployed by the state government and regional authorities to implement various components and ensure the beautification of the town for tourism development.[146] One of the first strategies was to revise the Draft Master Plan of 1966 to accommodate the changing needs of the site, such as the dramatic increase in land requests by foreign Buddhist groups. For this purpose, the *Revised Master Plan* (RMP) was completed in April 1973 by the Town Planning Organization, Local Self Government Department, and Government of Bihar for the Bodh Gaya Town Planning Authority.[147] Although the main goals and objectives were lifted directly from the earlier Draft Plan there are some important changes that foreshadow future discord and controversy over the spatial environment.

The Revised Master Plan has a projected time frame of thirteen years (1973 to 1986) to implement the proposed changes to over 1300 acres of land (total of 2714 acres) that is encompassed within the Bodh Gaya township, including the recently established Magadh University. With an expected population of 16,000 by 1986 (including 2000 as part of Magadh University complex), the revised master plan highlights the proposed distribution of land-uses into six main areas that overlap with the earlier topographical sectors. These include: *a) Residential; b) Commercial; c) Public-semi*

dwellings were likely relocated north to Pacchati village in accord with the Draft Master Plan.

[146] It is important to highlight that in terms of implementation of the 1966 Draft Master Plan it indicates that a Notified Committee Area and Town Planning Authority would administer the development programmes at an annual recurring establishment cost of 10,000 Rp. Although the Gaya Improvement Trust had been entrusted with the work of the Town Planning Authority, by the 1973 Revisions to the Master Plan, the Notified Area Committee had not been formed (Revised Master Plan 1973: 35).

[147] The only copy of the 1973 Revised Master Plan that I could find was located in the Archaeological Survey of India office library in Patna.

public; d) Industrial; e) Religious and Institutional[148] and *f) Open spaces*.[149] In terms of the *residential* component, the proposal describes 350 acres that are to be used for the "suitable creation of residential neighborhoods" that reflect the context of Bodh Gaya's rural background and maintains a small desirable population size (Revised Master Plan 1973: 24). Linked to this proposal is a concern that the existing villages are "far below the mark" and "compaction would have to be brought about through a judicious resettlement of displaced tolas and guidance of future housing" (RMP 25). Although the text does not clearly indicate which villages will be removed for this purpose, the accompanying map earmarks a 19 acre alternative site "to be acquired by the government for the rehabilitation of Taradih village." As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Taradih had been one of the main "revenue villages" for the Bodh Gaya Mahant that spreads around the Lotus tank to the east, south and west of the Mahabodhi Temple. With international Buddhist groups arriving in greater numbers each year and the lack of a secure boundary wall surrounding the Mahabodhi Temple, the removal of this village and the acquisition of a 1km buffer zone had now become a priority for the state government and regional authorities.

As part of the governmental rehabilitation plan, on July 7th 1977 a meeting was held to consider the question of "rehabilitation of persons likely to be displaced on account of acquisition of land at Taradih and Mastipur for development of Bodh Gaya."[150] The meeting brought together the District Magistrate of Gaya, P.P. Sharma, state regional and local authorities, and over 200 future "awardees" connected with the rehabilitation program. The Collector of Gaya, R.J. Sinha detailed the benefits and provisions such as road, water, light, park, school and market schemes that would accompany the relocation to village Bhagwanpur (literal trans. *to be removed*). The Collector also noted that the demarcation of plots and provisions for tap water and electricity will also be made available prior to the displacement of Taradih residents. One of the chief concerns raised by local *awardees* was that the

[148] Similar to the Draft Master Plan, the Thai monastery is regarded as the exemplary model of Buddhist architecture and aesthetic poise while other buildings, mainly those "constructed by the Central and State Govt. lack architectural merit which this Buddhist Centre demands" (Revised Master Plan 1973: 17). The Revised plan indicates 18 plots of about 2.5 acres to 3 acres each for the allotment of land to foreign Buddhist countries. Each plot of land is situated in clearly designated blocks to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple at the edge of the artificial mound. On the map it also shows additional space for the future site of the Temple Management Committee, an International Meditation Centre, Laos and Sikkim monasteries, and a large artificial pond to the south of the Japanese Hostel and Temple. Overall, about 117.50 acres of land has been proposed for the religious and institutional use, yet there is no mention of the fate of the existing tolas 'Mastipur' 'Pipattali' and 'Miya Bigha' that are to be replaced by these Buddhist institutions.

[149] Although the Revised Master Plan draws upon the earlier division of topographical sectors indicated in the 1966 Draft Master Plan, the emphasis is now based upon four broad sectors that include: northern, temple, north western and south western. Furthermore, the emphasis in terms of allocation of funds and proposed land-uses is organized around the six distribution points mentioned above.

[150] This information was taken from a copy of the proceedings held during the meeting on 7-7-77. The information was provided by a Taradih resident.

government should share some of the responsibility in constructing the houses and that expenditure made on this account be adjusted against the compensation money. It was decided that the Housing Board under executive engineer L.N. Ojha would be assigned the task of constructing the houses under three phases covering a total of seven months. Lastly, the proceedings also note that many house owners were concerned with the devaluation of their land and that the Taradih residents should receive compensation and employment incentives for family members as a result of the displacement.

In the months following this initial public meeting, village leaders and residents began to criticize the state rehabilitation project to Bhagwanpur fearing inadequate compensation and the lack of initiative to rebuild the houses by the government itself. These concerns culminated in a series of protests by many Taradih residents who now refused to be displaced by the government for the purpose of beautification and conservation as outlined by the Revised Master Plan.[151] According to Deepak, a Taradih native, these protests reached a new level of intensity during a large procession to the Inspection Bungalow where the District Magistrate P.P. Sharma was located during one of his visits. Outside the government building the group protested vigorously and blocked the vehicle of the District Magistrate shouting "you can kill us but we will fight." In light of the protest, according to Deepak, 26 residents from Taradih village were arrested and thrown in jail for a short duration of time. Over the next few years, these concerns over rehabilitation had been temporarily diffused, especially with the District Magistrate P.P. Sharma, transferred to another regional district.

In 1980 the Master Plan was once again reactivated under the new District Magistrate G.S. Khan, now with significant pressure from both the state and central government. Determined to reclaim the space around the Mahabodhi Temple, in April 1980 the District Magistrate arrived in Bodh Gaya with an armed police force and began to tear down upwards of 380 village homes in Taradih with two bulldozers. According to one Taradih resident, the state authorities first began by dismantling the house of a prominent leader and worker of the Bodh Gaya Mahant, Guir Shankar Prasad Singh.

> And once the villagers saw his home being crushed the villagers began to run. That time it was also summer. . . in April. . .it was very hot. There was no water and they just came and began to demolish houses with bulldozers. So people left. Many did not receive adequate compensation. Some are still waiting. They should not have done it like this. People were asking: "first you make buildings and settle, then distribute funds and remove us." But instead they removed us first.

[151] During interviews with Taradih residents, I often received contrasting reports regarding the protest against the Taradih relocation. Some of these residents suggested that there had been some resistance to the lack of preferential treatment in terms of caste groups and compensation. For other residents, the chief concern was the financially lucrative land and beneficial commercial arrangements that had long grown out of their close proximity to the temple and bazaar.

Thus, in the peak summer months of 1980, old Taradih village was razed to the ground and its residents were forced to relocate to Bhagwanpur or 'New Taradih' as it is often referred as today. The only structures left untouched were the remnants of a small Muslim *masjid* and the upscale Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) hotel located to the west of the main temple. When listening to the oral narratives of Taradih residents today, what they recall most vividly are the enormous challenges of trying to rebuild their homes during the summer and monsoon season without adequate roads, electricity or water supplies. Many residents suffered from heat stroke and were forced to live in tents for over three months before some basic housing structure could be erected. There were also many elders and children who became sick from the heat stroke and lack of public amenities.

With the temple sector now cleared of its local inhabitants a map of the Revised Master Plan was once again updated in 1982 by the Town and Country Planning Organization and indicates the use of this vacant space as a 'Tourist Complex.'[152] Building directly on the earlier vision of the Draft Master Plan, the temple sector is now depicted as the future site of 'Gautam Van' (Buddha forest) and reflects the sylvan attributes of the ancient landscape during the time of Buddha's enlightenment, albeit, one now suitable for upscale tourism consumption. When I interviewed, A.K. Shrivastava, a Bihar State Tourism official in Patna, he noted that the Gautam Van project was designed to include a number of small tourist cottages interwoven with forest, gardens, artificial streams and ponds. Under contract with the Indian Tourism Department Corporation (ITDC) the first initiative by the planning authorities was to erect a large boundary wall around the recently vacant 17 acre plot of land to secure the space for future landscaping and beautification.

Among many of the residents I interviewed, the construction of the boundary wall was seen as another exclusionary measure that privileged elite foreign interests and neglected the use value of local residents, especially the village roads, short cuts and paths connecting to the main bazaar. In response to these concrete restrictions at the former site of Taradih village, many local residents began to protest and even demolished a section of the boundary wall in opposition to the new plan. These actions were also followed by concerns on behalf of the Bihar State Department of Archaeology who were opposed to the Gautam Van project and the construction of tourist cottages directly on top of the sensitive archaeological mound. With the land cleared of residential dwellings, they argued that priority should now be given to the archaeological needs of the site that had long been neglected. Therefore, as an

[152] This revised map can still be seen today on the trunk of a nearby *Pipala tree* located along the footpath near the front entrance of the Mahabodhi Temple.

example of the incongruence between the local demands for public space and the various agendas of state tourism and archaeological agencies, the Revised Master Plan and the Gautam Van tourist complex never came to fruition and once again became dormant until a more opportune time.[153]



Figure 5.3 The boundary wall and remnants of the archaeological site today

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In this section, I have examined the ways in which urban redevelopment schemes and tourism development projects have involved the appropriation of land and the production of space into a rationalized modern heritage city based on its idyllic attributes as an ancient Buddhist site of worship. Through an analysis of the Buddha Jayanti and the various incarnations of the master plan since 1966, I have described the ways in which the state government has deployed a number of design strategies and forms of regulation to rehabilitate the image of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment and reclaim the public space "as a symbol for those who rarely use it" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 21). Through its topographical sectors, archaeological interventions, zoning and spatial grids, it is useful to think of the master plan as a form of *spatial tactic*, whereby the use of space and the deployment of

[153] In lieu of the Archaeological demands over the site, there was a small excavation conducted in the early eighties by the Bihar State Archaeological Department. Although the Gautam Van project was never implemented, there is a corridor of enclosed green space to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple called Jayaprakash Narayan Maidan today. This parcel of forested land was likely established during this time, although not as a place of Buddhist worship and tourism development but rather a tribute to the popular political leader of Bihar.

cartography becomes a strategy and/or technique of political power and social control (Foucault 1975; Rabinow 1982, 1989; Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). Driven by state policies in Delhi and Patna, planned towns and historic preservation projects are ways in which the government seeks to utilize authoritative forms of knowledge and manipulate space in order to enhance its political legitimacy, boost economic growth, uphold certain power relations and structure the social environment to serve disciplinary ends (Winter 2008).

In examining the contested program of the master plan at Bodh Gaya, as I have shown, rarely are these tourism development plans consistent with the daily spatial experiences of urban residents and workers. The master plan serves as a hegemonic discourse that looks to the ancient past in order to legitimate a modern vision of the future. A process that ultimately seeks to displace the present values of urban life and public space among Bodh Gaya's local residents. In this context, Hirsch's (1995) definition of landscape as a socially constructed form is particularly relevant in this context. According to Hirsch (1995: 1) a landscape involves tensions between imaginative and/or idealized settings which form the "background" against which the "foreground" of everyday lives and experiences are embedded. Here at Bodh Gaya, the background potentiality of a landscape "suitable for striving" also involves the exclusion of local residents from the realization of its urban vision. Thus, in an attempt to establish and legitimate an authoritative history based on the central event of Buddhism, it also produces silences and marginalizes certain histories and memories from the landscape. However, as I have shown in the context of protests and the destruction of the boundary wall, these state imposed projects are also challenged and resisted by local people. In this specific context, one is reminded of de Certeau's (1984) analysis of the spatial practices of the weak and how subaltern groups utilize short cuts and routes to contest the spatial domination of the state.

Despite these contests and disputes over Bodh Gaya's spatial environment, tourism development from the state and central government grew substantially from the mid-eighties onwards. These changes were directly associated with the liberalization of the economy and the expanding networks of transnational capital, especially among East Asian countries like Japan, that have provided development assistance for the Buddhist sector.[154] During this time, there were also a number of major initiatives at the provincial and national level aimed at rebuilding infrastructure to meet international standards and compete in the world's fastest growing industry, tourism. In the following section, I

[154] Tourism as a national industry has its roots in the Ministry of Transport and it was not until the establishment of the *Indian Tourism Development Corporation* (ITDC) on October 1st 1966 and the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation in 1967 that it gained a degree of institutional autonomy. At the provincial level the *Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation* (BSTDC) was established in 1981.

highlight some of the prominent tourism development strategies, international collaborations and market surveys that have redefined Bihar as the spiritual gateway of Buddhism and a major tourism destination. It is in this neoliberal context that Buddhism at Bodh Gaya also took on new meanings and became a central part of the image building and branding practices associated with the cultural politics of globalization.

5.2 Branding Bihar: Tourism Development and the Buddhist Circuit

> Tourism is a service to the visitors. We have a saying, *atithi baghwan hai*. This is an old Hindi saying: we treat every visitor like God and worship them like God on the same pedestal. Tourism . . .at least in Bihar works on this motto. We did not want to make money originally from them, but the scenario has changed and tourism now seems as an important avenue to boost the economy. We are now starting to think in these terms (Ashok Kumar Singh, Bihar State Tourism Department)
>
> Bihar got some roads thanks to Buddha and Naxalites (Prahbhat K. Sandhilya, Ahmad TOI, Feb 5, 2007)

From the mid-eighties onwards, tourism has become an integral part of India's broader economic development vision and central to the image management of different state governments. A major turning point in the evolution of Indian tourism was its recognition as an industry by the National Development Council in July 1984. These changes in state economic policy are certainly noticeable in the *Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90)* which involved an allocation of over 68 crore (US$ 14,000,000) to be used for various tourist development schemes throughout the county.[155] In order to compete in the world's fastest growing industry, the central government also inspired different state governments to survey their unique regional attributes and identify historical places, cultural heritage and infrastructural needs for leisure and holiday tourism. In Bihar, the concept of “regional circuits” or “sectors” gained wide currency during this period, especially in terms of the religious and cultural geography tied to networks of pilgrimage sites like Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Nalanda. As part of these efforts to strengthen the regional circuits, a number of prominent Buddhist, Jain and Hindu sites were provided with tourist bungalows, cafeterias, restaurants and improved transportation facilities. This is certainly the case at Bodh Gaya where an entire tourist bungalow complex was built including three

[155] The Directorate General of Tourism allocated 68 Rp crores for the implementation of various tourism development schemes to be approved by the Planning Commission for the Seventh-Year Plan. Under this impetus 15 States including Bihar and 3 Union Territories declared tourism as an industry.

hotels - Siddhartha Vihar, Buddha Vihar and Sujata Vihar - along with the Siddhartha Restaurant, Bus booking counter (connecting two daily buses to Patna) and a Tourist Information Centre opposite the Railway Reservation Office and Bank of India. Among the earlier central government initiatives such as the ITDC tourist complex, this was also regionalized under the Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation (BSTDC) and was renamed the Ashok's Travelers Lodge during this time.[156]

In conjunction with the growth of tourist facilities at Bodh Gaya was the prospect of financial assistance and technical support offered by Buddhist countries and international groups to develop the Buddhist sector in India. In this context, Buddhist heritage was targeted as a potential growth area and the new Indian Tourism Industry set out to provide a detailed report on the development of tourist locations associated with the life of Lord Buddha and bring them up to international standards. To accomplish this goal a Task Force by the Ministry of Tourism was formulated in 1986 with four main objectives that were part of an "effort to systematically exploit the tourism potential of the Buddhist circuit" (Report on Area Development 1988: 27):

1) identify exact locations at which accommodation and mid-way facilities are required to be put up with Central assistance;
2) identify sites at which stupas would be constructed at Piparhawa (UP), Vaishali (Bihar) and Amravati (Andhra Pradesh) which will contain the relics of the Buddha;
3) identify segments of national highways/State highways which need improvement/repairs to make them adequate for use by foreign and national tourist coaches/private cars, and
4) to suggest a phasing of activities so that viable sectors can be commissioned without delay.

Linked to these main objectives were a number of plans, reports, surveys and assessments that had important repercussions for the development of tourism at Bodh Gaya and India's Buddhist geography over the next two decades.

One of these reports is the *Action Plan for the Development of Buddhist Sector* (1986) that brought together a committee of high ranking archaeologists, engineers and tourism officials and offered recommendations for an integrated plan of the Buddhist sector to be ready by October 1988 and implemented during the Seventh Five-Year Plan.[157] In this comprehensive action plan, the committee suggests a series of phased developments and infrastructural changes that will improve connections at all the major Buddhist sites including Patna-Nalanda-Rajgir-Bodh Gaya-Sarnath-Kushinagar. One of

[156] Prior to the construction of this Tourist Bungalow Complex, the main state tourism office in Bodh Gaya had been run out of the Mahabodhi Society Guest House.

[157] This was also followed by a second task force in 1988 which I also draw upon here and is entitled *Report on Area Development of the Buddhist Centres in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar* (RAD) by the Department of Tourism, Government of India in April, 1988 and Published by A.F. Ferguson & Co. New Delhi.

the main concerns highlighted in the report is the dilapidated condition of the connectivity roads which straddle the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, along with the need for “star category accommodations” that will cater to international circles. “Although the scenery along the roads is indeed very pleasant, in as much as there are wide and green fields on both sides of the roads interspersed with colourful, rich and varied pageants of rural life” in terms of convenience, there is also “thick population on both sides of the road and not a single place which offers anything like a toilet or a cup of tea” (Action Plan 1986: 4; 18). To improve connectivity and meet international standards, the action plan offers a number of recommendations for improved road and air links, star accommodations, qualified tourist guides, wayside amenities, road transport and telecommunication along with greater involvement by the Archaeological Survey of India for trenching archaeological remains, beautification and other landscaping needs. It is also worth highlighting that in conjunction with the following recommendations emphasis is also placed on developing a marketing and multi-lingual publicity program used for attracting tourists abroad to the Buddhist sector. A strategy that gained considerable visibility under the Incredible !ndia campaign that I discuss at the end of this section.

5.2.1 National Park Services and the SPA Tourism Development Plan

In the efforts to rebuild the Buddhist sector of India, the Ministry of Tourism also established new financial partnerships and technical collaborations between foreign governments such as the United States and Japan. One organization that had shown interest in jointly undertaking the task of uplifting the Buddhist sector was the National Park Services (NPS) from the United States. The NPS was created in 1916 and is a U.S. federal agency that manages all national parks along with many national monuments and other conservation and historical properties throughout the United States. In June 1987, the NPS formed a committee to undertake a survey of the prominent sites associated with the Buddha's biography and to determine which locations should be adopted for further site-specific conceptual master plans. As part of this preliminary survey, the NPS group visited nine sites in the state of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These include: Sankasya, Shravasti, Piprahwa, Kushinagar, Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda and Vaishali.

Evaluated on a priority basis, both Bodh Gaya and Sarnath were rated most highly under their specific evaluation criteria that was measured on the basis of their “attractiveness to the following types of visitors”: 1) *Religious pilgrims*, who consider most important those places representing the eight

major events of the Buddha's life. 2) *Scholars and students*, who value the complexity of excavated ruins as well as the presence of museums and artifacts. 3) *General tourists*, for whom the most important factors are convenient access to the sites, their visual quality and the fascination of their story. Through their consultation with a range of stakeholders at Sarnath, the design team also discovered the existence of a fourth major visitor group that had not been initially represented. These were *local users* who merited consideration both as local-visitor groups comprised of "recreation-seekers from Varanasi" and the "local villagers who produce and sell souvenirs to the tourists." At the same time, according to the design team, "it grew apparent that recreational activities were a serious source of distraction and conflict for the other visitor groups" (NPS 1988: 4).[158]

When the survey was completed, Sarnath was selected on a priority basis for a site-specific conceptual master plan for tourism development, with a later study proposed for Bodh Gaya. The design team consisted of faculty and students from the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Illinois, together with landscape architects from Japan and interpretive architect consultants from the United States NPS. According to S.K. Sinha, a town planner and member of the INTACH Patna chapter, part of the "unwritten agreement" with the National Park Services at that time, was that the Government of India and the Bihar State should provide a study report involving a "technical consultant that would be selected to cooperate with the National Park Services."[159] For these reasons, the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) in New Delhi was selected by the Government of Bihar to provide a preliminary draft of a '*Tourism Development Plan for Bodh Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir*' that could be used for future collaboration with the NPS. The SPA Development Plan was completed in April 1991 with the goal of surveying the potential of tourism in Bihar and to highlight the "problems and prospects of growth. . . in the "Buddhist circuit" region" (SPA 1991: 1). Although similar in many ways to the early draft plans and reports I have already discussed, there are some important observations that are relevant to Bodh Gaya at this specific historical juncture.

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[158] *Sarnath: A Master Plan for Tourism Development* (1988) was designed by the Department of Landscape Architecture/ University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign and is a cooperative project involving the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of India; National Park Services, United States Department of the Interior. The master plan for Sarnath outlines a number of goals that were presented to the local officials in Varanasi and Government officials in Delhi that include: to tell the story of the Buddha's life and the significance of Sarnath; to preserve and enhance existing site resources; to accommodate and respond with sensitivity to increased visitor use; to resolve site use conflicts; to provide opportunities for the thoughtful growth of supporting facilities; to make development compatible with existing village life. Lastly, the design team also acknowledges important trends in visitor involvement with the site. In terms of Sarnath's rich religious heritage much of the tourism is "rooted in pilgrimage." Although British nationals used to comprise the largest group of foreigners to Sarnath since 1970 this has steadily been overtaken by other Europeans and North Americans. Japanese also make up an increasing number but according to some studies the domestic tourists outnumber the foreign 6 to 1.

[159] Interview with S.K Sinha in Patna, April 12 2006,

One of the major growth trends acknowledged by the technical consultants is the general saturation of tourist arrival from Europe throughout the eighties but the potential positive affects on the Indian market by catering to South East Asians, which to this point had not shown any significant growth. In recent years, and in line with previous chapters, Japan had also emerged as a major contributor to the world tourism market, with India serving as one of the "biggest earners" from the Japanese flows, especially with their preference for 4 or 5 star hotels (SPA 3).[160] However, one of the major setbacks in terms of catering to Southeast Asian and Japanese markets is that the socio-economic and physical development of the Bihar region has "not kept pace with the rate of development in the rest of the world or even in the rest of the country for that matter" (SPA 6).[161]

> Buildings, monuments, areas of religious and historic importance remain neglected – fighting for their own survival with onwards marching unplanned growth. As a result the impression created on the tourist who comes here seeking solace is quite opposite. . . Consequently, the pilgrimage to the land of the Buddha, in most cases turns out to be a journey into tedium (SPA 1991: 6-7).

Unlike the earlier draft master plan, the SPA document is also much more critical about the lack of governance at these prominent tourist nodes within the Buddhist circuit. From the viewpoint of the technical consultants, due to the sheer neglect, incompetent resources and lack of existing controlling authorities to manage these tourist sites, the Buddhist sector is unable to compete with other world-class destinations. At prominent international centres like Bodh Gaya, the development of the site is characterized by the "inadequate provisions of services and facilities" under the 'Notified Area Committee' who continue to be dependent on State level grants in order to maintain their day to day affairs (SPA 13). Not only is their inadequate financial support for the Notified Area Committee but these prominent heritage spaces are located in "backward areas" with the majority of people belonging to low and economically weaker sections of the communities "where the investment in the local level facilities are negligible" (SPA 15). However, on a positive note, this neglect may also serve as a virtue in terms of conservation management.

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[160] As part of a survey under the SPA plan the findings indicate that Rajgir and Nalanda are predominately visited by domestic Indians and constitute 88% of the total tourist inflow. Bodh Gaya on the other hand shows a higher inflow of foreign tourists, about 44% of the actual tourist inflow. At Bodh Gaya the main visitor group are tourists on pilgrimage – which constitutes 40% followed by 37% pleasure, 12% education and 10% as a place of retreat (SPA 1991: 23).

[161] According to the SPA proposal, the poor growth in tourism development at Bihar are attributed to poor publicity, the lack of law and order, indefinite 'season' and climatic effects, and most importantly the non provision of basic tourist infrastructure. With the exception of the Buddhist foreign tourists, "Bihar may not attract others and in order to keep and increase the tourist flow from the far east some basic efforts will have to be made" (SPA 1991: 10).

> It may be noticed that the natural trend of growth as displayed by all these three towns [Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda] has been rather sluggish and this could be a blessing in disguise since it is a well known fact that archaeological remains and places of historic importance stand no chances of survival in the race for active growth and development of habitable areas. Particularly in India these areas are neglected and sometimes overlooked by development agencies (SPA 1991: 14).

In order to ensure that there is no more "uncontrolled growth" and "piecemeal development" the planners emphasize that an immediate conservation based approach is essential and required at this juncture. According to the SPA proposal while "city growth is inevitable" this should not come at the cost of the "structures of national and international importance" (SPA 42). Furthermore, in "all the towns of the Buddhist circuit a very strict building and developmental control will have to be introduced. . . If this warning is ignored then we may well be prepared to write off the historical and cultural monuments in favour of the haphazard and unplanned physical development that is fast taking place" (SPA 42). While it is acknowledged that with Rajgir there is still some hope, "the cities of Bodh Gaya and Nalanda require immediate action" and in this respect, the technical consultants propose that all building activities in an area of 4km radius of the major monuments be totally frozen until an acceptable zonal development plan is prepared (SPA 42). In addition to the construction freeze, all buildings within close proximity to the temple need to be "controlled" – both in form and color, so that the "proposed buildings [do] not to come in direct visual conflict with the Mahabodhi temple or the ruins of Nalanda" (SPA 42).

> This is to ensure that accidentally or ignorantly permission is not granted to construct any monuments of the scale of the Great Buddha Statue or for that matter of the scale of the Great Tibetan Monastery Building (which is very colorful and has a very strong and different form) to be built very close to the Mahabodhi Temple. Some planned damage has already been done in the shape of the proposed shops by the NAC in Bodh Gaya just outside the temple wall. . .We feel that in the overall interest of the glory of the temple and also to drive home the point about the seriousness of such decisions, these be demolished to be rehabilitated at specified distances, making room for a large green space which will bring pedestrians close to the Mahabodhi on the one side and the existing temples on the other side. This in itself should deter the speculators of land not to purchase and build on the land in the specific zone (SPA 1991: 43).

As another example of the spatial tactics applied in the earlier Draft Master Plan, the SPA proposal also suggests that special care is required to reinstate the importance of the archaeological and touristic value of the site through certain zoning practices. Emphasis is placed on creating "exclusive zones" around key heritage nodes and utilizing careful landscaping as "another way of defining the exclusiveness of these sites" (SPA 49). Similar to the design strategy of the Draft Master Plan, the

technical consultants suggest that with careful planning and strict conservation measures “the tensions of day to day life will be removed by the design form which will merge with the concept of Nirvana most appropriate for the area” (SPA 37). Although there are a number of detailed propositions concerning future management of the site by a “strong statutory single body,” what is clear in this evaluation is that concerns over governance, implementation and the lack of structural coordination was now seen as a priority at the place of enlightenment (SPA 48).[162]

5.2.2 OECF and the Japanese Market Survey

Although the SPA proposal is one of the more critical evaluations of Bodh Gaya and the Buddhist sector in Bihar during this time, like its earlier incarnations, it remained in draft format and never received the international support promised by the National Park Services of the United States. However, there were other countries who have provided economic support and technical collaboration for the development of India's Buddhist sector during this time. One government agency that continues to play a significant role in the infrastructural development of Buddhist India is the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) from Japan. As I have described in earlier chapters, from the seventies up until the early nineties, the Japanese had a tremendous impact on the local economy and tourism development in Bodh Gaya. Ever since the establishment of the Indo-Nippon Temple and the Daijokyo Buddhist Temple, financial support was provided by the Japanese government and Buddhist sects to construct roads, sewage lines, schools and other pertinent infrastructural needs. Under the banner of OECF a number of proposals initiated by the 'Task Development Force' were taken up by the Japanese Government who invested millions of dollars into the development and beautification of Bodh Gaya and India's Buddhist circuit.

According to A.K. Shrivastava, a tourism authority from Patna, a soft loan of 143.17 Crore was set aside from the OECF for the development of a few key Buddhist nodes in Bihar such as Vaishali, Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodh Gaya. With the Tourism Department as the nodal agency for implementation of the OECF funds, basic infrastructure was implemented in four sections between 1995 and 1998. These include: electricity, water, landscape and roads. Loan assistance was also taken up in other states with prominent Buddhist heritage such as Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra where the famous Ajanta-

[162] The proposal set forth by the SPA plan requests that the Government of Bihar establish an Act of State Assembly that would create a Statutory Body called the 'BodhGaya Trust of Development Authority (BT or BDA).' The BDA will have the responsibility, authority and accountability of all constituents of the Bodh Gaya Trust and should be defined clearly in the related act to avoid any confusion and conflict at any stage.

Ellora temple cave complex is located. In Bodh Gaya, the OECF also helped finance the construction of a large paved promenade or footpath to the north of the temple that replaced an earlier dirt track that lay between the main road and the entrance of the temple. Building on these negotiations between the OECF loan agreement and the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, a joint venture was also coordinated between Pacific Consultants International in Tokyo and Consulting Engineering Services Pvt. Ltd, in New Delhi to report on the '*Development of the Buddhist Sector for the Japanese Market*' (JMS). This fascinating market survey was published in 1992 and explores the prospects of Buddhist pilgrimage tourism among the growing leisure class and changing generational demographics in Japan. "As the post war baby-boomers will reach retirement age at the beginning of the next century, the aged population in Japan is expected to expand rapidly and this will be favourable for the Buddhist Circuit in India" (JMS 1992: 3). This comprehensive survey includes a wide range of data on general characteristics of the Japanese Travel Market and the results from various surveys on Japanese consumers, experienced tourists to India, group interviews, pilgrimage organizers and Japanese Tour Wholesalers/Travel Agents' views on India.

Overall, the results generated from the survey indicate that there is great potential for the Buddhist sector in India especially with important changes in "priority of life" among Japanese society. According to the survey, this change in attitude "might also trigger a change toward a less workaholic and more leisure-oriented society in the near future" (JMS 9). To compliment Japan's growing GDP and the appreciation of the Yen since 1986, statistics from the OECF indicate that Japanese travel expenditure amounts to US$2187 on average, which is more than double that of other major countries including France, USA and the UK. Three prominent factors that are attributed to the purchasing power of Japan include: 1) The Japanese market has a higher percentage of group tourists and less individual budget tourists than in other countries. 2) There is a social custom in Japan that souvenirs for one's colleagues, friends and sometimes neighbors are almost obligatory. 3) Imported goods tend to be overpriced in Japan and the consumers have become aware of the fact. Thus, for many overseas destinations such as India, "shopping" is a principal motivation of the travel (JMS 11).

Other important features of the changing Japanese market is that two-thirds of tourists travel to overseas destinations for less than 11 days, therefore, the length of tour itineraries for Japanese tourists are relatively short (JMS 13). Furthermore, 93% of Japanese overseas travelers use travel agents and 58% of them participate in group tours suggesting that there is vast potential in states like Bihar for stimulating packaged tourism itineraries such as the Buddhist circuit. Despite the cultural and religious

legacy of Buddhism in Japanese society, the market survey also suggests that package tours to India are still most common in the "Golden Triangle," namely Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. However, since 1982, the number of Japanese visitors to India has doubled from 29,103 to 58,707 in 1989, highlighting the potential of the "Buddhist Sector" as an alternative to the "Golden Triangle." In order to compete with the "Golden Triangle" it also notes that "security" and "sanitary conditions" must be improved, as they are key factors that determine travel destinations among Japanese consumers, showing that Japanese tourists "are very sensitive to travel environments" (JMS 23).

Another key component of the market survey is the analysis of prevailing images of India and the Buddhist sector among the Japanese public. Overall, the findings indicate a strong association with the "cultural and historical" attributes of India, which "seems to be almost synonymous with seeing the Buddhist sector" (JMS 25). Other prominent Japanese images associated with India suggest it is a "religious" and "mysterious" place, accounting for 87% and 70% respectively. A female interviewee stated that if one goes to India, he or she "becomes like a philosopher" with the majority of respondents linking their motivations with a desire "to see" or "to know" India rather than to relax or to enjoy themselves (JMS 38). As part of the survey, data was also collected on Buddhist pilgrims who were regarded as a separate segment from the "general interest tourists" and are largely coordinated through specific group tours organized by Buddhist societies, sects and priests. Among the interviews conducted by the Japan Travel Bureau Foundation in January 1991 three Buddhist societies were selected: Nichiren-syu Sect, Rissyo Kosei-kai Sect and Jodo syu Sect. Among these Buddhist groups, overall, their motivations for visiting India and the Buddhist sector were "spiritual" including remarks such as: "to reach a state of mind like which Buddha had attained" or "to feel as if one's soul was purified." Although there were concerns about the poor sanitary conditions and the quality of transportation in areas like Bihar, it was suggested that in order to improve the Buddhist sector the groups would like to see a re-education program for the Indian tour guides. It was noted that tour guides "seem to be uneven in their ability and morals" and their main concern and motivation "seems to be the commission they get at souvenir shops" (JMS 40). In highlighting these survey inquiries into the Japanese tourist market it points to the twin concerns over the role of images in the production of tourist destinations and the infrastructural needs to support tourism development on the ground. As I describe in the next section, images and branding practices linked to the marketing of place-specific destinations grew substantially from the mid-nineties onwards, as Bodh Gaya and the Buddhist sector became key markers of cultural value within the imagined geography of tourism under globalization.

5.2.3 Destination Enlightenment: Buddhism in a Neoliberal era

According to Amitabh Kant (Namaskar Marketing Promotion 2007), the joint secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, “India has made an extraordinary transition into one of the world's most significant emerging economies in the sphere of a little over a decade.” This growth is often attributed to the strong economic push for liberalization, the elimination of market controls, privatization, new tax incentives and an end to subsidies in order to encourage more competition with other nations in the global economy. Within this context, tourism as the world's largest industry, has emerged as one of the highest job generating sectors and is now seen as a major driver behind India's economic growth. According to the 2005 Indian Tourism figures, the growth rate is 13.2% with an estimated 3.92 million foreign tourist arrivals in India. The estimated foreign exchange earning through tourism was US$ 5,731 million in 2005 and is the third largest net earner of foreign exchange in the country. Linked to this growth, according to Amitabh Kant (2007) are two major initiatives that were launched at the turn of the millennium and are key factors that underlie the economic success of tourism throughout the country. The first initiative was the investment in transportation and leisure infrastructure at key tourist destinations that could serve as models of “world-class standards” throughout the county. The second initiative involves the extensive use of images and brand names in world tourism marketing that have been used to enhance the international profile of India on the global stage. For the remaining part of this chapter I will examine how both of these initiatives have shaped Bodh Gaya and Bihar's Buddhist circuit in a neoliberal era.



Figure 5.4 India as a world-class spiritual destination. Source: www.incredibleindia.org

In the previous section, I have described the various ways in which the transnational currency of Buddhism has been instrumental in conjuring financial assistance from various agencies, both domestic and international. Ever since the bifurcation of Bihar in 2000 and the creation of mineral rich Jharkhand to the south, Buddhist heritage and spiritual tourism has been at the forefront of neoliberal agendas aimed at building new networks of global capital and

public-private sponsorship for the development of the state. As an extension of earlier financial assistance provided by the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) is the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC). The JBIC is a huge bilateral agency and is one of the world's largest sources of development aid financing, especially in Asia. According to Hisako Motoyama (2000), it has an annual budget of over 3 trillion yen (approx. US$ 27 billion dollars) and came into existence in October 1999 when the export credit agency (Export-Import Bank of Japan - JEXIM) merged with the Japanese aid agency (Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund – OECF).[163] Ever since this bilateral agency came into existence, India has been one of the top recipients of international development assistance.

One of the mega-projects outlined by the JBIC is a “soft-loan package” of 5600 Rp crore for the development of India's Buddhist circuit. According to an Embassy of Japan report (2005), the financial support is aimed towards the rehabilitation of the Buddhist circuit that not only “symbolizes a very special bond of friendship between the peoples of the two countries” but will also help to alleviate poverty in those areas that come under the Buddhist circuit. The project involves converting over 320 kilometers of roads into four-lane highways, including landscaping, solid waste management and improvement of existing drains and electrification (TOI Chaudhary Feb 01, 2007). At Bodh Gaya specifically, the JBIC has also agreed to grant a sum of 600 Rp crore for the construction of a control tower, technical block, fire station, the strengthening and extension of an airport runway, land acquisition, and associated changes to the road system and power lines in the area.

Alongside these international channels of development aid is a growing trend towards new public and private partnerships over tourism development and heritage management. During an interview with K.K. Bajaj, the Marketing Director for the Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi, he explained,

> There is a new special class of tourists who want to experience these destinations. They are a large number. . . and world heritage sites and other monuments should be developed for this purpose. We are also putting monuments to alternative use by adding classical dance forms and light shows. And through this. . . new revenue is created. The Government however cannot take up all its conservation on its own. This is why they are trying to get the private sector to adopt a monument. Such as hoteliers for example. They can share part of their earnings in the name of

[163] According to the report by Motoyama (Watershed 2000), the JEXIM is one of the world's largest export credit agencies with an annual budget of around $18 billion and had provided loans and guarantees to support Japanese corporate activities overseas such as foreign investment, exports of plant/equipment and natural resource exploitation. The OECF, as I have already pointed out, was one of the major agencies implementing Japan's official development assistance program to India in the eighties and nineties.

development. This way grants can be taken with certain terms and conditions.[164]

In Bihar, for example, there have been a number of protected monuments under the ailing Archaeological Survey of India that have now become key investment ventures by corporate bodies to help restore the ancient sites and improve tourism infrastructure. In a recent article in the *Hindustan Times* it is noted that the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has offered to develop protected monuments at places such as Vaishali and Kolhua in Muzaffarpur District. There is also the Steel Authority of India (SAIL) who have taken up the beautification work near the protected monuments at Lauria-Nandangranth in Champaran (HT Sopam March 3 2007). Not surprisingly, there have also been numerous publicity campaigns in recent years that target NRI's or "non-resident Indians" to help revitalize Bihar's cultural heritage.

As part of the overall strategy to improve transportation and connectivity with the Buddhist circuit, the Indian Government has also invested in new air services and train links with a view of attracting wealthy international Buddhist patrons and minimizing travel needs. For these reasons, in 2004, the Gaya International Airport was formally inaugurated. Catering directly to foreign airliners, the Gaya International airport includes regular flights from Bangkok on Thai Airways, Colombo on Sri Lankan Airlines, and Paro on Druk Air, the Royal Bhutan Airlines. More recently both Singapore based SilkAir Airways and Myanmar Airways also operate charter flights during the tourist season.[165] Similarly, the Indian Railway Tourism and Catering Corporation have also recently introduced the *Mahaparinirvan Express*. Modeled after luxury tourist trains such as the "Palace on Wheels," the Mahaparinirvan also promotes "world class facilities" providing 17 special package trips over a duration of eight days throughout the year. These tours involve meals, guides, sightseeing tours and hotel accommodation that are connected with all the prominent Buddhist sites in India and Nepal such

[164] The interview with K.K. Bajaj was held on September 28 2006. Here K.K. Bajaj is also referring to the *Buddha Mahotsav* (festival) which was first inaugurated by the Tourism Minister, Mr. Mandanlal Khurana and the President of India in 1994. Building on the memory of the 1956 Buddha Jayanti it is aimed at luring neighboring Buddhist countries and international visitors to the land of the Buddha. According to Ashok Kumar Singh from the BSTDC, the Buddha Mahotsav was likely modeled after the success of the Khajuraho festival in Madhya Pradesh which gained wide international recognition by incorporating classical Indian dancers throughout the country to perform against the backdrop of the floodlit temples. With co-ordination between international tour operators and government officials, the cultural menu of the Buddha Mahotsav relies heavily on spectacle and incorporates dance performances, Buddhist relics, seminars, Bollywood singers, craft exhibitions, and other hand picked artists from the state tourism department. However, unlike the Khajuraho festival, the Buddha Mahotsav has not had the same impact in terms of conjuring international visibility. In fact, these festivals have also attracted opposition especially when they overlap with prominent religious festivals such as the Tibetan Monlam Chemno held over the peak winter months at Bodh Gaya.

[165] As part of this strategy to expand India's foreign exchange earnings, there are also plans to upgrade the Gaya International airport and extend the existing runway length to incorporate jumbo planes such as the Boeing 737 category aircrafts.

as Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir, Kusinagara, Sarnath, Shravasti and Lumbini. As a Rajdhani Express train, it is fully air-conditioned and is largely targeted at the middle class and higher end Buddhist tourists, especially from South East Asia, China and Japan. The prices can range from US$140 for AC I to US $80 for AC III per day, and can fluctuate depending on the given time within the peak season months (HT Bartwal Nov. 28 2006).

Not only has Bodh Gaya emerged as a model destination for international tourism with the introduction of new airstrips and luxury trains but it is also the future site of an 18-hole golf course. Stretched over a 200-acre plot of land, the proposal for a "golf resort" was submitted by the UK-based Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) which will also include 15 cottages and 5 villas, club facilities, all weather swimming-pool, and a state-of-the-art gymnasium. It is also part of the "pilgrimage with pleasure" program that is being spearheaded by the Bihar State Tourism Department (HT Pandey Dec. 18 2006). When I interviewed the Secretariat of the Bihar Tourism Development Corporation about the rationale behind the golf course, given the site's importance as a religious centre, the surrounding regional poverty and the sheer lack of water resources available, he replied:

> The idea behind the golf course is to preserve more green areas. This will enable 200 acres to become green, but not only green alone, there will be two hotels and complexes that will be involved. There will also be golf cottages . . . and some guest houses. We also want to bring more money into Bodh Gaya. And we are sure the visitors from foreign Buddhist countries will use it. We want to enter Bodh Gaya into the global market. This is not to attract elite but to keep Bodh Gaya green. Otherwise there will be lots of construction. There is a new generation of Buddhists, so while those in South Korea are fading there is a revitalization in China. Japan also pays a lot of money for good infrastructure. So we see this as an opportunity to enter the international market. We also have envisioned floating a trophy for the 'Gautam Annual Tournament.' People from all over will descend for a month to participate. So there are two reasons for the golf course, one is as an international market strategy and the other is to keep Bodh Gaya green. The golf course will also bring 100 – 200 people employment. Horticulture can be improved. There can be lotus flower cultivation and usual hotel cleaning. So there is scope for much more employment.[166]

The government has already transferred 137.51 acres of land to the Tourism Department for the 18-hole golf course and approval for acquisition of 62.49 acres of land from the farmers along (HT Pandey, Dec. 18 2006). The estimated project will cost over Rs. 100 crore and not surprisingly, the government is also seeking private participation to help construct the golf resort at Bodh Gaya. It is envisioned that the various cottages will be sold to wealthy Buddhist in Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan and Sir Lanka where golf is also prevalent.

[166] Interview with Secretariat of the Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation, February 14 2006.



Figure 5.5 Branding Buddhism through the Incredible !ndia marketing campaign.
Source: www.incredibleindia.org.

According to Amitabh Kant (2007), the second initiative that has contributed to India's rise as a major global tourism destination is the success of the 'Incredible !ndia' marketing campaign launched at the end of 2002. One of the main concerns for national tourism development agencies in an era of globalization is how to establish a brand image that "gains global recognition, breaking parity, standing out from the crowd and accessing and penetrating markets" (Kant 2007). A brand that stresses the sub-continent's natural beauty, harnesses its internal diversity and promotes its status as an emerging economic super power on the world stage. Modeled after the success of other prominent marketing strategies in Spain and New Zealand, the development of the Incredible !ndia brand image was designed to create high international visibility and position India as a destination of choice. When I interviewed K.K. Bajaj, the Marketing Director for the Ministry of Tourism, he explained that in order to "increase the desire for foreigners" the Incredible !ndia marketing campaign draws on a wide range of mediums and utilizes a three phase approach: 1) create an awareness; 2) create a desire; and 3) turn that desire into bookings.[167]

Ever since the inception of Incredible !ndia, the Ministry of Tourism has aggressively promoted these images in both domestic and overseas markets drawing on a variety of mediums: print advertisement in tourism literature, cultural presentations at trade fairs and exhibitions, the use of TV/video, promotional films, along with electronic and internet media. According to Amitabh Kant's

[167] According to K.K. Bajaj these images derived from surveys conducted on tourists at various exit points of departure from India. There are also national surveys on visitor motivations. As part of market research the agency evaluates the strategies every 3 or 4 years checking up with varying tourist perspectives and changes, the stakeholders and locals – especially regarding positive and negative interests.

interpretation of the Incredible !ndia brand image,

> To be truly powerful, a brand must express itself not just in terms of a product benefit, but in terms of a greater socio-economic truth. Apple told a brave new world to reject Big Blue IBM and 'Think Differently'. Nike told flabby, procrastinating city-dwellers everywhere to stop making excuses and 'Just Do It', following up with the brilliant 'swoosh' icon, a graphic device that expressed energy and inspired sport without a word. The Incredible India campaign belongs to this generation of branding. Visually, it uses the '!' symbol to convey the mind-boggling depth and intensity of the Indian experience. Every aspect of India – be it ever-accelerating GDP, extreme geography, kaleidoscope culture, deep-rooted spirituality to photogenic chaos, even – is summed up by the simple yet profound exclamation mark. The campaign is also noteworthy in terms of tone. Headlines such as 'Not all Indians are polite, hospitable and vegetarian' [*with a picture of a large Bengal tiger*] are more than just witty advertising – they are symptomatic of a much bigger social phenomenon i.e. An optimistic and extroverted new India, eager to make its presence felt in the global community. This India is a far cry from the meek, tentative, 'offshore' destination of the last decade. It is this sub-text that transforms Incredible India from a mere branding exercise into a pop culture milestone, denoting a turning point in the evolution of one of humankind's greatest civilizations (Kant 2007).

The affect of the Incredible !ndia campaign raises some important questions about the underlying assumption of globalization and the cultural imperialism thesis within the context of tourism development.[168] Under globalization and the cultural logic of late capitalism today, according to Jameson and Miyoshi (1998) and AlSayyad (2001), the packaging of cities as commodities and the demands for a unique cultural experience associated with place and built environments are central to the tourists imagination especially when the trend is towards standardized products and services that are now marketed worldwide. “As these independent nations compete in an ever-tightening global economy, they find themselves needing to exploit their natural resources and vernacular built heritage to attract international investors” (AlSayyad 2001: 3). Far from effacing the cultural fabric of Indian society, one could argue that cultural identity and image management of a national brand is more likely the product of globalization rather than its victim. Here, India's “soft power” provides a vehicle for the resurgence of one of “humankind's greatest civilizations” but also a product of global consumerism and a cornerstone of India's emergence as an economic super power.

The Incredible !ndia campaign is also a brand that synthesizes a uniform national identity alongside its internal diversity. It is in this context that heterogeneity and diversity become advantageous because the brand celebrates difference through its visceral imagery of the sub-continents “mind-boggling depth” and intensity of experience.

[168] The cultural imperialism thesis suggests that developing economies are rendered subordinate to global capitalism and/or Western value systems.

> The land that continues to mesmerize with its larger than life image. The aura that is spellbinding, captivating and fascinating. A land where spiritualism breathes in and out, where Gods reside, where everyday is an occasion, where the forts and palaces still echo the bugle of victory, where you witness the arena of intellectual exchange, where the mustard fields delight you and the village life attracts you. A poet's poetry. A painter's masterpiece. A picture worth a thousand words (Market Research Division MOT, 2005).

Drawing on these images of Buddhism and Bihar as part of the Incredible !ndia marketing campaign, one can see how the different regions and states also acquire their own sub-brands and are positioned in a way to enhance the larger national brand image. In Bihar, as I have suggested, the main asset in terms of tourism development continued to be hinged upon the 'Buddhist Sector' now merging with a legacy of Orientalist images to elevate places like Bodh Gaya as destinations for spiritual tourism and a prominent feature of the underlying cultural power and civilizational fabric of the country.

As a consequence of this large scale promotional and global marketing strategy, according to Amitabh Kant, tourist arrivals have risen dramatically and both India and the Buddhist circuit in Bihar have been repositioned as premier tourist destinations for global consumption. So while Bodh Gaya and Bihar, for that matter, appear to be undergoing a resurgence under India's new global economic rise, it only makes sense that the state and central tourism authorities should capitalize on its greatest religious export. As focal points for “both the restoration of a glorious cultural past and the aspirations of an economically vibrant future,” (Winter 2007: 20) here at 'Destination Enlightenment,' the commercial value of the site in terms of its tourism potential is reshaping the religiosity of the site in creative ways. A place where the noble eightfold path and eighteen hole golf courses find unexpected equivalence.

5.3 Conclusion

Like many tourist sites in the midst of rapid change, the social transformation of Bodh Gaya's urban landscape into a tourist destination can be interpreted as a byproduct of globalization resulting from the transnational movement of people, capital, ideas and images that link this urban-rural town with the spiritual event of the Buddha's enlightenment (Appadurai 1996; Brennan 2005). In this chapter I have shown how various urban planning proposals and tourism development schemes reflect the interests of political elites and neoliberal agendas. Through zoning, landscape design and forms of cartography, I have argued that the master plan has been deployed as a spatial tactic to discipline the

urban environment and inscribe certain relations of state power and ideology. Although the master plan has never been implemented in its entirety, these proposals are still important documents because they chronicle the ways in which town planning authorities and political elites negotiate future images of the city. The production and reproduction of hegemonic schemes like the master plan, as I have shown, is aimed at the monopolization of public spaces in order to dominate memories and marginalize those aspects of the site that are seen as detrimental to the enhancement of tourism development. As David Harvey (1996: 296) suggests, "those who have invested in the physical qualities of place have to ensure that activities arise which render their investments profitable by ensuring the permanence of place." It is in this context that cities like Bodh Gaya are transformed into touristscapes, whereby, the production of symbolic and monetary value revolves around the religious claims of authenticity based on the Buddhistic history of the site.

In this chapter I have also shown how these efforts to secure political legitimacy over space and place and impose new forms of governance oriented towards transnational consumption has been challenged. By examining the various ways in which national and state authorities have constructed the Buddhist Circuit and brand images for tourist consumption, I have shown how these government programs can lead to social conflicts especially when these actions translate into forms of displacement. At the same time, it is important to highlight that these efforts to try and control or exclude the local vernacular and their experience of space also help to constitute and empower local identity as a social and political register of opposition to "outside" forces. At Bodh Gaya, I would argue that the efforts to rehabilitate the urban landscape that privilege foreign interest has also become a central means of constituting local consciousness over rights to public space; a point I develop further in chapter six. These findings accord with Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003: 20) who suggest "interventions that physically shape the urban landscape attract opposition because they reproduce key symbolic forms that reference deep and still unresolved or unresolvable conflicts among social actors and collectivities." Thus, despite the image management and marketing success of Brand Buddhism in Bihar, concerns over the lack of infrastructure, civic governance and "encroachments" continue to haunt Bodh Gaya's contemporary public life. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, the transformation of Bodh Gaya into a global site of memory in the imagined community of World Heritage has brought new demands and pressures over the spatial environment to ensure its worlding status as an emblem of political and administrative excellence. How these earlier histories and unfolding agendas become linked to the valoraization of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World

Heritage monument is part of my analysis in chapter six.

6. CHAPTER SIX:

MANAGING UNIVERSAL VALUE: THE CONDITIONED GENESIS OF A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

So far in this dissertation, I have looked at a set of interrelated transnational processes that underlie the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site. In each of these chapters, I have delineated the various historical and spatial tensions between various communities of interest that have shaped the global re-imagining of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. The enlisting of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2002 is the latest historical layering that has contributed to the monopolization of a dominant memory that links Bodh Gaya with an authentic Buddhist past. At the same time, these global configurations and transnational conservation mandates are leading to new demands, contests and entanglements between religious communities, local groups and the nation-state over the management of "universal value." How is World Heritage inscription at Bodh Gaya forged in a context of competing demands and claims of authority by multiple actors at various scales? How is the symbolic power and command of physical space linked to the construction of authenticity and the reproduction of dominant memories? How is universal significance generated at Bodh Gaya and what role does UNESCO have in terms of the management of sacred space?

In this chapter, I will examine how World Heritage designation unfolds in a particular time and place among a diverse set of interest groups. Building on the infrastructure and themes presented throughout this dissertation, I will argue that the worlding processes that underlie the Mahabodhi Temple's formal inscription on the UNESCO list began much earlier and that these historical and transnational processes are important to understand the contemporary spatial politics of World Heritage at Bodh Gaya. In order to examine the religious, socio-economic and political implications of this recent historical layering, in this chapter, I draw upon the Buddhist concept of the 'conditioned genesis.' Also referred to as the doctrine of dependent origination, (Pali: *Paticca-samupadda;* Sanskrit: *Pratitya-Samutpada*) this theory states that all phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect.[169] Connecting earlier chapters to this catalytic event, I will argue that the

[169] The Conditioned Genesis or Doctrine of Dependent Origination derives from the Buddha's enlightenment and his understanding of emptiness and the impermanence of all matter, so that everything depends on everything else. According to Fowler (1999: 85), the idea conveys the ultimate emptiness of all things and that "whatever we look at in

spatial environment at Bodh Gaya is also conditioned by various social phenomena that are historically relative and interdependent. In the first section, I examine a set of contingent and competing claims over management of the Mahabodhi Temple in relation to the larger identity politics of religious nationalism that emerged in the early nineties. In the second section, I explore the linked demands between heritage conservation and urban planning that is a byproduct of the accelerated processes of economic liberalization I discussed in chapter four. Through an analysis of global connections and the local chains of cause and effect, I will demonstrate how World Heritage and the production of universal value are not abstract and devoid of social and cultural meaning, but rather are constituted and animated by competing, contradictory and incommensurable forces.

6.1 "Capturing the Centre": A Contested Site of Religious Memory Revisited

In chapter two, I provided a historical overview of the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. A central figure in the Buddhist revival movement at Bodh Gaya was Anagarika Dharmapala who inaugurated a campaign for control of the Mahabodhi Temple in 1891. Despite years of agitation and legal battles, the desire to see the Mahabodhi Temple in the hands of the world Buddhist community was never realized during his lifetime. It was not until June 19, 1949, following India's independence from British colonial rule, that a bill was eventually passed by the Bihar Legislative Assembly transferring rights to a joint Buddhist-Hindu committee under the *Bodh Gaya Temple Act* (BGTA). As state government property, this legislative act remains the main constitutional form of governance today. As I have also shown, in the first decades of independence when the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) was established, temples were mobilized as public trusts and central institutions for the engendering of national sentiment and places of state legitimization. According to Hancock (2002: 7) "the agents of the state (its colonial authors and its postcolonial legatees) thereby sought to reorganize and rehabilitate temples in conformity with the norms of representation associated with the institutions of a modern democratic state." As a locus of national ethos where secular values of pluralism and tolerance could be transmitted, the Mahabodhi Temple provided an ideal space for the enacting of modernity and advancing the project of the nation by legitimizing political visions of prominent leaders such as the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

life or whatever we experience is always dependent on, and relative to, other factors; nothing is able to exist because of its *own being*. . .nothing exists independently of other things. . .nothing can be a thing by itself, it can only be seen as something in relation to another thing."

Since the late eighties and early nineties, the public life of monuments in contemporary India have become contentious grounds for national meaning among diverse communities of interest. The aftermath of Babri Masjid demolition at Ayodhya in 1992 has brought to the forefront the fragility of religious structures in the face of Hindu majoritarianism and a new aggressive *Hindutva* cultural politics. Among Hindus, the "liberation of Hindu sacred space" at Ayodhya was part of the reclamation of religious memory, a site which claims to have long-standing mythological association as the birthplace of Lord Rama (Ludden 1996). This cultivation of a public culture of Hindutva since the late 1980s is closely tied to the shifting grounds of party politics that has brought the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) forward as one the leading national parties in India.[170] Ludden (1996: 4) argues that the increasing permeation of religion and politics in the public sphere has reinvigorated religious identities in a way that now articulates "people's cultural and national identity at a level of emotive meaning more basic and fundamental than other kinds of political affiliations." Thus, within a context of national democratic politics and a heightened religious imaginary, contested sites of memory have been mobilized for upholding certain collective memories of the nation and erasing others.

Although the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Act of 1949 was seen as a compromise to the conflictual claims between Buddhists and Hindus over sacred space, this controversial piece of legislation has continued to remain a source of discomfort among many Buddhist groups throughout the second half of the twentieth century. In the early nineties, at the height of a resurgent Hindu nationalism there were two significant commemorative events that provided the inspiration to launch new demands and claims over management of Bodh Gaya's sacred property. Not only does the year 1991 mark the twin centenary year of the birth of Dr. B.T. Ambedkar but that same year marked the birth of the first transnational Buddhist institution in the Indian subcontinent, the Mahabodhi Society of India. With the predatory assertion of Hindu fundamentalism emerging in India's public consciousness, similarly, the historical injustice of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Act would also resurface bringing attention to the unrealized dream of Dharmapala to 'liberate' the Mahabodhi Temple once and for all from Hindu control. However, Buddhist claims to sacred property are not the only voices that have emerged within this highly contested arena. In order to contextualize the different forces and contributions that coalesce around the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site, in this section, I examine three groups and their contingent claims over sacred space that precede and overlap

[170] The Bharatiya Janata Party is a major political party in India, founded in 1980. It also maintains close links with other Hindu organizations and political parties such as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad.* From 1998 to 2004 the BJP was in power on the basis of an alliance with several other parties. The Prime Minister was Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani as his deputy.

with the 2002 UNESCO inscription. These groups are the 1) Ambedkar Buddhists; 2) Mahabodhi Society of India; and 3) Local Intelligentsia.

6.1.1 Ambedkar Buddhists

Throughout this dissertation I have largely focused on the role of transnational Buddhism in the form of monasteries, temples and/or guest houses that have reshaped the landscape of Bodh Gaya since the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations. As I mentioned in chapter three, 1956 was also a significant year for the propagation of Buddhism in India due to the conversion of Dalit political leader B.R. Ambedkar that took place on October 14th in Nagpur, Maharashtra. Unlike the Mahabodhi Society of India, which had largely attracted educated upper-caste Indian elites to their cause, Ambedkar's public conversion to the Buddhist faith was aimed at uplifting the untouchables from the longstanding inequalities of the Hindu caste system. On this historic occasion, Ambedkar not only denounced the Hindu religion but also led a massive conversion of over 500,000 untouchables with the goal of igniting a Buddhist revival movement throughout the county. Although Ambedkar passed away within two months of his conversion, over the latter part of the twentieth century, the number of untouchable converts has continued to grow. According to the 2001 Indian Census there are now currently 7.95 million Buddhists in India, with at least 5.83 million Ambedkarite Buddhists residing in the state of Maharashtra alone. Today, many Dalits employ the term "Ambedkar(ite) Buddhism" to designate the Buddhist movement or refer to themselves as "Nava-Bauddha" or New Buddhists (Kantowsky 2003). Although the Ambedkar Buddhist campaign to "liberate" the Mahabodhi Temple has been closely documented in other sources (Doyle 1997, 2003), it is important to contextualize this movement in relation to other contingent groups, claims and debates that emerged during this time.

The demands for "complete control" of the Mahabodhi Temple first took concrete shape on April 20th 1992 when the All India Bhikku Sangha (AIBS) passed a resolution at its session in Bodh Gaya "demanding transfer of the management and control of the Maha Bodhi Mahavihara to an All Member Buddhist Committee" (Ahir 1994: 157).[171] This resolution was followed by a mass demonstration during the Buddha Jayanti celebrations on May 16th 1992 where over 800 Indian

[171] In anticipation that changes would be made to the 1949 Temple Management Act, members of the All India Bhikkhu Sangha wrote a Draft Bill entitled the *Bodh Gaya Mahavihara Act* that was given to the new Chief Minister of Bihar, Lalu Prasad Yadav and requesting sole management of the Temple by the Indian Buddhists. As Tara Doyle (1997, 2003) has suggested, the circulation of the Proposed Draft Bill was initiated by the new Buddhists, but was likely adopted by the Chief Minister as a political strategy to win votes from the large demographic of backward caste groups throughout the state. For more details on the Draft Bill see Doyle (1997: 390-391) and Kantowsky (2003: 83).

Buddhists (other sources say 150 – 200) arrived in Bodh Gaya and vowed to "liberate the temple" (Dhammika 1996: 102). Stationing themselves in front of the controversial 'Panchpandav Mandir' adjacent to the Mahabodhi Temple, they shouted: "*Pandagiri bandh karo! Vihar baudhom ko do*!" (End Hindu priestcraft! Return the [Mahabodhi] Temple to the Buddhists!) (Doyle 2003: 250). Accusing the Brahmin on duty of falsely identifying the Buddha images, according to Dhammika (1996), they surged into the *mandir* and ripped off the Hindu vestments draped over the statues. After removing the red powder daubed upon the foreheads of the Buddhist images the Ambedkar Buddhists also began to march towards the inner sanctum of the Mahabodhi Temple threatening to break the Siva *lingum.* Before the Ambedkar Buddhists could demolish the Shiva lingum the local police intervened and ordered the Maharastrans to leave town. However, prior to their departure, "the Dalits circulated a memorandum outlining their grievances" and vowed to return in much greater numbers later that year (Doyle 2003: 250).



Figure 6.1 The controversial Panchpandav Mandir at the front entrance of the Mahabodhi Temple

As Tara Doyle (1997, 2003) and Tapati Guha-Thakurta (2004) have examined in detail, this movement was nearly parallel to the Hindu nationalist program which culminated in the razing of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992. Following the mass demonstration in Bodh Gaya, within a few days, sensational headlines began to circulate in the local and national media comparing this to "another 'Ayodhya-type' issue." According to Doyle (1997: 390), "and while the situation in Bodh Gaya basically returned to normal, certain signs of discord and tensions began to manifest, both locally

and farther afield. For instance, a small contingent of gun-toting police was stationed directly in front of the Panchpandav temple." Furthermore, as Doyle explains, by and large the residents of Bodh Gaya and several local foreign Buddhist institutions wanted nothing to do with the Ambedkarite movement fearing that "'another Ayodhya-type' situation would keep pilgrims away, disrupt business, and make a mess of their community" (Doyle 393) Many international Buddhists were also reluctant to raise their voices and preferred to maintain their distance, regarding the recent upheaval as an "internal domestic problem of the Indian state" (Doyle 2003: 252).

The 1992 Buddha Jayanti demonstration was only the beginning of a series of agitations that were held in Bodh Gaya under the banner of *Buddha Gaya Mahabodhi Mahavihar All India Action Committee* (henceforth, Mahabodhi Action Committee [MAC]). All of these protests have drawn upon a discourse that concerns the "'liberation of the Mahabodhi Temple' from Hindu and, to a lesser extent, 'elite' foreign and Indian Buddhist influence" and a desire to amend the 1949 Act and place the Temple in the hands of an All-Indian Buddhist Committee (Doyle 252). As Doyle (1997: 401-402) has suggested, similar to Ayodhya, the Mahabodhi Temple also served as a "powerful symbol for regaining Dalit Buddhists' rightful religious and cultural patrimony, forging a sense of group identity, and establishing their socio-political rights all of which they assert have been stolen from them by upper-caste Hindus." Yet, despite these authoritative claims on behalf of an indigenous form of Buddhism, one of the main leaders of this agitation is a Japanese monk with a Nichiren background who is now a naturalized Indian citizen known as Bhadant Nagarjuna Arya Surai Sasai.[172]

Following the initial protest that took place during the Buddha Jayanti in 1992, Surai Sasai began preparing for a second agitation that was designed to coincide with the commemorative date of B.R. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism and also modeled on the highly politicized Rath Yatra undertaken by BJP leader L.K. Advani in 1990. As a means of mobilizing popular support for the Hindu nationalist party, L.K. Advani had rode a symbolic BJP chariot that traversed the northern part of India from Somnath to Ayodhya with the goal of "liberating the Birth place of Lord Rama." Parallel to this controversial program, Surai Sasai also organized a campaign entitled the "Dhamma Mukti Yatra" (Buddhist Liberation Process) that would begin in Chaitya Bhoomi in Bombay on

[172] Born Minoru Sasai, this Japanese-born Buddhist came to India in 1966 and met Nichidatsu Fuji (1885–1985), the founder of the Nipponzan-Myōhōji order of Buddhism and known for his construction of peace pagodas throughout the world including Rajgir. After a falling out with Fuji he had a dream in which a figure resembling Nagarjuna (ancient Indian Buddhist philosopher) appeared to him and requested he "Go to Nagpur." Since moving to Maharashtra he has been working closely with the Ambedkar Buddhists and in 1987 he was granted Indian citizenship. Since the early nineties he has been one of the main leaders of the MAC to liberate the Mahabodhi Temple from Hindu control. For more biographic details on Surai Sasai and a comparison between the Advani's Rath Yatra and the Buddhist Liberation Procession see Tara Doyle 1997 and 2003.

September 27th and would reach Bodh Gaya for a large demonstration on October 22nd 1992. According to Doyle (1997), the liberation movement, in a manner strikingly similar to the Hindu nationalists, was met with cautious resistance at Bodh Gaya with many fearing that this politicized campaign would be detrimental to the wider international construction work. In an effort to diffuse the Dhamma Mukti Yatra before it reached Bodh Gaya, a dozen international Buddhist monks went to Rajgir the day before and met with Surai Sasai directly. They also carried a letter written by a number of local merchants who welcomed Surai Sasai, noting that his demands were legitimate, but asked to come in peace with fear that this would disrupt their economic livelihoods (Doyle 1997: 402). Although Surai Sasai agreed to a peaceful march, when it became apparent over the three-day demonstration at Bodh Gaya that neither the Bihar Government, nor the Central Government were willing to make immediate changes to the Temple Management Act, the MAC announced plans to undertake a more aggressive position.

Over the next few years, these agitations grew in number and became more violent.[173] During the 1994 Buddha Jayanti for example, it was the first time in forty years that the annual celebrations were canceled by the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee. Another significant turning point was the indefinite *dharna* or fast-until death that was held in April 1995 which eventually persuaded the Chief Minister of Bihar to make some slight changes in the composition of the state appointed Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (Doyle 1997). Although the Chief Minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav had made a number of promises to the Indian Buddhists in the past, it was not until his landslide victory in the state elections that same year, which prompted the charismatic leader to make changes to the management of the Mahabodhi Temple in a manner that fit his own agenda. As Tara Doyle (1997: 408) has suggested, to strengthen his image on a fund-raising trip to Southeast Asia, Lalu decided to address the agitation and reconstitute the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) so that three out of the four Buddhist positions went to leaders of the movement: Surai Sasai, Bhante Anand, and Prof. P.C. Roy (a local Bodh Gaya scholar).[174] As a part of his fund raising trip to Southeast Asia, Lalu was now in position to glorify his achievements in reconstituting the BTMC committee along

[173] Since 1993 fractions were also beginning to manifest within the internal politics of the movement itself, especially among the more militant enthusiasts. In 1993 for example, the more radical and militant leaders of the MAC had been expelled from the All India Bhikkhu Sangha. According to Doyle (1997) she notes that during the 1994 demonstration two new leaders, Bhante Anand, and Maiku Ram had also risen to prominence and both of these Dalit Buddhists were more moderate than either Surai Sasai or his more militant followers.

[174] As part of the Centenary celebrations of the Mahabodhi Society of India held in 1991, Magadh University Professor Dr. P. C. Roy was one of the first persons to publicly denounce the injustices of the legislative act among the scholars and Buddhist sympathizers in the crowd. Since the early nineties, P.C. Roy had very active promoting Buddhist scholarly activities and sheltering visiting Ambedkar Buddhists from Maharashtra.

Buddhist lines.



Figure 6.2 Ambedkar Buddhists from Maharashtra protest during the Buddha Purnima in 2006

Despite these changes in terms of management structure over the Mahabodhi Temple, members of the MAC vowed to continue their campaign until the goal of changing the 1949 legislative act was accomplished. During this time, a number of high level meetings were held in Delhi between Surai Sasai and other leaders of the Buddhist liberation movement with the National Minorities Commissioner and the Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao. Recommendations were also made by the National Minorities Commissioner suggesting an amendment to the controversial act and granting full rights to the Dalit Buddhist group but these recommendations were never implemented. It was not until 1998 following ongoing demonstrations, immolation threats and fasts-until death that the Chief Minister finally elected to make significant changes to the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee. This involved the removal of longtime Hindu General Secretary Dwarko Sundrani and appointing Bhante Prajnasheel, close associate of Surai Sansai as Secretary. This was the first time a Buddhist ever held the position of Secretary (Doyle 1997). With the Ambedkarite Buddhist leader's in a secure position of power and influence on the management committee they were now largely in control of overseeing the daily affairs of the temple, "performing *puja*, collecting donations, and assisting visitors inside the temple" (Doyle 270).[175] Although this was the first time the Secretary post

[175] The new members include: 1. Mr. Amritlal Meena IAS, DM of Gaya (Ex-officio Chairperson); 2. Bhante Prajnasheel, Nagpur, Maharashtra (member secretary); 3. Bhadant Gyaneshwar Mahathera, Kusinagar, UP (member); 4. Bhadant Arya Nagarjuna Sure Sasai, Nagpur (member); 5. Bhante Anand, Agra UP (member); 6. Mahanth Jagadish Anand Giri,

was held by a Buddhist, there were also significant voices that emerged from the international Buddhist community that challenged the position and claims of the Indian Buddhists as the authority of sacred space at Bodh Gaya.

6.1.2 Mahabodhi Society of India

As I described in chapter two and three, for over one hundred years the legacy of the Mahabodhi Society of India (MSI) as a transnational and ecumenical organization, rather than a distinctly Sinhalese Buddhist institution, is part of the reason why it has remained a centre of power and influence for over a century. Ever since Anagarika Dharmapala set out on his crusade to reclaim Bodh Gaya for the world Buddhist community, this society has been at the forefront of Buddhist cultural activities throughout the country and beyond. The Mahabodhi Society Centre at Bodh Gaya has also maintained this legacy through the post-independence era largely due to the charismatic presence of Bhante Pannarama. However, unlike the organizations founder, Bhante Pannarama was also influential among the local populace in Bodh Gaya. In particular, his capacity to encourage and nurture a local intelligentsia towards Buddhist scholarship and his philanthropic efforts among many of the scheduled caste villages like those in Siddhartha Nagar.

Overlapping with the agitation of the Ambedkar Buddhist movement was the declining health of Bhante Pannarama who eventually died in 1995. Pannarama was replaced by Maitipe Vimalasara Thero, a Sri Lankan who was born in 1959 and received full higher ordination in 1981. After completing his monastic education he moved to India in 1986 where he pursued higher education in the field of Pali and Buddhist Studies and was appointed Bhikkhu-in-Charge of the Mahabodhi Society at Bodh Gaya shortly after Pannarama's demise. Unlike Pannarama, who is often characterized by his gentle demeanor, the new head monk had gained a notorious reputation for his managerial and administrative power and looked to reform the Mahabodhi Society and Buddhism at Bodh Gaya under his leadership. According to an employee of the Mahabodhi Society during this time,

> Vimalasara was in control and claimed to undo everything. He changed the outlook, the building, staff, painted over the building and offered new services, a new magazine. He said openly “I will bring change in every way” . . . Once Vimalasara started implementing these dynamic changes many of these were good activities so we supported him, both locally, from the university and the local boys – the 'star club.' And through this he began to create his

(member); 7. Dr. Naresh Banerjee, Gaya (member); 8. Mrs. Rajsheela Singh Gaya (member); 9. Mr. Ramcharitra Das Achal, Gaya (member).

> muscle power and we felt as elders he showed good activities.[176]

One of the skills noted by almost all of my informants was that Vimalasara had been very tactful in building networks and alliances with local authorities, Buddhist monasteries and prominent political figureheads. According to one long term MSI volunteer Rajesh,

> his interest in affairs was not only tied to the Mahabodhi Society. He very openly spoke out on numerous incidents. He said "whatever happens in Bodh Gaya and around, that incident should follow our wish." He wanted control over other activities also. Such as sports programs, even if it were not related to Buddhism. He interfered in many areas such as the supply of gases, electricity and administrative issues.

To build his support-network, since the mid-nineties he had enlisted numerous MSI members including prominent Hindu nationalists such as L.K. Advani, Uma Bharati, and Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) Ashok Singhal. Locally, Vimalasara had gathered support from numerous contacts at Magadh University and among controversial '*goonda*' politicians such as Rajesh Kumar and mafia *dons* from the RJD ruling party such as the notorious Surendar Yadav. As a means of boosting his image within the local township, the Sinhalese monk also continued to expand the humanitarian and philanthropic efforts that were established by the late Pannarama.[177]

In terms of religious propagation and inter-sectarian relations among Bodh Gaya's diverse transnational community, Vimalasara was also very active and skillful in mediating both the Indian Buddhist groups and the Buddhist expatriates from the religious diaspora. Ever since Vimalasara arrived in 1994, he became an active supporter of the Ambedkarite Buddhist movement and offered guidance, *Sanghadana* and accommodation to the Maharashtrans during their annual protests and *andolans*. At the same time, Vimalasara started an 'International Buddhist Council' in Bodh Gaya that provided a common platform for the different foreign Buddhist monasteries and temples. Under the leadership of Vimalasara, as the appointed General Secretary, the International Buddhist Council emerged as a powerful voice linked to the expanding growth of transnational Buddhist groups. As I discussed in chapter three, the international body of monastic representatives provided a means of challenging new taxation schemes and allegations of corruption targeted against these religious centers

[176] The Star Club is a local football organization that was started by Vimalasara and involved some 40 to 50 youth from the surrounding villages.

[177] As I described in chapter two, these social welfare projects are central to the image building of many foreign Buddhist monasteries in Bodh Gaya. For example, during Vimalasara's ascendancy as Bhikkhu-in-charge, the Mahakarunika Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre was opened and an ambulance service was started in 1997 that was donated by Mr. Seah Wong Chi of Singapore. From 1998 until his departure, Vimalasara and his sponsors also established the annual "Great Feeding Ceremony" that involved the distribution of food-packets to over 15,000 poor people.

under Jungle Raj.

Although it is difficult to know the underlying motives that contributed to the rift between Vimalasara of the Mahabodhi Society and the Ambedkarite Buddhist leaders, what is clear is that by the late nineties, when the Dalits had secured a position of influence on the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee a vicious fight ensued. In the popular Indian newsweekly *Outlook*, an article was written by Amarnath Tewary and published on October 9, 2000 entitled the 'Zen of Making Money' which provides some insight into the quarrel and dispute. Quoting the Buddhist leaders Vimalasara and the newly appointed Secretary of the BTMC, Bhante Anand, the author notes that the "misuse and abuse" of the Mahabodhi name for the acquisition of foreign grants and donations is central to the contestation between the two religious institutions. According to Bhante Anand and Chief Monk Prajnasheel, who had recently undertaken a trip to Japan to seek donations for forthcoming renovation projects they came to the startling revelation that the Japanese had been providing some 40 crore of funds annually to the Mahabodhi Society of India for this purpose. Not only in Japan, but also Taiwan, Thailand and other MSI branches around the world had been collecting funds and authorizing funds in the name of the Mahabodhi Temple. "Every year the Mahabodhi Society of India which is primarily dominated by Sri Lankan monks collects crores of rupees – in the name of the Mahabodhi Temple. But they pocket all the money as they have not spent even a paisa on the renovation of the shrine to date," charges Bhante Anand. Furthermore, he states "The Mahabodhi Society of India is following the ISI precedent in destabilizing the country and destroying peace at the holy shrine. The Mahabodhi Society branches in the country are all being headed by the Sri Lankans who are collecting huge funds in the name of the Buddha and diverting to their country to fight the Hindu tamilians there." These alleged activities prompted the new Temple Management Committee to instigate legal charges not only against the Mahabodhi Society but also other foreign monasteries in Bodh Gaya who were deemed to be engaging in illegal activities from so-called "anti-national maneuvers" to "outright prostitution."[178]

As the battle lines were drawn and the war of words and accusations spread throughout the town and regional media, the General Secretary from the Mahabodhi Society Headquarters in Calcutta, requested that Vimalasara be transferred from Bodh Gaya to the Lumbini branch in Nepal. When I interviewed the General Secretary, Rewathero in Calcutta, he noted that they were uncomfortable with

[178] During this time there were also many local stakeholders who protested against the Ambedkar Buddhists when the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee had threatened to remove their shops outside the temple. Some informants suggest Vimalasara had helped orchestrate the uprising which led to the burning of an effigy of the head monk in charge and the firing of gun shot by the police security to disperse the crowd.

the “strong personality” of Vimalasara and the negative media attention that had begun to emerge at the place of Buddha's enlightenment. “Vimalasara is a dark part of the Bodh Gaya centre's history” he says, “as a Buddhist monk we should not be acting like that. The governing body felt that.” These controversies involving Vimalasara reached a new level of intensity when the Sinhalese monk refused to be transferred by the Mahabodhi Society Headquarters to the Lumbini center in Nepal. Shortly thereafter, Vimalasara was arrested by the state police on April 26th 2002 under allegations of the embezzlement of lakhs of rupee, accused of illegal foreign exchange dealings under the FEMA legislation, purchasing land as a foreign national in the name of trusts and ignoring the rules of the *Society Registration Act* of 1960 (Friedlander, BodhGaya News 2002). For three months, Vimalasara remained in jail and when he was finally released on bail, his foreign visa had expired and he was swiftly deported.[179]

As one can imagine, these scandalous allegations involving Buddhist monks and illegal maneuvering reflected poorly on the foreign Buddhist monasteries at Bodh Gaya during this time. Like many local residents at Bodh Gaya, these religious centres are also economically dependent on the traffic of pilgrims. As I discussed in chapter three, these accusations of corruption, exploitation and the “misuse of Buddhism” for the acquisition of foreign funds and land has become commonplace in Bodh Gaya during Jungle Raj. Thus, unlike the Ambedkar Buddhist leaders who set out to liberate sacred space from Hindu control, Vimalasara held a different vision of Buddhism and the place of the Mahabodhi Society at Bodh Gaya. Drawing on a hundred-year legacy as the founding institution in the Buddhist revival movement, Vimalasara, like Dharmapala before him, claimed moral high ground as the official leader of a pan-Asian Buddhist community at Bodh Gaya. Although Vimalasara had been very influential in terms of establishing and promulgating a strong international Buddhist voice at Bodh Gaya, it is important to highlight that there were also many foreign Buddhist residents who were uncomfortable with his robust claims. According to a long-term volunteer at the Mahabodhi Society “Vimalasara could have done something, but he misused it. He was full of ego. This is the reason why. He had a good personality to do something but was out of control.”

6.1.3 Local Intelligentsia

We are living on this temple, it is our duty to do something and we have done it. We used to say

[179] By 2004 Vimalasara had been discharged from some of the main allegations but still there are ongoing court cases. Ever since Vimalasara was deported from India he has been situated in the United States at the Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara in Los Angeles.

> 'when will it be in our hands'. . . And when they were fighting like dogs, we moved in (Ram Swarup Singh 2006).

As I have described in chapter four, many of Bodh Gaya's local inhabitants have long established transnational connections with Buddhist pilgrims and visitors to the sacred site. As part of the high seasonality of pilgrimage and tourism that characterizes the annual cycle in Bodh Gaya, many local residents are now dependent on the international traffic and the economic benefits generated from these global flows. Drawing on a set of life histories and bazaar stories in chapter four, I highlighted some of the social relationships that have long existed in Bodh Gaya through the latter part of the twentieth century between hosts and guests. However, with the agitation of the Ambedkar Buddhists and their vocal dismissal of Hindu Gods and the Bodh Gaya Temple Act this event has dramatically changed the public perception of Buddhism among some of the local residents. According to one shopkeeper Azim, during this time, Buddhism "became an 'ism' and people became alert. There was no thinking of separation back then. . . Before the agitation monks were being invited to funerals and marriages. But with the appearance of these people, Buddhism was seen as a different thing . . . There was bad behavior with the people, such as the removal of shops and fighting with locals. [Court] Cases were also filed." As a result of the growing discord over the management of sacred space at Bodh Gaya, these disquieting activities also propelled a local campaign to capture the Mahabodhi Temple for themselves.

At the height of the controversial entanglement over management disputes and the defalcation of foreign funds between the Ambedkar Buddhists and the Mahabodhi Society of India, a plot was hatched by a few of Bodh Gaya's local scholars and political leaders to rescue the temple from what was now being described as "foreign influence." It is important to highlight that some of the members of this local contingency were also longstanding disciples and supporters of the Mahabodhi Society under Bhante Pannarama, prior to the arrival of Vimalasara. A key member of this movement, Magadh University Buddhist scholar Ram Swarup Singh describes the unfolding events:

> Then a fight broke out between Vimalasara against the Ambedkars. It was like cannons being fired from the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee to the Mahabodhi Society of India. By that time we had left the Mahabodhi Society of India when Vimalasara was in charge. So we were sitting there at Ram Seevak's tea shop, myself, Kalicharan and Kailash. From that shop as the cannons fired over our heads we plotted on how to capture the place. The problem from our viewpoint was that all these people fighting were coming from outside the place and had no love for the temple, the people and the place. We were educated so we began to play both of them and when the committee's time had come we started mobilizing.

Central to the mobilization strategy of this local group was to bring ex-*parmuck* Kalicharan Yadav to the foreground given the currency of caste associations with the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) party under Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav. Although Kalicharan had been involved in both local and district politics in the past, during this time he had also taken enrollment in Buddhist studies at Magadha University, published articles in the local Buddhist magazines and eventually obtained both an MA and a PhD.

When the fight broke out on a large scale between the Ambedkar Buddhists and Vimalasara in 2000, according to Ram Swarup Singh, Kalicharan had approached the Chief Minister requesting that the government reconstitute the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee and remove those controversial members such as Bhante Anand and Secretary Pragyasheel (while retaining Surai Sasai who is based in Nagpur, Maharashtra). As a means of diluting the vexatious behavior that had come to define claims over sacred space in recent years, in the year 2001, a new committee was officially constituted by the provincial government with the following members: Jitendra Srivastava IAS (ex-officio chairperson); Kalicharan Singh Yadav (Secretary); Bhadant Arya Nagarjuna Surai Sasai; Bhadant Gyaneshwar Mahathera; Mahanth Sudarshan Giri; Nagzey Dorjee, IAS; Mangal Subba;[180] Ram Swarup Singh; and Kamla Sinha. Lastly, the Indian Buddhist monk from Meghalaya, Bhikkhu Bodhipala was appointed the Chief Priest of the Mahabodhi Temple. What is important to highlight is that this strategic composition of state elected members was the first time "local" authorities held significant positions of power and influence over management of the Mahabodhi Temple.

With Vimalasara at the center of controversy and the dissolution of the Ambedkarite Buddhists from the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee, immediately the new committee began to redirect public attention to the development and beautification of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex itself. One of the first steps taken by the new committee members was to contract the Archaeological Survey of India to commence shrine repair work and re-plastering of the temple surface after decades of neglect.[181] Work on the monument began in February 2002 at an estimated cost of 35.88 Rp lakh and was not completed until 2006. Alongside the restoration work was a series of beautification schemes

[180] It is also important to highlight the role of Mangal Subba within the context of the new temple management committee. Mangal Subba is a senior Buddhist resident at Bodh Gaya and the caretaker of the Daijokyo Buddhist Temple. In Bodh Gaya he has always been active in reconciling sectarian differences especially as Secretary of the International Buddhist Council, engaging in philanthropic activities and working closely with the local population. In April 2006 Mangal Subba passed away.

[181] In 1999 the BTMC had an evaluation carried out by the Patna Circle of the ASI on the conservation requirements of the Mahabodhi Temple and the projected estimates of carrying it out.

and development projects that were set in motion to help incur financial support such as the revival of a Meditation Park adjacent to the temple precinct, new landscaping initiatives, lighting systems and numerous tourist facilities throughout the township. Although these activities helped to bolster the image of the local committee it was the serendipitous arrival of UNESCO World Heritage designation on June 26, 2002 that effectively transformed over-night, the contentious shadow life of the temple politics into international glorification within the imagined community of World Heritage. A global site of memory recast in universal terms but one that remained hinged on local claims of sovereignty.

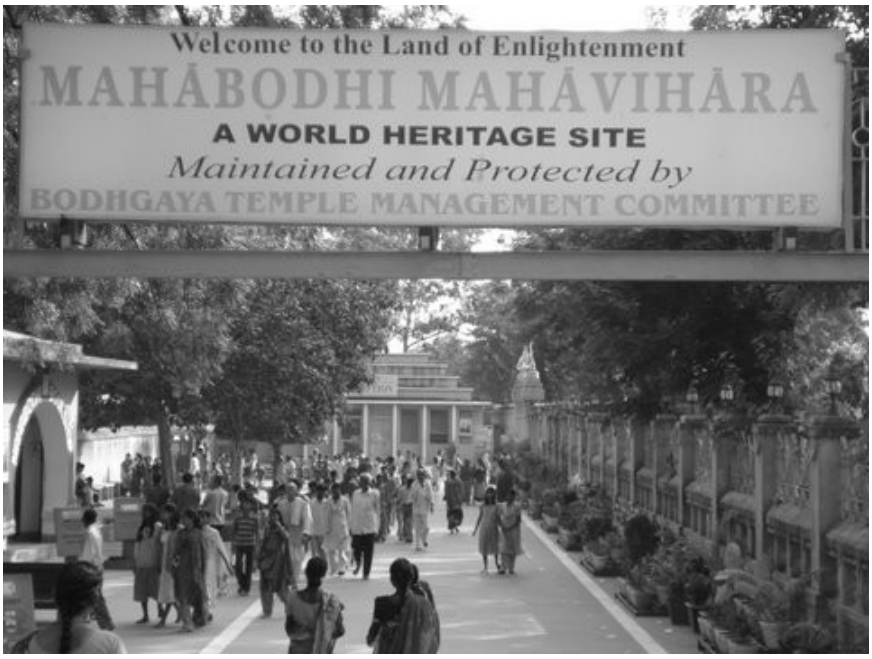


Figure 6.3 The main entrance to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex

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So far in this chapter, I have examined the complex and contingent interactions between institutions, actors and claims over the management of sacred space that inform the conditioned genesis of a World Heritage site at Bodh Gaya. Beginning with the Ambedkar Buddhist movement to liberate the Mahabodhi Temple from Hindu control, I have shown how these claims overlapped with the violent forms of Hindu nationalism that began to emerge in the early nineties. Parallel to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Bodh Gaya's sacred property also became an object of intense dispute along communal lines that exposed the fragile balance of power relations that had defined management of this contested site of memory since India's independence. Although some foreign Buddhist groups and

local residents initially supported the Ambedkar Buddhist movement, these amicable relations turned malicious once the Ambedkarites gained a foothold as members of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee from 1995 to 2001. As Tara Doyle (1997) has noted, and is evident throughout this dissertation, the support base for the Ambedkar Buddhists has been limited in Bodh Gaya due to the longstanding influence of transnational Buddhism and the ongoing importance of pilgrimage and tourism for both the local and state economy. As a result, the Ambedkar Buddhists and their authoritative demands for the repossession of sacred space were challenged by other prominent Buddhist leaders from the Mahabodhi Society of India and by many locals themselves. As Rajesh, a long-term volunteer for the Mahabodhi Society described,

> They did much damage. They harmed the reputation of the Buddhist community here. They had very bad relationships with locals. Stones were pelted at them. There was rumor of gun fire during a protest. There was also fighting with other Buddhist communities and monasteries. Accusations were against the Tibetans and the Dalai Lama. It was very ugly. Their behavior was "thinking about Buddhists against Hindus" for six years in the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee. Before. . . there was an environment of tolerance here at Bodh Gaya. There was no Hindu-Buddhist thing in the mind of local people. Then quarrels began and their mindset changed. There was a whole new generation involved with a different mindset. Young locals were now talking openly against the Buddhists.

In examining the recent "local" campaign to capture the temple from "foreign" influence I would like to draw attention to the ways in which this movement reverberates with early forms of power relations and asymmetries that revolve around control and access to the temple in the past. As I described in chapter four, the postcolonial dismantling of the *Zamindari* system under the Bodh Gaya Mahant has created a vacuum of power leading to the proliferation of new subaltern claims to authority by local business leaders and varying groups affected by the site as a growing international destination. It is in this context of competing claims over management of sacred space that appeals to local history and local sovereignty were empowered against a backdrop of competing "foreign" interests.

At this point, one might ask, what do these earlier forms of contestation over sacred space have to do with World Heritage designation at Bodh Gaya? In the next section I will show how World Heritage unfolds in a way that masks the underlying power relations and local forms of dissonance that are particular to specific places. Through its discursive claims for a more inclusive cosmopolitan engagement with the past, World Heritage inscription is able to subsume the conflicting visions and multiple demands of the present by appealing to its universal value. A process that ultimately serves to naturalize a specific history and memory of the site and through its universalizing abstraction make

invisible the cultural and political work that the heritage process does (Smith 2007). However, as I will demonstrate, the production of universal value is never politically neutral and in the case of Bodh Gaya, can even generate new forms of exclusion and difference that inadvertently reinscribe the politics of religious identity through new means.

6.2 The Spatial and Aesthetic Politics of a World Heritage site

As I mentioned in the introduction, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention can be interpreted as a "leading text in terms of influencing management practices and perceptions of heritage across the globe" (Smith 2006: 94). The foundation for the 1972 World Heritage Convention derives from the earlier Venice Charter, otherwise known as the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*. This treaty that was comprised of largely European members was first drafted in 1964 and seeks to establish an international framework and a set of guiding principles for the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings. As Laura Jane Smith (2006: 90) has suggested, interwoven in the definitions of heritage offered by the Venice Charter and the World Heritage Convention are the existential assumptions based upon the "inherent nature of the value and significance of a monument." According to Smith (2006: 91), monuments are treated as "a 'witness' to history and tradition" which serves to "anthropomorphize material culture and creates a sense that memory is somehow locked within or embedded in the fabric of a monument or site." This central idea forms the basis for legitimizing certain conservation agendas among a fellowship of nation-states and helps to naturalize the history, values and meanings embedded in specific places of monumental significance.

According to Cleere (2001) and Smith (2006: 99), the World Heritage List is also a process of meaning making in itself, one that "not only identifies, but also *defines*, which heritage places are globally important." In order to inscribe a natural or cultural heritage property on the World Heritage list it must satisfy two overarching conditions. First of all, the site must be recognized as having "outstanding universal value to humanity" based on a set of evaluation criteria that I described at the beginning of this dissertation. The second condition is that the state party that nominates the site must also demonstrate that the management instruments are in place to ensure the survival of the values that were recognized by the World Heritage Committee. Linked to both these processes are a host of technical experts and heritage practitioners who are deemed best suited to not only reveal the authentic

meaning of monuments but also to ensure that certain conservation mechanisms are in place that will not compromise or distort the integrity of the monument itself (Smith 2006). These heritage experts are drawn from state parties and from representatives of international advisory bodies like ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM (International Study for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). Thus, according to Smith (2006: 92), “it becomes the duty of those upholding the Charter to ensure these universal values are revealed, understood and propagated as consensual history and heritage”. . . 'It is our duty,' the preamble continues, 'to hand them on [to future generations] in the full richness of their authenticity.'” Therefore, once a site is nominated on the World Heritage list, this provides a symbolic gesture within a transnational arena that confers value on what is listed and also sets in motion a complex set of calculations that is central to my analysis below.

6.2.1 The Mahabodhi Temple Complex: a UNESCO World Heritage site

> The Mahabodhi temple stands tall in the very heart of Bodh Gaya. In fact the town has been built around it (World Heritage Application 2001: 10)

The proposal to nominate the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site was not initiated in Bodh Gaya but began in the central government offices in New Delhi. As early as 1999, at the height of conflict between the Ambedkar Buddhists and the Mahabodhi Society of India, plans were in motion by the Ministry of Tourism to inscribe the place of Buddha's enlightenment on the UNESCO list. Lobbying for UNESCO's recognition was Aswani Lohani, Director of the Ministry of Tourism, and the main application was drawn up by Benoy K. Behl, a consultant to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The application also required consensual support by members of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee and other supporting agencies such as the Archaeological Survey of India and the Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation. This comprehensive application package provides an extensive historical background of the ancient Buddhist site drawing on a long history of recorded material and “authoritative” sources such as the travel accounts of the Chinese pilgrims in the forth and seventh century, and from prominent archaeological reports such as Alexander Cunningham in the late nineteenth century.



Figure 6.4 The UNESCO World Heritage plaque

Although the nomination was first presented for evaluation in 2001 it was not until June 26th 2002 that the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was formally inscribed on the World Heritage list. During the annual convention meeting held in Budapest, Hungary, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex became the 23rd Indian site to be added on the UNESCO list of "outstanding universal value." The last Indian "cultural site" that was inscribed on the World Heritage list was the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 1999.[182] Central to the justification by the State Party was the recognition of a set of Criterion that conferred the site's universal significance and outstanding value to humanity. This Criterion, as outlined by the United Nations World Heritage list, is as follows:

> *Criterion (i)*: The grand 50m high Mahabodhi Temple of the 5th-6th centuries is of immense importance, being one of the earliest temple constructions existing in the Indian sub-continent. It is one of the few representations of the architectural genius of the Indian people in constructing fully developed brick temples in that era.
> *Criterion (ii)*: The Mahabodhi Temple, one of the few surviving examples of early brick structures in India, has had significant influence in the development of architecture over the centuries.
> *Criterion (iii)*: The site of the Mahabodhi Temple provides exceptional records for the events

[182] The Indian cultural sites that are inscribed on the World Heritage list include (in alphabetical order): Agra Fort (1983), Ajanta Caves (1983), Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989), Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004), Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004), Churches and Convents of Goa (1986), Elephanta Caves (1987), Ellora Caves (1983), Fatehpur Sikri (1986), Great Living Chola Temples (1987), Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986), Group of Monuments at Khajuraho (1986), Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1985), Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993), Khajuraho Group of Monuments (1986), Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya (2002), Mountain Railways of India (1999), Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi (1993), Red Fort Complex (2007), Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003), Sun Temple, Konark (1984), Taj Mahal (1983).

> associated with the life of Buddha and subsequent worship, particularly since Emperor Asoka built the first temple, the balustrades, and the memorial column.
> *Criterion (iv)*: The present Temple is one of the earliest and most imposing structures built entirely in brick from the late Gupta period. The sculpted stone balustrades are an outstanding early example of sculptural reliefs in stone.
> *Criterion (vi)*: The Mahabodhi Temple Complex in Bodh Gaya has direct association with the life of the Lord Buddha, being the place where He attained the supreme and perfect insight.[183]

Based on this set of Criterion, one could argue that the "outstanding universal significance" of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex is constituted on the basis of two overarching components. On the one hand, considerable attention is given to the site's underlying architectural significance that not only bears "exceptional testimony" to India's unique cultural tradition but also serves to validate the authenticity of the site's Buddhist past. The inscription document provides a detailed description of the entire built environment and evaluates the integrity of the monument in relation to the "significant places associated with the events that immediately followed the Buddha's enlightenment, together with votive *stupas* and shrines" (WH-ABE 2002: 6). Although parts of the present temple complex date from different historical periods and reflect various repairs and renovation over the centuries, in terms of its underlying Buddhist character, "it has retained its essential features intact" (WH-ABE 2002: 8). In other words, according to Asher (2008: 80), the attribution of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex to Ashoka and the events associated with the life of the Buddha serves to legitimize a kind of "mythic status" of Indian history to the monument, whereby the site becomes anchored in what is often seen as "Buddhism's golden reign."

On the other hand, the universal significance of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex is also generated from its transnational validation as the cradle of Buddhism and the place which commemorates the memory of Buddha's enlightenment. Quoting an observation made by Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang to the region in the seventh century, the inscription document states: "Thus, on account of its association with the signal event in the Buddha's life, that of his attaining enlightenment and supreme wisdom, Bodh Gaya may be said to be the cradle of Buddhism. To the devout Buddhist there is no place of greater importance and sanctity" (WH-ABE 2002: 5). Furthermore, the inscription document states the "Buddha's understanding of the truth of human existence on earth and the path which he enunciated not only transformed the lives of thousands in his lifetime but that of millions in the world ever since . . . [he] is universally respected by people of different religions for the fine

[183] For more information, including site specific details on the evaluation of the cultural property see: www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/1056

message of compassion and peace. . .” (WH-ABE 2002: 5). Therefore, not only is the temple complex inscribed on the basis of its unique architectural and archaeological significance but also as a “living monument” that is an “exceptional testimony of the importance given to this place of pilgrimage by people from different countries through the passage of many centuries” (WH-ABE 2002: 5). Echoing earlier descriptions by Sir Edward Arnold and Dharmapala, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya is also seen as the equivalent to Jerusalem and Mecca as the pan-Asian center of one of the world's great religions. This is a place of active worship that reflects a “continuous tradition of philosophical thought and human values since the time of the Buddha” (WH-ABE 2002: 8). In other words, Bodh Gaya is a site that generates universal value *only* in relation to its Buddhist past and its continuity in terms of ritual activity today.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, the second condition that is required by the State Party to inscribe a cultural property on the World Heritage list are a set of effective management instruments to protect the heritage values of the site.[184] Often emphasis is placed on World Heritage as a “conservation tool” that requires the imposition of a “clearly defined space within a boundary and buffer zone in order to curtail inappropriate encroachments that might compromise the aesthetic or historical value of the site” (Smith 2003: 109). In terms of the legal status, the inscription document clearly identifies that the Mahabodhi Temple is the property of the State Government of Bihar and through the Bodh Gaya Temple Act of 1949 the “State Government is responsible for the protection, management, and monitoring of the Temple and its properties” (WH-ABE 2002: 7). Although there is a complete erasure of any dissonance and conflict pertaining to the 1949 Act that I described in the previous section, the inscription document does indicate some “pressures” that are likely to grow owing to further development of the site and the increase in the number of visitors. It is estimated that there are currently some 400,000 visitors per year (30% foreign and 70% domestic) and during the busy winter months from November to February there is an average of 2000 visitors a day. Over the years there has been lots of construction activity in close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple, including foreign counties who have “acquired land to build temples, monasteries and residential accommodation for their visiting pilgrims in the buffer zone of the temple” (WH-ABE 2002: 7). In terms of

[184] According to Item II.F of the UNESCO 'Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention' it describes a set of stipulations for protection and management of World Heritage sites. The document says: “All properties inscribed on the World Heritage List must have adequate long-term legislative, institutional, regulatory and/or traditional protection and management to ensure their safeguarding. This protection should include adequately delineated boundaries. Similarly State Parties should demonstrate adequate protection at the national, regional, municipal, and/or traditional level for the nominated property.” It continues: “Whenever necessary for the proper conservation of the property an adequate buffer zone should be provided.” Thanks to Frederick Asher (2008) for bringing this to my attention.

recommendations for future action by ICOMOS, the agency "wishes to draw attention of the responsible authorities on the need to continuously monitor the impact that such challenges may have on the religious and spiritual significance of the place," including the "ambitious initiatives for the presentation of the site" by the state authorities themselves (WH-ABE 2002: 8).

In other words, following the initial inscription of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex on the World Heritage list in 2002 the main recommendation to the Indian authorities continued to rest upon the importance of developing an "overall management plan to protect the values" of the site, including provisions for monitoring the impact that tourism may have on the place. Yet, one could argue that it was precisely for the development of tourism that World Heritage at Bodh Gaya was established in the first place as a central government initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Tourism. As a symbol of global fraternity within the imagined community of World Heritage, as I have suggested, this universal designation provides a convenient mechanism for silencing other forms of dissonance and repositioning the past in a way that supports the current and future projections of the State Party. For the remainder of this section, I am going to examine some of the ways in which the World Heritage designation has been mobilized by state and tourism authorities as a means of translating universal value into economic prosperity and new forms of urban governmentality. As I will demonstrate, this involved the resurrection of a master plan for Bodh Gaya that appealed to the management concerns raised by the the World Heritage Committee but also triggered new forms of opposition and protest that reflect earlier histories of displacement and spatial exclusion that I described in the previous chapter.

6.2.2 Resurrection of a Master Plan

As an extension of the neoliberal convergence of Buddhism and tourism development that I described in chapter five, the transnational branding of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage site has provided an effective tool for conjuring new financial arrangements from both public and private capital investment. It does not come as a surprise that many of the tourism incentives that I discussed in the previous chapter, such as the 2002 Gaya International Airport, the 18 Hole Golf Course and the Mahaparinirvana Express train have overlapped with the recent World Heritage designation. At the same time, it is important to clarify that one of the prominent misconceptions deriving from World Heritage inscription is that the enlisting of the cultural property on the United Nations list translates into direct financial support from UNESCO itself. When I

interviewed one of the local members of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee he helped clarify the affective power and charisma of World Heritage as it articulates with the global economy of tourism.

> As part of the United Nations declaration, whenever they declare World Heritage it is in their rules that they provide some limited monetary help. But the important thing is that once it is inscribed on the World Heritage list it enters the tourist map of the world. The World Heritage works in its own way towards propagation. The advertisement spreads around the world. . . and before. . . here in Bodh Gaya. . . it was not like that.

Although the official mission statement of the World Heritage Convention does not directly mention tourism or economic development, tourism growth is certainly one of the prime benefits deriving from World Heritage listing. Consequently, ever since Bodh Gaya was inscribed on the World Heritage list, the Ministry of Tourism and the Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation have used this global currency to spearhead a number of large promotional and marketing campaigns under *Incredible !ndia* as a means of showcasing the place of enlightenment as a spiritual destination.

To provide an example of the intermarriage of religious and economic trajectories linked to World Heritage inscription, in 2004 a *International Conclave on Buddhism and Spiritual Tourism* was held at the Vigyan Bhavana in New Delhi on February 17-18 and followed by a post-tour dedication ceremony at Bodh Gaya to celebrate its recent World Heritage status. The Buddhist summit was organized by the Ministry of Tourism & Culture and brought together several international Buddhist dignitaries, tourism ministers from over twelve counties and prominent guest speakers such as the President Abdul Kalam and the 14th Dalai Lama. As part of the inaugural address, the President Abdul Kalam, a man who is popularly known as the 'Missile Man of India' for his pivotal role in the nuclear tests in 1998 presented on the importance of transforming religion into spirituality and finding strength in peace. “The religions are like exquisite gardens, places full of surpassing beauty and tranquility, like sacred groves filled with beautiful birds and their melodious songs. I truly think that religions are beautiful gardens. They are enchanting islands, veritable oasis for the soul and the spirit. But they are islands nevertheless. How can we connect them so that the fragrance engulfs the whole universe?” Drawing on the Chinese philosopher Hu Shih (1891-1962) the President also remarked that,

> India conquered and dominated China culturally for two thousand years without ever having to send a single soldier across the border . . .This is what Buddhist culture can do – bring people together, bring nations together, and bring peace at no cost. This is a religion that had grown in stature to the messiah of God and the advocate of the spiritual role of religion. When the

spiritual role of the religion is compromised, the religion becomes a weapon of destruction and a divider of people.[185]

The Buddhist conclave concluded its deliberations by adopting a "resolution to appoint a high level commission to look into the situation of the ancient places of Buddhist interest in India and to recommend measures to rehabilitate and bring them back into the ancient glory" (MSJ Vol. 111, 2004: 4). Directly following the meeting there was a two-day chartered flight from Delhi to Sarnath (the place of Buddha's first sermon) and Bodh Gaya for the official inauguration ceremony of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site. As part of the inaugural celebrations, India's Tourism and Culture Minister, Jagmohan announced plans to develop Bodh Gaya into an international destination and promised infrastructure and facilities to develop its tourism sector. "We are grateful to UNESCO that they responded to our request and have given the status of World Heritage site to the Mahabodhi Temple. This has put Buddha Gaya on the World map," the Minister announced (MSJ Vol. 111, 2004: 4). When I interviewed the Joint Secretariat of the Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi about the International Conclave and the prospects of Buddhism and spiritual tourism, she also appraised the recent developments in Bihar noting that Bodh Gaya will become a "mega-destination" where one can now have "a world class spiritual experience of the Buddhist circuit."

The prospect of a "world class spiritual experience" has led to the resurrection of a comprehensive master plan for city town development that appeals to the recommendations by the World Heritage Committee in terms of heritage conservation management but also one that incorporates the State Party's development agenda towards tourism promotion. As part of the standard protocol for UNESCO, once a cultural property is inscribed on the World Heritage list, a team of international heritage advisors (usually selected from ICCROM and ICCOMOS) visit the site and report on the condition of the monument and whether or not certain criteria and assurances are in place as recommended by the World Heritage Committee. As I mentioned previously, when the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was designated a World Heritage site in June 2002, the main concern noted by the technical advisors had been the pressure from tourism development and pilgrimage activities on-site and *not* the identity politics that had shaped the site up until this point. During this time, the World Heritage Committee recommended to the Indian authorities that they "develop a comprehensive management plan to ensure the conservation of the heritage values of the property, including provisions for regular monitoring and adequate mechanisms to control the impact of tourism and pilgrimage

[185] The address at the inaugurations of the International Conclave was provided at http://www.presidentofindia.nic.in. Visited 12/06/2006.

activities within and surrounding the property" (WHC-03/27: 38).

In response to the recommendations, the central agency who was entrusted by the Ministry of Tourism & Culture for revising the master plan for Bodh Gaya is the *Housing and Urban Development Corporation* (HUDCO), in consultation with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Building directly on earlier data from the previous master plans and involving a series of stakeholder consultations, surveys and new satellite imagery, these agencies have prepared three documents in response to the international advisory recommendations: *Mahabodhi Temple Complex World Heritage Property: Site Management Plan*; *Heritage Led Perspective Development Plan for BodhGaya, Vision 2001-2031: The Plan* and *Heritage Led Perspective Development Plan for BodhGaya, Vision 2001-2031: The Work Studies*. Later, these documents were revised and merged with the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNRUM) "City Development Plan" that I refer to here.[186] This corpus of planning documents present a collective initiative that involves city planners, tourism authorities, foreign Buddhist groups and citizen input that sets out a broad policy framework for development and sustainable management of the Mahabodhi Temple based on the guidelines prepared by ICOMOS. They include extensive phasing of specific heritage oriented projects and tourism development initiatives for the next 26 years and is designed to serve as an advisory policy document to "guide effective management of the temple and give suggestive controls for the regulation of its setting" (CDP 2006: 149).

[186] The 'City Development Plan' (CDP) is designed to be synchronized with the revised master plan, but whereas the Heritage Led Prospective Development Plan sets out the broad policy framework for development of the town from the present day to 2031, the City Development Plan was constituted in light of the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNRUM) scheme under the Government of India. This ambitious scheme launched in 2005 identifies 40 projects for implementation within the first two phases alone (2006-2012) and 434.63 Crores of investment required. This major initiative under the JNNRUM scheme has selected Bodh Gaya and 63 other 'priority' cities throughout India to encourage reforms and fast track development. This City Development Plan is meant to compliment the Site Management Plan under HUDCO and was finalized in September 2006 by the Department of Urban Development, Government of Bihar. The consultative data was provided by HUDCO but seeks to expand on the vision of the JNNRUM scheme. See www.jnnurm.nic.in for more information.

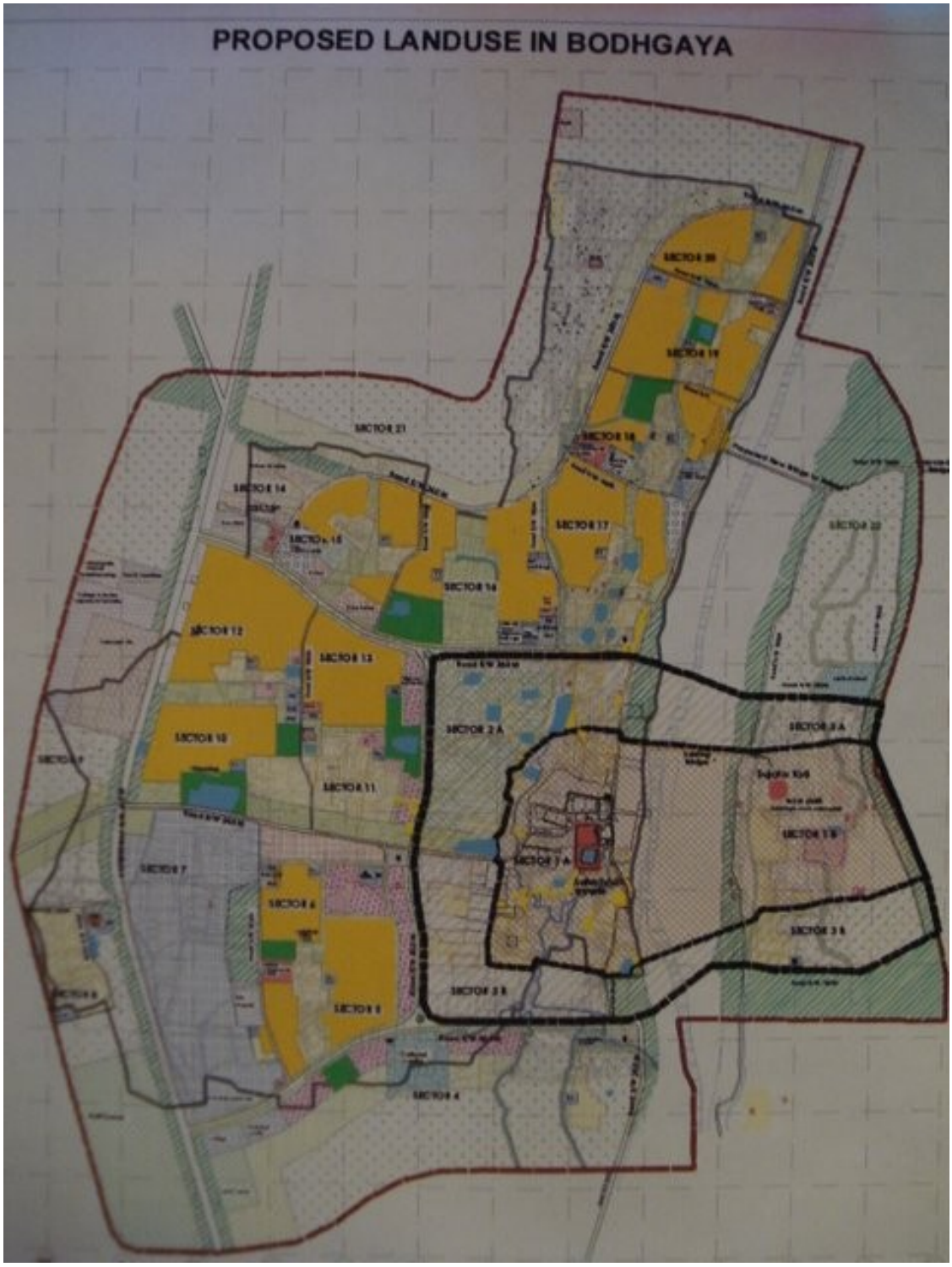


Figure 6.5 2006 City Development Master Plan for Bodh Gaya
Source: Housing Urban Development Corporation

The spirit of this recent set of urban rehabilitation plans builds directly upon the "planning imperatives" of the Draft Master Plan that I presented in chapter five, but now recast in terms of a model World Heritage city. Through the social engineering of Bodh Gaya's city space, the recent master plan is designed to express the aspirations of the government and ruling political party that uses Buddhist heritage and its worldly and universal value as a means of projecting future images of socio-economic prosperity. In other words, the place of enlightenment must convey both the spiritual aroma as the birthplace of Buddhism in order to satisfy the tourist and pilgrim desire for an "authentic" Buddhist landscape but it also employs heritage value and conservation design to produce an exemplary model of sustainable city development.

> The Site Management Plan seeks to establish a sustainable future for the Mahabodhi Temple Complex World Heritage Site by protection and enhancement of its value attributes that are representative of its universal significance (CDP 2006: 40).
>
> The plan outlines policies for developing BodhGaya as a 'World Buddhist Centre', a green healthy town with equitable social opportunity for all and a pilgrim destination that provides glimpses of the land of enlightenment as it used to be in the times of the Buddha (CDP 2006: 87).
>
> The city of BodhGaya should have a serene, verdant ambience, the conceptualisation of which was done by the Lord himself when he said "Lovely, indeed, O Venerable one is this spot of ground charming is the forest grove, pleasant is the flowing river with sandy fords, and hard by is the village where I could obtain food. Suitable indeed is this place for spiritual exertion for those noble scions who desire to strive (CDP 2006: 4-5).

Although the master plan strives to find a holistic balance with all its social constituencies, it also recognizes the longstanding complications and incompatible uses that have prevented its full emancipation in the present. "On conducting a comparative analysis of what was proposed for the town in the Master Plan (1991-2001), and what development was achieved, we find that most development that was proposed has not taken place. The city has developed in gross ignorance of the Master Plan proposals" (CDP 88). Despite earlier regulations and government policy to recalibrate major development around the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, there has in fact been a "significant increase in commercial activity with a number of hotels, guesthouses and unauthorized shops coming up in a haphazard way along the major road" (CDP 88). The proliferation of these hotels and guesthouses, without any architectural control, has also "devalued the aesthetics generated by excellent monasteries and temples. The monasteries and temples, constructed by other Buddhist countries could have contributed significantly to the development of a positive urban imageability with the focus on the

Mahabodhi Temple" (CDP 88).

In order to curtail these developments and protect the universal values of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, the master plan spatially segregates the town into four main layers (initially three, but later expanded at the request of the World Heritage Committee). These include the "World Heritage boundary zone" which covers 12 acres of land enclosed by an outer boundary wall that remains the primary protection of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex. The "core zone" which includes a ½ km radius around the Mahabodhi Temple and is based on Cunningham's 1892 excavation plan. The "buffer zone" which consists of a 1 km protection area; and the "periphery" of up to 2 km from the World Heritage site. The 1 km radius buffer zone is also collapsed into two larger "Special Areas" that are linked to specific heritage bylaws and are designed to regulate height and urban aesthetic control. In Special Area "A" there is a complete ban on all further construction in the "core zone" which may potentially disturb the historical and visual presentation of the monument. This area will also be designated a 'silence zone' that is traffic free and entirely pedestrianized to limit the noise pollution. In Special Area "B," which encompasses the larger buffer zone, there will also be no new construction unless it is for recreational, cultural facilities and essential infrastructure. This is described as a 'cultural zone' where religious and related uses are allowed but they must abide by specific height structures limited to 33 ft. Finally, as part of the overarching vision that will allow Bodh Gaya to breath as a living city, there will also be extensive green belts, a new system of parks and a complete revitalization of traditional drainage systems that will function as "city lung spaces" (CDP 129). In describing some of the features of this model World Heritage city and its continuity with previous urban plans, it is important to highlight the ways in which the production of universal value is also deeply implicated in the management of space and place. Furthermore, it is only through the realization of a master plan for Bodh Gaya that its spirit and essential character as the site of Buddha's enlightenment can be revealed and safeguarded.

Despite these ambitious efforts to design an effective master plan that could liberate the inherent qualities of its sacred environment, new information was beginning to arise that was also in tension with the idyllic presentation of the latest proposals. The first sign of discord began to emerge within the first few years of the site's inscription on the World Heritage list when the United Nations Committee received reports from local NGOs and other religious groups concerning increased tourism pressure, vandalism at the temple, court cases and "conflictual relationships between the religious groups using the property and occasionally the local communities, which reportedly resulted in fires and riots"

(WHC-03/27: 38). There were also some groups which were also claiming that the management of the property should be placed in the hands of Buddhist religious groups instead of the current local government authority. Concerns were also being raised by the World Heritage Committee that "the absence of a functioning comprehensive management plan had persisted" and expressed concern over these conflicts between local stakeholders and religious groups (WHC-03/27: 38). Having examined the management proposals presented by HUDCO, the Indian authorities were also now being accused of "complicating the conservation process" and the development of both tourism and pilgrimage-friendly facilities at Bodh Gaya (WHC-03/27: 39). Thus, in order to rectify these concerns, the World Heritage Committee requested that the State Party "enlarge the World Heritage protected area to ensure that the protective core and buffer zones are meaningful and effective for the conservation of the values of the property" (WHC-03/27 Corr: 4).

6.2.3 Resistance to the Master Plan

> These masters' seek to impose a 30 year city development plan when many of the locals are not in a position to plan for 30 days (Christopher Titmuss, Bodh Gaya Social Forum Meeting 2006).

Following the request of the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee, a joint mission was undertaken by members of ICOMOS and UNESCO from the 21st to 27th in April 2005 in order to follow up on the previous report and to assess the current conservation issues taken by the State Party.[187] When the international party arrived in Bodh Gaya it was clear that there was plenty of resistance to the latest version of the master plan in relation to the recent World Heritage designation. As the international committee and senior officials made their way to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex the everyday bustle of commercial activity in the bazaar was at a standstill. There were no friendly guides, street vendors and shopkeepers there to greet the VIP guests. Instead, all the stores along the footpath were locked and a two-day silent protest or *bandh* was held among shopkeepers and concerned citizens (Nagari Vikaras Munch) at the base of the nearby Ghandi Chowk. When the

[187] These members consisted of UNESCO advisory member Junko Okahashi, ICOMOS technical-expert Herb Stovel, the director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India C. Babu Rajeev, chief town planner of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), R.K. Safaya, state culture secretary S.K. Singh, tourism secretary R.S. Tiwari, Magadh division commissioner Shakti Kumar Negi and district magistrate Chaitanya Prasad. For more details see "Shrine to keep heritage tag" by Farhana Kalam in *The Telegraph*, April 25, 2005. As part of the UN mission, the technical advisors examined the city development proposals along with an alternative plan that was presented by an independent conservation expert named Poonam Thakur. In this proposal, Poonam Thakur critiqued the existing HUDCO master plan and offered a set of recommendations that take into consideration Bodh Gaya as a cultural landscape.

UNESCO advisory member Junko Okahashi was confronted by the local media on this matter she replied “the people of Bodh Gaya must develop a sense of belonging to the rich cultural heritage of the place and cooperate in the preservation and maintenance of the World Heritage site.” However, many of these residents were apprehensive about the positive role of cultural heritage at Bodh Gaya, especially when heritage conservation and urban redevelopment schemes involve the relocation of commercial activities that are central to local livelihoods and places of residential dwelling. A long time resident of Bodh Gaya, Dwarko Sundrani commented: “They say they want this for public space. . . but there was no decision on the master plan and then the government proceeds to give lands to foreigners. But what about local people? There are earlier issues over land but no one is listening.”

As I mentioned in the introduction, I arrived in Bodh Gaya to undertake my fieldwork in August 2005, a few months following the protest against the UNESCO mission. When I interviewed shopkeepers and other local stakeholders about the incident they told me that World Heritage designation was initially regarded as a positive achievement that would contribute to economic prosperity for the town. However, within a few years of its formal inscription on the UNESCO list, rumors of the master plan had begun to circulate through the bazaar and it was unclear to many of Bodh Gaya's public how they would be affected by this process. Although there were a number of stakeholder consultation meetings organized by HUDCO, other residents I interviewed had commented that they never had access to the latest City Development Plan or found the lengthy document illegible. Following the UNESCO mission in April, there were also a number of rumors in circulation through the regional media claiming that the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was in danger of being *de-listed* if the appropriate conservation measures were not implemented and the “encroachments” within the buffer zone removed. These early signs of the master plan, now linked to World Heritage designation, were seen as the latest front on the rights of local residents fearing they will be the only group affected by this new brand of global colonialism that privileges transnational religious groups, corporate and neoliberal interests. With tourism and pilgrimage expenditures increasingly being absorbed by the Buddhist monastic community and the state, there was growing concern that Bodh Gaya’s public will be unable to compete with the larger transnational interests.

For many of these local residents who have witnessed the ebb and flow of master plan rhetoric in the past they are prepared to resist the latest incarnation of heritage conservation and tourism development agendas that are a byproduct of UNESCO’s globalizing endeavor. Since the April 2005 mission there have been a number of protests and peaceful demonstrations in response to the new set of

regulations and conservation demands that seek to marginalize street vending and the urban poor from the presentation of World Heritage. According to one hotelier,

> The main purpose of the Master Plan should be development not a destruction plan. Then they come with bulldozers and start destroying this and that, it is not fair and not legal. If they would like to propose development they should first confront the people of Bodh Gaya informing us that we will do this and that work. Not just papers. Before they begin destruction, other plans should be in place. Implement those plans first. This place is not like Delhi. People are illiterate. We understand leadership but we are not literate people. If there will be bad effects due to the master plan we are free to revolt. If you want to resettle us, there should be more land, it should be more free, less taxes and necessary compensation. Then move. Otherwise it is not legal. . . The authority has given a map and we have constructed our hotel accordingly. Some officials they grant permission through briberies and in the other ways they do not. The people who do not know the legal aspects are very scared. Only god knows, only Buddha knows when we will shift. Some hoteliers do not have proper documentation of their construction permission. Here at Bodh Gaya there is a long history of master plans. It was first made in 1966. It is now forty years later and what is the government doing?[188]



Figure 6.6 Peace march against the destruction of hotels

As I have shown in chapter five, the rehabilitation of public space in Bodh Gaya is rarely consistent with the daily spatial experiences of urban residents and workers. Rather, as a prominent heritage site

[188] This hotelier is referring to the recent 2006 incident where two hotels, Prince Hotel and Jeevak Hotel had their forth floor demolished by the Gaya Regional Development Authority (GRDA) without any forewarning at the beginning of the tourist season. The GRDA argued that they had no permission to construct a fourth floor which was against the town height restriction policies. Immediately following the destruction, there was a Press Conference Meeting held by the Hotel Association and a peace march against the master plan on November 22, 2006. The Association also warned the government that if changes were not made to the master plan they would also protest the state govenrment sponsored Buddha Mahotsav.

and international tourist destination the place is often designed to serve the interests of elite members of "civil society." These shopkeepers and informal entrepreneurs from the bazaar are keenly aware of the empty promises and dismal record of state accountability towards rehabilitation and compensation in the past. Drawing comparison with the periodic "cleansing drives" that move through the town during the government sponsored Buddha Mahotsav festival and with the arrival of other VIP guests, they have become accustomed to these ritual performances of state power and aesthetic discrimination as part of the annual cycle in Bodh Gaya. At the same time, many of these local stakeholders have also been shaped by these national and transnational dialogues over place and now use "locality" as a reference point for mobilization against political elites and state-imposed spatial regimes. Under various grassroots organizations that often transcend class and caste based registers such as the Hotelier Association, Shopkeepers and Footpath Union, these groups have mobilized to highlight the inefficacy of state authority and "give public voice to the "invisible" or lesser known segments of the urban social order" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 22). In this way, local inhabitants have also become implicated in universal designs and the bazaar becomes central to competing versions and expressions of World Heritage in the form of protest and opposition especially when it threatens to undermine their economic livelihood and create an unequal playing field for business opportunities.

One example that many locals draw upon to convey their disappointment is the recent manifestation of a "meditation park" that was created by the state appointed Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee to enhance the experience of visiting the sacred site. As I described in chapter five, there have many attempts in the past to design a "landscape suitable for striving," one that expresses the natural authenticity of the Buddha's hermitage as a place conducive to meditation over 2550 years ago. This 12 acre track of land located in the southeast corner of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex includes a number of small individual huts for meditation and two large bells housed within decorative pavilions. The space that was once occupied by the residents of Taradih has now been transformed into a highly aestheticized garden environment surrounded by large concrete walls that requires special permission from the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee to enter the park. The recent transformation of this area into a meditative landscape has also come at a cost that presents an ethical dilemma for those seeking spiritual solace. Not only does the meditation park erase the earlier histories of displacement in the past but today the tranquil environment that will help elevate the mind towards enlightenment is only accessible through 100 Rp ($3 US dollars) entrance fee. As a result, this exclusionary space remains largely empty throughout the season and serves primarily as a

symbol of the state government achievements that periodically offer guided tours to visiting bureaucrats and VIP guests.



Figure 6.7 The Meditation Park

Linked to the local chain of cause and effect that has grown out of the conditioned genesis of a World Heritage site in Bodh Gaya is the diasporic Buddhist community. As I have described in chapter three, since the 1956 Buddha Jayanti, there have been a number of monasteries, temples and guest houses from the Buddhist diaspora that have converted agricultural land into gated spiritual communities. These transnational Buddhist institutions continue to play an important role in mediating pilgrimage activities and commemorating the Buddhist memory of this sacred site. In this regards, transnational Buddhism and World Heritage designation are complementary. However, with the soaring prices of land and the increasing competition between monasteries and local-run establishments, the unfolding social drama of the master plan have prompted many local groups to point the blame on the foreign Buddhist institutions and their position of privilege. One shopkeeper complained: “why do they target the local shops and hotels first, and not the monasteries? As a tourist place, tourists should come here and have hotels. If monasteries can build guest houses why not the common people?”

Under the inspection of the World Heritage Committee, many of these religious bodies are also concerned about the latest “construction freeze” and the imposition of a 1km buffer zone around the temple if it affects their claims to land ownership. The recent construction of the Wat Pa from the Thai Bharat Society provides a case example. Under suspicious terms, the founding members of the Thai

Bharat Society were granted a large plot of land directly south of the Mahabodhi Temple in 1997. Since that time, the Buddhist organization has been ensnared in competing land claims and subsequent court cases over the property rights. To complicate matters, a portion of the Wat Pa campus sits directly on top of the sensitive archaeological grounds in alleged violation of the both the World Heritage guidelines and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) policies for protected monuments. According to the ASI and state government policy, there can be no construction within a 100 meter radius of a protected monument like the Mahabodhi Temple. When I interviewed the head abbot or *Bhikkhu-in-charge* of the Wat Pa, he commented:

> There have been three to four court cases. . .but then I eventually win the case. However the owner of the property refuses to sign the papers. So still there are some plots where court cases are still going on. Then the World Heritage Committee came and is requesting that we do not build on this land due to its archaeological value. So we have to get permission from the World Heritage Committee to construct and they won't let us. We argue that this was part of the system prior to its designation. So in the end I have decided to build all of this together. I am not going to wait. But the name of development is for the development of Buddhism here. It is practice that goes straight to the mind. This will be a meditation place.

Rather than comply to the recent wave of international and state demands to freeze all construction, the Thai Wat Pa has chose to accelerate the building process for the purpose of future meditation practice. These international pressures tied with recent tourism development initiatives that will transform the place of enlightenment into a spiritual Disneyland with artificial gardens, golf courses, hi-tech security, and light and sound shows has left many Buddhist groups wondering about the benefits of this World Heritage status. As is evident in the concerns raised by international Buddhist groups today, many feel that these changes are effacing the spiritual reverence of the site as a place of Buddhist pilgrimage and sacred memory. When I interviewed a prominent Rinpoche from the Tibetan Nyingma lineage he asked:

> Why not make the Hindu Holy site a World Heritage site first? In 2002, it was nominated during BJP rule, so why would they nominate Bodh Gaya. . . a Buddhist site? I can tell you that we have big doubts as a Buddhist community. . . The question is what is behind World Heritage? Until now it may seem good, but this place touches the very heart of Buddhist people. The Buddhist need to be able to worship freely here. Or else there will be strong resentment from Buddhists around the world. . .Behind the Indian office I fear there is Hindu religious politics. . .Bodh Gaya must be the most important international place now and what they want to make is a big cut from its revenue. Soon they will be making more restrictions and soon there will be no Buddhists. Bodh Gaya is in the heart of Buddhists around the world. And we are unhappy with the Indian Government in how they are treating this place.

Today, international conservation and both urban and tourism development have taken on a new salience in the management of the enlightenment affect in Bodh Gaya as the crucible through which a large number of donations, government funding and transnational capital now flows. The sheer power and influence of both international and central government financing that is being channeled into the city is certainly one of the most dramatic changes to Bodh Gaya's landscape in recent years. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission scheme (JNNURM), like the early state planning that was an integral part of Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of national development in the aftermath of independence, has once again resurfaced through this major initiative launched by the Government of India in 2005. For this purpose, the central government is sanctioning upwards of 8,800 Crore rupees across 63 “priority cities” spanning 13 states. In Bodh Gaya alone, 50 Crore rupees (roughly 11 million US dollars) will be provided for solid waste management, drainage and sewage as part of this large initiative to revitalize city infrastructure and promote a more inclusive growth through the urban sector.

At the same time, the charisma of the UNESCO World Heritage designation and the prospects of urban development and global capital are reshaping the geography of difference in new ways. Not only has World Heritage inscription contributed to the monopolization of a dominant memory associated with the Buddha's enlightenment but improved accessibility to the site through the Gaya International airport is severing this world famous temple city from its wider regional geography. In recent years there has been some growing resentment among many Gayaites when it was announced in Patna that Gaya city would be excluded from the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNRUM) (Qadir 2007: February 13). Only Bodh Gaya and Patna in the state of Bihar were selected for the investment of crores of funds to support the ambitious urban development programme. From the *Gaya-mahatmya* perspective, Bodh Gaya has long been regarded as an appendage of Gaya's larger sacred geography. Similarly, the Buddha is often regarded as an *avatara* of Vishnu and enfolded within the larger Hindu cosmology. Yet, according to Sadanand Gurda, a prominent leader of the Gayawal Pandas “the exclusion of Gaya is bound to hurt the sentiment of the followers of Hinduism, as the world-famous Vishnupad shrine is not less important than the seat of Buddha's enlightenmnet” (Qadir 2007).

6.3 Conclusion

I began this chapter with the premise that universals and the production of global spaces of

universal value are not self-fulfilling truths (Tsing 2005) but are conditioned by various social phenomena that are historically relative and interdependent. Since the early nineties, the structural adjustments of the economy and the violent forms of religious nationalism have placed new pressures and tensions over the management of sacred space and the politics of placing the past. In the first section, I examined a set of contingent and competing claims over management of the sacred space that precede and overlap with the designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a UNESCO World Heritage site. I have suggested that these power struggles between the Ambedkar Buddhists, the Mahabodhi Society of India and local intelligentsia brought to the foreground the unresolved conflicts and competing demands over management of a contested site of religious memory. One aspect of branding cultural monuments within the imagined community of World Heritage is that the weight of the universal can silence or marginalize the counter-histories, memories and voices of various stakeholders. By foregrounding these earlier forms of contestation, I have shown how the production of universal value through World Heritage designation can mask these local forms of dissonance but also perpetuate new forms of conflict and opposition between state authorities, local residents and religious groups.

Throughout this chapter I have also shown how universals can operate in a practical sense. On the one hand, the production of universal value associated with World Heritage inscription, involves an element of abstraction that aspires for a more inclusive cosmopolitan stewardship over the past. Through its universal claims and the naturalization of history and memory, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was defined as a cultural property "in a way that negates any counter-discourse, distortion or sense of conflict and one that finds synergy with the expectations and assumptions that underlie universal significance" (Smith 2006: 101). In other words, the production of World Heritage and the pursuit of authenticity provide a way of legitimizing political power that can lead to new managerial practices and networks of governance that are oriented towards a broader vision of tourism development by the State Party. With universality conceived "as an important legal and moral ideology for protection" (Smith 110), it also serves to justify new forms of urban governmentality and spatial exclusion, especially among local shopkeepers and street vendors who are seen as a potential threat to the aesthetic and physical presentation of the site.

On the other hand, universals are also embedded and enacted in particular historical and cultural landscapes at the confluence of competing religious, socio-economic and political interests at various scales. According to Melanie Smith (2003: 108) "the significance of World Heritage status for the sites

themselves, national and local government, relevant authorities, local communities, and visitors to the site may differ enormously." Not all groups value and appreciate heritage in the ways outlined by UNESCO. World Heritage sites and their location within urban environments are also central to numerous "spatial contests because of their complex structures and differentiated social entities that collude and compete for control over material and symbolic resources" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 19). Throughout this dissertation I have described some of the underlying power geometries that constitute Bodh Gaya's spatial environment. As I have shown in this chapter, the freezing and naturalization of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as an authentic Buddhist site within the imagined community of World Heritage, does not transcend the place based struggles and public life that continually activate and shape its destiny in the present. In this regards, World Heritage inscription can produce space that is both constitutive of power, but also instigate new forms of resistance through social movements and local activism.

Before I turn to the final conclusion, in this chapter I have pulled together a number of themes and issues that were raised in each of the preceding chapters. Drawing on the Buddhist concept of the conditioned genesis, I have shown how certain meanings and claims are inflected and give rise to new demands along a contingent chain of cause and effect. Exploring the conditioned genesis of a World Heritage site at Bodh Gaya opens up the possibility of an ethnographic account of global interconnection where the production of universal value cannot be separated from the practical encounters across difference that give meaning to these global sites of memory. Although the inscription of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex upon the World Heritage list is a relatively recent phenomenon, the social implications arising from this designation also bring to the foreground the earlier spatial conflicts and historical sedimentations of meaning over place. It is for these reasons that one must look beyond the formal abstractions inscribed by World Heritage discourse and examine the social relationships that give grip to universals in specific cultural and historical contexts (Tsing 2005). According to Tsing (2005: 4-6), it is in these spaces of transnational encounter where global friction is generated by "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference . . . Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding and particularizing." It is this confluence of the local and global, particular and universal, religious and economic that continues to vitalize World Heritage at Bodh Gaya. In the final conclusion I will summarize the findings of my dissertation and discuss how one accounts for the plurality of place in Bodh Gaya and the ways in which cultural and religious difference, dissension and discord become a part of Bodh Gaya's

revitalization as the “Light of Asia” in the twenty-first century.

7. CONCLUSION:

THE LIGHTE OF ASIA REDUX: WORLD HERITAGE AND THE GLOBAL PUBLIC SPHERE

> What we need, it seems to me, is a global sense of the local, a global sense of place” (Massey 1994: 156)

In this dissertation I have provided a historical ethnography on the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a UNESCO World Heritage site. At Bodh Gaya, I have argued that World Heritage designation is the latest historical layering that lays claim to a particular history defined by a central event: the Buddha's enlightenment. My aim has been to elucidate some of the social relationships and transnational processes that underpin the production of universal value at Bodh Gaya. I began in chapter two with a historical overview of the modern reinvention of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment and detailed some of the disputes over rites of worship and proprietorship of the Mahabodhi Temple that spanned the nineteenth and twentieth century. It was during this period that the British colonial state helped to restore many prominent Buddhist sites such as the Mahabodhi Temple Complex but also played an integral role in constructing the “official” memory of the site as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. As a result of these archaeological interventions, this also brought to the foreground the competing religious claims and conflictual histories over the sacred property. This was most evident among the Buddhist-Theosophist Anagarika Dharmapala who founded the Mahabodhi Society in 1891 on the basis of reclaiming Bodh Gaya for the world Buddhist community.

Following this historical background, I have structured the dissertation along a set of interrelated transnational processes that grew out of independence and underpin the contemporary spatial politics of World Heritage designation at Bodh Gaya. In chapter three I provided an analysis of the institutional growth of monasteries, temples and/or guest houses from the Buddhist diaspora that grew out of the landmark Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956. Linked by expanding transnational networks of pilgrimage and patronage, I showed how these Buddhist groups have actively transformed the landscape of the “navel of the earth” into a place of sacred memory. In this chapter I provided details on specific Buddhist monks, managers and religious institutions that have shaped the site within the last fifty years. With the re-emergence of Bodh Gaya as an international centre of Buddhist

pilgrimage and devotion this has also led to certain moral and ethical quandaries, especially over the acquisition of agricultural land and the construction of spiritual gated communities under Jungle Raj.

In chapter four, I began with a description of the Bodh Gaya Math in relation to the social history of the south Bihar region. Drawing on the work of Gyan Prakash (1990), I examined the system of bonded labor among the *Kamias* that accompanied the rise of this religious institution as one of the largest Zamindars in the region. This hegemonic position was further entrenched during the British Raj and in the aftermath of independence, despite the colonial discourse of "freedom" and the agricultural reforms initiated by the Nehruvian government. It was not until the mid-seventies, during the Bodh Gaya land struggle, that this prominent religious institution was finally dismantled which coincided with the growing international traffic in pilgrimage and tourism to the site. Drawing on a number of life histories and bazaar stories, I showed the increasing importance of tourism as a source of economic livelihood and opportunity for social mobility among local residents. Like the high seasonality of the agricultural cycle, many of Bodh Gaya's inhabitants have also become intertwined with the global flows of traffic that characterize this international pilgrimage centre. Focusing on the informal economy of tourism in the global bazaar, I showed how the Buddhist memory of the site is negotiated by local inhabitants who draw upon and transform these claims into local histories of belonging.

In chapter five, I examined the ways in which the place of Buddha's enlightenment also provides a central resource for national and state development. As an object of cultural heritage and a place of state legitimization, I described how Buddhism articulates with future visions of socio-economic prosperity at different times. Since independence, the national and provincial state government has initiated a number of urban rehabilitation programs which seek to redesign the landscape to ensure the town's international visibility as a growing destination for pilgrimage and tourism. By tracking the history of the 'master plan,' I showed how practices of cartography, zoning and beautification are deployed as spatial tactics that have consequences for local people, especially among those at Taradih village who were displaced in the early eighties. In this chapter, I also examined some of the ways in which Buddhism articulates with the liberalization of the markets which has also redefined Bodh Gaya and Bihar's Buddhist circuit in recent years as a world class spiritual destination for wider global consumption.

The purpose of these chapters was to provide the ethnographic and historical context for my analysis of the recent World Heritage designation in chapter six. Since the official designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site in 2002, this recent historical layering has

brought to the foreground the politics of space and the contests of meaning among Bodh Gaya's diverse set of publics. Drawing on the Buddhist concept of the conditioned genesis, I pulled together a number of overlapping themes presented throughout this dissertation to show how World Heritage and the production of universal value was set in motion much earlier than the official designation. Central to the conditioned genesis are the ways in which the aura of secular nationalism and post-colonial development had been replaced by the ascendancy of Hindu nationalism hand-in-hand with the accelerated processes of economic liberalization since the structural adjustments of the early nineties (Hancock 2002, Appadurai 2001). In this way, World Heritage inscription was forged through the axis of identity politics in the aftermath of Ayodhya but also the market opportunism under economic liberalization. Through an analysis of global connection and the local chains of cause and effect, I analyzed the ways in which UNESCO's claims of universality can operate in a way that silences discord but can also exacerbate new forms of conflict in relation to the historical encounters over place and the power geometries that underlie the spatial environment.

Let me summarize my findings to this point. Through my spatial analysis of World Heritage designation at Bodh Gaya, I have explored the varying ways in which place is constructed out of a particular set of social relations. I have argued that the growing transnational significance of the site and its affective resonance is empowered by the dominant memory and foundational event related to the life of the Buddha. In this dissertation I have shown how World Heritage sites, like the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, are important global spaces of convergence where history, memory, narratives and groups are entangled through UNESCO's universal application. Like many other urban and cosmopolitan spaces, World Heritage sites also lie at the intersection of diverse and competing social, economic, and political influences (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003) and despite the claims of universality they do not transcend localities and the "particular historical conjunctures that give them content and force" (Tsing 2005: 8). In the following sections I am going to conclude with a discussion on various aspects of UNESCO World Heritage as a comparative site of anthropological analysis and also in terms of the particular ethnographic findings at Bodh Gaya itself.

7.1 Bodh Gaya as a Living Religious Heritage Site

As I have shown in chapter six, World Heritage and the production of global spaces of universal value has both intended and unintended consequences. According to Doreen Massey (1994), one of the

social repercussions of globalization is that the search for authentic meaning associated with places becomes heightened and the desire for a sense of place and rootedness becomes more important. The production of World Heritage geographies is part of the response to establish a relationship between a place and an identity within a larger world system characterized by increasing movement and change. Thus, one of the immediate effects deriving from World Heritage inscription is that global institutions like UNESCO can have a profound impact upon the politics of remembering and the establishment of authoritative histories. However, as Smith (2006) has shown, the intensification of World Heritage discourse in the late twentieth century also reflects the dominance of western and Eurocentric approaches that have naturalized a range of assumptions and meanings about the material authenticity and innate aesthetic and scientific value of heritage properties *in situ*. Like the earlier colonial reinvention of the past, similarly, World Heritage designation involves the production and reproduction of "official" histories of place that are informed by universal aspirations. Drawing on Appadurai (2001), one could argue that at Bodh Gaya the "spatial sovereignty" and "longterm materially certified authenticity" of the Mahabodhi Temple as a Buddhist site has been reinforced and singularized within a transnational arena. Through various forms of heritage practice and conservation design that I discussed in relation to the master plan, these actions can also be interpreted as further attempts to fix the authentic meaning of places, to enclose and defend them.

As I discussed in chapter six, the World Heritage List is also an act of meaning-making itself that involves a nomination process by the State Party who decides which pasts and memories should be "preserved" so that all may have access to it.[189] As is often the case in the production and dissemination of universal value, the existential assumptions that underpin the distribution of over 890 properties on the Word Heritage list also reflect a close affinity with European states that speak to the "grand narratives" of the modern enlightenment such as "European aesthetic notions relating to monumental cultures" (Cleere 2001: 26) and its reinstatement as national identity (Smith 2006: 98). This has been one of the main criticisms leveled at the World Heritage Convention in the recent past, that is, how does one account for the cultural diversity of human experience and the ways in which different groups perceive heritage. Thus, contrary to anthropological notions of cultural relativity, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006: 186) "to qualify as a masterpiece of the heritage of humanity, a cultural

[189] The relationship between a place of heritage and the discourse of cultural property is also important in this context, and according to Smith (2006), the notion of "property" assumes a right of possession, a possession by the world community. "The values become 'owned' by the world community and are subsequently further legitimized with the discourse. The term 'property' also reinforces the sense in which the cultural values associated with a place or object can be captured and frozen" (See also Hander 2003 in Smith 2006: 101).

expression must be not only *distinctive* but also *distinguished*. It must meet a universal standard." In other words, at the heart of the World Heritage Convention is a fundamental contradiction: "the celebration of diversity, on the one hand, and the application of a universal standard for determining which cultural expressions to be designated masterpieces of the heritage of humanity, on the other" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 186). A process, that as I have mentioned, continues to reflect the geographic dominance of European nations.

Through my spatial analysis of World Heritage inscription at Bodh Gaya I have also described the ways in which the production of spaces of global memory can also mask the politics of place and meaning that are central to it. Here, it may be useful to draw upon the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) who has suggested that space is a social product that can mask the contradictions of its own production.[190] As I have shown in chapter six, the use of authoritative heritage discourse and conservation practices can be mobilized by the State Party as a means of silencing or regulating forms of dissonance through the production of universal value. In this regard, World Heritage inscription can be a strategy deployed by the state "for making invisible forms of conflict by linking subnational phenomena to transnational ones" and stretching the notion of heritage to its "widest possible collective ownership" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 184). At the normative level, the enactment of these global heritage policies are seen as mitigating the impacts of modern development and rapid social change but they are also an integral part of converting cultural assets into economic profit, that serve specific interest groups. Therefore, on the one hand, World Heritage is used as the moral pretext that justifies strict conservation measures and spatial tactics that can be used to marginalize or displace local communities from the presentation of the site. On the other hand, as I have also shown, these heritage interventions can also generate new forms of resistance and opposition fueled by past resentment, especially among local stakeholders, who fear that conservation practices are used to undermine local sovereignty and create new forms of capital revenue that will bypass local residents.

These contradictory and contentious issues at the heart of World Heritage designation in Bodh Gaya beg the following questions: Is it necessary that all heritage spaces require a singular definition, a buffer zone or clear decisive boundaries of what it represents? Is it possible to envisage an alternative interpretation of Bodh Gaya, one that is not defined by its material authenticity with sole reference to an authentic Buddhist past? As Doreen Massey (1994) reminds us, this is not the only way in which the

[190] Lefebvre's argument in *The Production of Space* is that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. As a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre argues that this social production of urban space is fundamental to the reproduction of society, hence of capitalism itself.

notion of “places” can be conceived. Places do not have to be constructed out of an “introverted, inward-looking history based on delving into the past for internalized origins. . . people like places can have multiple identities in relation to places” (Massey 152-153). Bodh Gaya, like other prominent World Heritage sites, is a unique point of social interaction and transnational encounter where different histories and meanings of place are vital to its public life. What I have tried to do in this dissertation is bring out some of the ways in which Bodh Gaya is multi-local, a place that is “extroverted” and “includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world” through the global bazaar (Massey 1994: 155; Yang 1998). A process that “integrates in a positive way the global and the local” but does not neglect the “power geometries” that are distinctive to the site (Massey 155).

As I have shown, global sites of memory, like Bodh Gaya, are also inherently contested involving multiple publics which may run in contradistinction with the preservationist desire of professional experts in the heritage industry. According to Lynn Meskall (in Smith 2006: 188), one of the problems of creating a global standard of World Heritage codification is that it “represents a form of inert knowledge rather than knowledge produced in response to the context of application.” Not all cultures or site-specific stakeholders share the same value and appreciation for what constitutes heritage. Thus, rather than viewing history as contained within the landscape or built form itself, I have shifted attention to the role of memory which brings to the foreground the ways in which identity, place and history are intermeshed and activated in multiple ways on an ongoing basis (Smith 2006). As Massey (1994: 171) reminds us, “instead of looking back with nostalgia to some identity of place which already exists, the past has to be constructed.” In other words, heritage spaces like Bodh Gaya are not “inherently valuable” due to their physicality but rather reflect the cultural processes and activities that are undertaken to attribute meaning to places of remembrance. Pasts are made meaningful through social practice.

Focusing on the theoretical importance of place and memory in this dissertation, has been a conscious effort to locate Bodh Gaya within a spatial environment that is much more inclusive and integrates the social values of heritage among diverse publics, many of which extend beyond the authoritative discourse by the World Heritage committee. At this juncture, I would like to point out one aspect of the Advisory Body Evaluation that speaks to the concerns I have been raising here. In both the World Heritage inscription document and subsequent city development plans, the heritage discourse often refers to Bodh Gaya as a living religious site.

> The Mahabodhi Temple is a living monument where people from all over the world even today throng to offer their reverential prayers to the Buddha. (WHC-ABE 2002: 5)
>
> It is an icon of continuity in the present fast moving modern world. . . The Mahabodhi Temple continues to be a place of active worship and represents a continuous tradition of philosophical thought, human values and beliefs since the time of the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. . .The observance of religious rituals provide colour, vibrancy to this sacred place and has prevented the temple from turning into a dead edifice visited by a few art historians and enthusiasts. (CDP 2006: 36)

In my opinion, expanding the definition of World Heritage beyond the monumental to the living is an important step in transcending the physical orientation of the built environment and the Eurocentric assumptions that underpin the designation process. As noted in the city development plan, that "vibrancy" becomes an integral factor that distinguishes the Mahabodhi Temple Complex from other sites which are deemed "dead monuments" or cultural artifacts that reflect the preservationist desire and fossilization of past landscapes. Approaching the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a living monument does not necessarily mean that the conservation message is lost either, but rather it foregrounds the ritual embodiment of Buddhist faith and the importance of those living traditions such as pilgrimage that can never be safeguarded. One could argue that the ongoing ritual activities and social practices invested in the site will keep the memory of this place alive and will likely outlive World Heritage designation. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004: 56) reminds us, "a thing of vitality hardly needs safeguarding."

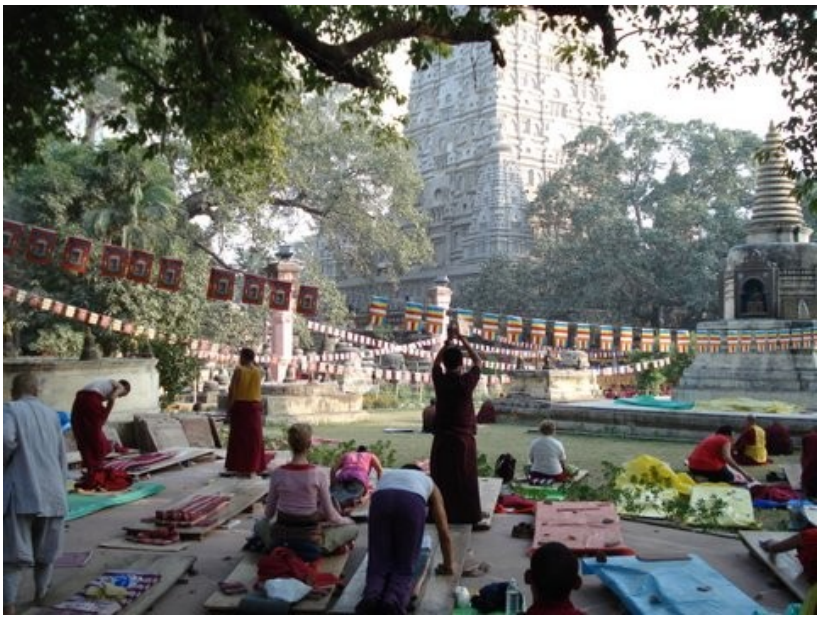


Figure 7.1 The Mahabodhi Temple as a living religious heritage site

Although Bodh Gaya is now a cultural heritage site of "outstanding universal value to humanity," as I have shown, it is not representative of universal experiences and beliefs. "World Heritage, like humanity itself, is heterogeneous" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 191). Bodh Gaya is not only a revered site of Buddhist memory but it also a place that serves overlapping religious interests, recreational needs, economic benefits and both state and national prestige. It is not only the role of pilgrimage that is important here, but also the role of the bazaar and the economic lifelines that are an integral part of the social ecology of a living religious monument. It is also an important object of cultural and national pride for the state government who look to the past as a resource for future prosperity. In other words, multivocality and the plurality of place should be an integral part of the cultural values and meanings associated with the site and none of this necessarily denies the uniqueness of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. The difference is that a living monument, like the recent UNESCO notion of "intangible cultural heritage" in 2003, recognizes the continuing and changing nature of cultural sites and the importance of social practice. As evident throughout the various chapters, heritage is never static, it is a living entity.[191]

7.2 A Culture of Peace in the Global Public Sphere

In the previous section, I highlighted some of the contradictory and contentious issues that underlie the production of universal value at Bodh Gaya. Perhaps the most significant contradiction at the heart of these new global designations, is that the inscription of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site may run counter to UNESCO's founding goals to build peace and prosperity.[192] The advancement of peace continues to be one of the main guiding principles of the United Nations and for these reasons, the year 2000 was proclaimed the *International Year for a Culture of Peace* and the decade 2001-2010 as the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the*

[191] Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – or living heritage – derives from the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, and is defined by UNESCO as: "the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage." The definition also indicates that ICH involves the following characteristics: is transmitted from generation to generation; is constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history; provides communities and groups with a sense of identity and continuity; promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity; is compatible with international human rights instruments; complies with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, and of sustainable development. For more details see: www.unesco.org

[192] According to the Constitution, the purpose of UNESCO is: "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations." www.unesco.org

Children of the World. According to the United Nations General Assembly, a "culture of peace" was defined as the:

> values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society (UN Resolutions A/RES/52/13: www.unesco.org).

Thus, on this special millennial occasion, a global movement for a "culture of peace" was initiated by the United Nations to create a "grand alliance" of existing movements that unites various domains of action. The World Heritage Convention (1972) is certainly an integral part of this larger mobilization of individuals, groups, organizations and institutions that seek to build a "culture of peace" across national boundaries.

As places of natural and cultural wealth that belong to all of humanity, the production of World Heritage rests on the assumption that collective ownership of the past will contribute to a wider global strategy of peace-building across cultures. However, as I have shown in my analysis of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, World Heritage designation can also create new forms of conflict and resistance that may be antithetical to UNESCO's central mandate. In many ways, the changes to Bodh Gaya's spatial environment in recent decades also reflect similar processes in other Indian cities where the rapid integration of global consumer markets and commodity networks have fostered more competitive interactions over public space (Kishwar 2005; Rajagopal 2001; Appadurai 2000, 2006; Sassen 2003). As I described in chapter five and six, the pressures of market liberalization coupled with the efforts to ensure a city's position in the new global economy of tourism has led to the creation of buffer zones where neoliberal interests intersect with global conventions and transnational conservation agendas as posed by UNESCO. Among some theorists of transnationalism, the loss of sovereignty to forces of globalization often presumes the thinning of nation-state apparatuses in a place like Bodh Gaya. However, in the context of World Heritage discourse, the links between UNESCO and transnational conservation practices often "position states as the primary agents for national development and as the chief institutions for the implementation of policies" (Sharma & Gupta 2006). Consequently, in seeking to uphold the universal ideals and values of World Heritage, places like Bodh Gaya have also become significant registers to rid streets and public lands of squatters and encroacher's, and to reclaim public space for the use of "proper citizens" (Chatterjee 2006). As I have

discussed, these concerted efforts on behalf of state-municipal and regional authorities to rehabilitate public space are often in direct conflict with the demands of local people who compete for capital, jobs and access to livelihood.

Examining the ways in which localized claims interface with transnational discourses opens up an important avenue for exploring both the visible or invisible terrains of power that accompany global heritage and the political terrain of "universals" as they become grounded in particular settings. Although there has been a significant amount of scholarship in recent years that has examined the politics of World Heritage designation in various national contexts (Harrison & Hitchcock 2005), there has been very little research on World Heritage in terms of analyzing new forms of transnational governance and political society that I feel is central to the advancement of UNESCO's movement for a "culture of peace" (Chatterjee 2004). An important point that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006: 180) raises and is certainly evident in this dissertation, is that "all heritage interventions – like the globalizing pressures they are trying to counteract – change the relationship of people to what they do. They change how people understand their culture and themselves." In other words, there has not been considerable attention on the ways in which the production of World Heritage is a "metacultural phenomenon" in its own right, one that can also create new "alternatives to those interventions" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 187).

For some time now, scholars have been discussing how globalization is transforming the ways in which people imagine themselves as members of national and global collectivities (Anderson 1983; Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1996; Ong 1999; Inda & Rosaldo 2002). As I described in the introduction, the emergence of a World Heritage Convention grew out of "the importance of solidarity and nations' that shared responsibility in conserving outstanding cultural sites" (Smith 2006: 94). Thus, aligned with the central mandate of UNESCO and the recent millennial movement to build a "culture of peace," World Heritage is certainly a part of furthering this goal. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006: 190-192), once a cultural property is inscribed on the World Heritage list it is energized with a sense of urgency for building consensus because they are not only "endangered assets of culture" but are also important spaces where heritage interventions can play a role "in alleviating conflict and contributing to development." Through its valorization within the World Heritage Convention among 186 state parties this also brings investment. It is for these reasons, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006: 196), "that debates arising from the valorization of cultural phenomenon seeking World Heritage status are a place to look for something like a global public sphere, however overdetermined it

might be by the institutional and professional actors."

As a means of producing a new global public sphere premised on civic engagement and critical debate across difference, World Heritage can become a "vehicle for envisioning and constituting a global polity within the conceptual space of a global cultural commons" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 161). For some critics, the emergence of new transnational spaces like Bodh Gaya can be seen as challenging the spatial commitment and sovereignty of the nation-state (Ferguson & Gupta 2002) but it can also create new forms of imagined communities and political society (Chatterjee 2004) that revolve around sites of global memory that are activated in the public sphere. World Heritage sites, memorials and other places of historic and cultural significance have emerged as important mediums through which different groups imagine collective membership, but also assert new rights and demands that revolve around human rights and related forms of global citizenship. In my opinion, Bodh Gaya may provide an important model for these emerging forms of transnational civil society or postnational governance where a new world image is projected that may involve a reformulation of citizenship, new notions of territorial sovereignty and decision-making that extend beyond nation-states. As I have discussed in chapter three, certainly the diasporic Buddhist community at Bodh Gaya play an integral role in challenging the dominance of the nation-state through their transnational religious claims over the site. Although I have not directly examined the role of NGO's in this dissertation, the recent growth of these forms of international collaboration is also deeply implicated in the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site.[193]

Drawing on Anna Tsing (2005: 3), in this historical ethnography I have taken the "messy and surprising features of such encounters across difference" as the basis for my analysis of place. Using the global bazaar as a guiding metaphor, I have explored the "productive friction of global connection" that underlies the social transformation of Bodh Gaya into a World Heritage site. Ever since the Mahabodhi Temple Complex was inscribed on the World Heritage list this has led to all sorts of disagreement and negotiation where extra-national authorities, religious communities, national interests and subaltern demands intersect and compete over a shared "universal" space. As Tsing (2005: 9) has shown, existing universals are always "hybrid, transient, and involved in constant reformulation through dialogue." There is also a deep irony that underlies the production of universality in that it is "implicated in both imperial schemes to control the world and liberatory mobilizations for justice and empowerment. Universalism inspires expansion – for both the powerful and powerless" (Tsing 9). As I

[193] See Jason Rodriguez, University of California, Santa Cruz and his forthcoming dissertation entitled: *Translating Desires in Bodhgaya: Gender and Development in the Land of Buddha's Enlightenment.*

have shown in chapter six, the production of universals also has the power to mobilize people across cultural and religious difference in new ways, such as invoking human rights discourse in order to shed light on the injustices of the state government itself. For many local groups in Bodh Gaya, the World Heritage designation provides an opportunity for the subaltern voice to merge with universal claims in order to voice their concerns over corruption, negligence and state violence targeted against resident populations in the past and present. This seems to be one of the most important aspects of future studies on World Heritage, that is, to explore the productive friction of global connection and how local adherents mobilize universals to make the state accountable before the eyes of UNESCO. Under these new global declarations and mechanisms there is still much debate about the meaning and potential value of World Heritage in a place like Bodh Gaya. These debates are an essential part of what World Heritage should be about and I hope that this dissertation will contribute to this conversation.

Let us now return to the question of peace that is central to UNESCO's founding principles. Although I have not made "peace" a central concept in my social analysis of Bodh Gaya up to this point, certainly the relationship between Buddhism and peace is also a key part of the global re-imagining of Bodh Gaya as the place of Buddha's enlightenment.[194] Throughout each of the preceding chapters I have described the varying ways in which different social groups are positioned in relation to the production of this collective memory. For many Buddhist pilgrims an experience of peace is often used to describe the sublime quality that accompanies the bliss of enlightenment. Thus, like other world religions, peace is at the core of Buddha's universal message and many pilgrims come to Bodh Gaya seeking emancipation from suffering. At the same time, peace is also central to the commercial and economic life lines of the global bazaar where a predominant section of the population lives in poverty. In upholding a tradition of "god is guest," this ensures continuing economic prosperity and opportunities through pilgrimage-based tourism. As two local shopkeepers explained:

These days there are no clashes because locals are getting more money. The problems here are

[194] As Appadurai (1996), Brennan (2005) and other scholars have pointed out, the role of the imagination from a distance is key to understanding the allure of these new global landscapes, the various meanings associated with place, as well as the socio-economic ramifications of that signification. Whereas other significant locales on the global map of international tourism cater to "sun, sex, sights, savings, and servility" (Crick 1989), I would argue that Bodh Gaya as the birthplace of Buddhism, promotes a direct experience of peace. Underlying the transnational production of Bodh Gaya as a site of peace is a number of factors. Central to these processes are the ways in which the ideological and Orientalist production of Buddhism has come to be equated with the Maurya Empire (322-185 BCE) as the apex of Indian "civilization" and more recently as an enlightened religion of compassion, self-discipline and above all "peace" (Almond 1988, Doyle 1997, Trevithick 2006). This association has certainly become more pronounced in the twentieth century, especially in the west, with the emergence of prominent "engaged" Buddhist leaders such as noble peace prize winner the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso and Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

due to poverty. But still the business center is running on a credit system here. Even today.

> If the system is disturbed the money will go. Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists – if they fight the business will die out. Occasionally it will be. . . In Bodh Gaya though you will not find as many people cheat you or try and steal. Everyone is cautious that this business environment should not be disturbed.

Through urban planning and tourism development, the state government also strives to recreate the sacred landscape in a way that is "suitable for striving" and distances the town from Bihar's notorious reputation as a place of violence and lawlessness. And finally, the production of universal value linked to the imagined community of World Heritage also aspires to fill universal dreams and visions of common humanity based on a platform of peace that I have highlighted above.

Now, there are many people in Bodh Gaya today who will argue that the site is inherently peaceful due to the grace of Lord Buddha and his auspicious awakening *at this spot* over 2550 years ago. When I asked a local caretaker of the Mahabodhi Temple grounds, why the place remains peaceful he said: "It is the Buddha. Even his name is enough to calm people. They say he is still a living force." This may very well be the case, but as I have suggested, the "culture of peace" at Bodh Gaya is also based on an understanding of the conditioned genesis and the ways in which the spatial environment at Bodh Gaya is also conditioned by various social phenomenon that are historically relative and interdependent. Throughout each of these chapters I have described some of the different ways in which the spatial integration of the temple town revolves around the compact nature of these social relationships and it is through these interlocking webs of meaning that provide the conditions on which peace is held, however thin that may be. Most importantly, it is the shadow of poverty and the local demands for livelihood in the global bazaar that are decisive factors in fostering Bodh Gaya's culture of peace. As a local engineer explained to me, "harmony and peace can never be controlled by police. There are 25 Blocks of Naxalite activities in the Gaya District and only one is peaceful – Bodh Gaya. The Master Plans will invite terrorism through the rehabilitation of the locals." Although it is difficult to know the fate of the recent master plan in Bodh Gaya, the mobilization of a "culture of peace" at this World Heritage monument cannot be separated from the sacral-commercial life of the global bazaar.

7.3 Light of Asia Redux: Bihar, an Enlightening Experience

Bihar has a future than emanates from its past. The past is a rich galaxy of sites steeped in

> history, culture, arts, crafts, and cuisine. Bihar is a destination that has so far eluded the global tourist (Aditya Roy *The Times of India* 2006: 5).

What will be the fate of Bodh Gaya and Bihar's worlding heritage in the context of India's rise as a global economic superpower? Will the Mahabodhi Temple Complex be placed on the *List of World Heritage in Danger* bringing shame upon the Indian government and perpetuating the popular stereotypes of a "backwards Bihar?" Will the site be submerged by the splintering fractions of religious claims and potential violence that simmers beneath the surface of this contested site of memory? What will be the fate of the latest incarnation of the master plan? Will Bodh Gaya be transformed into a Buddhist theme-park, a kind of spiritual Disneyland for mass tourism consumption? Or will UNESCO and the recently launched JNNRUM City Development Plan be the glue that holds the culture of peace together, recognizing the needs of local communities and other interest groups? While these questions are difficult to answer at this present juncture, I would like to conclude by speculating on some of the possible horizons of this World Heritage site and the ways in which Bodh Gaya and Bihar can emerge as the Light of Asia in the twenty-first century.

Today, religious conflict is seen as a preeminent danger to heritage sites around the world. The ruins of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by the hands of Hindu extremists in December 1992 and more recently the destruction of the Bamiyan Valley Buddha's in Afghanistan by the Talibans in March 2001 have evoked world-wide condemnation. According to Guha-Thakurta (2004: 286), "like Ayodhya, Bodh Gaya, too, emerges as a space of religious harmony and coexistence, unmarked by any overt signs of strife between Hindu and – in this case – Buddhist worshippers, until the intrusion of a reinvented modern-day form of the competing religion of Buddhism." However, an important difference between the case of Ayodhya and Bodh Gaya following India's independence, is that unlike the fate of the Babri Masjid, "the Bodh Gaya temple dispute found a legal solution. . . [and] the Mahabodhi Temple was able to find a renewed lease of life as both an archaeological and a sacred monument" (Guha-Thakurta 298). In other words, despite the divisive underpinnings of the *Bodh Gaya Temple Management Act* (1949) that provide 'Hindus' with a slight majority over the structure of management, throughout the twentieth century we have seen the increasing *Buddhification* of Bodh Gaya's landscape (Doyle 1997). With the recent designation of the Mahabodhi Temple Complex as a World Heritage site, in many ways, this catalytic event encapsulates Bodh Gaya's international metamorphosis into a global site of memory codified through UNESCO's universal discourse.

At the same time, this is not to deny that monuments like the Mahabodhi Temple Complex will

continue to lead “contentious public lives, always testing the limits of archaeological jurisdiction and historical meaning” (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 303). According to Guha-Thakurta, both Ayodhya and Bodh Gaya can easily “escape the bounded spheres of scholarly and administrative authority and slip into the more open, combustible domain of public memories and claims” (Guha-Thakurta 303). In drawing attention to some of these transnational processes that I have explored in this dissertation, it helps to unfasten the enduring legacy of religious difference and the politics of representation that continues to occupy a central role in the scholarship on Bodh Gaya. Evident within the modern historiography of Bodh Gaya, the delineation of the site in terms of Hindu or Buddhist association with competing objects of veneration, the overlapping master narratives of place; and other conflicting ritual practices can indirectly reinscribe these lines of difference between two opposing religious paradigms: Buddhism and Hinduism. Since the early “rediscovery” of India's Buddhist past in the context of British colonial rule, sites of ancient memory like Bodh Gaya have been tied to longstanding debates over authenticity, rites of worship and competing claims of patrimony. As I have shown in this dissertation, these debates and claims have certainly expanded and multiplied in recent years under new international frameworks such as UNESCO. Although I sympathize with the ongoing Buddhist demands for greater control over the management of the Mahabodhi Temple, my research has shown that there are not only multiple Buddhism(s) and Hinduism(s) that coalesce in the shade of the Bodhi tree but there are also other important spatial issues and divergent meanings associated with place and built environments that transcend these religious claims of authenticity.

Throughout its modern public life, and especially within the latter half of the twentieth century, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex has reflected the negotiation of multiple stakeholder interests that operate at various scales of engagement (local, regional, national and transnational) that trouble these antagonistic lines of religious opposition. It is also a site, according to Guha-Tahkurta (2004: 303), that brings together “webs of common concern” involving tensions between archaeology, conservation, tourism, development and ritual practice, and where the lines between “sacred and secular infringements, between national and extranational structures of authority have to be continually redrawn and reestablished.” Thus, in self-consciously moving away from a temple-centric view, I have approached Bodh Gaya as a transnational space which helps us to move beyond the limitations of this scholarship and highlight the central role of heritage in post-colonial society and how it mediates some of these contemporary forms of globalization. Using World Heritage as the catalyst, I have shown how different transnational forces and social constituencies have shaped the monument up until this point

and the ways in which this recent historical layering has either made these patterns transparent or obscured them.

Building on these historical and ethnographic insights, I would argue that the place of Buddha's enlightenment provides an important counter-narrative to the predatory forms of Hindu nationalism that have arisen in recent decades. As a center of devotion for millions of Buddhists' around the world, the significance of Bihar's cultural heritage recasts the specter of the Hindu right in a way that can encourage a more cosmopolitan future that is central to emerging inter-Asian aspirations in the global south. Unlike other temples in contemporary India, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya plays an important role in "complicating the task of producing a hegemonic consensus in India" as seen in the renationalization of cultural and urban space in other parts of the country (Appadurai 2001: 38). In recent years, India's growing confidence on the global stage now appears well poised to emerge as a rising super power in what some are calling the new Asian century (Ananya & Roy 2008). After centuries of relative desertion by Buddhist pilgrims, globalization has brought a renewed interest in the sacred geography of Buddhist sites throughout India. The return of the Buddhist diaspora, in particular, has placed Bodh Gaya at the political matrix of new networks of international aid and transnational capitalism which has major implications for the future management and governance of the place of enlightenment. As a critical resource for economic development and cultural pride, the spatial tensions surrounding the Mahabodhi Temple have important social ramifications that extend well beyond the conflicting politics of religious identity.

In noting the socio-economic ramifications of heritage and pilgrimage-based tourism under globalization, I have also examined the ways in which local communities seek beneficial interests from regular contact with these global flows. As a transnational process from below, there are many local residents and migrants to Bodh Gaya who seek new forms of employment, opportunities and symbolic capital through the worlding prospects of Buddhism. Thus, alongside both the heightened anxiety surrounding contested sites of memory and the role of heritage within the neoliberal agendas of state governments are many local people living and working in close proximity to historical monuments. For many poor communities in contemporary India, like those in south Bihar, the resource of heritage and the regular influx of tourists provide a key source of livelihood offering income-producing opportunities to subaltern groups who are often marginalized from the national and religious invocations of heritage. As I have argued, the significance of tourism for local livelihoods is an integral part of fostering a "culture of peace" that I described in the previous section.

In recognizing the social ecology of this living religious heritage site, perhaps Bodh Gaya and the Mahabodhi Temple Complex can provide a different model of World Heritage. A model that is based on a secular platform of religious tolerance that informed Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of Bodh Gaya when the Buddha Jayanti celebrations were held in 1956, but also one that recognizes the dangers that accompany authoritative religious claims to the past. A model that brings religious pluralism at the center of its world claims and uses heritage not as a mechanism for displacement and tourism development but also sustainability and the production of a new global public sphere. The important point that I want to emphasize is that World Heritage and the production of universal value is not a given. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, it is important to look beyond the universal abstraction and examine the ways in which spaces of global memory are laden with social and cultural meaning that is activated, reproduced and contested through a range of social practices. World Heritage is not only about the production of authoritative pasts but it is also about creating new meanings and forging new global public spheres across cultural, national and religious difference.

For Buddhists around the world, Bodh Gaya will continue to be an active place of worship and sacred memory regardless of the World Heritage designation. As I have shown, the place will continue to support the ritual embodiment of Buddhist faith because there are so many other stakeholders invested in its social transformation as the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Despite the aggressive claims on behalf of the Ambedkar Buddhists, Bodh Gaya cannot and will not ever be an exclusive Buddhist site.[195] As numerous scholars have shown in the past and present, there are many layers of meaning at this shared site where religious objects have been held as "shared foci of worship" (Doyle 1997: 5). In writing this dissertation it is difficult to enter into this transnational arena from an ethnographic point of view without feeling the temptation to filter its messiness. However, as Akhil Gupta (1998) reminds us, embracing the contradictions, mistranslations, hybridity and incommensurability are also key ingredients of the "postcolonial condition" itself. It is for these reasons that I have drawn upon the notion of the global bazaar as a key metaphor for exploring some of these interweaving processes, overlapping histories and global connections that give life and friction to this specific place. World Heritage sites, as I have shown in this dissertation, are places of global convergence that promote a culturally diverse vitality and should not be characterized by some inert

[195] The campaign by the Ambedkar Buddhists to "liberate the temple" and change the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Act of 1949 continues today. However the voice of the new Buddhists has weakened significantly in recent years including the splintering of the group into various fractions which can be difficult to separate: these include the *All-India Monks Federation* under Bhadant Anand; the *Bodh Gaya Mahabodhi Vihar All-India Action Committee*; *All India Bhikku Sangha* and *All India Maharashtran Bhikku Sangha*. In many ways, these annual protests have become another feature of the annual cycle I described in the introduction.

exclusive memory that needs to be protected by buffer zones.

How then, can the management of this sacred space reflect the participation of multiple publics? Although I may advocate for religious pluralism and mutual respect this is not to deny that important redressive steps need to be taken in relation to the Buddhist community at Bodh Gaya. What is clear to me in my fieldwork and in writing this dissertation is that the sacred landscape has outgrown the Bodh Gaya Temple Act of 1949. Bodh Gaya has become a World Heritage site of global significance but its current management scheme under the Temple Management Act does not reflect the international demands of this growing urban landscape. Rather, the provincial legislature continues to re-inscribe management on the basis of religious difference, with the balance of control in the hands of rotating District Magistrate of "Hindu" persuasion. Similarly, the Bodh Gaya Temple Advisory Board, although a kind gesture to the international Buddhist community, is also largely ineffective and does not meet as frequently as it once did in the decades following India's independence.[196] It is hard to know at this contemporary juncture what affect the different voices I have examined in this dissertation will have on the future governance of Bodh Gaya. One proposal that is often suggested by many local shopkeepers and resident groups is to create a Bodh Gaya Development Association or World Heritage Management Authority which integrates management mechanisms that take into account the various stakeholder interests in the site. Among some of the state officials and World Heritage advisory bodies there have also been some suggestions that all the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India should be linked into a single definition of World Heritage inscription, thus expanding the jurisdiction of UNESCO.

As a means of conclusion, I would like to return to the author of the *Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold who wrote the provocative plea *East and West: A Splendid Opportunity* in 1893. In this article for the *Daily Telegraph*, Arnold wrote: "Thus this new and great idea is spreading, and the world will

[196] This Advisory Board to the Mahabodhi Temple was established in 1959 in order to provide an international panel of largely non-Indian Buddhist Government representatives (including Ambassadors and High Commissioners) and distinguished persons from Japan, Korea, Thailand, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal and within India (Sikkim). It has in the past, played an important and active role in mediating conflict and providing external advice on the development and sanctity of the Mahabodhi Temple for the needs of the world Buddhist community but has been in decline since the late eighties. The Advisory Board met for the first time in 2006 after nearly a ten year gap and the meeting was largely catered by the Bihar State Tourism Corporation to highlight future development plans. A more active international voice that has the potential to build upon the recent UNESCO designation and forge new management possibilities in Bodh Gaya is the International Buddhist Council. As I mentioned in chapter six, this group of localized Buddhist representatives from the monastic community in Bodh Gaya was initiated by Vimalasara in the mid-nineties and during his reign gained prominence as a powerful international body. However, today this loosely tied confederation of transnational monks and caretakers from Bodh Gaya's monasteries face numerous challenges. With the expanding number of Buddhist enclaves in Bodh Gaya with different national addresses it has become increasingly difficult to negotiate language differences, culture and sectarian positions. Furthermore, there is still much debate and tension among council members about the path international Buddhism should take in Bodh Gaya given their tenuous and sensitive position as refugees and foreign nationals.

not be very much older, I think, before Buddhism by this gateway goes back to its own land, and India becomes the natural centre of Buddhistic Asia." Over a hundred years later, Bodh Gaya has become the worlding centre of Buddhistic Asia, and a transnational gateway like no other. As a UNESCO World Heritage site and a center of devotion for millions of Buddhists around the world, the significance of Bihar's cultural heritage has far reaching global implications today. In the words' of Amartya Sen on a recent trip to the Nalanda International University he noted: "Bihar is not only for Biharis; it is for the world. . .Why can't we overcome the disadvantages and build a glorious future? We should learn a lesson from the achievements of Bihar and seek inspiration from the past. It will help us address and conquer the persistent disadvantages" (Ahmad TOI Feb. 23 2009). If the twenty-first century will be an urban century and more significantly, a century of Asian urbanization according to Ong and Roy (2009), perhaps Bodh Gaya might serve as a model in this dynamic context of aspiring cities.

The rise of India as a global superpower will also depend not only on its economic might, but also on how India values its cultural assets. As a fitting destination for the "Light of Asia," the return of Buddhism to its land of origin is also located in India's heart of darkness. For many years a dark shadow has been cast over Bihar, a place that is feared, despised and above all deemed resistant to the forces of modernity and change (Prakash 1990). Unlike the shining model and success of Kerala to the south, Bihar's position of *alterity* and marginality is consistently reproduced in nation-wide surveys as an example of "backwardness." While for some, Bihar remains a site of perpetual backwardness and Bihar-bashing a nationwide obsession, for others, Bihar is a place of cultural pride in the heart of India where backward looking views towards Bihar's glorious civilizational legacy provides the inspiration for a vibrant and prosperous future. If Bodh Gaya is to be the "Light of Asia" in the twenty-first century and a "splendid opportunity" in the words of Sir Edwin Arnold, it will likely depend more on its relationship with other Asian Buddhist countries. Since India's independence, Bodh Gaya has shed the skin of its earlier colonial invocation as the "Jerusalem of the Buddhists" (Trevithick 2006) and is increasingly a transnational arena where East is meeting East in unexpected ways. Although Buddhism continues to grow in the West, it is the influence of Buddhist pilgrims from China, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore that appears to have the most significant economic influence at this World Heritage site today. Like the recent resuscitation of Nalanda International University as a bridge between South and East Asia, Bodh Gaya can also be an example of these new cultural articulations that are part of India's global projection within the world community, especially in the context of "an Asian renaissance."[197]

[197] Plans are currently underway to revive the ancient university site of Nalanda and turn it into an international centre of learning. Often described as one of the oldest universities in recorded history, Nalanda was a major center of

As I have shown in this dissertation, World Heritage is also about global aspirations for the universal and the rights of humanity to our common cultural heritage. When I interviewed an advisor for World Heritage sites, he explained that:

> It is a question of asking, what sites do we have that tell stories of such profound and immense importance that they should be shared beyond national boundaries? The importance of those stories that transcend national boundaries and for which the international community should take responsibility, if necessary, for the long term survival. So you are asking, which stories belong to all of humanity.

The rights of humanity, as I have shown in this dissertation also involve those groups that are invested in the cultural landscape from where the story of Buddha's enlightenment first sprung. Perhaps the greatest irony in the entangled web of meaning that informs this World Heritage site today, is that the shade of the Bodhi tree has also provided the conditions for the expansion of a Muslim mosque. The local *masjid* is located directly west of the main Temple Complex and has grown significantly in recent years as a result of political patronage prompting the World Heritage Committee to note: “there is a mosque which, owing to the high ground and its height, competes with the main temple of the Temple complex” (WH ABE 2002: 6). Throughout the day the regular cycle of *adhan* 'calling for prayer' from the minaret speakers can be heard throughout the Mahabodhi Temple Complex. For some, the recent expansion of the Muslim mosque is somewhat surprising given the controversial national historiography of the Indian subcontinent which often describes the demise of Buddhism with the rise of iconoclasm and Islamic conquest in the late twelfth century. However, in my opinion, this a fitting symbol of Bodh Gaya's importance at the confluence of several religions, none of which necessarily negates the sacred reverence of the Buddhist memory of this site. The truth of enlightenment as a pathway of emancipation, like the recent discursive claims of World Heritage, builds upon a universal enthusiasm that it is believed to transcend culture, locality and above all religious difference.

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educational learning attracting prominent students not only from India but also from China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Persia, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Turkey. As a bridge between South and East Asia the nine member mentor team spearheading the Nalanda project include former Indian president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, along with renowned scholars such as Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen, Singapore's Foreign Minister George Yeo, Harvard historian Sugata Bose, Indo-British academician and writer Lord Meghnad Desai, along with a consortium of scholars and government leaders from Japan and China.



Figure 7.2 The Muslim Mosque to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple

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