



*Guru Conference & Exhibition on
Life and Legacy of*

Atisá

Dīpamkara Śrījñāna

अतीश दीप्तिकर श्रीज्ञान

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21 & 22 November 2025

REPORT



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INTRODUCTION



Building on the success of the 2019 Guru Conference, which focused on the [Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava](#), the Centre for Escalation of Peace and the India International Centre, in collaboration with the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Ritinjali, and Pallavan Learning Systems, presented a two-day conference dedicated to Atīśa Dīpamkara Śrījñāna, a luminary whose influence continues to shape the Buddhist tradition across Asia.

Atīśa Dīpamkara Śrījñāna, a towering figure in Buddhist history, is renowned for his intellectual and spiritual contributions that still resonate today. The conference explored his multifaceted roles as a scholar, reformer, spiritual leader, and cosmopolitan figure, celebrating his enduring legacy.

The conference began by examining Atīśa's early life and intellectual journey, which laid the foundation for his significant contributions to Buddhism. Born in what is now Bangladesh, Atīśa's rigorous scholarly training under distinguished teachers encompassed a wide array of Buddhist traditions—Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna—as well as disciplines such as logic, astrology, and philosophy. His extensive travels across Asia, including time in India, Tibet, and Indonesia, enabled him to synthesise diverse strands of Buddhist thought. During this period, Atīśa also served as Abbot of the prestigious Vikramaśīla University, a role that not only cemented his academic reputation but also influenced his later contributions to Buddhist education and reform.

A key focus of the conference was Atīśa's perilous journey to Indonesia, where he sought teachings on Bodhicitta from the master Dharmakīrti (Suvarṇadvipi Dharmarakṣita or Lama Serlingpa). This quest exemplified Atīśa's dedication to obtaining profound teachings, which later played a crucial role in the development of Buddhism in Tibet, Bhutan and other Himalayan regions. The impact of this journey on Atīśa's teachings and his role in bridging different Buddhist traditions was explored in depth.

Atīśa's connection to Bhutan was highlighted through his influence on the development of Buddhism in the region. Although Atīśa himself did not visit Bhutan, his disciples and the

teachings he disseminated significantly shaped the country's religious landscape. Bhutanese Buddhism—particularly the Drukpa Kagyu and Nyingma schools—was influenced by his emphasis on ethical conduct, meditation practices, and the gradual path to enlightenment. Even today, Atīśa's legacy continues to be honoured in Bhutan, where many of his texts and teachings are widely studied.

The conference also examined Atīśa's contributions to the ethical and moral dimensions of Buddhism, particularly his emphasis on Vinaya (monastic discipline) and the guru–disciple relationship. His deep spiritual connections with his disciples were discussed, highlighting the profound authority he commanded as a spiritual leader.

Central to Atīśa's legacy is his seminal work, *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment"), which remains foundational across all schools of Mahāyāna. The text's comprehensive outline of the path to enlightenment, integrating both exoteric and esoteric teachings, served as a focal point, with discussions on its enduring relevance in the Himalayan region.

Although Atīśa is retrospectively recognised as the founder of the Kadam school, the conference also included a special session on guided meditation on *Bodhicitta*, which he practised rigorously. These methods, aimed at transforming the mind and cultivating compassion, were discussed for their historical significance and continued relevance in contemporary Buddhist practice.

The conference was complemented by an exhibition of relics, manuscripts, and photographs, offering a visual exploration of the cultural and artistic heritage associated with Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna.

The event served as a comprehensive scholarly examination of Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna's life, teachings, and legacy. By bringing together academics, practitioners, and scholars, the conference celebrated his remarkable contributions to the spiritual and cultural heritage of Asia, ensuring that his profound wisdom continues to guide future generations.

DAY ONE: Friday, 21 November 2025



INAUGURAL SESSION

The Guru Conference on the *Life and Legacy of Atīśā Dīpamkara Śrījñāna* opened in Seminar Hall 1–3 at the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, with a formal welcome to participants and thanks to the collaborating institutions: the Centre for Escalation of Peace, the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Pallavan Learning Systems and Ritinjali. The Chief Guest, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, was introduced alongside senior colleagues from IIC.

In his Welcome Address, Ambassador Shyam Saran, President of IIC, situated the event within an ongoing series on the great masters of the Nālandā tradition, recalling the 2019 conference on Guru Padmasambhava. He stressed the need to recognise this intellectual heritage—born in India and preserved and developed across the Himalayan region—and offered a concise portrait of Atīśā as an 11th-century monk of remarkable courage and learning, who practised at Nālandā and Vikramaśīla, travelled to Sumatra to study under Dharmakīrti and later revitalised Buddhism in Tibet influencing many Himalayan regions. He highlighted that this legacy was artistic as well as intellectual, as seen in thangka painting, and welcomed international and monastic guests from Bangladesh, Sumatra and Karnataka who had brought manuscripts, a thousand-year-old scroll of Atīśā and sacred relics, as well as the online presence of Bhutanese scholar Dasho Karma Ura and made reference to Arun Kapur’s work in value-based education.

A special message from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama was then read out, recalling Atīśā’s 17 years in Tibet, his role in reviving the Buddhadharma and establishing the Kadam tradition with his disciple Dromtönpa, and the foundational importance of *Bodhipathapradīpa* (“A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”) for later works such as Tsongkhapa’s *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. His Holiness emphasised Atīśā’s clarification of the proper relationship between monastic discipline and tantric practice, expressed happiness that the conference was being held, and offered prayers and good wishes that his teachings remain a living source of guidance.



Vote of Thanks by Shri K.N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC



Inauguration of Exhibition by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon. Minister of Culture, Government of India

The conference formally opened with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Minister and dignitaries. In his Inaugural Address, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon. Minister of Culture, Government of India, described Atīśa as one of India's greatest spiritual sons, whose influence radiated from Bengal to Tibet, Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumatra) and across South Asia. He traced Atīśa's renunciation of royal life in Bikrampur (Bangladesh), his sea voyage to study Bodhicitta under Lama Serlingpa (Dharmakīrti) and his later decision, at 60, to undertake the perilous journey to Tibet, presenting these choices as expressions of renunciation, courage and service. He praised Atīśa's wide education under many masters in India and South-East Asia, his integration of Theravāda, Sutrayāna and Vajrayāna into a path grounded in *śīla*, *saṃādhi* and *prajñā*, and framed his life as an example of India's civilisational outreach through knowledge, dialogue and compassion. The address also linked Atīśa's legacy to contemporary initiatives in manuscript preservation and cultural collaboration.

The opening session was complemented by the inauguration of the exhibition “Life and Legacy of Atīśa Dīpamkara Śrījñāna” by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and overview of the exhibits by Mr Thupten Tsewang, featuring manuscripts of *Bodhipathapradīpa* (“Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”) from Bangladesh, a scroll of Atīśa's image believed to be about a thousand years old, sacred relics from a monastery in Karnataka and visual material on his travels, teachings and artistic heritage. The exhibition was presented as a visual extension of the conference.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Keynote Address by Dasho Karma Ura drew attention to Bhutanese manuscripts, the presence of Atīśa's teachings in Bhutanese ritual life and his indirect but profound influence on Drukpa Kagyu and Nyingma traditions, and underlined the importance of texts such as *Bodhipathapradīpa* for understanding the doctrinal and practical transmission of Buddhism in the region.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

SESSION I: LIFE

Moderator: Ven. Prof. Kaveri Gill

Speakers: Geshe Lhakdor, Ven. Dr Pooja Dabral, Geshe Thabkhe



The first thematic session of the day focused on the life of Atīśā and the broader historical and geographical context in which he lived. The discussion opened by reaffirming Atīśā's centrality to the spread and revival of Buddhism in Tibet and other regions. His early life in a royal family in Bikrampur, Bangladesh, and his decision to renounce worldly power and privilege were revisited as key markers of a vocation shaped by the search for truth rather than the pursuit of status. His years at Nālandā and Vikramāśīla were described in some detail, with particular emphasis on his training across several Buddhist traditions and allied disciplines. In this telling, Atīśā appears as a figure who stands at the crossroads of Theravāda, Sutrayāna and Vajrayāna, with a command of philosophy, logic and debate that allowed him to weave these strands into an integrated and practical path.

The session gave prominence to Atīśā's journey to Suvarṇadvīpa (modern-day Sumatra and the wider South-East Asian region), where he studied under Lama Serlingpa (Dharmakīrti). This voyage, undertaken in the face of real danger, was held up as a powerful example of humility and perseverance: a celebrated scholar and abbot willingly becoming a disciple again in order to deepen his understanding of Bodhicitta and mind-training. The impact of this training became a recurring reference point throughout the session, as it was repeatedly suggested that Atīśā's later emphasis on compassion and the mind of awakening was rooted in what he had received there. The discussion then moved to the period following Atīśā's return to India, when he became abbot of Vikramāśīla and enjoyed considerable intellectual and spiritual authority. From this position, his acceptance, despite initial reluctance, of the invitation to Tibet was presented as a decisive act of service. The historical situation in Tibet at the time was evoked as one of partial decline and

confusion in Buddhist institutions and ethics. Against this background, Atīśā's arrival was described as pivotal. His teachings and example contributed to the re-establishment of doctrinal clarity, ethical discipline and a properly grounded tantric practice, laying foundations that would influence all subsequent Tibetan schools.

Another important thread in the session concerned the wide geographical spread of Atīśā's influence. His life was mapped across regions such as India, Bangladesh, Sumatra, Tibet, Bhutan and Mongolia, and the presence of his legacy in each place was explored through textual, ritual and iconographic evidence. The audience was reminded of manuscripts in Bangladesh, rare versions of *Bodhipathapradīpa* in Bhutan, long-standing ritual and liturgical uses of his texts in Tibetan monasteries and narratives about his activities in Mongolia. Together, these examples portrayed Atīśā as a genuinely trans-regional figure whose life story is embedded in the religious and cultural memory of multiple societies.

Towards the end of Session I, attention turned to the state of current research and the future of Atīśā studies. The need for reliable editions and translations of his works and for careful contextual research was emphasised. The session referred back to earlier mentions of collaborative projects involving universities, archives and the use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to locate, preserve and analyse manuscripts. The audience was encouraged to see the conference not only as a retrospective homage but also as a starting point for further study and practice.



[Click here](#) to view the available speakers' presentations.

[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.



SESSION II: DEEDS

Moderator: Ven. Dr Pooja Dabral

Speakers: Khensur Jangchup Choeden Rinpoche, Ven. Tenzin Choyang, Dr Penpa Dorjee



The second session shifted from biography to deeds, examining what Atīśā actually did in the world and how his activities shaped the subsequent evolution of Buddhism. It concentrated particularly on his role in Tibet, while also acknowledging the wider reach of his influence.

The conversation began by returning to the Tibetan context into which Atīśā arrived. The period was described as one marked by doctrinal confusion and laxity in monastic discipline, especially in relation to tantric practice. In this setting, Atīśā's work was portrayed as a careful and patient effort to re-establish a correct understanding of the relationship between sūtra and tantra. His emphasis on ethical conduct, refuge and Bodhicitta as the indispensable basis of all advanced practices was underlined, as was his insistence that tantric methods should never be treated as a substitute for basic discipline or as a shortcut that bypasses moral responsibility. His legacy in this respect remains visible today in the structures of Tibetan monastic education and ritual.

The session examined Atīśā's various contributions as teacher, debater and writer. It was noted that his ability to engage in rigorous philosophical debate did not lead him to produce texts that were remote from practice; rather, he repeatedly returned to the question of how doctrine could be translated into a path that different kinds of practitioners could follow. In discussing his deeds, the speakers highlighted his concrete role in building and reforming institutions, in training disciples who would carry his teachings to different regions, and in stabilising communities that were seeking to re-anchor themselves in the Dharma.

Attention then turned to the practical disciplines associated with his name, including purification

practices, daily rituals and methods aimed at stabilising ethical conduct and mindfulness. These practices were described as part of his broader project of renewal, and it was noted that many of them are still enacted in contemporary monasteries and lay communities. In this way, Atīśa's deeds are not merely historical episodes but living patterns of activity that continue to shape the rhythm of Buddhist life.

A particularly substantial part of the session was dedicated to a close look at one of his key works, referred to in the materials as *Ratnakarāṇḍodghāta*. The discussion explored its philosophical content and historical context and showed how the text embodies Atīśa's characteristic method of integrating diverse doctrinal strands into a single coherent path. Connections were drawn between this text, *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment") and other treatises to illustrate how Atīśa re-articulated Buddhist doctrine in a way that spoke directly to the needs of his time. The session also reflected on the wider historical processes through which his deeds intersected with larger currents of political and social change, including earlier work associated with Guru Rinpoche and later developments that shaped the emergence of different Tibetan traditions.

By the close of Session II, the discussion had made clear that Atīśa's deeds are not to be understood simply as isolated acts, but as a sustained pattern of teaching, writing and reforming that has left a deep imprint on Buddhism practiced in Tibet, Bhutan and Mongolia. His activity was presented as an example of how a single life, grounded in Bodhicitta, can both preserve and renew a tradition.



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SESSION III: BODHICITTA

Moderator: Khensur Jangchup Choeden Rinpoche

Speakers: Serkong Tsenshap Rinpoche, Prof. Madhumita Chattopadhyaya, Ven. Dr Karma Sonam Palmo



Session III turned directly to Bodhicitta, the mind of awakening, and explored its meaning, philosophical articulation and practical cultivation, with particular reference to Atīśā’s teaching. The session opened by reaffirming that Bodhicitta is the altruistic intention to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings and that it stands at the heart of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Atīśā’s own life was again invoked as a concrete illustration of this principle, especially his journey to Indonesia in search of more profound teachings on compassion and the mind of awakening. This narrative was used to show that Bodhicitta is not an abstract idea but a lived orientation that can shape major life decisions.

The discussion then moved into a more philosophical register. Different Mahāyāna accounts of Bodhicitta were examined, with particular attention to the ways in which Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga articulate the arising and nature of the mind of awakening. Contrasts and convergences between these accounts and Atīśā’s own presentation were explored. The relationship between relative and ultimate Bodhicitta was discussed, as was the interplay between merit and wisdom in the cultivation of this state of mind. In this way, Bodhicitta emerged as both an ethical resolve and a deep insight into the nature of reality.

A central section of the session was dedicated to *Bodhipathapradīpa* (“A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”), described as a concise roadmap of the Buddhist path. The discussion highlighted how the text distinguishes between practitioners of lesser, middling and supreme capacities and shows how Bodhicitta frames the aspirations and practices of the highest type.

The structuring of the path through refuge, ethical discipline, meditation and insight was examined in some detail, while emphasising that these are always held together by the intention to work for the welfare of all beings. The session drew out how Atīśā integrates other core Mahāyāna concepts—including great compassion and the understanding of emptiness—into this framework.

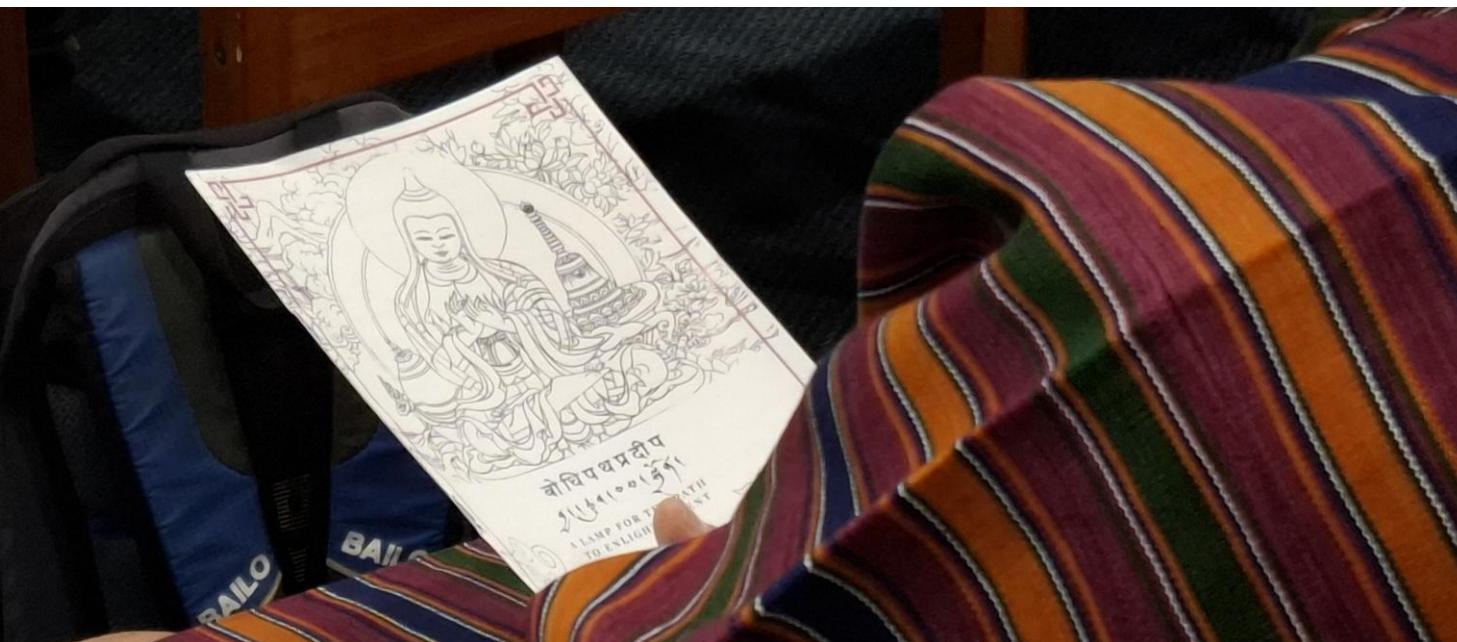
Practical questions of cultivation were also addressed. Methods such as the “seven-point cause and effect” approach to generating Bodhicitta were discussed, and the difference between aspirational and engaged Bodhicitta was clarified. The practices connected with engaged Bodhicitta—such as committing to virtuous actions, avoiding harmful behaviour, and consistently working for the welfare of others—were explained as practical ways to bring the awakened mind into everyday life. Frameworks such as king-like, boatman-like and shepherd-like Bodhicitta were mentioned in order to suggest that even within the single overarching aspiration to benefit all beings there are subtle differences of attitude and emphasis.

Session III concluded with reflections on the karmic conditions required to meet the teachings on Bodhicitta and to encounter qualified teachers, and with a brief dedication in which the merit of the session was offered for the growth of Bodhicitta in all beings.



[Click here](#) to view the available speakers' presentations.

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SESSION IV: GUIDED MEDITATION ON BODHICITTA

Speaker: Ven. Geshe Lhakdor



The final session of the day was a guided meditation on Bodhicitta. It served as a contemplative complement to the more discursive earlier sessions and invited participants to experience, at least in a preliminary way, the inner movement at the heart of the teachings.

The session began with an explanation of Bodhicitta as the deepest source of long-lasting happiness. It was suggested that the law of nature favours attitudes rooted in compassion, wisdom and ethical restraint, and that inner peace becomes possible when thoughts are aligned

with this law. By contrast, self-centred thinking, even when apparently successful in worldly terms, tends to generate anxiety and dissatisfaction. Meditation was described as a practice of connecting with oneself, learning to observe thoughts and emotions, and gradually transforming destructive patterns.

Participants were guided through simple breathing exercises designed to calm the mind and create a sense of spaciousness. They were encouraged to notice how quickly the mind moves from one thought to another and how strongly it reacts to attachment, anger and aversion. The instructions emphasised patient observation rather than immediate suppression, inviting meditators to recognise the arising of negative states and then, gently but firmly, return to a more wholesome focus.

A central emphasis of the session was on cultivating compassion and love, not only for those who are close and supportive, but also for those who may have caused hurt. Participants were asked to reflect on their own precious human life, on the kindness they have received from others and on the suffering that others experience, sometimes as a result of their own confusion. This widening circle of concern, from self to loved ones and ultimately to all beings, was presented as a direct training in Bodhicitta.

The teaching also touched on the idea of rebirth and the continuity of mind, suggesting that efforts made in this life to cultivate Bodhicitta and wholesome habits will continue to bear fruit in future lives. In this way, meditation was framed not as an isolated exercise but as part of a much longer journey.

Towards the end of the session, participants were encouraged to adopt simple daily practices, such as short periods of meditation, regular reflection on the meaning of life and spontaneous acts of kindness, as well as the recitation of refuge and Bodhicitta verses. The session concluded with such a recitation, offered as a concise daily practice that unites ethical commitment, the generation of Bodhicitta and the dedication of merit.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

DAY TWO: Saturday, 22 November 2025



SESSION V: Travels

Moderator: Ven. Tenzin Lekzom

Speakers: Ven. Prof. Kaveri Gill, Dr Elisabeth Inandiak, Ms Nazneen Haque Mimi



Day Two began with a wide-ranging exploration of Atīśā’s travels, presented as a journey of intellectual inquiry, spiritual striving and intercultural exchange. Building on the historical narratives introduced on Day One, the session revisited Atīśā’s roots in Bikrampur—an ancient centre of learning in present-day Bangladesh—where he received early exposure to scholastic and devotional traditions. From this fertile cultural landscape, he progressed to Nālandā and Vikramāśīla, two of the subcontinent’s greatest monastic universities, where his training in philosophy, ethics and contemplative practice took shape.

The session emphasised that Atīśā’s travels were not merely geographical movement but expressions of an enduring spiritual commitment. His now-legendary voyage to Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumatra) in search of the Bodhicitta teachings of Lama Serlingpa (Dharmakriti) was highlighted as an act of immense resolve, taken not for prestige or ritual performance but from a heartfelt wish to deepen his understanding of compassion. The speakers reflected on how these journeys, which might seem daunting from a modern perspective, were for Atīśā natural steps in a lifelong pursuit of wisdom.

A broader historical canvas situated Atīśā within the vibrant Buddhist networks of the 10th and 11th centuries. These networks linked India, Tibet, Nepal, Java and Sumatra, enabling the sharing

of texts, relics, inscriptions and monastic lineages. The session drew attention to archaeological discoveries at Muarajambi, where relics associated with Atīśa continue to inspire interest in early Buddhism in Southeast Asia. The discussion also noted how environmental threats and a lack of conservation challenge heritage sites in Bikrampur, underscoring the need for greater cultural stewardship.

The session concluded by presenting Atīśa as a truly transregional figure whose life wove together diverse intellectual traditions and spiritual communities. His travels were framed as acts of scholarship, devotion and service that built bridges across borders—bridges that remain vital to the study and practice of Buddhism today.



[Click here](#) to view the available speakers' presentations.

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SESSION VI: Vinaya

Moderator: Geshe Lhakdor

Speakers: Ven. Tenzin Lekzom, Dhardo Tulku, Gelong Jamphel Thinley



The second session of the day offered a comprehensive and nuanced examination of Vinaya as the ethical backbone of Buddhist practice and as a defining feature of Atiśā’s spiritual life. The speakers traced the meaning of Vinaya as “taming the mind”—a process that regulates body, speech and mind in order to cultivate inner stability and moral clarity. Atiśā’s reputation as a master of Vinaya was strongly emphasised: he adhered to monastic vows with exceptional sincerity, swiftly purifying even the slightest lapse, and embodying the belief that ethical conduct is the indispensable foundation for all advanced practices.

The session expanded upon the doctrinal and psychological dimensions of Vinaya. It explored the connection between ethical discipline and the *Noble Eightfold Path*, highlighting how right view, right intention and right mindfulness are reinforced by stable moral conduct. The discussion also examined the training of consciousness, including the continuity of mental consciousness after death, reinforcing the idea that ethical choices shape both present and future lives. This provided a wider context for understanding Atiśā’s commitment to discipline—not as rigidity, but as profound attentiveness to the conditions of liberation from the shackles of ignorance.

The speakers noted that Atiśā was a non-sectarian scholar who studied multiple Vinaya traditions, synthesising their strengths through lived experience. This open and inclusive approach revitalised monastic practice in Tibet, where ethical discipline had weakened during the later decades of the ninth century.

Contemporary relevance formed a substantial part of the discussion. The presenters observed

that in an age of distraction, materialism and ethical confusion, Vinaya remains a stabilising force offering clarity of purpose and practical methods for compassionate, responsible living. The session concluded by articulating the deep interdependence between Vinaya and Bodhicitta: ethical discipline grounds altruistic intention, while Bodhicitta enriches ethics with a wider horizon of care for all beings. Both monastic and lay practitioners can progress on the path when their actions arise from discipline, compassion and wisdom.



[Click here](#) to view the available speakers' presentations.

[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.



SESSION VII: Guru–Śiṣya Relationship

Moderator: Serkong Tsenshap Rinpoche

Speakers: Prof. Pradeep P. Gokhale, Dr Andrea Acri, Dr Geshe Lobsang Dorjee Rabling



The afternoon session offered a rich and multifaceted reflection on the Guru–Śiṣya relationship across Indian intellectual traditions, drawing on philosophical, historical and textual sources. The discussion began in the Vedic milieu, where the Guru functioned not only as a teacher but as an embodiment of divine authority. In this early framework, access to knowledge was structured by varṇa and gender, with Brahmins and upper-caste men traditionally receiving instruction, while women and Shudras were largely excluded. The speakers explained that in this context, a teacher imparted knowledge, while a Guru provided ethical and spiritual guidance, leading disciples toward the realisation of Brahman.

The session then moved to Buddhist traditions, where the Guru–Śiṣya model took on new dimensions. In Śrāvaka schools, the Guru guides disciples toward Arhatship through training in ethics, meditation and insight, with close attention to dependent origination. Mahāyāna Buddhism expanded the role of the Guru, emphasising the cultivation of Bodhicitta and framing the Guru as a kalyāṇa-mitra—a noble friend whose compassion, ethical conduct and example nurture the disciple's aspiration to benefit all beings. The speakers emphasised that while devotion remains central, Buddhist traditions actively encourage questioning and critical inquiry, allowing disciples to examine teachings before internalising them.

In Tantric Buddhism, the Guru's role becomes even more vital. The Guru acts as initiator and guide, transmitting empowerments and advanced techniques such as mantra, visualisation and ritual mudrās. This tradition emphasises the Guru's ethical excellence, wisdom and compassion, alongside the disciple's devotion, service and disciplined practice. Unlike the Vedic tradition,

Tantric Buddhism is fundamentally inclusive, recognising that all beings—regardless of gender or social status—possess the potential for enlightenment.

Historical reflections enriched the philosophical analysis. Drawing on inscriptions, travel accounts and monastic records, the session highlighted networks of Buddhist exchange between India and Southeast Asia, showing how ideas moved fluidly between regions. The life of Atiśā served as a unifying example: he travelled widely in search of teachers, demonstrated exemplary discipleship under Serlingpa, and later served as a compassionate and insightful Guru whose guidance shaped entire lineages in Tibet. His ability to combine scholarship, ethical discipline and devotional practice illustrated the enduring depth and complexity of the Guru-Śiṣya relationship.



[Click here](#) to view the available speakers' presentations.

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SESSION VIII: Guided Meditation on Bodhicitta

Led by: Ven. Geshe Lhakdor



The final session of Day Two invited participants into a contemplative exploration of Bodhicitta, integrating philosophical teachings with meditative practice. Ven. Geshe Lhakdor began by clarifying that meditation is not a single technique but a broad category encompassing object-based meditation, subject-based meditation and meditations that cultivate compassion and loving-kindness. He explained how Bodhicitta meditation transforms the mind into a state of universal care, rooted in the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, rather than for personal liberation alone.

A distinction was made between calm-abiding (*śamatha*) and analytical meditation (*vipaśyanā*), highlighting that concentration is essential not only for spiritual progress but for success in all areas of life. The session stressed that genuine interest and motivation are key prerequisites for effective meditation, and that human life—finite, fragile and precious—must be recognised as a rare opportunity for spiritual development.

A central part of the session addressed the cultivation of Bodhicitta through a deep understanding of suffering, impermanence and the limitations of *samsāra*. By contemplating sickness, aging, death and loss, practitioners naturally develop the wish for liberation, which then expands into compassion for the suffering of all beings. This progression leads the practitioner to commit to both conventional and ultimate Bodhicitta—the former grounded in compassion, generosity and ethical conduct, and the latter rooted in wisdom that perceives emptiness.

The speaker illustrated the nature of ignorance through the well-known example of mistaking a rope for a snake, showing how misconceptions distort reality and generate fear. Emptiness was explained through the analogy of zero in mathematics—not as a negation but as a foundational principle enabling all phenomena to arise. Ven. Geshe Lhakdor emphasised that dependent origination is a universal law ensuring that nothing exists independently.

The session concluded with reflections on the destructive effects of negative emotions—anger, attachment and self-cherishing—and on the importance of cultivating compassion, mindfulness and ethical behaviour. Participants were encouraged to recognise the Year of Compassion marking the 90th birth anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and to take meaningful steps in integrating these teachings into daily life. The session ended with an invitation to rejoice collectively in the shared effort to cultivate wisdom and compassion.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

CONCLUDING SESSION

Concluding Remarks

Delivered by: Arun Kapur, Chairman, Centre for Escalation of Peace; Director, Pallavan Learning Systems; Founder, Ritinjali



The conference concluded with an inspiring reflection on the deeper purpose behind learning and self-transformation. It was emphasised that the end of the conference is not a conclusion but the beginning of an ongoing journey of introspection and practice. Participants were encouraged to recognise the “treasure within” and to become their own treasure-revealers, nurturing wisdom, compassion and joy in everyday life. This was linked to the aesthetic dimension of living—finding meaning and quiet delight in our actions, guided by the example of Atīśā Dīpamkara Śrījñāna’s life and legacy. The remarks highlighted the importance of contextualising knowledge—not only geographically, but within the mind and heart—and adapting insights from the conference into one’s personal and professional spheres. The audience was reminded that across countless lifetimes, beings have been intimately connected, and that cultivating empathy, understanding and responsibility remains central to spiritual growth.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

Vote of Thanks

Delivered by: Shri K.N. Shrivastava, Director, India International Centre



The conference closed with a warm and gracious vote of thanks acknowledging institutional partners, government representatives, diplomats, scholars, monastic communities and delegates. Appreciation was expressed for the meticulous efforts of organising teams from both the India International Centre and the Centre for Escalation of Peace, whose dedication ensured the success of the conference and exhibition. The remarks celebrated the richness of the presentations, the value of the discussions and the significance of the rare materials showcased. Participants were reminded that education, mindfulness and conscious action are essential in building compassion, tolerance and wholistic development. The session ended with a renewed sense of shared purpose and commitment to carrying forward the values of understanding and peace.



[Click here](#) to watch the recorded session.

Q & A



DAY ONE

Q1: How can we reconcile the different historical narratives about the decline and revival of Buddhism in Tibet?

A: The speakers explained that these different narratives arise because each tradition and region preserves its own versions of events. Instead of looking for one single story, they encouraged a careful comparison of Tibetan, Sanskrit and, where relevant, Chinese sources, along with biographies, colophons and inscriptions. New manuscripts continue to appear, and these often challenge earlier assumptions. The general message was that the history of Tibetan Buddhism is best understood as a mosaic—one that becomes clearer when multiple sources are brought into dialogue.

Q2: What are the primary sources for Atīśā's life and work, and how do historians evaluate them?

A: The panel pointed out that we rely on a broad range of material—Tibetan biographies, hagiographies, colophons, Indian references, Bhutanese and Mongolian accounts, and manuscript evidence from Bangladesh and Sumatra. When assessing these sources, historians look closely at their date, background and purpose, and compare different versions of the same text. They pay attention to where legend begins and where historically reliable detail sits. The aim is not to dismiss traditional accounts, but to read them with care and context.

Q3: What role did translators like Lotsawa Rinchen Sangpo play in preparing the ground for Atīśā's reforms in Tibet?

A: The speakers emphasised that translators and patrons created the intellectual and institutional world into which Atīśā later stepped. Translators made texts available, patrons offered support and resources, and teachers like Atīśā provided guidance and interpretation. The revival of Buddhism in Tibet was described as a collective achievement that unfolded across generations, rather than the work of any single figure.

Q4: With so many visible spiritual teachers today, how can practitioners recognise a genuine guru?

A: The advice was to observe a teacher over time, rather than rely on first impressions. A

trustworthy teacher is grounded in an authentic lineage, knows the scriptures well, and behaves with humility, compassion and ethical clarity. Their guidance should encourage independence and moral responsibility, not dependency or confusion. Practitioners were encouraged to take time, to proceed carefully and to rely on wise counsel from their community.

Q5: How can a balanced relationship between sūtra and tantra be maintained in contemporary practice?

A: The panel stressed that tantra should rest firmly on the foundation of sūtra. Ethical conduct, refuge and Bodhicitta form the base upon which tantric practice becomes meaningful and safe. Tantra was described as a powerful method, but not one meant to bypass basic training. When approached correctly and transmitted within a lineage, sūtra and tantra work together; when ethics are neglected, tantric practice becomes unstable.

Q6: How can lay practitioners with busy lives genuinely cultivate Bodhicitta?

A: The speakers reassured that Bodhicitta does not require withdrawing from family or work. Even small daily reflections—setting intentions, practising patience, dedicating everyday actions to others—can gradually deepen Bodhicitta. Ordinary situations become opportunities to cultivate generosity, understanding and compassion. Consistency, not isolation, was emphasised as the heart of lay practice.

Q7: How can compassion be sustained in moments of conflict or when facing harmful behaviour?

A: It was acknowledged that this is one of the most difficult aspects of practice. Participants were encouraged to see harmful actions as rooted in confusion and suffering, and to separate the behaviour from the person. Pausing before reacting, remembering one's own mistakes and wishing the other person freedom from suffering were offered as practical steps. Difficult moments, they said, can become some of the richest training grounds for patience and compassion.

Q8: How should karmic connections be understood when it comes to receiving teachings or meeting qualified teachers?

A: The speakers explained that meeting the Dharma—especially teachings on Bodhicitta—is seen as the fruit of positive karmic tendencies developed over many lives. Recognising this can inspire gratitude and encourage practitioners to make good use of the opportunity. Karmic

connections were described not as fixed destiny, but as relationships that deepen through study, intention and practice.

Q9: What should practitioners do when meditation brings up distraction, emotional pain or fear—or when they feel they are “not doing it right”?

A: The guidance was to understand that such experiences are entirely natural and not a sign of failure. Returning to the breath gently whenever the mind wanders, observing emotional turbulence with kindness and avoiding self-criticism were encouraged. Fear and discomfort can be approached gradually and with patience. Over time, with regular practice and compassion toward oneself, the mind becomes steadier and more receptive.



DAY TWO

Q. 1: How did Atīśa devote his life to the Guru–Śiṣya relationship, and what were his contributions to his disciples?

A: Atīśa embodied the Guru–Śiṣya ideal throughout his life. He travelled widely in search of qualified teachers, receiving extensive training in ethical conduct, meditation and scholastic learning. His dedication to his teachers shaped his approach to discipleship when he himself became a Guru. He selected suitable students with discernment, guiding them through tailored instruction that integrated scholarship and practice. His emphasis on ethical purity, devotion and Bodhicitta helped his disciples cultivate insight and compassion. Beyond personal guidance, Atīśa ensured the preservation, clarification and transmission of the Dharma across regions, strengthening spiritual lineages for generations.

Q. 2: How does the Guru–Śiṣya relationship in Buddhism differ from that in Vedic traditions?

A: The Vedic tradition grounded the Guru–Śiṣya relationship in hierarchy, ritual authority and social restrictions based on varṇa and gender. Disciples learned primarily through memorisation and ritual performance, with limited space for questioning. In contrast, Buddhism embraces inclusivity and encourages reasoning, critical inquiry and experiential understanding. The Buddhist Guru is a guide whose role is to nurture ethical conduct, meditation and insight, rather than enforce ritual authority. Devotion remains central, but is balanced with investigation, personal effort and awareness, making the relationship dynamic rather than hierarchical.

Q. 3: Is questioning allowed within the Buddhist Guru–Śiṣya framework?

A: Yes. Questioning is not only permitted but encouraged, especially during the early stages of learning. Disciples are expected to clarify doubts, explore concepts critically and verify teachings through personal experience. Over time, as practice deepens, inquiry naturally matures into direct realisation. Buddhism values a balance between faith and critical understanding, ensuring that devotion is grounded in comprehension rather than blind acceptance.

Q. 4: What qualities make a Guru effective in the spiritual development of a disciple?

A: An effective Guru demonstrates ethical integrity, deep knowledge of the teachings, compassion and genuine commitment to the disciple's growth. Such a teacher provides clear guidance through moral conduct, meditation and philosophical understanding, while also serving as a living example of the Dharma. The disciple's sincerity, devotion and effort

complement the Guru's qualities, creating a mutually supportive relationship that fosters insight, merit and wisdom.

Q. 5: Why do people struggle with meditation, and how can genuine interest be cultivated?

A: People often struggle with meditation because they lack understanding of its purpose or approach it without sustained interest. Genuine motivation arises when practitioners recognise the preciousness of human life and the transformative potential of spiritual practice. Seeing meditation as an opportunity rather than an obligation helps cultivate joy, curiosity and perseverance, allowing concentration to develop naturally.

Q. 6: What is the role of a qualified teacher in meditation and spiritual life?

A: A qualified teacher safeguards the practitioner's path by providing accurate instruction, compassionate guidance and corrective advice. Their expertise prevents misunderstanding or misuse of meditation techniques. Ethical conduct, accessibility and genuine care are essential qualities of such a teacher. Their presence ensures the practitioner progresses safely and meaningfully, avoiding confusion or discouragement.

Q. 7: How should practitioners understand rebirth and the nature of samsāra?

A: Rebirth is understood as the continuation of mental consciousness shaped by past actions. Reflecting on samsāra's inherent instability—marked by illness, ageing, death and loss—helps practitioners recognise the suffering embedded in cyclic existence. This insight generates the sincere wish to attain liberation and naturally expands into compassion for all beings trapped in similar conditions.

Q. 8: What is the difference between conventional and ultimate Bodhicitta?

A: Conventional Bodhicitta is the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, cultivated through compassion, ethical conduct and loving-kindness. Ultimate Bodhicitta is the wisdom that perceives emptiness—the absence of inherent existence in all phenomena. Together, they form the two inseparable pillars of the path: compassion gives direction to wisdom, and wisdom gives depth to compassion.

Q. 9: How should practitioners deal with negative emotions such as anger, attachment and self-cherishing?

A: Negative emotions are seen as internal enemies that distort perception and generate suffering.

Practitioners are encouraged to recognise these emotions without self-judgment, apply antidotes such as compassion, patience and mindfulness, and cultivate habits that weaken destructive tendencies over time. Consistent practice enables positive qualities: compassion, clarity and equanimity, to gradually replace harmful patterns.

Q. 10: How can emptiness be understood without mistaking it for “nothingness”?

A: Emptiness does not imply non-existence; it refers to the absence of independent, permanent essence in all phenomena. The analogy of zero in mathematics illustrates this: zero does not mean “nothing”, but rather represents a principle that enables meaningful calculation. Similarly, emptiness is the condition that allows interdependent arising, transformation and compassion to exist meaningfully.

Q. 11: Why is dependent origination essential for understanding Bodhicitta and wisdom?

A: Dependent origination shows that all phenomena arise through causes and conditions, without independent existence. This insight undermines self-grasping and supports the development of Bodhicitta by revealing the interconnectedness of all beings. Understanding interdependence naturally leads to compassion, as practitioners see that suffering and happiness are shared across relational networks.

Q. 12: What practical steps can practitioners take to cultivate compassion in daily life?

A: Practitioners can cultivate compassion by performing small acts of kindness with sincere motivation, reflecting on others’ suffering, practising patience, and integrating ethical behaviour into daily routines. Even simple gestures—when performed mindfully—create positive momentum on the path and contribute meaningfully to personal and societal harmony.

Q. 13: How should one respond when meditation brings up fear, discomfort or emotional pain?

A: Fear or discomfort in meditation often arises from confronting deeply ingrained patterns or misconceptions. Practitioners are advised to return gently to the breath, maintain awareness without judgment, and recognise that emotional turbulence is part of the training. Patience, kindness towards oneself and gradual perseverance help stabilise the mind and transform difficult experiences into insight.

CONCLUSION



The two-day Guru Conference on the Life and Legacy of Atīśā Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna concluded with a profound sense of reflection, gratitude and renewed purpose. Across eight richly textured sessions, the conference brought together monastic scholars, academics, researchers, educators and practitioners to engage deeply with Atīśā’s life, philosophy and far-reaching influence. Through discussions on his extensive travels, his revitalisation of monastic discipline, his elucidation of Bodhicitta, and his exemplary embodiment of the guru–śiṣya relationship, participants gained a multidimensional understanding of a figure whose legacy continues to animate Buddhist thought and practice across Asia.

Each session revealed another layer of Atīśā’s contribution—from his role in strengthening Vinaya and ethical conduct, to his bridging of diverse cultural and intellectual worlds, to his integration of scholarship, compassion and contemplative insight. The examination of archaeological heritage, transregional Buddhist networks and the preservation of manuscripts further highlighted how Atīśā’s life continues to shape contemporary research, spiritual inquiry and cultural memory.

A defining strength of the conference was the active and thoughtful participation of attendees joining both in person and online. Their questions, reflections and observations enriched the dialogue, demonstrating the continued relevance of Atīśā’s teachings for modern practitioners, scholars and seekers navigating moral complexity, social change and the search for inner clarity. The dynamic exchange between presenters and participants helped ground historical study in lived experience, transforming the event into a shared exploration rather than a one-way transmission.

The conference concluded with sincere expressions of appreciation for the organisers, institutional partners, speakers and delegates whose dedication made the event possible. As the gathering drew to a close, a collective commitment was reaffirmed: to preserve, study and disseminate the wisdom of the Nālandā tradition, and to carry forward Atīśā’s message of compassion, humility, intellectual rigour and altruistic intent. The insights shared over these two days serve not as an ending, but as an invitation to continue the journey he began towards deeper understanding, ethical living and the cultivation of Bodhicitta in service of all beings.

S P E A K E R B I O S



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, born in 1935 in Taktser, Amdo, Tibet, is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and a global symbol of peace, compassion, and moral wisdom. Recognised as the reincarnation of his predecessor at age two, he assumed full spiritual and political leadership of Tibet in 1950. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he has tirelessly advocated for nonviolence, interfaith harmony, environmental stewardship, and universal human values, while preserving Tibet's profound spiritual and cultural heritage.

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat is the Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India, and a Member of Parliament from Jodhpur, Rajasthan. A senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he has earlier served as the Union Minister for Jal Shakti. Holding an M.A. in Philosophy from Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur, he is known for his dynamic leadership in rural development, water management, and cultural preservation, and for promoting India's heritage, sustainable tourism, and global cultural diplomacy.

Dasho Karma Ura

Dasho Karma Ngawang Ura is the President of the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies, where he has served as Executive President since 2008. Formerly with Bhutan's Planning Commission (1989–1998), he has been instrumental in advancing research on Gross National Happiness (GNH), wellbeing, and sustainable development.

Dasho Ura holds degrees from Oxford, Edinburgh, and Nagoya University, Japan. He serves on global advisory bodies including the Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford, the Earth Trusteeship Working Group, and the Global Happiness Council (UAE).

His publications include *Bhutan: The Unremembered Nation*, volume 1, “Community and Livelihood” (OUP 2022), and *Bhutan: The Unremembered Nation*, volume 2, “Art and Ideals” (OUP 2023).

Dr. Andrea Acri

Andrea Acri (PhD Leiden University, 2011; Habil. Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2024) is Associate Professor in Tantric Studies at the Religious Studies section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), PSL University, Paris. He specialises in the text-historical study of tantric traditions in South and Southeast Asia, with special emphasis on intra-Asian maritime circulation, and Śaiva and Buddhist traditions in premodern insular Southeast Asia. Besides being the Principal Investigator of ERC MANTRATANTRAM, he is Lead Researcher in the ERC Synergy MANTRAMS (Mantras in Religion, Media, and Society in Global Southern Asia) hosted at the universities of Vienna, Tübingen, Oxford, and the EPHE.

Ven. Tenzin Choyang

Ani Choyang was born in Tibet and escaped to India at eighteen. Ordained in 2003 under His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, she holds a Rapjampa Degree and is pursuing her Geshema (PhD-equivalent). A Tenzin Gyatso Science Scholar, she trained at Emory and Northwestern Universities, and now coordinates the Buddhist Philosophy and Science Project at Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, Mundgod, promoting dialogue between Buddhism and modern science.

Dhardo Tulku

Dhardo Tulku Rinpoche was born in Kalimpong, India, and recognised as the 14th incarnation of Dhardo Rinpoche by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in 1995. In 2000, he joined Drepung Losel Ling Monastic University, undertaking rigorous training in Buddhist philosophy. Having studied the five great treatises and completed the monastic curriculum, he is now in the final year of the Geshe Lharam degree, the highest academic qualification in Buddhist philosophy. Alongside his scholarly pursuits, Rinpoche serves

as head Lama of Ghoom Ganden Yiga Choeling, the oldest monastery in Darjeeling, founded in 1850.

Dr. Elisabeth Inandiak

Elisabeth D. Inandiak is a French writer and community builder who has lived in Indonesia since 1990, working closely with village communities affected by natural and human-made disasters. Deeply committed to intercultural and interfaith dialogue, she collaborates with local groups to preserve oral traditions, promote reconciliation, and rebuild lives through collective storytelling and education. In Muara Jambi, Sumatra, she co-founded the House of Local Wisdom and Peace, fostering understanding and cooperation between Buddhist and Muslim communities.

Gelong Jamphel Thinley

Gelong Jamphel Thinley was born in Tibet and brought up in exile. He did his schooling from TCV and joined Drepung Losel Ling Monastery under the guidance of the late H.E. Khensur Thuptop Gonpo. Jamphel received his bhikshu ordination from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Pursuing a Geshe Lharampa degree, he has completed the study of Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka and Vinaya and is at present studying Abhidharma.

Khensur Jangchup Choeden Rinpoche

Shartse Khensur Rinpoche Jangchup Choeden was born in Himachal Pradesh, India, and joined the Gaden Shartse Norling Monastery in his teens, where he completed his monastic education and earned the Geshe Lharampa degree in 1997, followed by the Geshe Ngagrampa. A disciple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rinpoche has travelled widely, teaching the Dharma across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. He served as Abbot of Gaden Shartse Monastery (2009–2017) and is currently the General Secretary of the International Buddhist Confederation, continuing his leadership in global Buddhist dialogue and education.

Ven. Dr. Karma Sonam Palmo

Dr. Karma Sonam Palmo is a Tibetan Buddhist nun born in the Tibetan Exile Community of Rumtek, Sikkim. She holds a PhD from the University of Tasmania (Asian Philosophy & Gender Studies), Australia, and Acharya & Shastri degrees from Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath. Currently, she is working on a *Tib-Sans-Eng Tri-Lingual Abhidharma Thematic Lexicon* in the Research Department of CIHTS. As visiting faculty at universities in India and abroad, she has taught courses on Buddhist Philosophy; Gender & Buddhism; and Women in Buddhism. She is Coordinator for the Five College Consortium's Tibetan Studies in India Program (exchange program between Smith College, USA and CIHTS) and Buddhist MOOCs offered by UGC and CIHTS on SWAYAM Platform.

Ven. Prof. Kaveri Gill

Professor Kaveri Gill is a faculty member at the Centre for Excellence in Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar University. Trained as a development economist, she studied and later lectured at the University of Cambridge, UK, specialising in political economy and development theory. Over the past decade, she has systematically studied Nālandā philosophy at Tibet House, New Delhi, integrating classical Buddhist thought with contemporary economic and ethical inquiry. Her interdisciplinary research bridges political economy, ethics, and contemplative studies, fostering dialogue between modern scholarship and ancient wisdom to explore compassion, consciousness, and holistic development in the Himalayan and global contexts.

Geshe Lhakdor

Ven. Geshe Lhakdor was born in Yakra, Ngari, Western Tibet, in 1956. He holds a Geshe (Doctor of Divinity) degree from Drepung Losel Ling Monastic University, an MPhil from the University of Delhi, and an MA in English from Punjab University, Chandigarh. A former translator and religious assistant to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for 16 years, he travelled extensively across five continents. He currently serves as Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, and holds honorary professorships at the University of Delhi and the University of British Columbia. Geshe Lhakdor is also Co-director of

Science for Monks and a trustee of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, contributing to global dialogues on ethics, education, and Buddhist philosophy.

Dr. Geshe Lobsang Dorjee Rabling

Dr. Geshe Lobsang Dorjee (Rabling) is Associate Professor and a distinguished scholar of Buddhist philosophy and philology. He holds an Acharya and PhD from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath, and a Geshe degree from Drepung Gomang Monastery (2018). His research focuses on restoring and translating lost Buddhist and Indian texts from Tibetan back into Sanskrit, reviving classical knowledge traditions. Among his notable works are the critical edition of *Tam-gyud Ser-ge Thang-ma* by Gedun Choephel and a Tibetan translation of the “Questions of King Milinda”, bridging India-Tibet scholarly exchanges through meticulous philological study.

Prof. Madhumita Chattopadhyay

Professor Madhumita Chattopadhyay teaches Philosophy at Jadavpur University. She has been well-trained in both Western and Indian philosophical traditions. Her area of specialisation is Buddhist Philosophy with emphasis on Buddhist Epistemology, Logic and Semantics. She has authored seven books on Buddhism and contributed articles in peer reviewed national and international journals. She has been awarded six international Fellowships for visiting countries like Japan, USA, Hungary, England.

Dr. Penpa Dorjee

Penpa Dorjee retired as Professor from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi. He served as the head of the Restoration Department, and the Librarian of the Shantrakshita Library at the Institute. He received his Acharya degree from Sampurnananda Sanskrit University in Varanasi and his PhD from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. He has 20 books to his credit as author, co-author, translator, or editor. At present, he is working for The Dalai Lama Centre for Tibetan and Indian Ancient Wisdom, Bodhgaya, Bihar.

Ven Dr. Pooja Dabral

Ven. Dr. Pooja Dabral is an Assistant Professor at the School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religion, and the School of Language, Literature and Philosophy, Nalanda University. She earned her PhD from the University of Delhi for her thesis “Ārya Nāgārjuna’s Philosophy of Emptiness and Je Tsongkhapa’s Exposition: Dissent in Two Prolific Periods.” Her teaching and research focus on Madhyamaka philosophy, Buddhist psychology, and the Mahayana tradition. A long-term student of Tibet House, New Delhi, she has published and presented widely on Buddhist philosophy, mind and matter, and Nālandā legacies. Proficient in Tibetan and German, she received the International Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award (2024) in Taiwan.

Prof. Pradeep Gokhale

Professor Pradeep P. Gokhale is a distinguished scholar of Indian philosophy and Buddhist studies. He retired as Professor of Philosophy from Savitribai Phule Pune University in 2012 and subsequently served as the B.R. Ambedkar Research Professor at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath from 2012 to 2018. He is currently an Honorary Adjunct Professor in the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies at Savitribai Phule Pune University. His research spans Buddhist logic, ethics, and comparative philosophy.

Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche

Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche was born in the Spiti valley in 1984. He was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of Kyabje Tsenshab Serkong Rinpoche (1914-1983), one of seven master debate partners to His Holiness. Rinpoche is the head of Tabo monastery in Spiti founded in 966 AD.

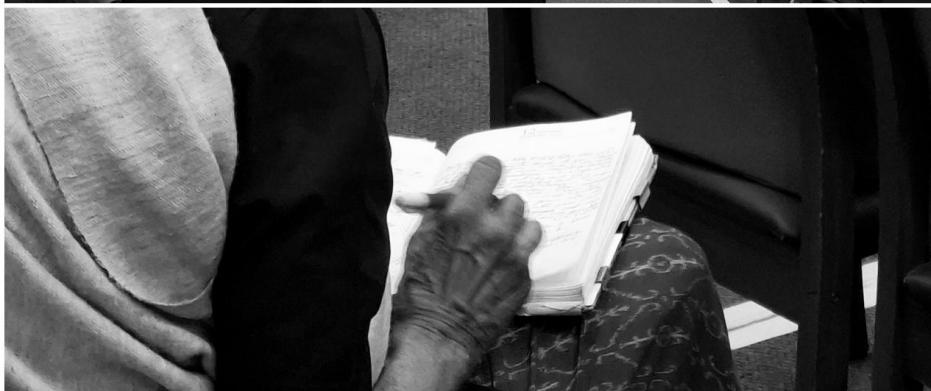
Ven. Tenzin Lekzom

Tsunma Tenzin Lekzom is an Australian–Nepalese Buddhist monastic pursuing advanced studies in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy at Jamyang Choling Institute, Dharamsala. Her current focus is on the definitive and interpretable teachings of the Buddha (Drang-nge

and Drang-don) within the Nālandā tradition. She has earned a Bachelor's in Studies in Religion from the University of New England and prior to ordination worked in civil engineering. She now teaches science and Nālandā Debate, blending analytical reasoning, contemplative insight, and modern pedagogy in her monastic community.

Geshe Thabkhe

Geshe Thabkhe is a scholar-monk of Sera Jey Monastic University, which he joined in 1997. After over two decades of intensive study in Buddhist philosophy, dialectics, and monastic discipline, he earned the Geshe Lharampa degree, the highest academic title in the Tibetan tradition. He also studied science at Emory University (2010–2013) and researched brain imaging at Northwestern University (2023). Since 2022, as Director of Sera Jey Modern Education, he has integrated modern science and Buddhist scholarship within the monastic curriculum.



ABOUT THE ORGANISERS



Centre for Escalation of Peace

The Centre for Escalation of Peace (CEP) is an initiative of Ritinjali that has evolved to address issues of conflict, poverty, lack of education and skills, and the growing disengagement within communities. While Ritinjali focuses on grassroots work by providing immediate support, CEP concentrates on systemic challenges, developing long-term strategies and policy-level solutions that foster meaningful and lasting change. CEP views peace not simply as the absence of war, but as an active, dynamic process that requires constant effort. In an age of far-reaching strategic and socio-economic change, peace must be sustained and, more importantly, escalated through deliberate and constructive action. It is this vision of “escalating peace” that underpins CEP’s dialogues, programmes and platforms.

At the heart of its activities are the three pillars of calmness: (i) Youth and Education; (ii) Trade and Sustainable Development; and (iii) Society and Culture. CEP creates spaces for the free exchange of ideas across borders, with a particular emphasis on empowering young minds to lead with integrity and resilience.

Among its flagship initiatives are the India–Bhutan Dialogue, convened since 2013 as part of the Thimphu Seminars, and the India–Bhutan Youth Summit, which strengthens ties between young people of the two countries. The Philosophers’ Retreat and the School Leaders’ Retreat provide forums for reflection and collaboration among leaders in education and society. Other initiatives include the Asia Pacific Schools Initiative, India–Bhutan Cultural Exchange and Art Camp, the Afghanistan–India Student Exchange, and the Conference on Guru Padmasambhava, alongside its advisory role with the International Summer School, New Delhi.

Through these initiatives, CEP advances its vision of cultivating “leadership through serene strength” and building a more peaceful, just and interconnected world.



India International Centre

The India International Centre was founded with a vision of India and its place in the world: to initiate dialogues in a new climate of amity, understanding and the sharing of human values. In the words of its Founder-President, Dr C.D. Deshmukh, the institution was designed to be a meeting of minds, a place where “various currents of intellectual, political and economic thought could meet freely”. The Centre serves as a bridge between cultures and communities from across the globe. It organises conferences, lectures, performances, exhibitions and film screenings for the public. The Cultural Programmes, the Library and the Publications Division complement one another in advancing the Centre’s aims.

IIC launches special long-term projects in keeping with its aims and objectives. One is the IIC-Asia Project initiated in 1997, which convenes annual international seminars that bring together different regions of Asia, and explores routes of communication cutting across national boundaries that led to continuities and cross-fertilisation in Asian civilisation. In 2016, the IIC-Asia Project was re-named the IIC-International Research Division, expanding its remit to the wider world.



Library of Tibetan Works and Archives

The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) was founded in 1970 by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, following the devastation of Tibetan culture in the wake of the 1959 Chinese takeover. Conceived as a centre for preservation and renewal, the LTWA is dedicated to safeguarding, protecting, and promoting Tibet's unique cultural and spiritual heritage.

From its modest beginnings, the LTWA has grown into one of the world's leading institutions for Buddhist and Tibetan studies. Its holdings include more than 80,000 manuscripts, books and documents, along with a significant collection of thangkas, statues, artefacts and photographs. Recognised as a Centre for Tibetan Studies by Himachal Pradesh University in 1991, the LTWA was subsequently accorded the combined status of National Library, National Museum and National Archives by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. In 2006, it was also designated as a National Manuscripts Resource Centre by the Government of India.

The LTWA's objectives are rooted in a threefold vision of preservation, protection and promotion. It acquires and conserves Tibetan manuscripts and works of art, provides access to a wide range of resources in Tibetan and foreign languages, supports scholars, and publishes rare texts. Its educational programmes include courses in Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan language and culture, which attract researchers, practitioners and students from across the globe.

Today, the LTWA stands as a living repository of Tibetan wisdom, offering both a resource for scholarship and a place where knowledge and practice converge in the pursuit of spiritual understanding and cultural continuity.



Pallavan Learning Systems

Pallavan Learning Systems (PLS) is an educational research organisation dedicated to enabling every learner to actualise their dynamic potential and grow into a *Person of Substance*. Its philosophy is centred on “learning how to learn” so that education becomes a pathway to self-actualisation.

The foundation of this approach lies in the Five Areas of Development: Cerebral, Emotional, Physical, Social, and Spiritual. Together, these dimensions highlight the interconnectedness of human growth and the need for holistic learning. Since 2016, the

Five Areas of Development has been recognised annually by HundrED, Finland, as one of the most influential global innovations in education.

PLS brings extensive experience of working with schools and institutions across public and private sectors, in both urban and rural settings, and at local and international levels. Its work spans diverse groups of learners, from early childhood through to young adults, including those with special needs and disadvantaged youth. With deep insight into learner needs, PLS designs contextualised curricula, develops teachers and school leaders, and strengthens educational ecosystems.

Its expertise covers curriculum and teacher development, school management, policy inputs at state and national levels, advisory services, and research into innovative educational practices. Over the years, PLS has also contributed to rejuvenating government schooling systems, supporting impact studies, and designing educational strategies and IT solutions.

Through its vision of “leading out”, Pallavan Learning Systems continues to nurture compassionate, creative, and confident individuals—equipped to contribute to society with substance and integrity.



Ritinjali

Ritinjali, meaning *helping hands* in Sanskrit, has been working as a catalyst for change since 1995. With a presence across urban Delhi and rural India, Ritinjali empowers disadvantaged communities through education, skilling, and community-led action. Its initiatives range from residential schools and slum-based learning centres to women's empowerment programmes and youth rehabilitation. Each project reflects the belief that every individual deserves the dignity of opportunity—whether it is a child receiving her first textbook, a young man becoming the first graduate in his family, or a woman setting up her own livelihood.

Over nearly three decades, Ritinjali has reached marginalised groups including slum communities, incarcerated juveniles, survivors of disasters, women, and youth excluded from formal education. Its flagship *Second Chance School* in Mahipalpur has transformed lives through wholistic education, while interventions in government schools across Delhi and Rajasthan have revitalised infrastructure and teaching practices. Ritinjali's presence in spaces such as Tihar Jail and INA Night School demonstrates its commitment to reaching the most excluded with empathy and structured support.

The organisation's work is collaborative and community-driven, engaging parents, teachers, local leaders and public institutions. With strong expertise in teacher training, curriculum design, and inclusive pedagogy, Ritinjali combines innovation with rigorous monitoring to ensure lasting impact.

Its mission is to nurture empowered, responsible citizens capable of sustaining themselves and contributing to their communities. Its vision is a society where individuals actualise their potential and communities thrive free of prolonged poverty, illiteracy, and exclusion.

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