

Buddhism as A Soft Power Tool in India-Japan Cultural Relations

Sushila Narsimhan
University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Abstract

There is hardly any forum pertaining to India-Japan relations without a reference to India's glorious Buddhist heritage. While Buddha's birthplace Lumbini today forms part of southern Nepal, all other places, namely Sarnath, Bodhgaya, and Kushinagar - where he first expounded dharma, attained enlightenment, and mahaparinirvana respectively, are located in India. However, despite the enormous goodwill, respect and admiration clustered around this rich reservoir of Buddhist heritage, the Indian policy-makers have been rather casual and indifferent in tapping the potential of Buddhism as a soft-power tool in strengthening diplomatic relations with the countries in the Asia-pacific region with a predominant Buddhist population. In the process, India inadvertently lost the mantle of being the custodian of Buddhist heritage and its central role in the Buddhist world. In fact, in contrast to India, Buddha and Buddhism are today more sacrosanct and popular in countries like Japan, China, and Thailand. However, India is now making conscious efforts to regain its hold over Buddhism and utilize its allure for fostering deeper engagement with Asian countries – especially in the east and southeast, as part of its “Look East, Act East” policy.

Why Buddhism?

In the context of current interdependent global society and the prevailing international scenario tense on account of super-power rivalries and terrorist activities, Buddhism offers many advantages. It is perhaps the only faith system not linked to blood, racial, ethnic, or national groups. Some of the key Buddhist messages, such as equality, non-violence, as well as its dialogical approach hold universal appeal and are extremely conducive to its spread across different societies, cultures, and civilizations. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his book *The Light of Asia* (1879), recorded that Buddhism has influenced millions for over 26 centuries and the spatial dimension of its dominions extended “from Nepal and Ceylon over the whole Eastern Peninsula to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland.” Perhaps the most enduring and decisive element of Buddhism as a “soft power” is that strikes a spiritual and an emotional chord not only with the Indians and the Buddhist world but also with people of some Western countries who are probing for a calmer and philosophical meaning to their lives. It is precisely because of this reason that both India and China, who had almost abandoned Buddhism for other priorities, have now realized the ‘power’ of Buddha and are taking measures to rectify the same. So much so, that as part of their growing competition for influence in Asia, both India and China are vying to stake their claims with solid Buddhist credentials and make up for the lost opportunities by sponsoring conferences, financing upkeep of Buddhist sites, and displaying relics in Buddhist-predominant countries.

In contrast to India and China, Buddhism in Japan has been an integral part of its cultural and religious landscape ever since its introduction in sixth century. The Japanese people have embraced, nurtured, and preserved this alien faith along with their indigenous Shinto traditions. Today, compared to India's 0.8 per cent Buddhist population, Japan has more than 70 per cent Buddhists. Japanese people's deep reverence for Sakyamuni Buddha is clearly reflected in their efforts to preserve Buddhist heritage sites not only within Japan but also in other parts of the Buddhist-world, including India. The Indian policy-makers should therefore be grateful to Japan not only for keeping alive this shared Buddhist heritage, but also in waking them up to rediscover and utilize this asset favourably.

Japan's Buddhist Diplomacy

Japan's Buddhist diplomacy is of long-standing. Even before Joseph Nye's 'soft power' concept came into vogue in the 1990s, the post-war Japan, in its quest for a sober and peaceful image in the international society, had initiated steps to showcase its unique traditional art forms, Noh theatre, Kabuki opera, Bunraku puppet play, chanoyu (tea ceremony), shodo (calligraphy), ikebana (flower arrangement), bonsai (miniature tree-cultivation), suibokuga (black-ink painting), kare-sansui (rock garden), judo and karate etc. in countries with whom it had established diplomatic relations. All these traditional art forms are inspired by Zen-Buddhist philosophy. It is not surprising therefore for Japan to harness Buddhism as its "soft power" and disseminate its cultural and aesthetic values which would appeal to other countries. In fact, Japan is probably the first country to employ Buddhism for diplomatic purposes and promote Buddhist tourism in Asian countries, including India.

An event that gave impetus to Japan's soft-power Buddhist diplomacy was the arrival of the royal Japanese guests - the Crown Prince Akihito and the Crown Princess Michiko - in India and their subsequent visit to Bodh Gaya on December 5, 1960. For the Buddhists, Bodh Gaya holds maximum significance as it was here that Gautama Buddha had attained enlightenment more than 2600 years ago. The inclusion of the Mahabodhi Temple in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2002 reinforced the cultural and historical significance of Bodh Gaya, necessitating a befitting renovation and development of the temple complex and the city infrastructure. To expedite the developmental tasks, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), came forward to lend a helping hand in sprucing up the place. Driven by the momentum, several Buddhist organizations from various countries, like Japan, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Tibet, Bhutan, and Cambodia, built rest houses, monasteries, and temples which reflect the unique aesthetic and architectural styles of their respective countries enriching the urban landscape of Bodh Gaya. The temples built by the Japanese include the Indosan Nippon Temple and the Daijokyo Buddhist Temple in Bodh Gaya, and Nichi Getsu San temple in Sarntah. The installation of a Kamakura's Daibutsu-like giant statue of Buddha within Daijokyo temple vicinity, on November 18th 1989, has added to the charm of Bodh Gaya making it a major centre of tourist attraction and of the Buddhist world.

India's Buddhist Diplomacy

After gaining independence, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had enunciated Panchsheel principles as the basis of his foreign policy. These principles included, mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence. Nehru refrained from using religion upfront in foreign policy. Panchsheel has now been replaced by the Modi-led Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) government with a new Panchamrit doctrine based on: samman (dignity), samvad (dialogue), samriddhi (shared prosperity), suraksha (regional and global security) and sanskriti evam sabhayata (cultural and civilisational links).

The fifth of these five principles, namely 'sanskriti' and 'sabhayata,' is aimed at leveraging India's rich historical cultural links with other countries as part of its non-coercive soft power strategy. India's present government with its Hindu nationalist leanings, is using both Hinduism and Buddhism as its soft power tools to promote national interests in the Indo-Pacific region and the immediate neighbourhood. Reviving and promoting Hindu-Buddhist linkages with Asian countries is also in consonance with India's 'Look East, Act East' policy. As a matter of fact, Modi during his diplomatic visits to Asian countries has been making a conscious effort to emphasize shared Hindu-Buddhist linkages. This was clearly evident when he chose a predominantly Buddhist neighbour Bhutan (June 2014) as the first official destination, and then a predominantly Hindu neighbour Nepal (August 2014). In Nepal, instead of visiting Buddha's birthplace Lumbini, Modi chose to visit the Hindu temple Pashupatinath in Kathmandu and offered 2,500 kg. of white sandalwood and 2,400 kg of ghee, both worth around Rs.41 million. During his visits to all Asian countries, whether Japan, or Sri Lanka, or Myanmar, or China, or Mongolia, or South Korea, conscious efforts were made to emphasise shared Buddhist heritage. In fact, now it has become a norm to reserve one day for visits to temples (whether Hindu or Buddhist).

In pursuance of Buddha-diplomacy, Modi is not ignoring the larger Hindu-focused BJP agenda. As a matter of fact, when he visited Japan (September 2014), which is essentially a Buddhist-dominated country, Modi chose Kyoto, instead of the capital city Tokyo, as his first destination. And, the Japanese

PM Shinzo Abe also made the unprecedented gesture of travelling to Kyoto to welcome him. Deviations from the usual diplomatic protocols clearly speak of their camaraderie. To understand Modi's faith-based diplomacy, it is important to know why he selected Kyoto as the first touchdown city in Japan. In Kyoto, Modi visited Toji, which is inspired by the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh of Hindu philosophy. Toji has two most venerated Hindu Gods: Brahma and Indra. The utilization of Buddhism does not also contradict ruling party's Hindutva ideology, as both Buddha and Ram are considered to be the avatars of Vishnu.

Along with Buddhism, efforts are also being made to project "Hindu-Buddhist" unity globally, through congregations, exhibitions, and melas, with India and Japan being the key participants in the strategy. In February 2015, India hosted the first International Ramayana Mela; and in May, India hosted the International Buddha Purnima Diwas. In 2015, the idea of promoting global Hindu-Buddhist unity through 'Samvad' dialogue was incorporated in India-Japan Joint Statement (Clause 33: 2015). In September 2015, two Indian organizations - the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) & International Buddhist Federation (IBF), in collaboration with the Tokyo Foundation held a three-day (from 3rd to 5th September) global conclave 'Samvad: Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness.' It was the first Hindu-Buddhist conclave. Shinzo Abe joined the conference through video participation and extolled the greatness of all the major Asian religions, giving equal importance to all. Invitations were probably sent to some Chinese delegates but no one came, even though the Dalai Lama was requested to abstain from attending.

While the proceedings of the conclave, in the first two days, were held in New Delhi, the venue, on the third day (5 September), shifted to Bodh Gaya. From Delhi, Modi proceeded to Bodh Gaya for the concluding ceremony, and the day coincided with the Hindu festival Janmashtami. Making a pitch for Hindu-Buddhist thrust, Modi extolled the contribution of both Gautam Buddha and Lord Krishna in the path of dharma. Belonging to a party with Hindu nationalist inclinations, Modi treaded carefully so as to not relegate Hinduism to second-fiddle while exalting Buddhism, and said that the Buddha played an important role in the 'enlightenment' of Hinduism. In the end, in the presence of the Samvad delegates, Modi sought to strike a spiritual connect with Buddhism by sitting in dhyana mudra under the Bodhi tree. The passion with which the Modi government is pushing Buddhist diplomacy has also given rise to a series of symbolic gifts - saplings of the original Peepal (*Ficus Religiosa*) or the Bodhi tree considered to be an offshoot of the original specimen planted in 288 BC. The Bodhi tree saplings have assumed unprecedented significance in recent years, and have by now taken roots in almost all Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Mongolia, Myanmar, Korea, and Thailand.

In Bodh Gaya, a Declaration was adopted which said, "The Hindu-Buddhist civilisations have a special responsibility to work for conflict avoidance and environment consciousness by expounding the philosophical principles common to Hinduism and Buddhism to save the world from fratricidal conflicts". Since then, Samvad conferences have become an annual feature. So far four conferences have been held in Delhi (2015), Tokyo (2016), Yangon (2017), and Tokyo (2018). Apart from India and Japan, scholars, religious leaders, and others from several other countries including China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam, Mongolia, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Bhutan, and several other countries have taken part in these conferences.

India's Buddhist Sites & Japanese In-bound Tourism

Religious tourism is almost synonymous with pilgrimage, or spiritual tourism, or cultural heritage tourism. In last one decade, it has emerged as an important soft power tool of cultural diplomacy. In order to develop and promote tourism of religious circuits, several projects have been undertaken by the Indian government to facilitate travel and provide tourism infrastructure at important sacred sites associated with myriad of India's religious beliefs – Buddhist, Jain, Sufi, Christian, Sikh, and Hindu. Today, spiritual tourism is a growing industry, with travel companies and hotel chains beginning to recognise its immense potential and opportunities.

The idea of providing lodging facilities for the visiting Sinhalese Buddhists was first realized in 4th century AD by King Meghavanna (304-332) who built a monastery in Bodh Gaya. The monastery, known as Mahabodhi Mahavihara, later grew into a great centre of academic studies, at par with Nalanda and Vikramasila. The renowned Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang (602-664), who visited Bodh Gaya in 637 left a detailed description of stupas, the monastery and Mahabodhi temple. It was

dominated by Sinhalese monks until its destruction by the Muslim invaders in the second half of 13th century.

In the late-19th century, after prolonged neglect, an Anglo-Sinhalese Buddhist Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) tried to restore Buddha's place of enlightenment – Bodh Gaya – by restoring the glory of Mahabodhi Temple and building appropriate guest house for the visiting foreign monks. With help from a British author-journalist Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) and his Japanese wife Tama Kurokawa (1869-1962), Dharampala was able to procure land and funds to build a Rest House in 1901. This was the first of its kind in the city. An event which hastened the project was the forthcoming visit of Swami Vivekananda and his Japanese guest Okakura Tenshin to Bodh Gaya in February 1902.

The sacred Buddhist sites recommended by Mahaparinirvana sutra are four: Bodh Gaya (Bihar), Sarnath and Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh) in India, and Lumbini in Nepal. These are expanded to include Rajgir, Vaishali, and Nalanda (Bihar), Sravasti and Sankassa (Uttar Pradesh), Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh), Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra), and Dhauligiri (Odisha). These are much sought after destination for the Buddhists of the world, including the Japanese. Japan is a very important tourist generating markets for India and contributes to 3.07% to the total foreign tourist arrivals. The arrivals from Japan have been growing steadily, from 29,032 in 1981 to 193,525 in 2011 to 225,668 in 2014, and 208,847 in 2016. Of these, between 2011 and 2016, 61-63% were for business & professionals; and the remaining for leisure tourism. By and large, a large number of leisure-seeking Japanese include Buddhist sites in their itinerary. The special railway tours, known as 'Mahaparinirvana Buddhist Circuit Train,' commenced in 2007 offering spiritual rides to Buddhist pilgrimage destinations, have become quite popular with the Japanese tourists. As per Bihar State tourism ministry, more than 91% of Japanese tourists coming to India visit Buddhist sites. Compared to India and other peer destinations, Japan trails very badly in its perceived affordability. Nonetheless, the Japan is trying to devise various mechanisms to woo international tourists especially in view of the forthcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games. An inbound Tour Operator specializing in Buddhist pilgrimages, called 'Travel Saray' has started special tailor-made tours for the Indians.

The rapid rise in the number of foreign tourists visiting Buddhist sites from 17,425 in 2016 to 36,850 until November 2017 is a positive indicator of Bihar State tourism. For several decades, the tourist-hub for the Japanese was the "Golden Triangle," namely Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. This has now been replaced with "Buddhist Circuit" on account of Japan's demographic changes and the increasing number of retirees thereby brightening the potential of the Buddhist pilgrimage tourism. According to the findings of Japanese Market Survey and Japan Travel Bureau Foundation, it is largely the elderly group that evinces maximum interest in Buddhist destinations. To them, the cultural, historical, and spiritual attributes of India "seem to be almost synonymous with the Buddhist sector." For many including the Buddhist groups, the motivations for visiting India and the Buddhist sector were "spiritual." The consensual remarks included: "to reach a state of mind like which Buddha had attained" or "to feel as if one's soul was purified" or when one goes to India, he or she "becomes like a philosopher."

In recent decades, religious or spiritually motivated travel has become widespread and popularized, occupying an important segment of international tourism. India being home to a number of religions, there is a huge scope for boosting tourism to religious places. In this context, both Buddhism and Hinduism, with their cross-border Asian cultural connections and historical ties, provide a significant investment opportunity that resonates with India's wider global nationalist vision. Steps have already been initiated to facilitate tourism infrastructure that even transgress national borders in order to connect the important Hinduism-Buddhism-related sacred sites wherever feasible, for both tourism and pilgrimage. In August 2014, Narendra Modi signed the 'Kyoto-Varanasi Partner City Agreement' with Shinzo Abe by which the two nations agreed to develop India's holy city 'Varanasi' and transform it into a Kyoto-style smart city. Similar landmark agreements were signed between India and Nepal for the development of Ayodhya-Janakpur (birthplaces of Rama and Sita) and Varanasi-Kathmandu as twin cities, thereby fostering Hindu-Buddhist linkages. Thus the two Indian cities will soon have Nepalese sisters. The four-lane Ram-Janki Marg (National Highway 29) connecting Ayodhya and Janakpur is nearing completion and a direct bus service between the two places has already started.

Bodh Gaya: A Global Spiritual and Cultural a Hub

While talking of India's Buddhist diplomacy, Bodh Gaya deserves a special mention. Congregation of international pilgrims, and several of them settling down with the locals, has made Bodh Gaya not only a global spiritual destination for the world Buddhists, but also a global hub for transnational marriages. It is believed there are more than 30 Bodh Gaya-men today who have foreign wives. Many of the successful hoteliers have Japanese wives. While some Japanese brides are living in Bodh Gaya, there are others who have returned to Japan with their Indian husbands, set up hotels, restaurants and travel agencies that cater to the Indo-Japanese traffic in tourism. Bodh Gaya thus provides both marital bliss and spiritual fulfilment. Bodh Gaya's global appeal has also opened new avenues for jobs. It has brightened the prospects of translator-cum-guide's jobs which in 2008 prompted Magadh University in Gaya to set up an Academy of Foreign Languages and Cultural Cooperation with two-year diploma courses in Spanish, French, Korean, Japanese and Mandarin.

Revival of Nalanda University

However, of all India's Buddhist soft power initiatives, it is the Nalanda University project that carries maximum potential for expanding its appeal and influence in Asia, and the world. India's pan-Asian plan to revive its historic Nalanda Mahavihara, once-upon-a-time a major centre of Buddhist Studies, has opened opportunities to Japan and many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In October 2013, Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's then Prime Minister, shared the idea with the leaders of East Asia Summit meet (held at Brunei on 10 October 2013), namely grouping of ten ASEAN Member States (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), plus eight countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA.

The involvement of so many players has brought to the fore the soft-power value of both Nalanda and Buddhism. The Buddhist element of Nalanda connects people culturally across Asia and offers a cause and a forum through which important powers in the Asia-Pacific can work together and promote regional peace and stability. Nalanda, it may be recalled, was a home to about 10000 students from distant lands, such as China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia. The project, therefore, wields enormous nostalgic and emotional appeal for all the Asians, who are now looking for an opportunity to re-discover their shared histories, cultures, and religions, and recover and restore the lost connections. Since the course-structure of Nalanda University is not Buddhist-centric, it has the potential of facilitating inter-civilization dialogue and inter-faith understanding and can play a very positive role in building a harmonious Asian community.

India's initiative for the revival of Nalanda is also in tune with its 'Look East, Act East' policy directed towards greater integration with the East and Southeast Asian communities and attracting foreign investment for local development. The Japanese interest is motivated not only by its desire to reach out to the Buddhist world, but also in engaging India in the larger politico-strategic equation emerging in the Asia-Pacific. And, this includes the rise of both China and India as major players in the region, growing India-Japan strategic partnership and continued Sino-Japanese hostility. Japan played an important role in getting India its membership of the East Asia Summit, despite opposition from China, thereby, ensuring India's presence in any future East Asian community-building process and its active role in the strategic deliberations in the region. Nalanda offers both India and Japan a soft platform which could enable the two countries to engage in cooperative ventures in the Asia-Pacific.

However, despite several countries supporting the initiative, re-conceptualising Nalanda has become mired with several problems. It was hoped that the Nalanda project would facilitate Asian convergence. But there are signs that Buddhism is becoming a serious source of competition rather than an area of convergence. China, for instance, has been lately projecting itself as the main patron and sponsor of the Buddhist world, and is drawing on its vast cultural resources for establishing cultural links with Buddhist institutions throughout Asia. China's attempt to build psychological connections through Buddha's tooth diplomacy with the people in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and other Southeast Asian countries is seen as an attempt to edge in on India's traditional sphere of influence. Clearly, India sees China deriving geopolitical benefits from its Buddhist links. As a result, India too has begun to rival China by undertaking several counter measures, for example, by sponsoring Buddhist conferences, stepping up the playing of the Tibetan card and checkmating Chinese Buddhist influence in India's neighbourhood. Approaching Buddhism from the narrow prism of its political utility by the two

countries is not a good idea and goes against the very essence of Buddhist thought. It is unlikely to be helpful for India, China and above all for building an Asian Century.

Conclusion

In the context of globalisation and the growing concern over the use of military power for achieving foreign policy objectives, the importance of soft power has increased considerably, and Buddhism offers many advantages. Some of the key Buddhist messages, such as equality, non-violence, as well as its dialogical approach hold universal appeal and are extremely conducive to its spread across different societies, cultures, and civilizations. And, for the countries of Asia who are spiritually aligned to Buddhism, there is no better soft power tool.

Despite its alien trappings, Buddhism has been an integral part of Japan's cultural and religious landscape for more than 1500 years. Today, it is the most enduring pillar of Japan's soft power diplomacy. Through several private and government agencies, Japan has been from time to time funding many projects restoring the Buddhist relics, developing the major Buddhist pilgrim sites in India. Japan has thus rendered a great service to Buddhism and the land of its birth by rediscovering, reclaiming, and keeping alive the 'wonder that was India.'

India has finally woken up and is drawing world attention to its solid Buddhist credentials by making Buddhism as the core of its soft-power push in Asia. During the past one decade, the Indian policy-makers are making conscious efforts to utilize its allure for fostering deeper engagement with Asian countries – especially in the east and southeast, as part of its "Act East" policy. This involves not just sprucing up and showcasing Buddhist sacred sites and monuments, but also establishing people-to-people contacts and promoting cultural exchanges via tourism. Of all the soft power initiatives, India's Nalanda University project perhaps carries maximum potential for facilitating inter-civilization dialogue, inter-faith understanding and Asian convergence. Under India's present political dispensation with its Hindu nationalist leanings, along with Buddhism, efforts are also being made to project "Hindu-Buddhist" unity globally, through congregations, exhibitions, and melas, with India and Japan being the key participants in the strategy. However, while Buddhism can be the basis for cultural cooperation and diplomacy, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, like India, should avoid overt use of Buddhism or any particular faith, as this contains the risk of piquing India's myriad groups.

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https://idsa.in/issuebrief/asias-buddhist-connectivity-and-indias-role_pstobdan_190216
- Statistically, 60% of its population today profess the Buddhist faith and 90% of Japanese funerals are conducted according to Buddhist rites. There are about 75,000 Buddhist temples with over 100,000 priests.
- A shining example of the Indo-Japanese friendship is the Sanchi and Satdhara project involving archaeological excavation and conservation of stupas and two monasteries. The project was carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in collaboration with UNESCO with the Japanese Trust Fund \$500,000, which started in 1994 took ten years to materialize.
- The Japan Foundation and the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage have been involved in the restoration and preservation of Buddhist relics in many countries, such as China, India, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Thailand, and Cambodia. Japan is also quick to align itself with Buddhists on international level. In 2001, when the Taliban threatened in 2001 to destroy the Bamiyan Buddha statue in Afghanistan, the Japanese government engaged in active shuttle diplomacy trying to prevent the destruction. MOFA (March 21, 2001).
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- The 82-feet statue of Buddha carved out of pink chunar sandstone and red granite is by V. Ganapati Sathapati. For details, David Geary, *Destination Enlightenment: Buddhism and the Global Bazaar in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation submitted in The Faculty of Graduate Studies (Anthropology), University of British Columbia, Vancouver (December 2009), pp.79-83.
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- A Shanti Stupa was constructed at Dhauligiri where, in the aftermath of Kalinga War, King Asoka renounced violence. The stupa was constructed in 1972 with assistance from a Buddhist monk Nichidatsu Fuji (1885-1995), better known as Fuji Guruji, of Nipponzan Myohoji (Japan Buddha Sangha) and the Kalinga Nippon Buddha Sangh.
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- The Japanese women prefer Indian husbands who are good and give time to their wives and children, unlike the Japanese men who have no time for the family and work like machines. For details, Sanjay Kumar Jha, "Knot Uncommon" in *India Today* (March 31, 2003); David Geary, pp.136-38.
- The renowned institution was a great centre of learning that operated for 800 years from 4th century onwards until its destruction in 1198 by the Turkish Muslim invaders led by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. Primarily, a centre of Buddhist learning, it offered a vast range of academic curricula covering not just Buddhist philosophy but also art, mathematics, medicine, literature and several other streams of knowledge.
- Some of the noted scholars who studied at Nalanda were: Hiuen-Tsang, I-Tsing, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Padmasambhava (the founder of Buddhism in Tibet).
- Ibid.*, p.8.