

Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness

Renowned Buddhist and Hindu Scholars will gather in the New Delhi this week to deliberate upon two key issues confronting the globe--Rising conflict and rampant environment degradation—in an attempt to come up with a new framework that will move away from the usual solutions.

The “*Global Hindu - Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness*” jointly organized by the Vivekananda International Foundation(VIF) in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation and Tokyo Foundation will take place on 3rd and 4th September in the premises of VIF in Delhi’s Chanakyapuri area.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the two-day conclave. Sri Lanka’s former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, senior ministers from Japan, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal besides Sri Sri Ravishankar and Lama Lobsang, the president of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) will be in attendance. India’s external Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will be delivering the Valedictory address on 4 September, according to an elaborate programme that has been chalked out.

The conference will seek to evolve a new paradigm that speaks about ‘conflict avoidance’ rather than ‘conflict resolution’ in finding solutions to the world’s problems. For decades, the world has attempted to find peace by negotiating *after* conflicts have broken out. The organisers however believe that this approach is increasingly failing to deliver results. Therefore, in consonance with the ancient philosophies practiced by both Hinduism and Buddhism, it is now necessary to try and avoid conflicts rather than resolve them.

According to Gen NC Vij, Director of VIF: “The current approach towards conflict resolution is largely based on western and simplified perspectives of conflict between faiths and civilizations. It is in this context that the world is increasingly noticing the benign nature of Buddhism vis-a-vis western ethics. It is important therefore to recognize the importance of historical Asian traditions and values to make them more relevant for the future of world peace and harmony, especially the culture of understanding and acceptance of the alternative view beyond that of mercy and tolerance.”

Similarly, Hinduism and Buddhism with their well defined treatises on respect for Mother Nature can create a huge impact and lead towards a “*sustainable world.*” Buddha’s 2600-year old message about kindness, personal responsibility, and the path to happiness holds the key to a new way of relating to each other and to our environment. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a

strategic action to mitigate the emerging environmental woes which lead to conflict at various levels. The conference shall thus examine the environmental changes we are facing at present and how Buddhism and Hinduism teach us to respond to these challenges

The conference is aiming to have the following outcomes at the end of the two-day deliberations:

- Institution of a mechanism to work for transparent philosophic discussions on conflict avoidance and environment protection at the global level;
- Co-opting Global Institutions to take up the agenda of the Initiative and carry on dialogue and debate on the themes; and
- Taking the themes to leading thought institutions, academia of the world.

On Saturday, 5 September, 100-odd delegates are scheduled to travel to **Bodh Gaya** for a visit to one of the most revered Buddhist pilgrimage centres. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to join the delegates for over an hour in Bodh Gaya.
