

## INDIA'S BUDDHIST DIPLOMACY AND SACRED RELICS



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FROM THE DESK OF CHAIRMAN

Worshippers pay homage to relics of the Lord Buddha and his chief disciples Sariputra and Moggallana at Sanam Luang, Bangkok

### Introduction

India's historical and spiritual connections with Buddhism have transcended borders, shaping its foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Recently, India showcased its commitment to fostering stronger ties with Thailand through a remarkable act of generosity: the exhibition of **sacred relics**. I will try to explore the intersection of India's Buddhist diplomacy and the significance of these relics.

### The Relics' Journey

India graciously exhibit relics of the Lord Buddha and his chief disciples Sariputra and Moggallana to Thailand. These sacred artifacts, classified as "AA" (rare) antiquities and art treasures, were brought from India for a special exhibition.

More than 4.1 million people, in Thailand paid their respects to these revered relics, emphasizing their spiritual and historical value. To understand the magnitude of the crowd, one need to understand population of Bangkok which is 10 Million. This means 1 out 4 person has been part of spiritual enlightenment.

### Strengthening Thai-India Relations

Buddhism serves as a powerful bridge between the two nations. India's soft power diplomacy centers around Buddhism, reinforcing historical and spiritual ties. I firmly believe that the best diplomacy or country to country relation should not be measured in terms of business relations, Trade quantum, or military tie-ups. It is people to people connect, which should make the measure of yard stick.

### The Significance of India's Buddhist Relics

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has unearthed Buddhist remains, including a shrine (stupa) and temples in Madhya Pradesh. These relics, dating back to the 2nd to 5th century BCE, thus affirm the prevalence of Buddhism in the region.

#### 1. The Kapilvastu Relics

Discovered in Bihar's Piprahwa, the Kapilvastu Relics date back to around the 4th or 5th century BCE. Associated with Lord Buddha and his disciples, they symbolize the teachings and legacy of Buddhism.

## 2. Minister Lekhi's Message

Minister of State for External Affairs, Meenakshi Lekhi, emphasized peace and unity inspired by the Buddha. She highlighted the civilizational bonds between South East Asian nations, using the example of traditional attire.

## 3. India's Soft Power Diplomacy

India strategically uses Buddhist relics as a diplomatic tool. In 2012, India sent the Kapilavastu relics (fragments of Buddha's bones) to Sri Lanka, strengthening bilateral ties. These relics transcend borders, fostering understanding among nations.

## Conclusion

The exhibition of these revered relics not only honors the Lord Buddha's teachings but also symbolizes the enduring bond between India and Thailand. As India continues to engage with ASEAN nations, Buddhism remains a bridge that transcends borders and fosters understanding

*Thank you all..... Always in Gratitude*

*CA Armeet Chheda*

