

The Greatest Journey of Ideas: The Spread of Buddhism

**Exhibition of photographs of Buddhist heritage in 19
countries / regions by Benoy K Behl**



***Seated Buddha, Wat Maha That Sukhothai
Historical Park, 13th-14th centuries, Thailand
Pic: Benoy K Behl***

The exhibition consists of 100 photographs of Buddhist heritage in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Mongolia, Siberia, Uzbekistan, Kalmykia (in European Russia), Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. It shows the birth and the development of different schools of Buddhism in India and their spread to the many countries of Asia.

The exhibition shows the deeply shared Buddhist traditions of the whole of Asia. It is a journey through Buddhist history and culture, from the time of the life of the Buddha, through the development of Vajrayana and other Buddhist deities in Eastern and Western India, to the spread of these traditions to distant lands.

This is a unique exhibition, as even a fraction of this wide coverage of the Buddhist heritage of so many countries has never been attempted before.

***Through the gateway, we leave Kala, or
Time, behind us, as we proceed towards the
understanding of the final truth. Borobudur
Stupa, Java, Indonesia.
Pic: Benoy K Behl***





Seated Buddhas, Wat Chawattanaram, 17th century, Ayutthaya, Thailand. Pic: Benoy K Behl

Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC was the first great royal patron to honor Buddhist sites. The great stupas which he made, his commemorative pillars and sculptural railings are some of the most beautiful and oldest surviving architecture and art of the Indian subcontinent.

From the time of Ashoka onwards,

Buddhism spread not only to all corners of India but also all over Asia. The religion and the art associated with it had a transforming effect on the countries which it reached and, till today, Buddhism flourishes all over the continent.

In the 1st century AD, the Kushana King Kanishka gave royal patronage to Mahayana Buddhism. Thereafter the Mahayana tradition, which later also developed into the Vajrayana tradition, became dominant in India. This form of Buddhism also travelled northwards from Kashmir to the trans-Himalayan regions and to China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan.



Pagodas at sunrise, Bagan, Myanmar. Pic: Benoy K Behl

This exhibition provides a comprehensive perspective of the ancient monuments and art heritage of Buddhism in the whole of Asia. It covers a wide range of the heritage of both Theravada and Mahayana-Vajrayana orders, providing a view of the richness of the whole Buddhist tradition.

The photographer

Benoy K Behl is one of the prominent art historians and film makers in India. Exhibitions of his photographs have been held by scores of prestigious institutions in 28 countries around the world. Documentary films made by him are shown regularly on national television channels in India. He is also a world-renowned authority on Buddhism. His book on the earliest Buddhist paintings of Ajanta is published by Thames and Hudson, London and New York and studied in many countries. He is invited to lecture at prestigious universities, museums and Buddhist temples around the world. As Consultant to the Government of India, he wrote the successful application for the UNESCO World Heritage Listing of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya, which commemorates the spot where the Buddha gained enlightenment.



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.

Pic: Benoy K Behl