



**001** The range of hills out of which the ancient Bamiyan site is carved, Bamiyan Afghanistan. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**002** Bamiyan Site, Afghanistan. In war-torn Afghanistan, the people of Bamiyan town live in the shadow of a great and ancient heritage. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**003** Bamiyan site, with old Bamiyan remains in the foreground, Afghanistan. The remains of Old Bamiyan show bring alive the romance of the past of this once-great city. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**004** Bamiyan site, with old Bamiyan remains in the foreground, Afghanistan. Old Bamiyan would once have had hundreds of shops, where people from around the world would have rubbed shoulders. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**005** Art historian-photographer Benoy K Behl at the Bamiyan site. I was growing my beard to look as rough as possible, for travel across troubled Afghanistan. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**006** Art historian-photographer Benoy K Behl and researcher Sujata Chatterji with armed Afghan Police escort at Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan. This escort safely pulled us out of the interior of the Blue Mosque, when trouble started there. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**007** Recently excavated Buddha from Mes Aynak site, Afghanistan. In the past, spiritual thoughts deeply pervaded the life of the people who were touched by Indic culture. There must be many sculptures of the Buddha still under the ground in Afghanistan.  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**008** Shah Jahan Mosque, Bagh-e Babur, Kabul, Afghanistan. The Emperor Shah Jahan built this Mosque in the 17th century. Kabul was a favorite visiting place for the Mughals, owing to its climate. Photograph: Benoy K Behl





**009** Blue Mosque, Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. Mazar-e-Sharif literally means "Noble Shrine". This is a reference to the Blue Mosque in the center of the city. It is also known as the Shrine of Hazrat Ali. Some believe that it is the tomb of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**010** Afghan women in the courtyard of the Blue Mosque, Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**011** Fayaz-Tepe, stupa near Termez, Uzbekistan. It is wonderful to recall the time when stupas would have dotted the landscape, from Central to South East Asia. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**012** Art historian-photographer Benoy K Behl at stupa excavation site near Termez, Uzbekistan. It was a wonderful experience to be at this once-magnificent site of Buddhism. Indic philosophy and culture had led to many such centers of study and worship across Central Asia.



**013** Buddhist Stupa at Zurmala, Termez, Uzbekistan. The stupas at Termez are among the earliest surviving, after those in India.  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**014** Buddha from Fayaz-Tepe, 1st-2nd century, collection: Tashkent National Museum. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**015** Mural, Buddha, from Fayaz-Tepe, 1st-2nd century, collection: Tashkent National Museum. There was a wonderful tradition of Buddhist mural paintings, with its roots seen at Ajanta, from the 2nd century BC onwards, which spread across Central Asia and China. It is one of the world's great traditions of art.

Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**016** Shiva, 7th century,  
Farghana Valley, collection:  
Tashkent National Museum.

As this was found at a  
Buddhist site, it carries the  
label of “Buddha” in the  
museum. In recent times, the  
world has lost site of the fact  
that there was no lines  
dividing the adoration of  
different Indic deities. In fact,  
I have documented paintings  
of Shiva and Ganesa in the  
Kizil Caves of China also.  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl





**017** Haji Piyada Mosque (Noh Gumbad), Balkh, Afghanistan. This was an ancient Zoroastrian temple once. There is much similarity between early Vedic worship and that of the Zoroastrians. In fact, the ancient Zoroastrian language of their earliest scriptures is practically identical with Vedic Sanskrit. It is just the script which is different. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**018** Al Khakim At-Termizi Complex, Termez, Uzbekistan. This is the Mausoleum of Al Khakim, a great Islamic scholar and Sufi of the 8th / 9th century. Till today, there is a gentleness in the people of Uzbekistan which reminds one of their great past of scholarship and philosophy. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**019** Sher-dor-Madrassa, Registan, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Registan, literally meaning desert, was in the heart of ancient Samarkand. This Madrassa was made in the 17th century. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**020** Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The name means “Tomb of the King”. It is the Mausoleum of Timur, built in the 15th century. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**021** Bibi Khanym Mosque, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This is the famous Friday mosque of Samarkand, named after the mother of Timur. It was originally built in the 14th century. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**022** Shah-i-Zinda, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This complex has many Mausoleums, mainly of the 9th to the 14th centuries.  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**023** Shah-i-Zinda, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This complex has many Mausoleums, mainly of the 9th to the 14th centuries. It was in Uzbekistan that the dramatic use of colored tiles reached its zenith. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**024** Shah-i-Zinda, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This complex has many Mausoleums, mainly of the 9th to the 14th centuries. It was in Uzbekistan that the dramatic use of colored tiles reached its zenith. From here, the tradition spread all the way till the western shores of Portugal. Photograph: Benoy K Behl





**025** Golden Abode of Shakiyamuni Temple, Kalmykia, Russia. This recently-made temple has become a great symbol of the Buddhist traditions of the people of Kalmykia. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**026** Golden Shakyamuni Temple, Elista, Kalmykia, Russia. Woman praying before a statue of the “Wise Old Man”, who is seen in all the Buddhist temples of Kalmykia. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**027** Pagoda with prayer wheel, Elista, Kalmykia, Russia. The blend of European culture and the Indic culture of Buddhism is quite fascinating in Kalmykia. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**028** Atisa, Golden Shakyamuni Temple, Elista, Kalmykia, Russia. The temple at Kalmykia honors 17 great Acharyas of the Nalanda University. Atisa was born in Bengal, studied at Nalanda and in Indonesia and taught Buddhism in Tibet. He is known as a cornerstone of Buddhism in Tibet.

Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**029** Khurul or Buddhist temple in Aarshaan, Elista, Kalmykia, Russia. These temples have prayer wheels of the kind which we have in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Tibet. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**030** Vast and beautiful interior, Khurul a Buddhist temple in Aarshaan, near Elista, Kalmykia, Russia. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**031** People of Kalmykia posing in front of statue of Acharya from Nalanda. Photograph: Benoy K Behl



**032** People of Kalmykia receiving blessings of a Ladakhi lama.  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl





**033** Building bridges-- art historian-photographer Benoy K Behl and researcher Sujata Chatterji with Telo Tulku Rinpoche, Kalmykia Russia  
Photograph: Benoy K Behl