

- What are the connectivity initiatives that various members of SCO have undertaken? What scope is there for building synergies?
- How building synergies can contribute to efficient resource utilization, creating secure supply chains, making resilient infrastructure and promoting environment protection?
- How SCO as an organization can contribute in this regard by taking concrete steps?
- How to further enhance cooperation for faster post -COVID recovery, and overcoming the challenges in poverty alleviation and employment generation?
- How to realize the potential for cooperation in digital connectivity and energy connectivity in the SCO space?

Session IV: “Reconnecting the People: Invigorating Hearts & Minds”

- Culture, architecture, literature, great personalities, spirituality, tourism and travel connect SCO people with each other in a strong framework. It teaches tolerance and respect towards each other. How to strengthen this shared heritage?
- How to connect younger generation and make them aware of the rich heritage of the SCO region to further strengthen mutual understanding? What actions can SCO take in this regard?
- How to promote interaction among women, entrepreneurs, media, researchers and academics?
- How to enhance and exploit the tourism potential of the shared Buddhist heritage of the SCO region?

Participants

One participant to be invited from each of the following as Session Speakers:

- Member States: India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
- Observers: Belarus, Iran, Mongolia
- Dialogue Partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Cambodia, Qatar, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Turkey
- New Dialogue Partners: Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, UAE
- Special invitee: Turkmenistan

Logistics

- Venue: Sapru House/Hotel, New Delhi (TBC)
- The delegation members may be taken to tourist sites on 25 March 2023
- The Conference is primarily in - person, though provisions will be made for virtual participation.

Language of the Conference

- The Conference will have the provision of simultaneous interpretation in Russian/English languages.
- Communication in preparation to the Conference will be primarily in English.

Post-Conference Publication

- Conference participants will be requested to send the full paper, including an abstract, at least two weeks before the Conference.
- The paper would be 2,500 - 3,000 words (excluding references)
- Following the Conference, participants should send their finalized papers in two weeks' time to the Council, latest by 15 April 2023.
- A conference publication will be prepared.
- The publication will be brought out latest by June 2023.

For functional aspects kindly reach out to the following:

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Programme

International Conference on SCO Reconnect ~ Rejuvenate 23-24 March 2023		
Programme (As on 28 Sept 2022)		
Plenary Session	Venue: TBC	Time IST
Day I 14:30-15:00 23 March 2023 Thursday	Moderator	
	Welcome Remarks: Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi	14:30-14:35
	Keynote Address: Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India	14:35-14:45
	Special Address: Amb. Zhang Ming, Secretary General, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Beijing	14:45-14:55
	Vote of Thanks: Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi	14:55-15:00
Photo Session	Venue: TBC	15:00-15:10
Tea Break I	Venue: TBC	15:10-15:30
Session I 15:30-17:10	Venue: TBC	
	Session I "Reconnect and Lead: SCO's Role in Enhanced Integration" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of SCO in regional and global developments. How SCO can contribute to stable political and economic progress of the region? How to make the Organization vibrant and responsive in facing various challenges? What is the desired future trajectory of SCO? How SCO can play an effective role in advancing reformed multilateralism, with the UN at its centre? Expansion of SCO and its impact on the Organization, region, and the world? 	
	Chair (India)	15:30-15:40
	Russia	15:40-15:50
	Kazakhstan	15:50-16:00
	Iran	16:00-16:10
	Armenia	16:10-16:20
	Cambodia	16:20-16:30
	Egypt	16:30-16:40
	Myanmar	16:40-16:50
	Q&A	16:50-17:10
18:00-20:00	Dinner by DG, ICWA Venue: TBC	

Session II 10:00-11:30 Day II 24 March 2023 Friday	Venue: TBC	
	Session II: "Reconnect for Stability: Ensuring Secure re-Emergence of Eurasia" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global pivot is shifting towards SCO area - what are the implications of this trend for political, security, economic and other spheres of the region? What is the SCO's vision of peace and prosperity for the region in the backdrop of ongoing geopolitical shifts? What concrete steps can SCO take for enhanced stability of Eurasia and the SCO space? What role can SCO play in facilitating the security, stability and economic development of the Afghan people? Countering terrorism, its financing, drug & human trafficking, money laundering are among immediate tasks at hand for SCO. What roadmap can SCO adopt to effectively tackle these issues? 	
	Chair (India)	10:00-10:10
	China	10:10-10:20
	Tajikistan	10:20-10:30
	Belarus	10:30-10:40
	Nepal	10:40-10:50
	Saudi Arabia	10:50-11:00
	Kuwait	11:00-11:10
	Q&A	11:10-11:30
Tea Break II	Venue: TBC	11:30-12:00
Session III 12:00-13:30	Venue: TBC	
	Session III: "Reconnect, Synchronise, Grow: Quest for Enhanced Connectivity" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the connectivity initiatives that various members of SCO have undertaken? What scope is there for building synergies? How building synergies can contribute to efficient resource utilization, creating secure supply chains, making resilient infrastructure and promoting environment protection? How SCO as an organization can contribute in this regard by taking concrete steps? How to further enhance cooperation for faster post-COVID recovery, and overcoming the challenges in poverty alleviation and employment generation? How to realize the potential for cooperation in digital connectivity and energy connectivity in the SCO space? 	

	Chair (India)	12:00-12:10
	Uzbekistan	12:10-12:20
	Azerbaijan	12:20-12:30
	Turkiye	12:30-12:40
	Sri Lanka	12:40-12:50
	India	12:50-13:00
	UAE	13:00-13:10
	Q&A	13:10-13:30
Lunch	Venue: TBC	13:30-14:30
Session IV 14:30-16:10	Venue: TBC	
	Session IV: "Reconnecting the People: Invigorating Hearts & Minds" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture, architecture, literature, great personalities, spirituality, tourism and travel connect SCO people with each other in a strong framework. It teaches tolerance and respect towards each other. How to strengthen this shared heritage? • How to connect younger generation and make them aware of the rich heritage of the SCO region to further strengthen mutual understanding? What actions can SCO take in this regard? • How to promote interaction among women, entrepreneurs, media, researchers and academics • How to enhance and exploit the tourism potential of the shared Buddhist heritage of the SCO region? 	
	Chair (India)	14:30-14:40
	Pakistan	14:40-14:50
	Kyrgyzstan	14:50-15:00
	Mongolia	15:00-15:10
	Qatar	15:10-15:20
	Turkmenistan	15:20-15:30
	Maldives	15:30-15:40
	Bahrain	15:40-15:50
	Q&A	15:50-16:10
Tea Break III	Venue: TBC	16:10-16:30
Concluding Session 16:30-16:50	Venue: TBC	
	Remarks: Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi	16:30-16:40
	Remarks: Ms. Yojna Patel, National Coordinator, South Asia Division, Ministry of External Affairs, India	16:40-16:45
	Vote of Thanks, Indian Council of World Affairs	16:45-16:50

Glimpses of Buddhist Art from India Across Asia

Information Note

For 2500 years, Buddha and his teachings have been the fountainhead of profound religious, historical, and cultural discourses in India, shaping a globally enriched dialogue. The quest for eternal wisdom led the young Shakyen Prince, Siddhartha Gautama, to forsake his royal and material gains to become the *Samyaksambuddha* or 'the one who is perfectly perfect self-awakened. The peripatetic nature of Buddha and the *bhikkus* were instrumental in spreading the message of *cattari ariya saccani* or the four noble truths and *paticcasamuppada* or dependent origination. As Buddha favorably recalls in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, "Bhikkus! walk for the benefit of all, for the happiness of all, for compassion in the world, for gods and people...". After a hundred years of Buddha's *parinirvana* (around the 4th century BCE), the divisionism of Mahasanghika and Sthavirvada led to the first schism in Buddhism based on liturgical differences. Spreading through the Gangetic basin and the Krishna valley, the *buddhavacana* proliferated across the Hindukush during the Mauryan, Kushan, and Gupta periods, spreading further across Central Asia. Both the sects co-existed peacefully, as seen through the archaeological remains of stupas, *chaityas*, *viharas*, and *sangharamas* that flourished along the ancient trade routes and urban settlements in India and Central Asia.

Many different dynasties in India supported Buddhism. King Ashoka of the Mauryan Dynasty and King Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty played an essential part in the ancient kingdoms. During their rule, Buddhism not only flourished in India but also reached kingdoms and tribes of Central Asia. During Mauryan and Kushan rule, Buddhist philosophy evolved from Hinayana to Mahayana, and in later dynasties, it grew to Vajrayana Buddhism. The early period of ancient Buddhist art is identified by worshipping aniconic symbols depicting Buddha. A prominent juncture in early Indian art, an increase in large-scale stupa buildings led to the representation of jatakas and events from Buddha's life as narrative reliefs on stone slabs and roundels on the stupas. In addition, the use of symbols to convey significant events from Buddha's life marked the beginning of diverse narrative modes in early Buddhist art. The Kushana period (1st – 3rd century CE) ushered in a visually captivating phase of the iconic form of worship of the Buddha. A physical form was ascribed, culminating in a corpus of Buddhist iconography and narrative art inspired by the sutra tradition and religious codices. The cosmopolitan culture of the Kushan Dynasty led to the development of two prominent schools of art in Gandhara and

Mathura. The Gupta period (4th – 6th century CE) brought a nuanced aesthetic style to the sculptures of Buddha through the sanghati, treatment of the halo, and body musculature. The classical idiom of the meditative and the otherworldly glance created a detached persona of the Buddha which became an aesthetic component of classical Buddhist art, also seen in Central Asian and Far East Asian art. During the medieval period, Buddhist art patronized by the Pala-Sena rulers (8th – 12th century CE) in eastern India paved the way for the development of tantric or esoteric Buddhism. The sculptures of Shakyamuni Buddha, Panchatathagatas, Avalokiteshvara, Tara, Prajnaparamita, Chunda, Marichi, Jambhala, among others, depict the convergence of the Mahayana and the Vajrayana Schools. The Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita manuscript, with richly illuminated folios and wooden covers showcasing events from Buddha's life, also brings our attention to the monastic establishments of Nalanda, Kurkihar, Vikramshila, etc. as prominent centers of Buddhist scholasticism which were known all across East Asia and Southeast Asia.

This process of cultural dissemination started during the Mauryan dynasty (322-185 BCE), wherein several trade routes were evolving and expanding but these routes became more prominent during Kushan (2nd Century BCE- 3rd Century CE) and later dynasties. During the 1st to 7th Century CE, along the dominant land trading route, Buddhism spread to central Asia and developed into a world religion. In the north of central Asia, Buddhism encountered many diverse populations such as the Greeks descendants of Alexander, the Bactrians, the Sogdians, the Parthians, the Sassanians, and the Sakas. In the east, Buddhism came into contact with the Chinese, the Huns, and other dynastic rulers. **China** first came into contact with Buddhism during the 1st Century BCE. Extensive translation of Buddhist scriptures at the end of the 4th Century CE and early 5th century CE leads to the widespread of Buddhist philosophy and art. From the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, the doctrine of Buddhism was actively widespread by missionaries among whom Sogdians prevailed. In the territory of **Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan**, numerous monuments of the Buddhist culture can be seen along the ancient trading Route. In the south of **Uzbekistan**, the city of Termez, once located on a crossroads of civilizations on a dominant trading route, much like Dunhuang in Gansu Province, China, was one of the largest centers of Buddhism in Central Asia. Around the 1st century BCE, Buddhism entered and flourished in the **Tajikistan** region. The prime site is a Buddhist monastery built around the 6th CE at Ajina tepe, where a 12 meters long statue of recumbent Buddha in Nirvana was found on a large pedestal that occupied almost the entire length of the hall. Buddhism was first introduced to the Gandhara region (located in today's **Pakistan** and Afghanistan) by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE and began to

flourish from the 1st century CE as land route trade and cross-cultural connections from the Mediterranean to China fostered its spread. Under the patronage of the Kushan Empire, the Gandhara region became a major seat for Buddhism. Several edicts were found, engraved on numerous boulders (Shahbazgarhi, Mansehra, Laghman, Pul-i-darunta, Shar-i-kuna, Kandhar) and on pillars in Taxila. In **Russia**, the main center of Buddhism was Buryatia, where Buddhism entered Russia from Mongolia. At first, people gathered in prayer tents, but in the 18th century the first permanent monasteries, Tsongolsky and Gusinoozersky, were built.

The special exhibition will showcase magnificent and rare works from India and Central Asia and the SCO States, revealing various Buddhist Art forms that transcend national boundaries, with renderings of similar subjects that encourage comparisons among regional aesthetics while distinguishing aspects unique to each area. To trace the journey of Buddhism in India and its continuity further across Asia, the National Museum brings together a unique selection of Buddhist antiquity ranging from stone and bronze sculptures, terracotta and clay votive objects, manuscript paintings, and ritual objects depicting Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and the growing Buddhist pantheon in India and Central Asia. The artistic wealth displayed in the exhibition is embedded within an eclectic historical timeline spanning the development of the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism.

The National Museum houses an exquisite collection of Indian Buddhist art from the early historical periods of Maurya, Shunga, and Satvahana Dynasties from the 3rd century BCE onwards to Chola sculptures dating to the 15th century CE. These masterpieces in the exhibition narrate the development of Buddhist art traditions and the historical and cultural turn of events that led to the making of Buddhist visual culture. To throw light on the shared commonalities between the Buddhist art of India and its influence on the Buddhist art of Central Asia, the masterpieces in the Central Asian Antiquities collection of the Museum focus on the spread, development, and trans-cultural tropes of Buddhist heritage envisaged through the archaeological finds from the northern and southern silk routes. Some of the significant sites are Khotan, Danadan-oilik, Turpan, Bezeklik, Dunhuang, Miran, Kizil, Niya, Balawaste, Shorhchuk, Farhad-Baig-yailaki, among various others. The majority of these sites currently belong to the Chinese sphere, hence, the archaeological sites, sculptural findings, and imageries from the remaining SCO countries would be represented through an online mode.

Exhibition Framework:

This special hybrid exhibition, divided into three sections, looks at the following themes:

1. Indian Art:

- (a) Development of Buddhist Art from Aniconic to Iconic Phase in Early Indian Art
- (b) International Legacy of Pala Style
- (c) Expansion of Buddhist Book Cults and the Pantheon

2. Central Asian Art

- (a) Transmission of Texts, Icons, and Ideas from India to Central Asia
- (b) Bezekilk mural fragments
- (c) Buddhist Paradise and Book cults - Sacred art from Central Asia

3. Digital Display of Objects of the SCO Countries

Proposed Space: The proposed Exhibition is spread over nine halls, which traces the life of Lord Buddha, his teachings, and the evolution of Buddhist philosophy and arts over more than a thousand years. The exhibition showcases Buddhist art through the significance of jatakas, Buddhist symbols and bodhisattvas, representation of Buddhist deities, scroll paintings, and the spread of Buddhism across Asia, including Central Asia, Far East Asia, and South Asia. The exhibition also displays the sacred relics of Buddha, excavated from Piprahwa, Uttar Pradesh. The Exhibition will also showcase the digital content of the remaining SCO countries and some of the exhibits pertinent to this exhibition could be added to existing gallery space.

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